

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Freshfel Europe's expresses deep concerns and perplexity on asymmetric tariff and non-tariff concessions for fresh fruit and vegetables within the EU-US trade deal

The European Commission just released its proposal for the adjustment of customs duties on import of certain goods originating from the USA, as a result of the USA-EU "agreement" reached end of July 2025. Freshfel Europe is expressing its deep unease over such trade "deal" and its process. Beyond trade impact or benefit, this agreement raises multiple questions and concerns on fundamental international trade principles.

The President of the European Commission brought back from Scotland a one-sided and fully asymmetric agreement, with concessions that threaten reciprocal concept. This appalling outreach was brought to EU business after a negotiation process that breached basic principles of good governance, set aside commitment to transparency requiring meaningful a priori stakeholder consultation and failed to have been subject to a credible impact assessment. The deal also significantly weakens WTO, eroding the principle of Most Favoured Nation (MFN) clause and other multilateral rules while also deteriorating the integrity of future bilateral trade agreements.

On this background, Freshfel Europe expresses its deep concerns and outright opposition to the EU–USA trade deal, currently in its implementation process. Despite representing a limited part of the total bilateral trade between the EU and USA, fresh fruit and vegetables are once again taken as a bargaining chip for achieving other objectives, leaving European fresh produce businesses exposed to disproportionate tariff and unfair balance in regard to non-tariff conditions. This will further deepen the already existing trade deficit.

Philippe Binard, General delegate of Freshfel Europe commented: *"Under the proposed deal, imports of US fruit and vegetables into the EU are fully liberalized removing with immediate effect existing tariffs to a full duty exemption. On the contrary EU exporters face a significant rise of tariffs to 15% when accessing the USA market".* This stark asymmetry hands a competitive advantage to US producers interested in exporting to the EU, while severely impacting the competitiveness of EU fresh produce on the USA market. Although additional duties will ultimately be borne by US consumers, it will overtime limit volume of EU fresh produce currently exported. The EU generous discriminatory move with fully fledge duty waiver for US fresh produce imported in the EU might lead other third countries to request similar concessions from the EU in light of the MFN clause.

Moreover, while the EU declared readiness to address US concerns on "non-tariff barriers" and other climate-related and sustainability matters, there is no such clear and unambiguous commitment by the USA to resolve longstanding Sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures that have blocked or limited for decades EU exports of apples, pears, citrus, tomatoes, and many other products. Philippe Binard stated: *"Excessive US SPS rules continue to keep EU fruit and vegetables out of the USA market, while US exporters might gain more access to EU market. The deal also generates conditions for an unequal playing field, between EU operators bound to comply with strict sustainability, climate and food safety requirements—such as CSRD, CDDD or PEFCE monitoring and reporting—while allowing US and other non-EU suppliers much greater flexibility or derogation on societal concerns or climate transition obligations. This move totally undermines the trustworthiness of the EU sustainability agenda and the competitiveness of EU business".*

The EU concessions on tariff conditions carry as well non-negligible collateral effects for the EU with major financial consequences. The tariff dismantling for US produce will reduce annually EU own financial revenues by an estimated 12 billion €. Philippe Binard added: *“This will add more pressure on EU budget, already facing multiple cuts further harming European businesses and EU citizens. In the recent discussion of the upcoming MFF, we already experienced the far-reaching implications of budget cuts for agriculture and absence of resources to adjust activity to climate change challenges or to promote a shift towards a more sustainable and healthier diet”*.

Some months ago, the European Commission was considering agriculture as essential for food security. Last July, the President of the European Commission completely forgot its commitments for EU agriculture competitiveness, its engagement to tackle climate change and the need to wisely manage EU own financial resources. This deal was claimed by its protagonists to offer predictability and stability, both essential for long-term business planning and investment. At a first glance, it is rather generating more uncertainties, being placed at the mercy of its counterpart threatening to seek more concessions from its weakened partner. This is already happening with the Digital Market Act.

Freshfel Europe calls for wisdom of EU policymakers of the Council and of the Parliament to reject this one-sided agreement and urgently seek fully reciprocal, non-discriminatory and fair market access conditions that are equally beneficial for EU operators. Otherwise, EU sustainability commitments, and EU credibility on the global stage are seriously at stake.

ENDS

Note to the Editors: Freshfel Europe is the European Fresh Produce Association, representing the interests of the fresh fruit and vegetables supply chain in Europe and beyond. Freshfel Europe currently has over 200 members, including both companies and associations. For more information, please contact info@freshfel.org

Fruit and vegetables transatlanting trade in figures

- **EU exports** around **290.000 T** (worth **680 Mio €**) of fruit and vegetables out of which 75.000 T of fresh fruit and vegetables to the USA : Kiwifruit (30.000 T) , garlic (15.000 T) , onions and shallots (15.000 T), spinach (5.000 T) cucumbers (3.000 T), persimmons (1.000 T), endives (850 T) sweet peppers (600 T), satsumas (650 T), table grapes (600 T). lemons (500 T). Other main categories are processed or dried vegetables: cooked vegetables (85.000 T), mixed cooked vegetables (35.000 T), beans (25.000 T), shelled peas (20.000T)
- **USA exports** around **700.000 T** (worth **2,7 billion €**) of fruit and vegetables , out of which almonds (275.000 T) , sweet potatoes (120.000 T), pistachos (120.000 T), walnuts (70.000 T), beans (65.000 T), lentils (35.000 T), grapefruit (5.000 T) , dried grapes (5.000 T), mangoes (5.000T)

As a result for the fruit and vegetables category, the EU already experiences a significant **trade deficit** , both in volume (**> 400.000 T**) and in value (**> 2 billion €**).

With the term of the asymmetric trade deal, the deficit in volume and value will further increase.

