



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

16 February 2021

Freshfel and FPC urge UK government to extend derogations on phytosanitary certifications for fresh produce to avoid business disruption on 1 April

The impact of Brexit is a big challenge for businesses on both sides of the Channel with EU27 exports representing over 3 million tonnes of fresh fruit and vegetables to the UK, 40% of the UK's internal demand. The sector is already facing additional annual costs of at least €55 million as a result of the adaptation to new administration, customs and trading processes. From 1 April, the cost of official inspections and of the issuance of over 750,000 phytosanitary certificates (PCs) will be added to this economic and administrative burden, a threat which may significantly hamper the capacity of the industry to continue 'just in time' operations of highly perishable produce. In this context, Freshfel Europe and FPC have addressed a letter to the RT Hon Michael Gove expressing the concerns of the sector about the introduction of a requirement for PCs from 1 April.

In their letter Freshfel Europe and FPC argue that this requirement will mean more than three quarters of EU fresh produce exports to the UK will require a phytosanitary certificate (approx. 2.5 million tonnes). This will be a herculean effort for both the sector and public administrations, as at least 750,000 PCs will have to be issued on an annual basis to support this trade. The reason is that whilst some bigger operators may issue a single PC per truck (e.g. for exports of big categories such as apples), most EU27-UK trade is highly fragmented with consignments addressed to many small customers and wholesalers and often carrying over 10 PCs per truck. This requirement will therefore lead to significant delays in orders, to blockages both at departure and arrival, and generate losses of quality and food waste. This will also add costs to the already fatigued fresh fruit and vegetables businesses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic effects.

Freshfel Europe and FPC therefore urge the UK to introduce derogations to the almost systematic obligation of a PC for fresh produce trade across the English Channel taking into account the very limited risk of fresh fruit and vegetables trade across the Channel after 40 years of free flows. Freshfel Europe General Delegate Philippe Binard highlighted, "We ask the UK to consider a derogation to reflect the very limited phytosanitary risk of fresh fruit and vegetables exchanges across the Channel after over 40 years of free and safe flows, and the fact that EU and UK plant health legislation will remain, at least in the mid-term, almost identical". "Postponing the introduction of the phyto requirement for EU imports until electronic certification is in place would facilitate trade on both sides of the Channel. It's the very least we need to help maintain supplies of fresh produce", added Nigel Jenney, Chief Executive of the Fresh Produce Consortium.

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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.

The UK Fresh Produce consortium is the voice of the UK fresh produce industry. It supports its more than 700 businesses across the chain, which include include retailers, distributors, importers, wholesalers, processors, packers, food service and a large number of associated members including freight handling, ports, embassies, laboratories, business solutions, lawyers, packaging, recruitment and trade media.

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