

INDUSTRY COOPERATION

The horizontal nature of food safety legislation and its increasingly complex nature has given rise to numerous initiatives in which industry can exchange views and raise awareness on emerging issues. Since its creation in 2003, Freshfel continues to be active in the **Food Chain Roundtable on Pesticides**. This forum proved to be useful for the discussion on common issues regarding plant protection products and their residues. Initially the brainchild of Freshfel and the European Crop Protection Association (ECPA), the group includes today representatives from the main food chain partners including farmers (COPA-COGECA), agri-food traders (CELCAA), food manufacturers (CIAA) and associated industries. Freshfel is co-chairing this group with ECPA.

Given its proactive stance on plant protection products Freshfel was invited by GLOBALG.A.P. to be part of its **Crop Protection Working Group** (CPWG). The

Freshfel secretariat and an expert of the association (Jean-François Proust –Forum Phyto, France) regularly participate in the meetings of the CPWG. The group is dealing with a number of important matters, such as non-compliance, confidence and other legislative/non legislative developments. In the last year of activity, the CPWG dedicated work on the matter of unprovided use/speciality crops, criteria for laboratories, residue monitoring systems and also look at the setting up of IPM guidelines. GlobalGAP is moving towards a revision of its protocols in October 2010 and the CPWG has been monitoring the changes that are being planned.



Given similar interests in a wide range of issues concerning plant protection products and their residues, Freshfel is cooperating intensively with AREFLH (association of European F&V producing regions) and PROFEL (association of the processing F&V industry) through participating at food safety working groups of one another.

In the framework of the future authorisation rules for pesticides, Freshfel joined forces with AREFLH and PROFEL to defend the interests of the fruit and vegetables sector. Whereas the legislation has been adopted, the associations remain committed

to improve the situation of minor uses and will seek to obtain an EU Promotion fund for Minor uses. In this light they co-organised the Specialty crops & Minor uses conference on 4 November 2010. In line with practices in the processed fruit and vegetables, a working group of officials and

sector experts from several Member States has been set up to identify priorities and strategies to advance the situation for minor uses in the fresh fruit and vegetables segment.

More general and since 2004, European federations representing all stages of the food chain established a forum to discuss issues relating to food safety. The **Food Safety Platform** allows all stakeholders federations to share information and provide an early-warning system to ensure that all sectoral representative organisations are aware of each others' actions and foreseen changes in the legislative environment. Freshfel regularly participates in the meetings of this Platform.





SUSTAINABILITY

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY



increased requirements from consumers, and it is continuously looking for improvements in the supply chain. The sector has seen the highest uptake of organic and integrated farming systems and is addressing its GHG emissions through the establishment of a carbon footprint methodology and carbon offsetting schemes. Freshfel is taking a key role by assisting its members to understand the various implications of this dossier and coordinating research efforts.

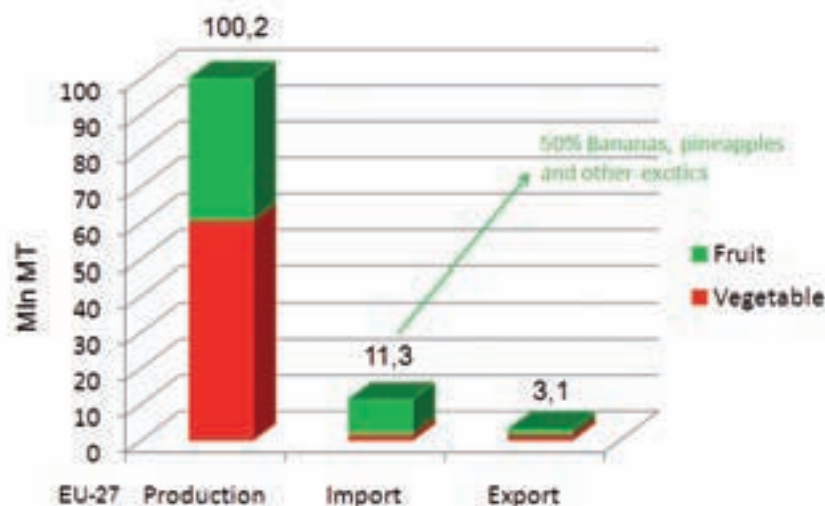
The association thereby stresses the need for an integrated policy approach to food supply, based on life-cycle assessments and the consideration of wider social and economic implications. Freshfel remains wary of a dogmatic debate resulting from simplistic messages such as buying local, seasonal and organic. Indeed today's supply is already largely local and/or seasonal, making it more a perception issue that diverts the attention away from real solutions. The climate change debate should not be taken as a tool for protectionism or favour a particular growing method which will always be detrimental to the category as a whole and will unnecessarily reduce the choice of consumers.

Sustainable development has rapidly shifted upwards in the political agenda, and public authorities are now actively promoting the consumption of 'green products'. The EU Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production, launched mid-2008, already provides a clear example of this through its guidelines for the green public procurement of foodstuffs, focusing particularly on fresh fruit and vegetables and fish.

As the debate on climate change gained

political momentum with a view to the Copenhagen summit, Freshfel held a dedicated working group to review the various aspects of this complex dossier and its implications for the fresh produce sector. The reduction target of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) of 80% by 2050 will imply a change in the behaviour which will touch upon the whole sector and all of its stakeholders.

The fruit and vegetable sector has been proactive in developing sustainable agricultural practices to cope with



Source: Eurostat/Faostat figures based on the average of the last 5 years

Acknowledging the complexity of the debate, EU food chain partners, including Freshfel, have set up a joint initiative, the Food Sustainable Consumption & Production Roundtable, in order to collectively address the challenges regarding assessment methodologies and communication tools, while also exchanging best practices. A European or even an international approach is a must to avoid the proliferation of solutions and schemes which will ultimately add confusion and cost to the chain. Public authorities should show leadership for a common solution with an integrated policy approach rather than focusing on simplistic messages and certain food segments.

The European Food Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Roundtable launched in 2009, constitutes a major contribution from the food sector to the EU's ambitions in the field of Sustainable Consumption and Production, bringing together farmers and their suppliers, agricultural traders, food and drink producers, retailers and civil society representatives.

The Roundtable will add significant value to initiatives outlined in the European Commission's 2008 Action Plan. It is currently finalising principles to facilitate uniform and scientifically reliable environmental assessment methodologies for food products. Parallel to environmental assessment methods, the Roundtable is examining key sustainability challenges along the food value chain (e.g. climate change, water conservation, waste reduction) and is developing adequate strategies to address them.

Environmental labels are not the best way forward for the fruit and vegetable category given the complexity of the supply chain and associated costs. The carbon and environmental footprinting tools will rather help the sector to identify problem areas and solutions and to assist clients and retailers to meet consumer demands and Corporate Social Responsibility goals.

While the complexity of the debate still represents a major hurdle towards communication to the public, consumers are looking for concrete information and advice on how they can make a difference in addressing climate change and wider sustainability issues. As the record of fresh produce on carbon footprint is excellent compared to other food categories, public authorities should join forces with stakeholders to stimulate a change of attitudes and motivate consumers to move their habits towards fresh fruit and vegetables. Several consumer and environmental groups have already called for increased fruit and vegetables consumption as an undisputed, easy and healthy way for consumers to address climate change. Hence fruit and vegetables are not only an essential contribution for improving the health of consumers but also moving towards a better environment.



SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

While social standards have become common within the exotics segment of our industry, recent NGO campaigns on other commodities and European produce have caused retailers to evaluate their sourcing strategies and to generalise the concept of social standards to other product categories and origins. In this light Freshfel closely follows developments in this area, collecting information and best practices. This subject is regularly tabled on the agenda of the Food Quality & Safety Working Group, such as through presentations by standard owners, which allows debate and the exchange of views.

TRADE POLICY

Over the past year, Freshfel has continued to closely monitor and actively participate in the debate on trade issues that have an impact on the fruit and vegetable sector. The continued expansion of trade through the network of regional and bilateral trade agreements negotiated by the EU is of major importance to the sector. Freshfel is eager to keep members updated of progress in these trade agreements to allow them to take advantage of the growing number of opportunities for European fresh produce.

The annual meeting of the import and export divisions at Fruit Logistica remains one of Freshfel's cornerstone activities, where important topics in this area are reviewed. This year the meeting was

attended by close to 50 delegates. Chaired by Jacques Azoulay (CSIF/FFIFL – Katopé International, Univeg Group, Import division) and Willem Baljeu (Frugi Venta, Export division), the meeting presented an excellent opportunity for members to highlight issues of importance and exchange views on the latest developments.

Freshfel has overseen the expansion of the EU's "Global Europe" trade strategy, furthering market access and trade through the development of free trade agreements. Later this year, this strategy will be replaced by a new, more expansive and comprehensive trade strategy which will build on the evolution made through Global Europe, whilst combining this

with the ambitious EU 2020 strategy. Freshfel will keep members informed of the development of this strategy and will prepare its submission to the consultation process in due course. Freshfel's policy is one of free trade, always insisting that reciprocity in trade should be one of the key elements of sustainable trade growth.

Freshfel Europe closely cooperates with the European Commission to promote a positive agenda for the EU in its international trade negotiations. Freshfel participates regularly in the Civil Society Dialogue meetings held by DG Trade, as well as the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Market Access Working Group on plants and plant products.

MARKET ACCESS STRATEGY

Market access is a key part of Freshfel's trade strategy, and Freshfel participates regularly in the Market Access Working Group on SPS issues organised by DG Trade. This meeting gives Freshfel the opportunity to provide updates on important market access issues for fresh produce, and to highlight some of the difficulties faced by exporters to third countries.

Freshfel also maintains a close working relationship with the unit of DG Trade responsible for SPS issues, and has provided input on a number of dossiers on non-tariff barriers in third countries and improving market access possibilities for EU fresh produce. Freshfel regularly consults with its members on these issues, and actively encourages them to provide input on difficulties faced with exports of fruit and vegetables to countries outside of the EU.

MULTILATERAL TRADE & WTO



Freshfel is closely following the progress of the ongoing negotiations for a multilateral trade deal through the World Trade Organization. The Doha Development Agenda of the WTO has been ongoing since 2001, however progress has been limited since the talks broke down at the July 2008 ministerial after failing to reach a compromise on agricultural import rules. Many countries still have reservations over the package

discussed at the 2008 ministerial, and finding a compromise which satisfies all participants is likely to take some time. Further adjustments from the United States are also scheduled to take some time to be agreed upon, and are unlikely to be brought to Congress before the mid-term elections to be held this November. Discussion groups are continuing in order to ensure that what has already been agreed upon is kept, and that progress up to now is not lost, however further political will is required to see significant movement in the negotiations. Movement in 2010 is thus unlikely, with advancement in 2011 being a more realistic target. Freshfel will continue to closely monitor this situation, and will inform members of progress in the talks as and when it occurs.

In further developments, Freshfel welcomes the recent notification by Russia that it will seek to join the WTO as an independent country and no longer as a joint customs union with Belarus and Kazakhstan. As the only major economy outside the 153-member WTO, it is hoped that Russian accession to the WTO will lead to a more stable and cooperative trade in fresh produce with Russia in the future.

REGIONAL & BILATERAL TRADE AGREEMENTS

Freshfel welcomes the European Commission's initiative to promote free trade through the establishment of a network of bilateral and regional free trade agreements. Regular participation in DG Trade's Civil Society Dialogue allows Freshfel to put forward the views of the fruit and vegetable sector in ongoing trade negotiations, whilst being kept up-to-date with progress and new developments. In the last few months several important negotiations were finalised namely with Morocco and Egypt but also important for bananas the various agreements with Andean and Central American countries as well as the implementation of EPA with ACP countries. The following table summarises the current regional and bilateral negotiations underway:

Type of negotiation	Negotiating Partner & Progress	
Regional	Central American countries	Negotiations for an association agreement were finalised and formally concluded in May. Will still take time for the agreement to be agreed upon by the Council and Parliament.
Regional	Andean Community of nations	Bilateral agreements have been signed with Peru & Colombia. Ecuador may now choose to negotiate a bilateral agreement having seen the successful conclusion with the other two countries.
Regional	MERCOSUR (South America)	Having been stalled since 2004, talks for an FTA were formally re-launched in May, with the first round in July. Objections from several member states over the possible effects on EU agriculture.
Regional	ASEAN (South-East Asia)	Since the possibility for a regional agreement was deferred, progress has been made on several bilateral FTAs, namely with Singapore, Vietnam & Malaysia, with other countries to follow.
Regional	African, Caribbean and Pacific	Interim EPAs were initialled by most regions, with negotiations for full EPAs to continue. Progress is foreseen in the coming months with East & West African regions.
Bilateral	India	This negotiation is the "flagship project" of the EU, and is by far the biggest and most important bilateral deal currently in negotiation. 9 th Round of negotiation took place in April, with the aim being to conclude negotiations by the end of the year.
Bilateral	Ukraine	10 th Round of negotiations took place in March, although there still remains a lot of progress to be made. Full engagement from Ukraine on tariffs is expected as of July.
Bilateral	South Korea	FTA negotiations concluded, and Council approval should be received after the summer which should see provisional application of 95% of the agreement before the end of 2010.
Bilateral	Israel	The new Free Trade Agreement was completed last year and entered into force in January 2010.
Bilateral	Egypt	The new FTA recently agreed upon is likely to enter into force on 1 June 2010.
Bilateral	Morocco	The text of the recent agreement is currently under discussion at the Parliament, and will come into force at the earliest on 1 January 2011, but may take longer depending on the ratification process.
Bilateral	Canada	Negotiations are advancing quickly, and are expected to conclude in 2011.
Bilateral	Norway	A draft agreement on trade in agricultural products was initialled in February. This accord will provide full liberalisation to the Norwegian market for an additional 20% of EU agricultural exports.

SPECIFIC TRADE DOSSIERS

Freshfel is involved on a day-to-day basis in a large number of dossiers. More concretely, last year has been marked by a series of important dossiers such as:

- ✓ Implementation of the "Geneva Agreement" on bananas for the reduction of tariffs and requests from Freshfel in the framework of the CAP simplification to simplify the import procedure by repealing the monitoring licences.
- ✓ Revision of the import provisions for garlic by amending the rules managing the tariff rate quota.
- ✓ Coordination of positions on the negotiation of protocols and work plans to access third country markets. Freshfel in

particular closely monitored the entry into force of kiwifruit protocols in China and the elaboration of a work plan for the export of apples and pears to the USA.

- ✓ Representation of the specificity of the fruit and vegetable sector in the revision and modernisation of the Customs Code.
- ✓ Ongoing monitoring of the entry price regime and unit prices, although there has been little progress on this dossier pending possible reform to follow conclusion of the Doha Development Agenda of the WTO. This system has also been maintained in the Free Trade Agreements recently signed with Korea, Peru & Colombia.

EXPERTS GROUPS & FRESHFEL/SHAFFE CITRUS WORKING GROUP

Freshfel is proactively involved in the various expert groups of the Commission, namely on tomatoes, apples and pears, peaches and nectarines and citrus. Freshfel is attending these meetings with its own experts from the sector and also contributes with presentations and perspectives.

In regard to citrus, a great part of the input is generated by the outcome and expertise resulting from the Freshfel-SHAFFE Citrus Working Group. This joint initiative which was already launched 3 years ago provides specific analysis on the citrus sector for the benefit of the members and the citrus community at large. Since its inception, the group has grown to incorporate many interested parties keen to input and participate in the analysis and discussion within this forum. This Working Group has had

a very successful year, with excellent cooperation between members helping to consolidate the structure and reinforce its place as a key platform for discussion in the global citrus community.

The Citrus Working Group was created to provide a reliable and accurate information network for the increasingly globalised citrus industry. The citrus WG ensures that information is exchanged in a mutually beneficial environment, helping to promote accuracy and transparency, as well as helping in the resolution of specific sector difficulties.

The citrus working group is chaired by José Antonio Garcia of Ailimpo, Spain, and counts on the support of citrus producers, exporters and importers from key regions. The Citrus WG includes northern hemisphere producers from

the Mediterranean basin region and the USA, as well as southern hemisphere producers and exporters, namely South Africa, Australia and South American countries. Furthermore, the inclusion of market analysis from the principle markets within the European Union such as the UK, Germany, Spain, France and the Benelux, as well as the USA and Russia, enables thorough supply and demand analysis to give a comprehensive overview of the sector.

The Citrus Working Group has now an agenda set throughout the year mainly structured around teleconferences and a joint physical meeting in Berlin. Information shared among members is made public through press releases and/or on the website.



Date	Specific Topic	Type
September	Preliminary NH forecast / SH Ending Season	Teleconference
October	NH Forecast / SH Balance	Teleconference
December	NH ongoing season	Teleconference
February	Preliminary SH Forecast – Development NH	Berlin Meeting
April	SH Forecast / NH Ending Situation	Teleconference
June/July	SH ongoing season	Teleconference



As of 2010, Freshfel is also setting up an ad hoc committee with Board representation to follow as appropriate the matter of concerns for bananas.



HEALTH AND NUTRITION

EUROPEAN PLATFORM ON DIET, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTH

With the aim of exploring best practices and encouraging voluntary actions in the fight against obesity, the European Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health was launched in March 2005 by the EU Health Commissioner at the time, Markos Kyprianou. Freshfel has been a full member since the summer of 2005. The main purpose of the Platform is to conduct open and informal discussions to examine ways of achieving binding commitments aimed at tackling the obesity epidemic and at addressing diet-related chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease.

To date the Platform involves 33 member EU organisations including food manufacturers, retailers, the catering industry, advertisers, consumer and health NGOs, and health professionals. The World Health Organisation (WHO), EU Presidencies, some Member States, EFSA as well as the European Parliament are represented at the Platform as observers. Together with AREFLH, Freshfel represents the fruit and vegetable sector in the Platform.

The Platform meets at regular intervals for plenary meetings to monitor overall progress and discuss relevant issues. The latest plenary meetings took place in July, September and December in 2009, and February and May in 2010, addressing subjects such as food labelling, public private partnerships, lifestyles and education, and most recently in May focusing on commitments in the field of reformulation. The “energy out” side of the

obesity equation also received attention with increased collaboration between Platform members working in the area of physical activity.

The EU Platform is now in its sixth year of operation. 2010 will be an important year for the Platform since the European Commission will report to the Council and

Parliament on progress on the EU Strategy on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity. As part of this reporting, the Platform will be subject to an external evaluation, exploring the Platform’s work during the first four years of its existence. The evaluation will assess in particular the Platform’s effectiveness in achieving its objectives, whether the commitments made by its members are in

line with the original ambitions, the impact generated in policy at national and European levels, and the role of the Platform as a place for dialogue. Results from this evaluation are expected to be available in the summer of 2010.

Over the six years of the Platform, more than 200 commitments have been submitted by members, covering a very wide range of activities, including actions in key fields such as consumer information, including labelling, education, physical activity promotion, marketing, advertising targeting children and product reformulation. Platform members have agreed to monitor and evaluate the performance of commitments in a transparent, participative and accountable way.



“Fresh Times” – At the time when this commitment was undertaken, there was no real pan-European centralised exchange of information on promotional campaigns among different actors due to the diversity of actions, the fragmentation of the sector and the lack of organisation and reporting. Freshfel engaged to publish this bi-monthly newsletter which aims at raising awareness and exchanging information from members and non-members on promotional activities to increase fresh fruit and vegetable consumption in Europe and beyond. Best practices can in this way be broadly known and reproduced, which in turn benefits the consumer.



“Fresh Charter” – Work places are important settings to promote healthy lifestyles. By endorsing the “Fresh Produce Charter” Freshfel invites companies and associations to provide fruit and vegetables for employees and visitors at meetings and in reception areas, which helps them to make better, healthier snack choices.



“Consumption Monitor” – Although a significant number of national reports and studies on the consumption of fruits and vegetables are available in the various EU Member States (often in different formats), consolidated information on fresh produce consumption at the European level remains scarce. Freshfel Europe is committed to fill this gap with its annual ‘Consumption Monitor’. In a single document Freshfel sets out consolidated information on fruit and vegetable consumption across Europe per year. The document includes a general section on the EU’s total gross supply of fresh fruit and vegetables and specific sections by country.



COMMITMENTS ARE:



“Fit Dudes” – The ‘Fit Food Dudes’ Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Programme will extend the work of the original ‘Food Dudes’ programme by using the principals of role-modelling, rewards and repeated exposure to encourage primary school children to be more active (as well as encouraging them to eat more fruit and vegetables).

“Pro Greens” – Recent research has demonstrated the health benefits of eating a diet rich in vegetables and fruit. In Europe, children’s consumption of fruit and vegetables is far below the current recommendations. The main objective of this project is to assess the current intake and to develop effective strategies to promote consumption of fruit and vegetables of school children across Europe.



“School Fruit Scheme” – Through this commitment, a unique collaboration between the public health sector (EPHA – European Public Health Alliance, and EHN – European Heart Network) and the fresh fruit and vegetables sector (Freshfel) has been established to provide Platform members and the Directorate-General for Health of the European Commission with information on their work in relation to implementing the EU School Fruit Scheme (EU SFS).



It is important to note that following the recommendation of Freshfel, the meeting of the Platform enjoys a large basket of fresh fruit for delegates to enjoy during the meeting. Baskets are empty when the morning and afternoon session are over! This example demonstrates that actions can be taken to improve behaviour and eating habits at the work place and to change lifestyles!

NUTRITION & HEALTH CLAIMS

Regulation 1924/2006 on nutrition and health claims made on foods (published in Official Journal L 12 of 18 January 2007, and in force since 1 July 2007) sets up the conditions for the use of nutrition claims (such as "low fat") and health claims (such as "helps lower cholesterol") based on nutrient profiles. This Regulation will become increasingly important for the sector. It provides:

CLAIM DEFINITION

The Regulation (Article 2§2.1) defines claims as *"any message or representation (...) including pictorial, graphic or symbolic representation, in any form, which states, suggests or implies that a food has particular characteristics."*

This definition could help defend fresh fruit and vegetables from the use (or rather abuse) of the positive image of these products by other processed foods.

As general requirements are that the use of nutrition and health claims shall only be

permitted if the average consumer can be expected to understand the beneficial effects as expressed in the claim, and that nutrition and health claims shall be based on and substantiated by generally accepted scientific evidence.

NUTRIENT PROFILING

Claims may only be used if a food product meets a certain profile, i.e. appropriate ratios of salt, fat and sugar. Nutrition claims can fail one criterion, i.e. if only one nutrient (salt, sugar or fat) exceeds the limit of the profile a claim can still be made provided the high level of that particular nutrient is clearly marked on the label. Health claims cannot fail any criteria. National recommendations on food intake (i.e. "5 a day") will be taken into account.

Exemptions from the requirement to respect established nutrient profiles are envisaged for certain food or categories of foods depending on their role and importance in the diet of the population. Exemptions will almost certainly include: *"Fruit, vegetables and their products, presented fresh, frozen, dried, or under any other form in so far as they contain no added sugars, salt or fat"*.

Food categories, specific conditions & thresholds: The European Commission is

proposing a category *"Fruits, vegetables, nuts, and their products"*, with the specific condition that the finishing products contain a minimum of 50g per 100g of fruit, vegetables or nuts. The following thresholds would also apply: maximum of 400mg sodium, 5g saturates and 15g sugars per 100g.

According to the Regulation, nutrient profiles should have been developed by 19 January 2009, based on an opinion of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

NUTRITION CLAIMS

'Nutrition claim' means any claim which states, suggests or implies that a food has particular beneficial nutritional properties due to energy, nutrients or other substances. A list of authorised nutrition claims and the conditions for use is published in the Annex of the Regulation. Comparative claims may only be made between foods of the same category, taking into consideration a range of foods of that category.

http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/labellingnutrition/claims/community_register/index_en.htm



HEALTH CLAIMS

'Health claim' means any claim that states, suggests or implies that a relationship exists between a food category, a food or one of its constituents and health. These are divided in Article 13 and Article 14 claims. Functional claims (Article 13 of the Regulation) (such as "calcium is good for your bones") will be included in a "positive list" that the European Commission was required to draw up by 31 January 2010, based on EFSA's scientific advice.

Due to the difficulty of dealing with all requests, EFSA is now analysing Article 13 claims in bunches. The first series was published in October 2009. A second series was published in February 2010, and additional series will be published throughout 2010 and 2011.

<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/ndaclaims/ndaclaims13.htm>

These claims do not include those related to children's development or health or disease risk reduction claims (Article 14 of the Regulation). Disease reduction claims (defined as any health claim that states, suggests or implies that the consumption of a food category, a food or one of its constituents significantly reduces a risk factor in the development of a human disease), and claims referring to the health of children require full authorisation on a case-by-case basis, following the submission of a scientific dossier to EFSA.

http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/labellingnutrition/claims/community_register/index_en.htm

Given the complexity of this dossier and the importance to have the interests of the sector taken into account, Freshfel will intensively be in contact with its interested members to represent as appropriate the interests of the sector.





RESEARCH & INNOVATION

Research and innovation are key to any industry in maintaining competitive advantage, addressing new consumer needs and improving the supply chain.

Whereas research and innovation primarily falls within the remit of individual companies or groups of companies, Freshfel acknowledged the need for collective action in certain areas. In this light, Freshfel has taken a more active role with regard to the EU research funding.

The necessity for research project coordinators to demonstrate the relevance and benefits has increased the importance of sector involvement and improved dissemination. As a result the most recent call for proposals has led Freshfel to be approached on a number of relevant projects for the fresh produce sector. The Freshfel Board considers if projects are relevant for the members of Freshfel and consequently decides whether the association should support the project.

The first project supported by the association and approved by the European Commission will start as of July 2010 for a period

of 3 years. The Acropolis project aims at developing models and strategies for assessing risks arising from cumulative and aggregate exposure to pesticides with a similar mode of action, suspected additive or synergistic effects, or complex mixtures. This research will contribute to improving the European policy and regulatory basis and benefit the international community. The project is coordinated by a consortium led by Wageningen University in the Netherlands. Freshfel involvement is sought as a work package leader with regard to stakeholder involvement, in collaboration with the University of Ghent.

The Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) bundles all research-related EU initiatives together under a common roof playing a crucial role in reaching the goals of growth, competitiveness and employment.

The programme runs for seven years, it became fully operational as of 1 January 2007 and will expire in 2013. The EU Member States have earmarked more than € 1,9 billion for funding in the area of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, and Biotechnology over the duration of FP7.



STIMULATING CONSUMPTION

COMMUNICATION & IMAGE

Under the auspices of the **Promotion, Communication and Image Committee**, Freshfel started in 2009 a reflection about how to better tackle the communication and image issues surrounding the association. This revamping of the communication strategy would not only benefit the association, but also and importantly lead to a better image for the fresh produce sector. The committee, chaired until its last meeting of 2009 by Laurence Swan, has initiated a review of the communication, image and marketing challenges faced by the association, with challenges of communication being both internal within the association and towards third parties.



Based on this evaluation, there are a number of areas where actions have already been reinforced:

- ✓ Addressing the main deficits of image or misperception in regard to fresh fruit and vegetables: Freshfel is often confronted with statements which need to be addressed referring to price, safety, nutritional value, convenience, organic versus conventional, or “buy local”. Fact sheets on several of these issues have been prepared and have been made available to members.
- ✓ Addressing communication with consumers: Fresh produce has many positive assets, in particular healthy properties widely recognised by the scientific community. There is a wealth of scientific findings which are published every year but regrettably sometimes these findings are difficult to translate into concrete and practical messages. An ad hoc research has been carried out which has concluded in a study on the misuse of the image of fresh produce by other industries. The role of Freshfel and the link with national associations or other bodies at national level in charge of promotion and communication needs to be assessed.
- ✓ Relationship with its Members: Freshfel has already improved the format of its communication to members by revamping its website, launching a new extranet and improving the format of the Newsletter and Press Review.
- ✓ Communicating with media and decision makers: Freshfel has re-launched the Headlines and multiplied the number of press releases as well as starting a media networking through Facebook and being more visible in search engine results. Freshfel has also embarked in a process of preparing a number of statements on key issues in the format of Frequently Asked Questions. This will help members and the association to speak with a common voice and provide access to key data and facts.
- ✓ Support the work of the scientific community: The scientific community could provide useful input on the benefits of consuming fruit and vegetables. Freshfel could play an active role in liaising with the researchers and disseminating results of the findings. The support of the health community is also sought. The success of EGEA in policy setting is a clear example of the win-win situation of such a partnership.
- ✓ Visibility: Evaluate the role and benefits of Fresh and Fruit Logisitica for the networking and visibility of the association.



EU PROMOTION POLICY

Freshfel closely follows the EU promotion policy which has been consolidated in the European Regulation 3/2008 on the Promotion of Agricultural Products. Freshfel's input is mainly voiced through the European Commission Advisory Group on Promotion of Agricultural Products. This Advisory Group guides the European Commission on its promotion policy and in particular regarding the EU Regulation 3/2008, which used a total budget of €39 million in 2009. The scheme remains attractive for fresh produce as applications and projects are above the indicative threshold set for fruit and vegetables. Freshfel continues to seek a better functioning of the scheme allowing more flexibility and also the possibility to use private brands within the scheme.



In the period 2009/2010 the EC Advisory group on promotion has discussed notably the need for changing the current regime. With the renewal of the Commission in 2010, the opportunity has come to voice the proposals of the Advisory Group stakeholders, and bring the fundamental changes needed to EU promotion policy. The Group has worked hard to approximate positions in the last years and to offer concerted and unanimous proposals to the Commission. However, apart from certain technical adjustments, no major improvements have been achieved concerning the revision of the Regulation. Freshfel is also calling for a greater transparency of the accepted programmes and also for having greater insights into the motivation of the Commission for rejecting specific programmes. Based on the outcome of the EGEA conference, Freshfel will also seek to adjust the priorities of the eligible programmes to include the most deprived persons in the priority target groups.

On a collective basis together with the other agri-food organisations, Freshfel is supporting the following requests elaborated by the advisory group to review the current regime:

1. Better balance between generic promotion and trademarks in non-EU countries

Need for clarification of the conditions under which branded products could be exhibited in fairs and exhibitions in non-EU countries, provided that there are several of them, as an illustration of the diversity of what Europe has to offer. This is a key point if we want programmes to be co-financed by the private sector on the one hand, and efficient promotion campaigns on the other.

2. Need for more specific Community guidance in view of organising the management of programmes involving more than one Member State

In multi-country programmes, several of the difficulties encountered by operators are linked to the lack of contacts between stakeholders involved. Article 9(4) of regulation 501/2008 states: "The Member States shall agree on administrative collaboration procedures to facilitate the monitoring, implementation and checking of the programmes". This provision should be clarified by mentioning that a meeting should be organised before the start of the programme between Member States' authorities and proposing organisations to agree on clear procedures (e.g. who has to send the interim report to the paying agencies? Is it the proposing organisation of that Member State or the paying agency of the coordinating Member State?).

3. Need for clarification on the level of details required in the submitted programmes

The Commission should clarify that operators have to provide details for the actions foreseen and the budget linked for the first year, and only outlines of actions and budgets for the following years. In

promotion activities it is very difficult to foresee concrete actions and a budget, as conditions in the market can change and operators have to adapt. Although it is important for a programme not to change its target public (consumers, the press, journalists, etc.), it should be allowed to modify specific activities. The 10% tolerance rule of the model contract provides some flexibility but operators are still concerned by the high level of detail requested.

4. Need to improve the work of the Monitoring Group (Article 12 of Regulation 3/2008)

During Monitoring Group meetings, the European Commission or Member States should clarify any doubts and answer any questions that the proposing organisation may have regarding the practical aspects of running the programme. These clarifications and answers should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

This matter will remain on the Freshfel agenda. A meeting with the Cabinet of Commissioner Dacian Ciolos is foreseen for mid-June 2010.

EUROPEAN SCHOOL FRUIT SCHEME

The proposal for a European School Fruit Scheme followed an undertaking made during the negotiations on the reform of the Common Market Organisation for fruit and vegetables in June 2007. Consumption of fruit and vegetables is at best stagnating across Europe. In most cases consumption is at a level well below the WHO/FAO minimum recommendation. This level is today fixed by WHO/FAO at minimum 400 gr/day but many experts underline the need to consume at least 700 gr/day. Among the youngest citizens the level of consumption is even more worrying. Research has also shown that families with a lower level of income tend to consume less fruit and vegetables.

The effect of the under consumption of fresh produce, combined with other factors such as an inadequate diet rich in sugar, salt and fats, as well as a lack of physical activity is leading today's society to face in the future a major health challenge with a growing part of the population being overweight or obese. The rise in childhood obesity

is already reaching epidemic levels all across Europe. Nearly a quarter of overweight children are obese and medically at risk of several diseases. In the EU and according to data of the International Obesity Task Force, approximately 22 million children are overweight and around 5.1 million school children are obese. Every year, this figure increases by 400.000. The cost of obesity to the economies of the EU27 as calculated by the same body can now reach €150 billion plus per year.

The European fruit and vegetables school scheme (SFS) can therefore make a real difference, particularly in underprivileged areas. The scheme began at the start of the 2009/2010 school year, and for the school year 2010/2011 there are 25 out of the 27 Member States (all but Finland and Sweden) that have already presented their strategies. European funds worth €90 million every year will pay for the purchase and distribution of fresh fruit and vegetables to schools, based on the distribution of one piece of fruit per child per week during the school



term. This money will be matched by national and private funds in those Member States which chose to make use of the programme, either on a 50/50 basis, or 75/25 in the so-called 'convergence regions', where GDP/capita is lower. Besides providing fruit and vegetables to a target group of schoolchildren, the scheme will require participating Member States to set up strategies including educational and awareness-raising initiatives and the sharing of best practices.

Freshfel has been very supportive of this pan-European scheme from the beginning of the legislative process.

However, now that the second school year of implementation begins, some concerns regarding certain aspects of the implementation of the programme remain:

1. Integrity of the programme:

- a. Nature of products eligible: Health aspects should remain the core of this scheme as they are particularly relevant regarding the eligible products for the programme.



- b. Diversity: Focus should be given to a diversified range of fresh produce. A careful selection of products is of paramount importance to make sure that the youngest consumers change their eating habits, get used to new tastes and textures, while discovering and enjoying a wide diversity of fresh produce.
- c. Frequency: Freshfel advocates for an increase of the budget to make it possible to increase the frequency of supply in schools. It is through repeated tasting and regularity that children will be more likely to make a change of their eating habits.

2. Transparency: There continues to be a lack not only of clarity and detailed information for some national strategies, but also centralised and consolidated information of programmes at EU-level. The sector is eager to contribute and to provide its expertise on logistics, product handling and sorting for the successful implementation of the scheme. Regrettably, until today there is only a limited involvement of the sector by Member States' authorities. The School Fruit Scheme is a unique opportunity for a public-private partnership where all expertise available should be used. Schools, the fruit and vegetables sector, the scientific and health community, programme managers, as well as the national and European public sector all have input and experience to provide for the success of the programme.

3. Communication and Networking: Many communication and networking issues remain pending.

- a. There is indeed little progress with regard to the launch of an EU website to promote the scheme.

A dedicated F&V website could provide information about health benefits and scientific studies on fruit and vegetables, toolkits for teachers and kids, recipes, best practices on SFS across Europe and beyond, links to national programmes, etc. The communication policy should also be fine-tuned to avoid confusing young consumers about the elements of a balanced diet. Freshfel deems critical that the EU accompanying measures remain specific to the fruit and vegetables sector, and not be done in conjunction with the School Milk Programme. At the moment the Commission is implying by the fact that school schemes are available for milk and fruit and vegetables that a balanced diet can be reached by consuming these two product categories alone. However, the rationale, background and overall health objective of both programmes is different, and joint action could be problematic given the fight against the obesity dimension of the School Fruit Scheme.

- b. The Commission should also be fostering networking and the exchange of best practices. Freshfel urged the Commission to set up an expert scientific group as well as a stakeholders' advisory ad hoc committee for regular information exchanges.

The Commission and the Member States should not rest on their laurels as much remains to be done in this respect. Freshfel will continue to contribute and provide constructive criticisms as the reflection of the eagerness of the sector towards a successful implementation of a much demanded and needed programme!

PROGREENS



For the second consecutive year Freshfel has been involved and supporting the work and research of the Progreens Project aiming at promoting fruit and vegetables consumption among schoolchildren in the EU. High intake of fruit and vegetables (F&V) promotes health and contributes to the prevention of chronic diseases. The level of consumption of F&V in Europe is highly variable and consumption by no means reaches the recommended level. In this context, the Progreens project focuses on F&V intake of children and their parents in ten European countries, what affects the consumption and how to increase consumption. The project especially contributes to exchange of best practice in fruit and vegetable promotion. It will furthermore investigate the determinants of F&V intake from gender, cultural, educational and socio-economical perspectives and investigate effective communication and promotion strategies.

The expected results are:

- Estimates of the fruit and vegetable consumption in different European countries;
- Information concerning important psychosocial and socio-demographic determinants of fruit and vegetable consumption among school children in different European countries;
- A set of intervention strategies tailored to be appropriate and effective in promoting fruit and vegetable consumption among school children;

- An increased consumption of fruit and vegetables among the participating target group; and
- A set of recommendations for national and international authorities, commercial and professional groups on best-practices for assessment and promotion of fruit and vegetable consumption.

The PROGREENS project is funded up to €700.000 by the Health and Consumer Protection Directorate General (DG SANCO) of the European Commission. It involves twelve partners, among which Freshfel, from eleven countries (Sweden, Iceland, Norway, Germany, Greece, Slovenia, Portugal, Bulgaria,

Finland, the Netherlands and Belgium), and will run until July 2011. During 2009/2010 several conference calls have taken place to coordinate the work among partners. A physical meeting took place in September 2009 in Sweden and a new one is now foreseen during the second World Congress of Public Health Nutrition that will be held in Porto, Portugal, September 23-25. Freshfel has been actively contributing to this project notably during the phase of intervention design and in communicating about the project. More will be done during the dissemination phase. The objective is that the results of the project become as widely known and understood as possible, and by this to spread evidence-based best practice in fruit and vegetable promotion.



EGEA

EGEA is a unique gathering of scientists researching on the health benefits of fresh fruit and vegetables. EGEA is organised by APRIFEL. Over the years, EGEA has become a well listened and authorised body. In 2010, and as it was already the case in 2007, EGEA was organised in Brussels. Freshfel widely supported the organisation of the event on behalf of the fresh produce sector.

In 2007, EGEA was an eye opener for many policy makers in Brussels in the effort and urgency to set up a European School Fruit Scheme. The scheme was indeed launched several months later with an initial budget similar to the one claimed by EGEA. The call for action by the sector and health associations was therefore well received and translated into concrete policy.

On this background, Freshfel coordinated again on the eve of EGEA 2010 in Brussels a policy briefing together with MEP Esther Herranz Garcia of the European Parliament. Based on consumption data and on the concerns of the impact of the economic crisis, urgent actions to stimulate consumption among certain at-risk populations should be undertaken. Reaching the WHO goal of at least 400 gr/day of fruit and vegetables will indeed require a joint approach that includes programmes that target lower socio-economic groups while reinforcing current schemes. This was indeed the main focus of EGEA 2010.

In line with the EGEA 2007 conclusions and the White Paper "A strategy for Europe on nutrition, overweight and obesity- related health issues", the call for EU actions focused on the following policy area:

Reducing social inequalities in fruit and vegetable consumption

It is important that European Institutions support the inclusion of measures that increase the consumption of fruit and vegetables in lower socio-economic groups in current legislation and in the post 2013 Common Agricultural Policy. Policies and instruments under consideration or recently implemented should move towards providing more "public good" by providing better public health outcomes. Two actions need to be considered:

Food aid to Most Deprived Persons Scheme: Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1146/2007 should include fruit and



vegetables as an eligible product category and allocate 100 million € out of the current 500 million € budget specifically for the purchase of fruit and vegetables.

- ✓ Encourage specific low-income population groups to increase fruit and vegetable consumption: The EU should introduce new financial instruments to stimulate and reinforce Member States' programmes such as fruit and vegetable vouchers for targeted population groups (pregnant women, infants, children, etc.). An EU budget of 350 million € should be considered for a successful action.

Increasing access to and availability of fruit and vegetables in schools

The EU School Fruit Scheme (SFS) is a step in the right direction. The SFS is being implemented in 25 out of 27 Member States. However, additional funding and actions must be taken to reinforce the scheme, namely by:

- ✓ Increasing funding to allow daily distribution throughout the school year
- ✓ Reinforcing the accompanying measures both at European and local level
- ✓ Developing clear criteria for the evaluation of the scheme

As proposed by the European Parliament's Busk report, a 500 million € EU budget would allow Member States to effectively increase fruit and vegetable consumption and change long term eating habits among the young.

Improving information on the health benefits of fruit and vegetables and increasing advertising

Within the food market, the fruit and vegetable sector has limited investment capacity for research, innovation, advertising and marketing. The EU should act as a catalyst for improved communication to European citizens on the benefits of eating more fruit and vegetables. Most European citizens are aware of the health benefits of fruit and vegetables, so communication

should focus on changing attitudes and perceptions towards fruit and vegetables, ultimately leading to changes in behaviour particularly in the most vulnerable members of society.

✓ The EU and its Member States can play an important role in improving communication on the necessity of increasing fruit and vegetable consumption by building an ambitious strategy incorporating the effective use of media. Daily messages aimed at increasing fresh fruit and vegetable consumption could be used, such as information on School Fruit Schemes in Member States, best practices across Europe, information on the 5-a-day campaign and innovative actions to improve the availability and accessibility of fruit and vegetables. Actions should target children and low socio-economic status groups which are particularly vulnerable to the advertising of high fat and high sugar foods. This strategy would require building

partnerships with public television networks and advertisers. An EU budget of 100 million € should be considered for successful action.

✓ Information provision and promotion measures for agricultural products: Commission Regulation (EC) No. 501/2008 should extend the eligibility of the fruit and vegetable programme towards vulnerable groups (low-income population groups, etc.). An appropriate budget should be raised accordingly (e.g. by doubling existing resources to reach 24 Million €).

Freshfel will continue to further support the implementation of these policy recommendations as they could help stimulating consumption in particular with target groups identified as the lowest consumers of fruit and vegetables.

WHOLESALE AND FOOD SERVICES

Increasing consumption should not only be reached by rectifying consumption habits of the young or low socio-economic population groups. More needs to be done to increase consumption by adapting accessibility and availability to a changing lifestyle.

In this respect, Freshfel initiated already a few years ago a review of opportunities in the foodservices sector. The foodservices business in Europe is indeed rapidly growing and represents today 25 billion € of business, with the market remaining diversified and fragmented. Freshfel continued in 2009 to offer members a forum for brainstorming on emerging opportunities for the fruit and vegetables sector in the foodservices business and responding to the specific demands of that sector through meetings of the Wholesale, Distribution and Foodservices Division.

Members have within Freshfel the possibility to exchange views on non-competitive best practices, such as logistics, packaging, technologies, responding to requirements of seasonality/local sourcing and product information, providing added value, specific quality requirements regarding size, ripeness, shelf life, etc. Freshfel also provides information for members how to address the challenges of European



legislation, for example with regard to the School Fruit Scheme, EC guidelines for 'Green Public Procurement', etc.

In 2009/2010 Freshfel was also active to intensify the relationship with the World Union of Wholesale Markets (WUWM) through attending a WUWM annual symposium at Rungis International Market, informal meetings with the WUWM-Secretariat to discuss possible areas of cooperation etc. Wholesale markets remain an important area for Freshfel, with issues like promotion, new distribution channels, sustainability and the relationship between producers and wholesalers being on the agenda.

As convenience is becoming more and more important, many issues will need to be on the agenda of this division to continue to look at opportunities for growth and developing the consumption in all the various segments represented by the foodservice sector.



CONCLUSION

This report provides a summary of the main activities conducted by Freshfel during the last twelve months. Most of the issues are evolving and will remain on the agenda in the coming months.

Several issues are becoming increasingly complex and technical. Collectively much progress can be achieved, and with its increased expertise and know-how, Freshfel remains the ideal vehicle for handling the dossiers that can advance the fruit and vegetable sector at European level.

The role of the association will therefore remain of paramount importance in the coming months. Freshfel will more than ever require the full support of all its members, and relies on the unique expertise of the members' representatives in its day-to-day work.

On the basis of this collaboration and despite all the difficulties experienced by the sector in this complex period of financial, economic and employment turmoil, we are convinced that progress can be made to provide the most favourable environment for the sector to take full benefit of all the assets and diversity of fresh fruit and vegetables.



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