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**"The two most important days of your life are the day you were born and the day you find out why" (Mark Twain)**

### Freshfel and Eurostat warn of low fruit and vegetable consumption in Europe

The first alarm was sounded on 16 December by the European fruit and vegetable association of which AILIMPO is a member, FRESHFEL EUROPE. The number, to be honest, is a little shocking: the average consumption of fruit and vegetables in the EU is only around 350 g/capita/day. A few days later, Eurostat, the EU's official statistics agency, reports that **33% of the population over 15 years of age does not eat any fruit or vegetables**. And note that **only 12% of the population meets the target of 5 portions a day**. The report also shows that women eat more fruit and vegetables than men, with 15% of women reaching 5 portions and only 10% of men. A first objective of FRESHFEL is to reach at least the 400 grams per day recommended by the WHO, an objective that we can think is within our reach just by adding a piece of fruit or vegetable to the daily diet of European consumers, and that would give a boost to the EU fresh produce market of no less than 15 million tonnes.

AILIMPO fully supports the message of the Secretary General of FRESHFEL EUROPE, Philippe Binard, who has declared that **despite these figures, the sector has many reasons to be optimistic considering the nutritional and healthy properties of fruit and vegetables**. The fruit and vegetable sector must seize the political and social momentum to stimulate the consumption of fruit and vegetables by 2022, with many legitimate ambitions such as the benefit of the planet, the climate and the health of consumers themselves.

### GOOD HOPES FOR 2022

The beginning of the year invites us to reflect and take stock of what we have worked and experienced in the previous year, to give us a boost of energy, enthusiasm and strength for the next 365 days. Despite the difficulties, geopolitics, COVID, uncertainty... there is room for optimism. As I mentioned in the column on the left, the data on fruit and vegetable consumption clearly indicate that there is an impressive business opportunity, and citrus fruit can play a really interesting role in this scenario of increased consumption. **The map of opportunities is very large in Europe and in opening up markets in more distant destinations**. The COVID has reminded us of the importance of health, combating climate change is a collective responsibility of society but also of individuals, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals set the agenda for politics and business, sustainability is a real demand from consumers, who, by the way, are not satisfied with marketing, they demand data, credible reports and metrics. The citrus sector is ready to provide answers to all these questions, **the wind is blowing from behind**. **Our goal for 2022 is to redefine our purpose as a sector. A task we will tackle immediately at AILIMPO**, because without purpose we walk in the dark, groping, with intuition but without certainty. A hint: the Spanish lemon and grapefruit sector aims to be a sustainable and digital global reference to improve the food and health of consumers while ensuring profitability for entrepreneurs (producers, exporters, industries) who play a key role in absorbing CO2, saving water, generating circular economy and protecting biodiversity, guaranteeing the highest standards of social protection to our workers. The purpose is based on generating a virtuous circle with the participation of the sector, consumers and society. Redefining the sectoral strategy will be fundamental, as will the ability to communicate with consumers so that they are aware of this effort that begins in the field and ends in the supermarket. **Consumers have an almost infinite capacity to transform the world through their purchasing decisions, and by**



**buying lemons and grapefruit produced in Spain they will have the guarantee and evidence that this decision has a positive impact** on their health, on the maintenance of the incredible forest of 15 million trees in Spain, on the more than 25,000 workers in the sector and, in short, on a better society. That is part of the purpose in 2022, will you join us?

