



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**27 October 2020**

## **Freshfel Europe highlights resilience of fruit & vegetable sector despite COVID-19 socio-economic challenges to EU policy-makers in European Parliament Hearing**

**Freshfel Europe General Delegate Philippe Binard highlighted the resilience of the fresh fruit and vegetable sector in the face of many socio-economic challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic this year at a dedicated Public Hearing in the European Parliament yesterday evening. Throughout the pandemic so far, the sector has faced multifaceted socio-economic difficulties such as border closures, panic buying, seasonal worker availability complexities and food service closures. But despite this and without fail, the fruit and vegetable sector has continually adapted to provide high quality fresh produce to European consumers.**

Speaking at the European Parliament's Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development Public Hearing on 'Fruits, vegetables and wine market situation – the impact of the EU measures to face the COVID-19 pandemic' yesterday evening, Freshfel Europe General Delegate Philippe Binard presented the socio-economic challenges for the fruit and vegetable sector created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Binard highlighted that the sector had shown tremendous resilience and taken steps to quickly adapt to the pandemic conditions including responding to panic buying, adapting supply and securing product diversity, adjusting to new consumer requirements, redirecting specific product segments as a result of food service closures and repositioning sales through e-commerce.

Mr. Binard thanked the European Institutions for their initial response in supporting business, however stressed that business continuity should not be taken for granted. Mr. Binard explained that, "*Freshfel Europe's May COVID-19 Impact Assessment\* identified that adjusting to challenges across the supply chain resulted in an estimated added cost for the sector of at least €500 million per month. This excludes loss from the food service stage in the chain from which sales represent 15-25% of the total fruit and vegetable market as well as costs at retail level which were felt by all sectors*".

While consumer value of fruit and vegetables as a key nutritional element of a healthy diet has been boosted by the health pandemic, Mr. Binard warned policy-makers of the new and continued socio-economic challenges already hitting the sector in the current second wave of the pandemic. Mr. Binard outlined that mounting pressure on prices due to the impending economic crisis, continued additional costs in the supply chain, the need to quickly re-direct produce to other market channels due to restrictions on food services, shortages of seasonal workers and maintaining trade opportunities would prevail over the coming months, all in the shadow of Brexit, which will bring its own costs and constraints.

**ENDS**

**Note to the Editors:**

More information about Freshfel Europe's work on COVID-19, including Crisis Management Strategy, priority areas and Impact Assessment is available via the Freshfel Europe website at <https://freshfel.org/covid-19/>.

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, contact the association at [info@freshfel.org](mailto:info@freshfel.org) or visit the association website [www.freshfel.org](http://www.freshfel.org).

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