

28/09/2020

Press Release

Still under distress facing COVID, fruit and vegetable growers concerned that their situation is poorly taken into account within the Green Deal

The European fruit and vegetable sector is expressing strong concerns about its future with the combined effects of the COVID-19 crisis and the announcements made in the Farm-to-Fork Strategy. While the sector is recording ever-increasing production costs and losses for certain products such as tomatoes, vegetables and stone fruits, professionals in the sector are questioning their capacity to thrive with the targets announced by the European Commission.

For the fruit and vegetable growers and cooperatives meeting in the Copa-Cogeca Working Group this week, the situation is bitter. While certain categories of fruit and vegetables witness an increase in prices during the pandemic, growers have not in fact been able to benefit from this price increase, which was necessary for the medium-term economic viability of their farms. These were a result of the increase of production costs due to various restrictions linked to the COVID-19 pandemic.

If there is less media coverage at the moment, major challenges still remain for the sector, mainly due to the lack of access to seasonal workers due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. At the same time, weather conditions have not been favourable, leaving producers with a lack of solutions to control certain pests and diseases and facing irrigation restrictions in key regions.

Against this background, Luc Vanoirbeek, Chairman of the Working Party on Fruit and Vegetables said *“We are already playing with the limits in certain productions like tomatoes, vegetables and stone fruits, it would take little today for the situation to become critical for growers. This is why the announced 50 % target for reducing the use of plant protection products in the Farm to Fork Strategy really worries us. It will generate for sure additional costs. As our margins are already being squeezed very tightly, I don't see how this could be done without an increase in prices of European fruit and vegetables for end consumers. It's a simple fact but a reality that seems to be on the agenda of a few EU key decision makers.”*

Another important point of concern for the sector is the prospect of a no deal with UK. For Luc Vanoirbeek *“ we will be in the front line if the negotiations break down, which is why the European Commission needs to plan crisis management measures in order to avoid a "Broid" effect, as we can fear cumulative effects in the EU.”*

Copa and Cogeca sent a letter ahead of the Special Committee on Agriculture that will take place on Monday 28th September to ask the Commission's proposal on the CAP post 2020 to be

revised in order to both set more realistic obligations and provide greater flexibility when it comes to the operational programmes covering “climatic and environmental actions”. A 20% threshold seems too ambitious and could become too restrictive for producer organisations in the fruit and vegetable sector. Copa and Cogeca also request that producer organisations need to be better supported in their efforts to transition towards more sustainable packaging in order to support the Farm to Fork and the European Green Deal ambitions of carbon neutrality by 2050.

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Download the letter [here](#).

Translations in DE, ES ,FR, IT, PL will soon be available on the Copa-Cogeca website.

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