

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## FRESH PRODUCE SECTOR MEETS IN BRUSSELS TO DISCUSS PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

The fresh produce sector is now more than ever looking at ways to increase fruit & veg consumption in the EU and find alternative export markets for fresh fruit and vegetables. At the Annual General Meeting of the European Fresh Produce Association (Freshfel), that took place in Brussels on 7 October, close to 100 participants debated the sector's options for the future. The meeting sent the clear message that more efforts are necessary from the European institutions and from the fresh produce sector to increase EU consumption and boost access to third country markets, becoming even more urgent to respond to the consequences of the Russian embargoes.

Several renowned speakers presented views on how to manoeuvre the fresh produce sector out of its current situation. Prof. Olivier de Schutter, former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, outlined policy options that could remove the current holdbacks for more promotion of fruit and vegetables. Joeri van den Bergh, author of the book "How Cool Brands Stay Hot. Branding to Generation Y", challenged fruit and vegetable companies to develop more targeted campaigns to reach Generation Y, young people born after 1980. Prof. Jonathan Holslag from the Brussels Institute of Contemporary China Studies (BICCS) outlined the potential that lies in new consumer markets in East Asia but also in the immediate neighbourhood of the European Union.

Freshfel General Delegate Philippe Binard and members of the Freshfel board then presented the latest activities of the European Fresh Produce Association. Freshfel has been very active in the recent past on a number of issues ranging from nutrition and food safety to trade, phytosanitary market access and the plant health reform. A more complete picture of all Freshfel activities can be found in the newly published "Freshfel Activity Report 2014" that can be downloaded from the Freshfel website at [http://www.freshfel.org/docs/2014/Freshfel\\_Activity\\_Report\\_2014.pdf](http://www.freshfel.org/docs/2014/Freshfel_Activity_Report_2014.pdf).

During the General Assembly organised in the frame of this policy event, **Mr Luc Clerx** (Prominent, NL) was elected new President of the Association and **Mr Stephan Weist** (REWE Group, DE) was elected Vice-President.

In the evening, participants held a discussion with three Members of the European Parliament: Giovanni La Via (Chair of the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee), Mairead McGuinness (Vice-President of the Parliament and member of the Agriculture Committee) and Marietje Schaake (Member of the International Trade committee). The discussion helped to raise the deputies' awareness of the main problems faced by the fruit and vegetable sectors and outlined some ways in which the Parliament can help tackle these problems.

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During the meeting, a call was made to the EU to increase efforts at a political level to address the severe consequences for the sector of the Russian crisis and in particular the need to rapidly open new markets. Of particular relevance are the USA, Canada, Japan and Australia which are also included in the Russian embargoes but much less affected than the EU, or countries such as Turkey, Egypt and Israel which are now likely to be the main alternatives suppliers to the Russian market. Most of these countries keep significant barriers in place which restrict market access for EU fresh produce. The European industry urged the authorities to adopt a strong stance regarding the opening of new markets.

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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. 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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