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EU FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SECTOR LAUNCHES TASK FORCE TO COORDINATE PARTICIPATION IN EUROPEAN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION PROJECTS

The European fruit and vegetable sector is ready for the European Innovation Partnerships (EIP) and the new Horizon 2020 policy. These were recently started by the European Commission to stimulate research and innovation to foster productivity and sustainability of the agriculture sector. At a conference in Brussels on 22 January 2014, the three organisations Freshfel, AREFLH and EUFRIN launched a task force that will steer priorities and coordinate the sector's participation in these EU research projects.

As the European Union reshapes its research and Innovation policy, the fruit and vegetable sector joins forces to seize the opportunities provided by the EIP and the Horizon 2020 strategy. At a meeting that brought together more than 100 representatives from the sector, research centres and leading fruit and vegetable producing regions in Europe, Freshfel, AREFLH and EUFRIN launched a Task Force to foster research cooperation and coordinate fresh produce needs and initiatives in this area.

The Task Force puts the sector in a good position to address its forthcoming challenges through a bottom up approach and take the lead to prioritise the needs of the sector. The Task Force is open to other stakeholders such as universities and other partners who could contribute to the projects identified by the sector with their knowledge and expertise.

Research and innovation is crucial to improve the competitiveness of the sector and address today's challenges in areas such as production and supply chain efficiency. Innovation enables the sector to continue providing a diversity of high-quality fruits and vegetables to the consumers. In recent years, the consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables has been under permanent pressure. Research and innovation could contribute significantly to address these various challenges for the benefit of the sector and European consumers.

More precise information about the concept and composition of the task force can be found in the enclosed document.

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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 or visit the association website www.freshfel.org.

AREFLH is the Fruit and Horticultural European Regions Assembly which represents the interest of fruit and vegetable producing regions in France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Belgium. For more information, contact the association at areflh@aquitaine.fr or visit the AREFLH website at www.areflh.org.

The European Fruit Research Institutes Network (EUFRIN) is an organisation of university departments and research institutes that specialise in research, development, and extension on temperate fruit crops. These institutes are based in the European Union, Switzerland and Eastern Europe. For more information, visit the association website www.eufrin.org/.

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