



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**20 May 2021**

## **COVID-19 accelerates global fresh produce trade trends towards a deceleration of volumes & previously growing values**

**On 20 May Freshfel Europe hosted its Annual Trade Meeting online. During the meeting the Freshfel Europe Secretariat provided an evaluation of long and short-term global trade figures for the fresh fruit and vegetables sector with a focus on the European exports, imports and intra-EU trade trends. Freshfel Europe members expressed their views and insights, and debated local and global produce and trade conditions as well as the importance for the fresh produce sector to tackle intra-EU and international trade barriers.**

The analysis of global produce trends showed a positive development for both European and international trade of fresh produce with global fresh produce trade reaching €100 billion in 2020, as highlighted by Nelli Hajdu, Freshfel Europe Director for Trade & Business Development. In turn, global volumes of fruit and vegetable trade have followed a downward trend since the peak was reached in 2018, down to 87 million tonnes of global trade in 2020, a tendency explained as an overall deceleration in growth of booming categories, which has now been accentuated by COVID-19 pandemic disruptions in the past season.

Looking at Europe, fresh fruit and vegetables intra-EU trade volumes decreased by 11% compared to 2019 to 29.2 million tonnes, with prices reaching a peak of €1.29 per kilo as a result of strong consumer demand during the crisis. In turn, EU exports outside of the Single Market went down to record low levels to 3.9 million tonnes, although value continued increasing up to €4.6 billion. *“Demand continued to be strong in key non-EU European markets and the partial opening of the Mexican market for some EU produce has opened new possibilities, although export diversification remains low with volumes unable to recover pre-Russian embargo figures”*, noted Freshfel Europe Trade & Market Access Director Natalia Santos. *“Moreover, several booming markets for EU exports showed a decreased demand in 2020 compared to 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as India (-58%), China (-65%), Qatar (-24%), Morocco (-14%) and Egypt (-30%)”* Ms. Santos added. In terms of imports into the EU27, volumes showed a reduction of 5% compared to the previous year down to 12.8 million tonnes, with value continuously growing to €14.8 billion (+6%). Most EU suppliers kept growing in the EU market despite the 2020 downturn with India (+45%), Guatemala (+37%), Egypt (+68%), and Peru (+66%) showing the greatest growth rates for 2015-2020.

In the Annual Trade Meeting the Freshfel Europe Secretariat also evaluated the future of fresh produce trade in light of European policy developments, notably the European Green Deal, Farm to Fork Strategy and the recently adopted EU Trade Policy Review. Freshfel Europe General Delegate Philippe Binard noted that, *“It will be essential for the fresh fruit and vegetables sector to raise its voice in the coming years about the importance of boosting fresh produce consumption and trade to attain the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the European Green Deal’s objectives, especially in relation to a move towards more sustainable, plant-based diets”*. Mr. Binard added that, *“The sector has a responsibility to continue positioning itself in the circular economy debate and to stress the importance of both local and European production and international supply to secure year-round, diverse and sustainable fresh produce availability for European consumers”*.

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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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