

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Freshfel Europe urges the sector to act now to fill the gap of consumption with minimum health recommendation

“Reaching the recommended 400 gr per day by adding one piece of fruit or vegetables in the daily diet of European consumers would boost European market size by 15 Mio T and be beneficial for the environment, the climate, and the health of European citizens”

On the occasion of the release of the Freshfel Europe Consumption Monitor on 16 December 2021, experts from across Europe and the supply chain reviewed the latest consumption trends in 12 EU Member States plus the UK. The Consumption Monitor, which is based on figures up to 2019, was complemented by an analysis of the consumption trends in 2020 and 2021, which are characterized by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the Consumption Monitor figures indicate that fruit and vegetable consumption decreased to 349,19 gr/capita/day, Freshfel Europe urges the sector to build on the environmental, climate, and health benefits of a plant-based diet throughout 2022, with the goal of 400 gr/capita/day or half of the plate each meal.

Freshfel Europe has released today its annual Consumption Monitor and reviewed with its members the latest state of play of consumption trends, in particular after two atypical years marked by the consequences of the COVID-19. The pandemic has significantly changed the lifestyle of Europeans, in addition to increasing their sympathy towards environmental causes and climate change. The latest figures from the Freshfel Europe Consumption Monitor indicate that, in 2019, EU citizens consumed 349,19 gr/capita/day. Stephan Weist, President of Freshfel Europe declared: *“The fresh produce sector has many reasons to be optimistic considering the assets of fresh fruit and vegetables. We also need to be ambitious. Every additional 10 gr consumed by a European per day, would lead at the end of the year a market size boosted by 1,8 Mio T. Adding one piece of fruit or vegetables and raising the average consumption over the 400 gr recommended by the WHO would mean the need to supply almost 15 Mio T more per year”*

The meeting led to an agreement on the benefit to “Act Now”, which was also one of the mottos of the International Year of Fruits and Vegetables 2021. The fruit and vegetable sector should capitalize on the momentum built by the consensus between political leaders, consumers, and NGOs regarding the benefits of increasing the consumption of fruit and vegetables for the planet, the climate, and the health of the consumers themselves. This is also reflected by the current priorities on the European agenda, such as the Green Deal, the Farm to Fork Strategy, the FIT55 target, the Circular Economy Action Plan, as well as Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan.

The Freshfel Europe Workshop provided an in-depth review of the consumption situation from different angles and perspectives. The meeting was inspired by the results of a pan-European study on the evolution of consumers profile across 11 Member States, which addressed the age gap and



gender gap, adjustments the business model in the extraordinary time of the COVID-19 pandemic, understanding the paradox between local demand on online development, and the perception of consumers of sustainability buzzwords. Research shows there is a clear segment interested in premium quality products also among people with lower income, with flavour and freshness being the determining factors.

The Freshfel Europe experts also reviewed the latest trends in 12 EU Member States as well as in the UK. While each market has its own specifics, it was apparent that there are many commonalities regarding the expectations of European consumers. The most efficient strategy to boost consumption would focus on consumers with less prevalence towards healthier food rather than preaching to the converted. The youngest generation, including in particular the millennials should be in the spotlight of priorities. Setting consumption targets such as 5 a day like campaign, eating in colour, having half of the plate with fruit and vegetables are important concept to help consumers to take up the challenge of eating at least 400 gr per day. Philippe Binard, General Delegate of Freshfel Europe stated: *“The findings from local studies agree that consumers across Europe care for taste, freshness, vitamins and minerals, added value, convenience and seasonality. Aspiration towards sustainability is only indirectly transpiring from their food choice while looking for local or organic products.”* Despite concerns about the unstable economic situation, the shift of purchasing power based on the evolution of population disposable net income between the East and the West of the EU, and the increasing inflation, the sector will have to position itself in the food assortment to convince new consumers to buy more fruit and vegetables, in particular those prepared to pay more for higher quality and trust in the product. Philippe Binard added: *“Moving towards higher prices and better retribution for high quality and value for fruit and vegetables could help the sector, which operates with tight margins to address the latest price increase across the supply chain. In recent months, costs are rising sharply in particular for production input, road and sea logistics, packaging, energy, wages while consumers prices are almost stable. One option to explore to alleviate the pressure would be to move across Europe to VAT exemption, considering fruit and vegetables as public goods, given their assets to address the current environmental, climate and health societal challenges.”*

Freshfel Europe members and EuroCommerce also reviewed during the Workshop the initiatives undertaken by retailers in their pledge to “act sustainably” and develop multiple initiatives in their stores to move consumers towards a plant-based, healthier diet. The most noticeable initiatives of retailers include rethinking supermarket choices and offers, improving access to fresh produce and their quality, developing loyalty programmes for healthier food choices, encouraging fruit and vegetable consumption with campaigns, such as “Peas Please” and other initiatives to enhance the consumption of “super foods”, providing educational and informative material for consumers to promote nutritional and healthy diets, acting as a lifestyle coach by advising customers through food apps and actions to reduce food waste. Much could be gain for the supply chain to work together to better position of fresh produce in the shelf assortment of retailers.

As one of the driving factors of the COVID-19 pandemic was the development of online sales, the Freshfel Europe members also reviewed the latest trends for online shopping. Nelli Hajdu, Director for business development at Freshfel Europe stated: *“This segment remains very fragmented and with very different penetration rates across the EU. Different models are being developed across*



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Europe, from “Click & Collect” to home delivery, as well as other concepts including online purchases from growers or home delivery of entire meal packs. The development of online sales for convenience and lifestyle, however, further demonstrates that consumers are ready to pay more for services like home delivery as several studies confirmed that the online segment is growing even if they report the highest price per kg.” It will be important to position the fresh produce in this growing segment to secure that it will not be an obstacle but rather an opportunity for the European fruit and vegetable sector, like it is now witnessed in some markets in Asia, in particular China, which is experiencing an incredible growth of fresh produce sales through online portals.

Under this state of play of consumption as analyses by Freshfel Europe, the sector has a busy agenda ahead for 2022. Freshfel Europe will continue advising, guiding, and coordinating the European sector’s perspective from a supply chain approach. Philippe Binard concluded: *“Freshfel Europe will work actively in 2022 towards new opportunities for the sector, resulting not only following a Farm to Fork strategy but also and importantly from a Fork to Farm perspective. The workshop demonstrates the importance to meet the diversity of consumers’ expectations and supply products according to their preferences always for high quality, great taste and texture as well as freshness and convenience. Opportunities resulting from sustainability expectation will also have to be met but kept sustainable for the sector in the current prices increase spiral to allow the sector to fully deliver long term on new expectations and growth”.*

Boosting consumption will ultimately be a win-win-win situation, for the planet, the health of consumers, and the sector, with the objective of boosting consumption well over the 400 g, leading to a market size growth by almost 20%, which represent close 15 mio T.

The Freshfel Consumption Monitor is available for Freshfel members but can be purchased by non-members at a cost of 2.000 €. For all queries, please contact Gil Kaufman g.kaufman@freshfel.org

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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, please contact info@freshfel.org.



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