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FRESHFEL WELCOMES EU GUIDELINES ON QUATERNARY AMMONIUM COMPOUNDS

Freshfel Europe, the European Fresh Produce Association, welcomes the adoption of EU guidelines to deal with the presence of Benzalkonium Chloride (BAC) in foodstuffs which will apply as from 26 July. Similar guidelines had been adopted for another quaternary ammonium compound, Didecyl Dimethyl Ammonium Chloride (DDAC), by the EU Standing Committee of the Food Chain and Animal Health on 13 July. For both substances a temporary safety level of 0,5 ppm applies, pending further investigations by authorities and industry into the various contamination sources. Direct applications on fresh produce (i.e. pesticide use) remain forbidden and are not covered by these guidelines.

In recent weeks an issue regarding the presence of quaternary ammonium compounds (QAC) on fruit and vegetables had emerged and led to considerable disruptions in the trade. Labs detected DDAC and BAC in various foodstuffs, including fruit and vegetables. These compounds are mainly used as biocides (disinfectant/cleaning agent) but in some countries also as pesticides (foliar spray, dip application), in certain cases they are also used as co-formulants in pesticides and biostimulants.

Whereas the strict regulatory status regarding QAC residues was clear (0,01 ppm), the extensive presence of unintentional residues on a variety of foodstuffs required an urgent temporary solution pending further investigations. Frederic Rosseneu, Director for Quality and Sustainability at Freshfel Europe, commented: *"The swift and responsible attitude from the fresh produce supply chain, investigating all possible contamination routes and providing analysis results, has contributed to a fast response from the EU Commission and Member States. The adopted guidelines provide the industry with enough time to further investigate the exact causes of cross-contamination and discontinue any non-essential uses throughout the supply chain."*

In the coming months Freshfel will coordinate further efforts to provide the authorities all necessary elements to establish a long-term solution. To this end, a workshop will also be organised in Brussels on Tuesday 2 October (pm). The workshop will feature the various aspects of this incident and also look at ways to anticipate such emerging issues in the future. More information is available from the Freshfel secretariat.

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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.



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