

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FRESHFEL QUESTIONS APPROPRIATENESS & TIMING OF THE CAP SCHOOL SCHEMES CONSULTATION

Freshfel Europe has sent a letter to Commissioner for Agriculture, Dacian Cioloş, questioning the appropriateness and the timing for the Commission consultation on the CAP schemes providing agricultural products to school children, open to consultation until 22 April. The association expresses serious concerns in regard to the policy options envisaged in the consultation, which it finds would be extremely detrimental for the School Fruit Scheme (SFS).

Freshfel Europe – together with Aprifel, AREFLH and EPHA (the European Public Health Alliance) – has addressed a letter to Commissioner Cioloş on the public consultation on CAP schemes for milk and fruit distribution in schools which outlines several options now open for debate. The organisation starts by questioning the timing of the consultation, and suggests postponing it until the SFS improvements under the CAP reform (increased budget to enhance accompanying measures and raise the level of the co-financing) are introduced, consolidated and monitored, and the planned evaluation for the School Milk Scheme (due after the summer) is finalised.

Saida Barnat, Scientific Director of Aprifel, and member of the EU SFS Group of experts, commented: *“Considering a greater integration of these schemes or even widening further the scope of the products would hinder any consensual communication efforts and will put into question the high level of health protection to children, one of the primary objectives of the SFS.”* Quoting the vice-president of the group (Margherita Caroli MD PhD in paediatric nutrition), she continued *“no other agricultural product besides fruit and vegetables, is scientifically justified for further promotion to children at schools.”*

The letter also highlights the specificity of the products and the logistics of the two schemes, which widely differ and for which a merger would be to the detriment of the need for frequent distribution of perishable products. The letter further observes that while all the objectives mentioned in the consultation paper (i.e. the disconnection of consumers and children with agriculture, the increased globalisation and modern way of life, the consumption of highly processed foods high in sugar and fat, the fight against obesity and overweight, the help to small scale farmers by shortening the marketing chains, granting farmers a bigger share of the price to the consumer, the climate change mitigation, the seasonality, the waste, etc.) are laudable objectives, they should not be part of a school programme, and can be reached through other CAP instruments. Diluting SFS messages would weaken the scheme and the efficiency of accompanying measures. Moreover, monitoring and controls would become extremely complex.

EUROPEAN FRESH PRODUCE ASSOCIATION A.I.S.B.L

Rue de Trèves 49-51, bte 8 - 1040 Brussels - Belgium Tel: +32 (0)2 777 15 80 Fax: +32 (0)2 777 15 81
e-mail: info@freshfel.org - www.freshfel.org - www.freshquality.eu - www.freshcongress.com –

www.enjoyfresh.eu – www.kidsenjoyfresh.eu

Philippe Binard, General Delegate of Freshfel, stated: *“In a time of budgetary constraints, it is important to have well-structured, well-funded and efficient policies, and we urge the Commission to first further improve the SFS without jeopardising its achievements so far.”* He concluded: *“When launched, the SFS was built on the basis of increasing fruit and vegetables consumption together with a clear health objective. Its merits are more than ever valid today and should not be undermined!”*

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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