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FRESHFEL EUROPE RELEASES UPDATED FRESH PRODUCE EXPORT DATA

Freshfel Europe has consolidated the EU fruit and vegetable export trade data up to the end of 2009 based on Eurostat data. While the 2009 export volume of fruit jumped by 11,9% to reach 2.843.010 T, the value of fruit exports to third countries decreased sharply by 7,24% compared to the previous year. The 2009 export volume and value of vegetables have both declined significantly, by 7,68% and 12,39% respectively.

Exports of fresh fruit from the EU-27 to third countries in 2009 reached a peak level of 2.843.010 T corresponding to an increase of 11,91% against the volume of 2008, and also means an increase of 21,18% when compared to the average of the previous five years. At the same time, the value of exported fresh fruit decreased by 7,2%, and was worth some 1.9 billion Euro. *“Combining these two figures, one should have a careful reading of the growth in volume given the lower returned value. EU exporters have remained handicapped by the high value of the Euro on the external market as well as the lack of support mechanisms, such as export credit schemes and export refunds that the EU dismantled with the latest CMO reform”,* stated Philippe Binard, General Delegate of Freshfel Europe. *“Looking at the value per kg exported, it has decreased by 0,15 cts/kg on average for fruit from 0,84 € cts/kg to 0,69 €cts/kg. This is an alarming situation”,* he added.

With regard to fruit exports, Russia remained by far the largest export market accounting for 38% of the overall exported volume, followed by other neighbouring countries of the EU such as the Ukraine (12,8%), Switzerland (10,2%) and Norway (6,4%). Looking at the different fruit categories, apples remain by far the most exported fruit in 2009 with more than 1.1 Mln T, with the volume growing by 26% between 2008 and 2009. Oranges are ranked second with 240.935 T exported, followed closely by pears. Philippe Binard commented: *“While the exported volume remained steady mainly due to the demand on the Russian market for fruit, one should also look at the breakdown of the global EU volume. Indeed, some important variations occurred among the Member States and by products. The growth in 2009 was mainly driven by the strong development of Polish apples to the Russian market which has hidden the decline experienced by some other traditional exporting Member States.”*

Contrary to the increase of the fruit category, exports of vegetables to third countries witnessed a considerable decrease in 2009 by 7,68% in volume and by 12,39% in value from 2008. However, comparing the data from 2009 with the average of the previous five years, the figures suggest a substantial growth by volume (up by 12,72%) and value (up by 9,65%). The main trading partner of the EU for vegetable exports in 2009 was again Russia, accounting for 28,7% of the overall volume, followed by Switzerland (10,6%), Senegal (8,7%) and Norway (6,2%). The most exported vegetables were onions (679.973 T), tomatoes and sweet peppers.

Willem Baljeu, Chairman of the Freshfel Export Division, concluded: *“Russia is the leading destination for EU fresh produce. EU exporters should however continue diversifying their markets and open new markets, particularly in Asia. Today China and India account for less than 5.000 T of EU exports, when they represent one third of the world population and two of the fastest growing markets. More efforts need still to be undertaken at EU level to move towards greater reciprocity in trade, to tackle technical barriers to trade such SPS measures, and also look at some other important aspects such as competitiveness and promotion.”*

**Summary of export variations for fruit and vegetables 2009 to 2008
and in perspective to the average of the previous 5 years:**

	Fruit	Vegetables
Volume var 08/09	11,91%	-7,68%
Volume var ø 04-08/09	21,18%	12,72%
Value var 08/09	-7,24%	-12,39%
Value var ø 04-08/09	18,54%	9,65%

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Note to the Editors: Freshfel Europe is the European Fresh Produce Association, representing the interests of importers, exporters, wholesalers and distributors, and retailers of fresh fruits and vegetables 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.