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For immediate release

UNDERSTANDING PRICE FLUCTUATIONS OF FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLES HELPS CONSUMERS IN QUALIFIED SHOPPING DECISIONS

Fluctuating consumer prices of fresh fruit and vegetables are reflecting many factors, which are too often not known or understood by the public. However, they should always be seen by consumers in perspective of a series of factors. Knowledge, education and experience are needed steps to enable consumers to make qualified purchasing decisions and to value fresh produce accordingly.

Consumers are used to have a large diversity of fresh produce available all year round. However, a number of factors affecting either offer or demand might interfere and affect the price of fresh produce at retail level. Price variations might consequently astonish shoppers as they are not familiar with the price formation of fresh produce. Consumer surveys confirm that without the needed knowledge and experience they are wondering about the swings in retail prices, which they finally struggle to put into perspective. Philippe Binard, General Delegate of Freshfel, stated: *"This is indeed not a simple undertaking for consumers and education and knowledge are needed in this respect, as prices reflect a huge variety of different elements. There exists a natural lack of homogeneity of the price with fluctuations throughout the year, countries, final outlets etc. It is not only the market or the consumer demand, but aspects such as weather, seasonality, and purchase location, the cost of energy as well as the quality, origin, packaging, brands and many other factors that all influence the final price."*

Starting at the production level climate contingencies, like frost, heat, rain, drought, etc. affect the production in terms of volume as in terms of quality and availability. There may be also production contingencies due to plagues or pests. The price of fresh produce is also influenced by the time of the purchase, as products outside or at the beginning/end of the season might be more expensive than in the middle of it. Market elements such as differences in supply between regions and/or countries, shortages, abundant supplies or temporary delays and the interdependencies among product categories all influence the final price.

At the demand level, the price of fresh fruit and vegetables is also influenced by many factors: variety, size, packaging, brand, organoleptic quality or the maturity of the product (ready to eat, etc.), demand for specific growing practices such as organic or fair trade, promotion activities, etc. All these elements are influencing the price. Furthermore, logistical constraints or the place of purchase (supermarket, hard-discount, grocery store) also exert an influence on the final price. Finally, one should not forget the overall economic situation and purchasing power, the demand for competing products, changes in consumer demands and so on.

Philippe Binard concludes: *"Consumers tend to point their fingers at the disadvantages of price fluctuations. However, these variations reflect a basic reality for a product that stays fresh and*

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perishable. Fresh fruits and vegetables remain "cheap" compared to other competing products and consumers will always be able to find on the market fruits and vegetables at all prices, enabling them to adapt their purchases according to their means to consume at least 400g of fruit and vegetables a day."

ENDS

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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