



FPC PRESS RELEASE

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SEASONAL IS GLOBAL - BE REASONABLE ABOUT 'SEASONABLE'

Enjoy your fruit and vegetables in season, but don't limit consumer choice, says the Fresh Produce Consortium. The 'Eat Seasonably' campaign is well intentioned in its aim to encourage people to enjoy the delights of fresh produce in their prime, but there is no need to restrict people's diet to what's only grown in the limited UK season when good quality seasonal fresh produce is available throughout the year.

"We welcome this campaign's focus on eating more fresh fruit and vegetables," said Nigel Jenney, Chief Executive of the Fresh Produce Consortium, "but we should not look to restrict consumers' choice and deprive the nation of some of its favourite fruit and vegetables at certain times of the year by implying that produce grown indoors, imported or stored may not as enjoyable or as responsible towards the environment."

The 'Eat Seasonably' calendar imposes ridiculous restrictions on key indigenous staples of the UK diet, for example, stating that:

- main crop potatoes are only at their seasonal best from October to December.

Given the success story of UK growers to be almost self-sufficient, this is certainly bad news for new potatoes and even for 'national chip week' which takes place every February.

- Cox apples can only be enjoyed in their prime during October, and Bramley apples between July and September.

If you follow this calendar you would have to gorge on Cox just in the month of October, which goes against this variety's 150-year strong reputation as 'the Christmas apple'. Most Bramleys are harvested in September for processing into traditional apple pie and enjoyed throughout the year. Many apple varieties, including Bramleys, benefit from storage after harvest to mature and bring out their best flavour.

Limiting the market for fresh produce to this 'Eat Seasonably' calendar would simply make production unviable from a grower's perspective and undermine consumers' interest in fresh produce, leading them towards greater consumption of highly processed foods.

The consumption of fruit and vegetables accounts for only 2.5 per cent of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions in total. Meat production is responsible for 8 per cent of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions, more than three times that of fresh produce. According to a report on food miles and food choices 'dietary shift can be a more effective means of lowering an average household's food-related climate footprint than 'buying local'.

"If the 'Eat Seasonably' campaign really wishes to make a significant difference to the environmental impact of our diet on our environment then it should encourage people to reduce their meat consumption," said Nigel Jenney. "It would have been just as easy to encourage consumers to be vegetarians one day a week."

Complimenting indigenous production, around 60% of fruit and vegetables are imported into the UK, providing us with produce outside of the UK season as well as varieties which simply cannot be grown in the UK due to our climate. The fresh produce sector has worked to deliver safe affordable quality produce which is available all year round.

Defra recognises the benefits of imported produce in its definition of what is 'locally in season': 'Food that is outdoor grown or produced during the natural growing/production period for the country or region where it is produced. It need not necessarily be consumed locally to where it is grown. This applies to seasonal food produced both in the UK and overseas'.

According to Defra's own research some imported fruit and vegetables are grown in less greenhouse gas intensive ways than the same products in the UK, with savings from greater efficiency outweighing the negative impacts of additional transport.

"We need to encourage the UK consumer to eat 5-day and they need a wide variety of fresh produce regardless of origin to achieve this. With rising levels of obesity and the UK consumer eating on average only 2.5 servings of fruit and vegetables a day we face a difficult challenge in terms of our nation's health. We should not be doing anything that limits choice in the face of this significant issue," added Nigel Jenney.

Ends

Notes for editors:

1. The Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC) is the UK's fresh produce trade association and is based in Peterborough. The FPC has represented the fresh produce sector for many years and is recognised across the UK and EU as the voice of the industry.
2. Extensive membership covers the complete spectrum of industry businesses including growers, importers, wholesalers, retailers, distributors, processors, packers, food service companies and other allied organisations.
3. Eat in Colour campaign www.eatincolour.com

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