



FPC PRESS RELEASE

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THANKS FOR LISTENING TO OUR CONCERNS, SAYS FPC - GOVERNMENT TAKES ON BOARD INDUSTRY'S VIEWS ON NEW MARKETING STANDARDS

The Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC) has welcomed guidance published by HMI on the implementation of the new Marketing Standards which come into force on 1 July. Following strenuous lobbying by FPC, HMI has confirmed that General Marketing Standard (GMS) products will not have to be entered onto the PEACH system, which will save the fresh produce industry significant time and costs estimated at £250,000 every year.

"The EU Marketing Standards were originally proposed with the aim of introducing simplification of regulation, yet at one point we were looking at the likelihood of having to enter around 400 new products onto PEACH, which would have placed a considerable burden on the industry. We rejected this proposal but provided alternative suggestions in response to the consultation and we are delighted that the UK Government has listened and responded favourably to avoid additional cost pressures," said Nigel Jenney, Chief Executive of FPC. "Many small to medium sized businesses would have faced a mass of additional bureaucracy as well having to deal with the current economic pressures. It is imperative that the UK market remains attractive to growers from around the world."

PEACH applications will have to be made for the ten products covered under Specific Marketing Standards (SMS) and for products that require phyto-sanitary certificates, such as aubergines, notified to Fera through the PEACH system.

FPC is pleased that its concerns have been recognised regarding the practicalities of advising the consumer of the country of origin of produce at the point of sale when purchasing online

and other distance contracts. Defra has agreed that: 'it will be acceptable, within reason, to list a number of countries of origin for a specific product if that product is regularly supplied from several countries and there is no guarantee at the time the order is made from which country it will actually be from on delivery. This is providing that when the goods are delivered the consumer is advised of the actual country of origin via for example a deliver note, and at this point the consumer has the right to refuse the goods at no cost to themselves.'

FPC is still calling for greater clarity before the completion of HMI's 'advisory period' (1 October 2009) on arrangements for checking non-conformity of GMS produce, details for importers on joining the Approved Trade Status Scheme, and the potential application of UN-ECE standards.

"We want to ensure that any requirements to hold and check GMS products will be carried out on a risk-based approach, as a last resort, following existing intelligence held by HMI regarding the individual trader, the actual product and its country of origin. The ALV pilot currently underway to align PEACH and CHIEF systems will assist this process but it needs to be fully functional before it is rolled out. It's vital that a decision is made and communicated to the industry well before its implementation," said Nigel Jenney.

"We are delighted that Defra has agreed to extend the Approved Trade Status Scheme (ATS) to importers who meet the requirements. We are keen that our members can see the details of the scheme as soon as possible as this is an important step forward to assist competent professional traders to have fast and uninterrupted access to their goods," added Nigel Jenney. "There are areas of difference with regard to established criteria for growers, and we seek clarification that these have been taken into account."

A derogation from the ten Specific Marketing Standards is available for products presented for retail sale to consumers for their personal use and specifically labelled as intended for home processing (but not industrial processing), but these products must still meet the GMS. Consignments packed and distributed within the supply chain must be labelled as 'intended for home processing'.

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 recognized 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. Around 60 per cent of fruit and vegetables are imported into the UK, providing us with produce outside the UK season as well as varieties which simply cannot be grown in the UK. Imports of fruit in 2007 were 3.5 million tonnes, and vegetable imports were 1.8 million tonnes.
4. The ten products covered under the Specific Marketing Standards are: apples, citrus fruit, kiwifruit, lettuce (including curled and broad leaved endives), peaches/nectarines, pears, strawberries, sweet peppers, table grapes and tomatoes.
5. For more information on the implementation of the EU Marketing Standards visit:
www.rpa.gov.uk

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