



FPC PRESS RELEASE

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FPC ASKS EU TO LISTEN TO CONSUMERS AND GIVE CLARITY OVER FUTURE OF HORTICULTURE

Concerns are mounting that the horticulture industry faces months, if not years, of uncertainty about the impact of the European regulation to remove key products which are vital for controlling pests, weeds and diseases.

The ability of European horticulture to supply good quality affordable produce in a safe sustainable manner will be jeopardised without a full impact assessment, including the wider impact on food supply, says the Fresh Produce Consortium.

“The lack of detail from the European Commission and clarity regarding definitions of criteria makes it very difficult for the fresh produce sector to assess fully the implications of this regulation. This has led to speculation, second guessing, and even talk of unofficial ‘blacklists’ to ban certain active substances. This speculation is neither useful nor constructive as these substances have been through rigorous testing and approval. We are grateful for the evaluation by the Pesticides Safety Directorate in the UK, and work is progressing to interpret more fully the implications of the regulation which will be most helpful to the industry. However, the European Commission must resolve this uncertainty by putting in place a full impact assessment and providing information of the impact on individual crops,” said Nigel Jenney, Chief Executive of the Fresh Produce Consortium.

“The European Commission appears to base its livelihood on indecision and narrow thinking, but it cannot impose this on the fresh produce industry. We need hard and fast

information upon which to make long-term business decisions to ensure that we can continue to provide safe, affordable fresh produce.”

Growers already have a limited range of products to protect horticultural crops, and in some instances there will be no viable alternatives for treating common pests which reduce yields and damage fresh produce. It may become uneconomic to grow some crops such as sprouts and carrots, and lower yields will mean hard-pressed consumers will have to pay higher prices for their fruit and vegetables, including apples, pears, raspberries, leeks, peas and beans.

In a recent survey³ by the Food Standards Agency UK consumers indicated that they are more concerned about rising food prices than about pesticides in food. In fact, concerns about pesticides have decreased over time and are now at their lowest level since tracking began in 2001.

“The European Parliament should prioritise its efforts to tackle the significant challenges of feeding an increasing world population, competing pressures on agricultural land and the impact of climate change,” said Nigel Jenney. “With rising obesity levels across Europe we must encourage more people to eat fresh fruit and vegetables and ensure that the industry can continue to provide a sustainable supply of fresh produce.”

“The horticulture industry already leads in the adoption of integrated pest management systems and we will continue to press the UK Government and others to ensure that the industry has the necessary tools to provide a sustainable supply of fresh produce,” added Nigel Jenney.

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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. Food Standards Agency’s latest quarterly ‘public tracker’ survey monitors changes in consumer attitudes regarding key food issues.
For details visit: <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/trackersurvey1208.pdf>