



FPC PRESS RELEASE

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FPC CALLS FOR SWIFTER ACTION TO REMOVE UNNECESSARY CONTROLS ON BANANA IMPORTS

The Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC) is calling on the Food Standards Agency and the European Commission to lift with immediate effect the unnecessary checks on imports of bananas from the Dominican Republic. The European Commission recently reviewed Annex I listing of products under EC Regulation 669/2009 and agreed to de-list bananas from 1 October 2010.

"After extensive lobbying by FPC we are delighted that the Commission has seen sense to remove the ridiculous controls on bananas from the Dominican Republic which has cost five UK importers around £50,000 since January 2010. However, the controls must be removed now to avoid these same companies facing a further £30,000 in costs over the next four months," said Nigel Jenney, Chief Executive of the Fresh Produce Consortium. "The Commission has agreed with what we have been telling them all along, that pesticide residues, if any, in bananas are not posing a risk to UK consumers. It's unacceptable that the industry has to incur even more costs and delays when the Commission already confirms that these products are safe to eat."

FPC has raised concerns with the Food Standards Agency and the European Commission regarding the inclusion from October 2010 of other products to the Annex I listing, namely: Egyptian oranges, peaches, pomegranates, strawberries and green beans; curry leaves from India; and coriander leaves, basil and mint from Thailand.

The UK is a major importer of these Egyptian products, for example, accounting for 40% of EU imports of oranges from Egypt in 2008, and the regulation will impact on many importing companies.

“We are extremely concerned about the impact of these additional checks on the capacity of both ports and Port Health Authorities to cope with the required number of checks. It is likely that some will not have sufficient resource or storage facilities to cope with such high volumes coming from Egypt,” added Nigel Jenney.

“This poorly thought out Regulation fails to meet standards for effective, risk-based and proportionate regulation,” said Nigel Jenney. “Increased checks, delays in clearance, additional storage costs, damage and loss of products and their disposal are devastating many importers and suppliers of highly perishable products. The situation is likely to worsen in October unless the authorities allow the application of the Assured Trader status and reduce checks on reputable traders.”

FPC is lobbying for the urgent application of the Assured Trader Scheme in the context of this Regulation which would permit Port Health Authorities to reduce checks on reputable traders already meeting high standards. Currently there is no recognition of the fact that highly reputable companies have made considerable investment in securing accreditation from Globalgap and others, with independently verified records of pesticide monitoring.

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. **Egyptian produce**
The proposal to introduce checks on oranges, peaches, pomegranates, strawberries, and green beans from Egypt will impact significantly on a larger number of UK companies, with high volumes of these products being imported to the UK.

Product	UK % of EU imports (Eurostat 2008)	Volumes (tonnes)
Oranges	40.5	44,612.3
Peaches	35.8	535.5
Strawberries	21.7	2,052.0
Pomegranates	13.8	580.2
Green beans	20.4	4,343.2