



FPC PRESS RELEASE

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ALV PROVES A WINNER FOR IMPORTERS

Simplified procedures for importing fresh produce and cut flowers are proving an immediate winner for importers and agents with the Automatic Licence Verification (ALV) system coming into force on Tuesday 16 February 2010 and replacing the old customs clearance process.

"FPC has worked for a long time to have a streamlined process which is estimated to save the industry around £1 million each year," commented Nigel Jenney, Chief Executive of the Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC). "We are delighted that all importers and agents can enjoy now the benefits of significant reductions in time taken to clear containers subject to HMI or PHSI control."

ALV provides an electronic link between the Fera/RPA 'Peach' system and the HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) 'CHIEF' system³. Consignment release decisions from Horticultural Marketing Inspectorate (HMI) and Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate (PHSI) Inspectors are transmitted electronically and in real time, directly into CHIEF, removing the need for agents or importers to send Quarantine Release Certificates (QRCs) or Conformity Certificates to the HMRC National Clearance Hub at Salford. This real-time update directly into CHIEF results in the customs clearance times of containers which are subject to HMI or PHSI control being reduced from two hours to 10-15 minutes, once the HMI or PHSI inspection decision has been made.

Close liaison between the Fera team during the pilot project and vital feedback by FPC members and others helped to ensure a fully workable system available to all traders.

Mike Parr of Perishable Movements Ltd commented: "Thanks to FPC's instigation we took part in the pilot and we have already seen the benefits of faster clearance times. It's great to have a trade association which works hard to secure efficiencies and savings such as these on behalf of its members."

Another benefit of the new system is swifter direct electronic communication to traders TO alert them about any service disruptions. Traders can register to receive a free PEACH/ALV alert service via email or for a SMS message, at 7p per message. Prior to ALV the only means of advising the trade of planned or unplanned disruptions was via a note on the PEACH Home Page or via Inspectors.

"FPC will continue to challenge the UK Government to remove any unnecessary burdens from companies importing fresh produce to the UK, and to ensure that the UK is a destination of choice, with fast and effective importation controls to allow highly perishable fresh produce and cut flowers to be enjoyed by the nation," added Nigel Jenney.

For information on ALV visit:

<http://www.fera.defra.gov.uk/plants/plantHealth/imports/alvs.cfm>

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. The ALV process covers goods, controlled by HMI (Horticultural Marketing Inspectorate) or PHSI (Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate) imported into England and Wales from third countries outside the European Union and indirect imports of controlled goods sourced from third countries that enter the EU via another member state prior to onward movement to England or Wales to their final destination in the UK.

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