



# FPC PRESS RELEASE

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## **FPC to scrutinise proposals to increase plant health import inspection charges**

Proposals to increase the charges for plant health import inspections will be scrutinised closely says the Fresh Produce Consortium. The Food and Environment Research Agency has announced a consultation on the increased charges to reflect changes in the sterling/Euro exchange rate.

The charges relate to products which require a phytosanitary certificate, and include documentary, identity and plant health checks.

“FPC helped to negotiate temporary standard charges to allow the trade time to adapt to the additional cost when statutory charges were introduced in 2005,” said Nigel Jenney, Chief Executive of the Fresh Produce Consortium. “Up to now the industry has been paying full wack for an incomplete service, with issues relating to IT and delays in completion of checks. Fera is proposing an additional annual cost of around £325,000 which increases the total annual cost to the industry to £2 million. FPC will be looking closely at the quality of service, including efficiencies and reduced levels of checks, expected by the industry.”

As part of pre-consultation of the EU Plant Health Directive FPC is calling for the development of the Assured Trader Scheme which would reduce levels of inspection and administrative costs for reputable companies.

“It’s surely sensible in the commercial world to fast-track the development of the Assured Trader Scheme to minimise additional costs to the industry and for Government to deliver

simplification and efficient regulation,” added Nigel Jenney. “However, the EU gravy train is likely to restrict and delay the UK Government’s and the industry’s commitment to simplification.”

According to Fera current charges fall below the minimum level required under EU legislation and this will be an interim step pending a fuller review of plant health charges planned for later this year. On average current charges will need to increase by around 20 per cent to bring them up to the equivalent EU minimum standard. This would increase the total charge for a typical consignment from £23.82 to £28.58.

Fera intends to introduce the new charges from 1 August 2010.

The fuller review of plant health charges will take place in 2010, with the intention of having a full assessment of charges in place by 1 April 2011.

**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 consultation documents can be found at:  
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/plant-health/index.htm> The consultation closes on 24 June 2010.

**Ends**