



# FPC PRESS RELEASE

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## **Research into green labelling schemes must benefit consumers and trade**

The UK Government must ensure that green labelling schemes give consumers accurate information to allow them to make informed choices, says the Fresh Produce Consortium. Standardisation and consistent methodologies in calculating environmental impacts, such as PAS 2050, are essential to ensure that a wide variety of products, as well as differences in production and transportation methods, can be compared properly.

The Government announced its intention to commission research into green labelling schemes in its response to the House of Commons' International Development Committee's report on 'Sustainable Development in a Changing Climate'. The research will look at existing schemes, practicalities, impacts on consumer behaviour and cost/benefit analysis to the industry, as well as considering how imported foods could be included and the impact on trade.

The International Development Committee's report recognised the value of imports of air-freighted fresh produce and the need to put their environmental impact in perspective, recommending to the UK Government the provision to consumers of accurate information about the way products have been grown as well as transported; research on how such a scheme might be introduced and an assessment of the potential benefits to producers in developing countries.

"We need to tackle the impact of climate change and to consider the carbon footprint of the whole supply chain," said Nigel Jenney, Chief Executive of the Fresh Produce Consortium.

"Let's keep air freight in perspective: total air freighted imports of fruit and vegetables

account for a mere 0.2 per cent of total UK greenhouse gas emissions. Indeed, the consumption of fruit and vegetables accounts for only 2.5 per cent of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions in total. Horticultural exports are important contributors to fighting poverty in developing countries and air-freight has a place in sustainable development."

"There is no evidence that fewer aircraft would fly if purchases of imported fruit, vegetables and cut flowers were reduced. At least 60 per cent of air freighted fresh produce is brought to the UK in the bellyhold of passenger aircraft. Consumers need reassurance that there's no need to restrict choice by excluding imported produce on the basis of its carbon footprint."

The UK is self-sufficient by over 74 per cent in agricultural produce which we are able to grow in the UK. 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. Research shows that some imported fruit and vegetables are grown in less greenhouse gas intensive ways than the same products in the UK, with savings from greater efficiency outweighing the negative impacts of additional transport.

"We must put ill-founded concerns about the impact of transportation of fresh produce from developing countries in their proper perspective, and balance them against the need to address rising obesity levels and poor diets across Europe, as well as assisting the development of local economies in Africa. To encourage the UK consumer to eat 5-day we need a wide variety of fresh produce regardless of origin or means of transport," added Nigel Jenney.

The UK Government also considered the Committee's recommendation that the UK Government considers paying to offset the air freight emissions of horticultural products from developing countries. The UK Government concludes that 'the complexity of the mechanism proposed would make it expensive to administer and difficult to ensure that mitigation reductions were achieved. This would not be a politically feasible proposal for agreement internationally at Copenhagen since it would entail payments for embedded carbon. The UK is leading on proposing a global fund for adaptation and mitigation to which all countries except the least developed would contribute according to their capabilities and responsibilities.'

**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. For more information about the International Development Committee's report and the UK Government's response visit: [www.parliament.uk/indcom](http://www.parliament.uk/indcom)
4. The Chairman of the International Development Committee, Malcolm Bruce MP, commented: "There is a danger that steps taken by consumers in the UK to reduce their contribution to carbon emissions may lead them to avoid buying produce from developing countries in the belief that air-freighted food and flowers necessarily have a higher carbon footprint. This is not true. We saw for ourselves the sophisticated and efficient techniques used to grow flowers in Kenya. The CO<sup>2</sup> emissions from Kenyan flowers flown to the UK are nearly six times lower than those from Dutch flowers grown in heated greenhouses. Consumers need accurate information about the way products have been grown as well as transported so that they can make informed choices."

**Ends**