



FPC News Release

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FPC contests massive hike in plant health import inspection charges

Proposed increases in statutory plant health inspection fees for UK companies importing fresh produce and cut flowers are exorbitant and unnecessary, says the Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC).

“This proposed hike in charges, in several cases over 100 per cent, is extortionate and totally unacceptable,” said Nigel Jenney, Chief Executive of the Fresh Produce Consortium. “The industry should not have to bear excessive costs for what continues to be a highly inefficient service. Instead Fera should look to make efficiencies and target its resources towards where the real problems lie.”

The charges relate to a range of products including those that require a phytosanitary certificate, documentary, identity and plant health checks. The proposals are a move towards full cost recovery, and come less than a year after an increase imposed on the industry to reflect changes in the sterling/Euro exchange rate.

Among the proposals are:

- Import inspection fees: 463% increase for plant health checks; 11% increase for identity checks; 11% increase for documentary checks;
- Plant passport fees: 112% increase in fees for inspections;
- Import services for potatoes originating in Egypt: 273% increase;
- Licence fees: 300% increase in fees for inspection;
- Export certification: 188% increase in fees for inspection, examination of samples and issue of certificate.



“Some sectors of the industry will have a real difficulty absorbing these costs, and it will make the UK less competitive, pushing trade elsewhere in Europe,” said Nigel Jenney. “The industry has been paying out for years for an incomplete service, with issues relating to IT and delays in completion of checks. As a customer our industry expects a far better level of service.”

“After years of poor performance Fera has accumulated a large financial reserve, with many physical inspections not taking place but charges being levied regardless. Based on actual physical inspection levels we estimate that the industry has funded around £5 million since the inception of charging,” added Nigel Jenney.

The risk of any plant health issues arising from fresh produce is minimal, less than one per cent. FPC believes that Fera should focus its resources where there are real risks and deliver a more efficient cost-effective service to responsible importers and their agents.

“Fera should be seeking to minimise costs and delays in clearance by working with other government departments and agencies to fast-track the delivery of the Assured Trader Scheme which recognises the high standards of reputable traders,” added Nigel Jenney.

FPC is rejecting the proposals to increase statutory charges and is calling for Fera to introduce efficiencies in its service and reduce the frequency of checks on reputable traders.

Notes for editors:

- 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.
- Extensive membership covers the complete spectrum of industry businesses including growers, importers, wholesalers, retailers, distributors, processors, packers, food service companies and other allied organisations.
- For more information about Fera's consultation on proposed fee increases visit:
<http://www.fera.defra.gov.uk/plants/feesChargingReview/>