



FPC PRESS RELEASE

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DEFRA TASK FORCE IGNORES RED TAPE TANGLE AFFECTING FRESH PRODUCE INDUSTRY

The Farming Regulation Task Force will not remove unnecessary red tape and oppressive regulation impacting on the fresh produce industry, says the Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC). Simultaneously Defra has advised the fresh produce industry of proposed additional costs for plant health inspections.

“Despite providing Defra and its Task Force with an extensive list of issues on behalf of the fresh produce industry, we still see little appetite to take up the real biting issues impacting on our industry,” said Nigel Jenney, Chief Executive of FPC.

“The Task Force has done a laudable job in recommending a new approach to regulation, but fine words and a ‘can do’ culture change do not go far enough. This report has ignored key regulatory areas affecting the fresh produce supply chain.”

“We are extremely concerned about the emerging proposals to increase plant health charges by many millions. This is not acceptable, viable, or competitive versus our European counterparts,” added Nigel Jenney.

“We recognise that Defra and Fera have a job to do but the risk of any plant health issues arising from fresh produce is minimal, less than one per cent. There is already an EU-wide review of the Plant Health regime underway and we await the findings; so why is Fera intent

on imposing these exorbitant changes now and placing UK businesses at a commercial disadvantage?”

FPC is calling for current standard charges only to be applied, and for Fera to carry out a thorough and rigorous review of the actual level of service provided to the industry, with more reduced inspection levels reflecting the negligible risk from fresh produce.

“It’s unacceptable to impose more costs and delays on the industry on one hand when you are promising on the other hand to regulate with a lighter touch. It just doesn’t add up. Fera should focus its resources where there are real risks and deliver a more efficient cost-effective service to importers and their agents.”

FPC welcomes the Task Force’s recommendation for ‘earned recognition’ to reward good practice with less frequent inspection. FPC has long advocated the extension of the Assured Trader Scheme, which has already reduced the level of checks under the EU Marketing Standards for reputable traders. In its evidence to the Task Force FPC highlighted that the Scheme could be developed further across several Government departments and their agents, bringing significant benefits, reducing resources and costs of at least £3 million for both industry and Government.

Other areas recommended by FPC for better regulation were:

- Removal of detailed Marketing Standards required under the EU Marketing Directive;
- Further integration of Government IT systems to remove duplication of pre-notification of produce by importers;
- Impact of delays and increased costs of implementation of EC Regulation 669/2009 (‘high risk’ products);
- Simplification of regulation of organic fresh produce.

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.

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