



FPC PRESS RELEASE

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FRESH PRODUCE IS VITAL KEYSTONE FOR ACHIEVING TASK FORCE OBJECTIVES

An affordable variety of fresh fruit and vegetables is a vital element of a healthy diet and remains the keystone for helping people achieve 5 a day, says the Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC). As a member of the Fruit and Vegetables Task Force, FPC welcomes the Government's commitment to take on board the recommendations of the task force and will be monitoring closely progress as individual Departments consider these recommendations.

"We want to see that the fresh produce industry is not hampered by unnecessary regulatory burdens and has every opportunity to increase UK production and encourage greater consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables," said Nigel Jenney, Chief Executive of the Fresh Produce Consortium and member of the Fruit and Vegetables Task Force. "The task force took on board the challenges of increasing production of indigenous crops and has included wide ranging recommendations, whilst recognising that we cannot be totally self-sufficient in all fresh produce."

"It is vital that both the industry and Government play their part in encouraging people of all ages to eat more fresh fruit and vegetables, which is the central objective of the task force. If we fail to do this future generations will suffer the effects of poor diet and obesity and there will be no increased market for UK production. Industry campaigns such as Eat In Colour demonstrate that fresh produce can be fun, easy to prepare and convenient. Fresh fruit and vegetables will always be the vital keystone for a healthy diet and we believe that the Government should continue to focus on fresh produce as the ultimate convenience food," said Nigel Jenney.

FPC welcomed the task force's recommendation that 5 a day should further promote potatoes as a healthy and vitamin rich carbohydrate.

FPC also identified to the task force the significant potential of the wholesale/food service sector which accounts for a third of overall sales of fresh produce in the UK. FPC will be working with Nabma to provide guidance on how to maximise opportunities as part of the task force's recommendations.

Another recommendation of the task force is to evaluate the Food Dudes programme. FPC is one of the original sponsors of Food Dudes and over the years has provided substantial funding and support.

"We are committed to the aims of this initiative and others, such as Eat In Colour and the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme, which provide benefits to young children. We support the work to evaluate the sustainability of the Food Dudes programme," said Nigel Jenney.

"The School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme demonstrates Value for Money principles which are the bedrock for public procurement. This is why we believe it is essential to maintain the central procurement strategy of the Scheme to promote healthy eating habits at an early age. Given that the Government has already made a clear policy decision to maintain the provision of free milk in primary schools, we do not see why a decision cannot be made to secure the future of the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme now as a national priority, including the retention of the central procurement strategy."

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. Eat In Colour campaign: www.eatincolour.com
4. The Fruit and Vegetable Task Force's report is available from Defra.