

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Freshfel Europe welcomes UK announcement to postpone new import requirements for EU exports in response to sector's request

Over the past months Freshfel Europe has been advocating in cooperation with its members for more flexibility from the UK when it comes to the obligation for EU fresh produce exports to the UK to carry phytosanitary certificates from 1 April. Today's announcement by the UK government about the adjustment of the timelines in the introduction of controls for EU imports, made in a written statement by RT Hon Michael Gove, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, is therefore warmly welcomed by Freshfel Europe and the fruit and vegetables sector as a crucial relief to enable the sector to smoothly adapt to Brexit in the ever-challenging context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In today's announcement, the UK agrees to postpone the introduction of phytosanitary certification obligations for most fresh produce, considered low risk plant products, until January 2022, when documentary checks will start to apply. Physical checks at Border Control Posts on fresh produce will only be applied from March 2022. Freshfel Europe General Delegate Philippe Binard emphasized that, *"Freshfel Europe has been voicing strong concerns over the last months and we consider that this postponement is essential to ensure the supply of the UK market and the continuation of trade flows through the Channel, across which the EU27 exports over 3 million tonnes of fresh fruit and vegetables a year"*. Currently EU supply represents 40% of the UK's internal demand for fresh produce.

Following this welcome news, the sector further calls EU and UK authorities to make the most of this extended 9-month transition to speed-up preparations to ensure the smooth running of operations in 2022. The challenge remains enormous - over 750,000 phytosanitary certificates will be required on an annual basis to sustain EU-UK trade in fresh produce, a substantial economic and administrative burden, and a threat to the capacity of the industry to continue 'just in time' operations if administrative procedures are not sped-up. Freshfel Europe Director for Trade and Market Access Natalia Santos-Garcia Bernabe, highlighted that, *"In Freshfel Europe and FPC's letter to the RT Hon Michael Gove, the sector reiterated the need for electronic certification transmission between the EU and the UK to be up and running before the end of the year through the e-Phyto hub"*. The postponement will give more time on both side of the Channel to work on digitalization and the successful introduction of electronic certification in 2022.

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Note to the Editors:

Freshfel Europe is the European Fresh Produce Association, representing the interests of the fresh fruit and vegetables supply chain in Europe and beyond. Freshfel Europe currently has over 200 members, including both companies and associations. For more information, please contact Ms Natalia Santos at n.santos@freshfel.org

