

GLOBAL COALITION OF FRESH PRODUCE

PRESS RELEASE

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GLOBAL COALITION OF FRESH PRODUCE CALLS FOR URGENT POLICY MEASURES TO SAFEGUARD THE SUPPLY OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES TO CONSUMERS

The Global Coalition of Fresh Produce today released a report analysing the current global trading environment for fresh fruits and vegetables. The report argues that fruits and vegetables are a critical element of the shift towards healthy and sustainable diets, as well as an engine of economic growth and job creation the world over. However, a number of challenges are currently threatening the long-term economic viability of the fresh produce sector worldwide, and thereby economic stability, food security and health. These challenges include substantial increases in costs, inefficiencies and delays in transportation, labour shortages, dwindling consumer purchasing power and obstacles to international trade, among other factors.

Ron Lemaire of the Canadian Produce Marketing Association and chairman of the Coalition said: “our sector has shown great resilience in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and has guaranteed consumers’ access to healthy and nutritious products. But rising costs will ultimately be passed on to consumers in the form of reduced supplies and higher prices.”

According to the report, such an outcome will make it harder for consumers the world over to eat a healthy diet. Indeed, to keep their food expenses in check, people will increasingly rely on low-cost staple foods or turn to unhealthy calories, such as those from soft drinks. In addition, the economic difficulties faced by fresh produce exporters in developing countries counter the impact of efforts towards poverty reduction, and threaten the livelihoods of millions of families.

The report calls upon national and international policymakers to urgently implement a number of measures to safeguard the supply of affordable fresh fruits and vegetables to consumers worldwide - and ensure the viability of a sector that is an important contributor to the economies of developed and developing countries alike. “First and foremost, governments and international bodies across the globe should recognize fruits and vegetables as essential goods,” said Robert Guenther, Chief Public Policy Officer for the International Fresh Produce Association, and a member of the Coalition’s Steering Committee. “By establishing that fruits and vegetables are fundamental to the health of populations and an essential element in the shift towards more sustainable food systems, other measures can be unlocked to ensure their consistent supply,” Guenther stated.

Among the measures advocated in the report are:

- help fresh produce operators shoulder the burden of increased energy bills;
- promote the creation of safe and good-paying jobs in the fresh produce industry and in transportation, and encourage young people to pursue careers in these sectors;
- ensure undisrupted and priority access for fresh fruit and vegetables to all transportation networks, and develop integrated, multimodal transportation solutions;
- create priority lanes for imported fresh produce, to ensure quick offloading and transit in seaports and other points of arrival;
- address the causes of inefficiencies at seaports, and implement measures to minimize bottlenecks and improve operational practices to ensure the seamless movement of fresh produce;
- work towards the harmonization and mutual recognition of sanitary, phytosanitary and other market entry requirements to enable operators to seize export and import opportunities;
- promote the consumption of fruits and vegetables by exempting fresh produce from value added tax, stepping up information campaigns and offering more fruits and vegetables through school feeding programs.

Philippe Binard, General Delegate of Freshfel Europe and member of the Global Coalition of Fresh Produce, stated that "by virtue of their health benefits and low environmental footprint, fresh fruits and vegetables are an essential part of the solution to global problems such as climate change and malnutrition." Unless effective measures are implemented urgently, the report argues, the current challenges facing the sector will have long-lasting impacts on economies - and consumers - the world over, including bankruptcies, legal disputes, food inflation, food shortages and more. "It is time to take action," Binard said.

About the Global Coalition of Fresh Produce

The Global Coalition of Fresh Produce brings together fresh produce associations from around the world, based on their joint vision to create resilient global value chains for fruits and vegetables that bring a myriad of economic, environmental and societal benefits. The Coalition's mission is to voice solutions to address disruptions in global supply chains for fresh produce, including - but not limited to - rising costs, and share and promote best practices. The Coalition's current members are Afruibana, the Association of Banana Exporters of Ecuador (AEBE), the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA), the Committee Linking Entrepreneurship-Agriculture-Development (COLEAD), Freshfel Europe, the Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada (FVGC), the International Fresh Produce Association (IFPA), the Southern Hemisphere Association of Fresh Fruit Exporters (SHAFFE) and United Fresh New Zealand. To find out more about the Global Coalition of Fresh Produce and obtain the full report, visit our website at www.producecoalition.net or contact us at info@producecoalition.net.

Fresh produce associations wishing to join the Coalition can contact us at info@producecoalition.net.