



PRESS RELEASE

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EUFruit, facilitating access to research and innovation knowledge available across Europe for fruit sector.

EUFruit thematic network met in Leuven on 9th November 2016 for its first General Assembly. After less than 6 months of operation, a dedicated knowledge platform was already launched by the project to facilitate access to research and innovation knowledge available across Europe for fruit sector. EUFRUIT is a multi-layered project under Horizon 2020 to unleash, stimulate and use European research potential for exploiting new opportunities in the fresh produce category.

EUFruit project was launched March 2016 with the objective of facilitating the access to knowledge and at disseminating existing research and innovation potential for the benefit of the fresh fruit sector and consumers. The network has the ambitious goal of fully exploiting the European research potential for the fruit sector. EUFRUIT is a unique thematic European Fruit Network where research institutes and the European representative organizations of the fresh fruit sector are joining forces. Altogether, EUFRUIT gathers a consortium of 21 partners from 12 different countries.

In the first 6 months of activities, the consortium worked on its 4 core thematic areas for the innovation potential of the European fruit sector. It included a review and an analysis on the latest trends on the performance of new varieties and cultivar developments, on a scanning of initiatives to minimise residues on fruit and in the environment, on an inventory of improvement of fruit handling and storage and finally on the identification of activities enhancing sustainable production systems. For each of these topics, a scanning of existing research conducted and summed up in dedicated synthesis reports for each of the above thematic areas. Altogether, this exercise has already allowed the cooperation of 86 participants from 15 Member States who collaborated on the 4 themes to collect best practices. The thematic groups will continue the work in the coming months to broaden the scope of produce covered by the scanning and synthesis reports.

The Annual EUFRUIT meeting took note with satisfaction that after 6 months of operation of the project the Knowledge Platform is fully operational. The first interim synthesis reports as well as other relevant information of activities of the partners are already available on the new internet platform created to facilitate the access to the information to the widest possible audience. The EUFRUIT Annual General Meeting welcomed this important milestone of the project and evaluated further actions to populate the Platform website and raise its visibility. The Knowledge Platform is accessible at the following link: <http://kp.eufrin.org/>

The Annual Meeting also provided the opportunity to review with representatives of the European Commission the main drivers of the EU Research and Innovation policy for agriculture as well as the European Innovation Partnership (EIP- AGRI) for Agriculture and Innovation. An overview of the EUFRUIT programme was recently

provided on the EIP- AGRI website: <http://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/news/eufruit-%E2%80%93-european-fruit-network>

EUFUIT is coordinated by Michelle Williams, Head of the Department of Food Science, Aarhus University, Denmark and current chair of the Board of EUFRIN, an informal network of university departments and research institutes for temperate fruit crops. From the fresh produce sector, both AREFLH (Association of the European Regions producing fruit, vegetables and horticulture products) and Freshfel Europe (European fruit and vegetables Association) are actively involved in the dissemination of the project achievements to the sector.

After the meeting, Michelle Williams stated: "*I am very pleased with the involvement of all the partners and the progresses and achievements that the project delivered in the first 6 months. EUFRUIT fills an important gap by enhancing research cooperation across Europe and fosters exchange of knowledge for the benefit of the fruit sector. I am also pleased that during the meeting the partners had the opportunities to exchange with the representatives of DG AGRI in charge of Research and Innovation as well as with the EIP- AGRI for agriculture and innovation.*"

The project is building an efficient instrument to enhance the competitiveness of a very important segment of the agricultural economy of the European Union. Altogether, the fruit and vegetables sector represents about 20% of the agricultural output and is as such an important contributors to the European jobs and growth objectives. Both Jacques Dasque (Secretary General of Areflh) and Philippe Binard (General Delegate of Freshfel Europe) underlined the benefit of the EUFRUIT thematic network: "*EUFUIT is a useful tool to boost the cooperation between the fruit sector and the research centre. It is important that the fresh produce sector continue to gear research and innovation towards very practical and operational issues. EUFRUIT and its knowledge platform is aimed at becoming an important tool for the fruit sector with ready access to up-to-date information on research to stimulate competitiveness, sustainability, quality and safety of fruit for the benefit of the supply chain and ultimately the consumers*".

The main mission of the **AREFLH** (Assembly of the European Regions producing fruits, vegetables and plants) is:

- to represent its 21 member regions from 6 countries in Europe;
- to defend the economic and social interests of the fruit, vegetable and horticultural sectors with the European authorities;
- to promote the exchanges of experiences, partnerships and joint projects between regions and professional organizations;
- to actively seek new solutions for the main issues which affect the future of the fruit and vegetable production in Europe.

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