



10 November 2009

**AGRICULTURAL PRODUCT QUALITY POLICY: WHAT STRATEGY TO FOLLOW?  
AREFLH AND FRESHFEL CONTRIBUTION TO THE MOTION OF A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION**

**About the associations**

AREFLH is the assembly of fruit, vegetable and horticulture producing European Regions. It unites 28 regions : SPAIN: Andalucia, Aragon, Cataluña, Extremadura, Murcia, Navarra, Valencia. FRANCE : Aquitaine, Basse-Normandie, Bretagne, Centre, Ile-de-France, Languedoc-Roussillon, Limousin, Midi-Pyrénées, Pays de la Loire, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Rhône-Alpes. ITALY : Basilicate, Bolzano, Emilia-Romagna, Lombardia, Piemonte, Toscana, Trento, Veneto. PORTUGAL : Lisboa e Vale do Tejo. BELGIUM : Flandres.

Freshfel Europe is the European Fresh Produce Association. The Freshfel Membership includes both Associations and Companies across Europe involved in the production, shipping, import, export, wholesale, distribution and retail of fresh fruit and vegetables. Freshfel activities are further reinforced by the experience of a number of associated members both inside and outside the European Union, namely service providers to the sector (e.g. seeds, plant protection, logistics).

Fruit and vegetables are high value crops with a wide diversity in species grown on relatively small production areas (3% of the EU's cultivated area), they account for 17% of the value of the EU's agricultural production with a total production value of 50 billion EURO. The fruit and vegetables supply chain has a turnover of more than 120 billion EURO with approximately 550.000 employees and over 2 million farm holdings.

**EU Agricultural product quality policy**

Our associations welcome the European Parliament's commitment regarding agricultural product quality policy. The fruit and vegetables sector is used to comply with strict standards, and is ready to adjust its practices in order to cope with specific customer requirements demanded by the market as long as these requirements are workable, reasonable and consistent with international trade policy.

Given the very recent overhaul of the quality policies in the fruit and vegetables sector and the publication of Regulation (EC) Nr 1221/2008, we have opted to provide punctual suggestions for amendments to matters relevant for the fruit and vegetables sector.

Yours sincerely,

Jacques Dasque  
Secretay-General AREFLH

Philippe Binard  
General Delegate Freshfel

**Proposal for amendments on Agricultural product quality policy: what strategy to follow?**  
**2009/2105(INI)**

**Amendment Nr**

**Report rapporteur G. Scotta**  
**Paragraph 7**

*Report rapporteur*

considers that marketing standards still retain an important role in the production chain, and consequently they should be kept; they render transparent the changes on the market and allow purchasers to compare prices, sizes and quality of products and ensure a level playing-field in European competition;

*Amendment*

considers that **specific** marketing standards still retain an important role in the production chain, and consequently they should be kept; they render transparent the changes on the market and allow purchasers to compare prices, sizes and quality of products and ensure a level playing-field in European competition;

**Justification**

Marketing standards define clear rules for all contracting parties in an increasingly global trading environment. Whilst the increased market share of retailers has led to a majority of fresh produce having to comply with extra-legal requirements, the EU marketing standards (and its compulsory character) continue to serve as a basis and remain the sole guarantee for consumers to buy quality products in countries with fewer retailer dominance.

Given the wide variety in certain agricultural categories, a general marketing standard can only accommodate basic requirements for commodities with a limited offer in the EU. In this respect the premature decision of the European Commission earlier this year to drastically cut the number of specific marketing standards for fruit and vegetables could be lamented. Today the proliferation of private requirements in diverse domains (GAP, phytosanitary issues, ...) is already proving challenging for the agricultural sector, the drastic cut in the number of specific marketing standards has done anything but alleviating these concerns. **Consequently, specific compulsory marketing standards need to be kept for certain product categories (eg. fruit and vegetables).**

As the agricultural market, is still very fragmented, an active role from the public authorities is still desirable to ensure a fair balance between all stakeholders. The greatest simplification is achieved through aligning EU-regulation with the standards adopted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and actively engaging in harmonization efforts at CODEX-level.

**Amendment Nr**

**Report rapporteur G. Scotta  
New paragraph 27a**

*Report rapporteur*

*Amendment*

**New EU schemes**

**considers that stakeholder demands for further EU schemes in the environmental sphere are increasing, is of the opinion that demands regarding concrete initiatives (eg. Integrated farming schemes) should in the short term be evaluated on their EU added value and if necessary be accompanied by the necessary proposals to the Council and the European Parliament;**

**Justification**

Environmental issues have steadily climbed on the list of consumer concerns in recent years, leading to increasing sales of produce originating from organic or integrated production. Alongside the “organic” approach, another series of schemes for addressing the environmental impacts of agriculture which at the same time aim at improvements in productivity, are widespread within Europe – a variety of terms and systems exist: “Integrated Farming Systems”, “Integrated Production”, or “Integrated Crop Managed Systems”.

However just as organic food, the market for products originating from integrated farming in the EU continues to be fragmented along national lines. While this is partially caused by the multitude of schemes which are developed at a region level, the lack of a common baseline which could consequently be communicated to consumers represents a major hurdle for a functioning internal market. Likewise the absence of an agreed EU definition prevents a clear differentiation with conventional products and the associated price premium, whereas farmers are confronted with higher costs as a result of implementing integrated production methods. The latter could potentially threaten the further uptake of these methods in the future.

In this regard initiatives towards the establishment of guidelines have already been prepared. The adoption of such guidelines at EU-level, entailing a system of benchmarking of existing schemes to ensure the credibility of integrated production would avoid the administrative burden and associated costs of a mandatory EU-scheme.

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