

27/10/2020

## Press Release

### **European fruit and vegetable sector managed to absorb the shock of the first COVID wave thanks to its European producer organisations**

**Yesterday, the European Parliament Committee on Agriculture and rural development organised a hearing on the lessons learned during the first wave of the COVID crisis. For Luc Vanoirbeek, chairman of the Working Party Fruit and Vegetables at Copa-Cogeca, if the fruit and vegetable sector resisted and adapted to fast changing conditions, it has been mainly due to the support of producer organisations, mainly cooperatives. A fact that should be acknowledged, explained and further supported.**

As part of the European agri-food chain, the fruit and vegetable sector had done critical work during the first Covid-19 wave, the supply chain never stopped and the shelves remained full. The sector's reaction capacity, the extraordinary effort made on the ground and its faultless responsibility have contributed to the fruitful performance of the fruit and vegetable market during these critical months.

Growers, as well as fruit and vegetable producer organisations that are conditioning, grading, packaging and delivering fruit and vegetables to retailers, have resisted and reversed the successive difficulties. A fact that should not be taken for granted.

Fruit and vegetable producer organisations, of which most are Cooperatives, have reacted by implementing risk prevention, safety protocols and contingency plans in record time to guarantee the continuity and safety of production and marketing activities. They have been adapting every day to changing and uncertain circumstances and regulations.

For Luc Vanoirbeek, the policy lesson that should be learnt from this first wave is clear, *“The reaction capacity and resilience of the fruit and vegetable sector is largely based on its ability to work together. Fruit and vegetable producer organisations that have been established with the support of the Common Agricultural Policy play a central role and need to continue to be the cornerstone of the support to fruit and vegetable sector in the Common Agriculture Policy for the period after 2020. It is time to bet on policies that stimulate and prioritize efforts to concentrate more supply, as cooperatives.”*

Considering the role played by the European Commission during the crisis, Luc Vanoirbeek believes that the Commission reacted fast and quite adequately by giving guidelines to keep the single market open and took relevant decisions to avoid extra threats related to the free movement for seasonal workers and essential goods such as packaging.

During the first Covid wave, eating habits have changed. The conviction of European consumers that fruits and vegetables are essential for a healthy lifestyle lead to increasing demand for high quality and nutritious fruit and vegetables in general. Nevertheless, the extra costs that have accumulated throughout the chain were not fully compensated by the higher price received in the market.

**-END-**

Download the full speech of Luc Vanoirbeek, chairman of the Working Party Fruit and Vegetables of Copa-Cogeca [HERE](#)

---

For further information, please contact:

**Dominique Dejonckheere**  
Senior Policy Advisor  
Dominique.Dejonckheere@copa-cogeca.eu

**Jean-Baptiste Boucher**  
Communications Director  
Mobile: + 32 474 840 836  
jean-baptiste.boucher@copa-cogeca.eu

---

**CDP(20)8081:1**

---