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Press Release

Copa-Cogeca says new aid package for EU fruit and vegetable sector step in right direction to alleviate impact of Russian ban but stronger action will be required

Reacting to the European Commission move to introduce additional support worth 165 million euros to help producers hit by the Russian ban on EU farm exports, Copa-Cogeca said it's a good step forward but regretted that the measures were delayed unnecessarily.

Copa-Cogeca Secretary-General Pekka Pesonen said "We are pleased that the Commission has announced a further package of measures which are more targeted and will help to reduce pressure on the market. The sector has been hit badly, since 29% of EU fruit and vegetable exports are normally sent to Russia. But we are disappointed that it took the Commission so long to introduce the new package of measures. During this time, prices have fallen further and this could have been avoided. It will be too late now for some producers. We therefore urge the Commission to apply these measures retro-actively. Article 222 also needs to be opened to aid producer organisations. We also need support from the Commission to find new market outlets and boost export promotion and remove unnecessary obstacles to trade. This is crucial".

This new scheme gives support to withdraw surplus volumes of fruit and vegetables from the market and comes in addition to the programme worth up to €125 million for fruit & vegetables that was announced on August 18, but suspended on September 10. The new plan also includes oranges, mandarins and clementines for the first time as well as apples and pears. Other vegetables like carrots, cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes and other fruits like kiwi, plums & table grapes are also included.

Mr Pesonen continued "Next January, much stronger action will be required for all fruit and vegetables to prevent the market from collapsing altogether as the season will be at its peak and production volumes much higher".

"In addition, the EU pigmeat sector has been suffering for months by the ban and action must be taken to improve the situation, for example, by setting up promotion campaigns for pigmeat", he added.

Wrapping up, Mr Pesonen regretted that the EU Commission decided to suspend at the end of September the temporary private storage aid scheme for cheese, saying that it should still be open at least for countries severely affected by the ban. It remains open for skimmed milk powder and butter.

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