

The European fruit and vegetable sector already needs exceptional measures



[AREFLH](#) asks Commission President Von der Leyen to put in place exceptional measures to respond to the consequences of the coronavirus health crisis.

AREFLH's member Regions and their Producer Organizations were numerous to meet by videoconference on Wednesday 25 March for the preparation of a joint document to be sent to the European Commission to request the establishment of support measures for European producers of fruits and vegetables.

In a letter addressed to Ursula Von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, and Janusz Wojciechowski, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, AREFLH underlined that the European fruit and vegetable sector requires the implementation of urgent

measures in light of the exceptional situation that EU producers are currently facing.

The situation is deeply worrying, particularly for certain productions that have already entered the harvest phase, while many regions have to face other difficulties, particularly with regard to the checks to be carried out with Producer Organisations (POs), made impossible because of confinement.

The priority actions and measures proposed by AREFLH relate to the following points:

- **The right to free movement of goods and workers in the EU:** careful monitoring of disturbances in cross-border movements must be implemented as several restrictions persist between certain Member States, which leads to delays that have a negative impact on highly perishable goods such as fruits and vegetables. In addition, closer cooperation between EU countries is required to allow the movement of seasonal workers and their safety at work.
- **Approval of exceptional derogations for the management of operational programmes by producer organizations (POs) in the fruit and vegetables sector for the year 2020:** with exceptions for on-site checks, derogations on green harvesting and non-harvesting measures, as well as an increase in community co-financing from 50 to 70% for all interventions, with the exception of free distribution (already 100% co-financed).
- The activation of **exceptional measures** provided for by regulation (EU) n ° 2013/1308 on the common market organization, with the triggering of articles 219 and 222 to allow the adoption of delegated acts in order to take the measures necessary to deal with the current market disruptions (as was done for the E. Coli and Russian embargo crises).

These proposals, detailed in the letter to President Von der Leyen, can be implemented swiftly and with minimum budgetary adjustments, while delivering much-needed assistance to EU fruit and vegetable producers.

AREFLH, Assembly of European Fruit, Vegetable and Horticultural Regions, main missions are:

- Represent its 18 regions and 28 member POs / APOs from 9 countries in Europe
- Defend the economic and social interests of the fruit, vegetable and horticultural sectors with European authorities;
- Foster the exchange of experiences, partnerships and joint projects between regions and professional organizations;
- Find solutions to the main issues that condition the future of fruit and vegetable production in Europe.