

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

19 December 2008

**EU PESTICIDE PACKAGE COMPROMISE
CONFRONTS THE FRUIT AND VEGETABLES SECTOR WITH CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Yesterday Member State's permanent representatives adopted the compromise achieved earlier this week on the EU pesticide package by negotiators of the European Council and Parliament. This agreement follows weeks of discussions after the Parliament's Environment Committee adopted its second reading amendments. The conclusion of the EU pesticide package would mark a provisional end to EU legislative initiatives regarding pesticides in recent years, thereby providing a reinforced high level of consumer protection. Philippe Binard, Freshfel's General Delegate commented: *"In line with the EU MRL-harmonisation, the sector is hopeful that the adoption of the EU pesticide package will enable the increase of consumer confidence in the safety rules adopted by legislation and further stimulate consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables given the overwhelming health benefits a diet rich in fruit and vegetables brings."*

The implementation of the new rules will lead to even stricter requirements in regard to the future authorisation of plant protection products. Indeed, the latest compromise will introduce in the European legislation additional cut-off criteria which will phase out even more active substances compared to the previous compromise agreed among Member States. The loss of some essential active substances will therefore have a concrete impact for the horticultural sector. It will become a serious challenge to control certain pests in the future, in particular for minor crops. Regretfully, these consequences were not measured in details by the EU prior to the decision through a solid impact assessment. In some cases Member States will have to take benefit of a derogation clause to continue using certain active substances if certain pests cannot be contained. Such a clause will therefore be crucial to maintain economically viable horticulture in certain regions.

The compromise recognises that a limited number of plant protection solutions are available for fruit and vegetables. Freshfel welcomes in this respect the provisions to ease bureaucracy on approvals for minor uses and in particular the possibility of a new fund to promote greater availability of active substances for minor uses. Frédéric Rosseneu, Food Safety adviser at Freshfel Europe stressed the importance of implementing such a fund: *"As some key plant protection solutions for horticulture will be phased out over the coming years as a consequence of this regulation, it will be crucial to find timely alternatives. The IR-4 project in the USA provides first hand experience how such a fund could introduce safer and more efficient pesticides for EU fruit and vegetable production, which will be a win-win situation for all stakeholders."* Freshfel will continue to work constructively alongside the EU institutions to obtain this vital tool for the EU horticultural sector.

Plans to come closer to a single EU market for the approval of plant protection products at national level through the establishment of 3 geographic approval zones have also been adopted. Whilst specific opt-outs allow Member States to refrain from the authorization of certain pesticides for particular agricultural or environmental reasons, Freshfel is satisfied that the principle of enhanced mutual recognition among Member States has been safeguarded. Indeed the current system has led to distortion of competition among farmers in different Member States and in some cases has confused the public on supposedly illegal pesticides.

The plenary vote in Parliament will take place early January, after which the agreement will be formally adopted by the Council.

EUROPEAN FRESH PRODUCE ASSOCIATION A.I.S.B.L

Note to the editors:

Freshfel Europe is the European Fresh Produce Association, representing the interests of operators across the supply chain of fresh fruits and vegetables in Europe and beyond. Freshfel Europe currently has over 200 members, including both companies and associations. Freshfel's work is organised on the basis of its four divisions: Import, Export, Wholesale and Distribution, and Supply Chain and Retail. In addition, Freshfel Europe has set up various Working Groups on specific food topics incorporating the views of European experts. For more information, contact the association at info@freshfel.org.