



**CuTE**-Cultivating the taste of **Europe!**

## Press dossier



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**APROA**





# **FruitVegetablesEUROPE (EUCOFEL), the European fruit and vegetable association, is launching a historic promotional campaign co-financed by the European Union to boost fruit and vegetable consumption through 2021.**

The European campaign for the period 2019-2021 is endowed with nearly 4.8 million euros and aims to increase awareness of the specific characteristics of agricultural production methods and the properties of European fruit and vegetables in the internal market (Spain, France, Germany, Poland and Greece).

Are Europeans aware of the value of these productions marked by quality, traceability, food safety, and economic, socio-labour and environmental sustainability? The fruit and vegetable sector, committed to food sovereignty, employment and integrating workers and the environment, is joining forces to launch the “CuTE: Cultivating the Taste of Europe” campaign with financial support from the EU.

## **1. - The campaign: a historic milestone for the European fruit and vegetable sector**

Every year, 3.4 million farms in the European Union as a whole (EU, i.e. almost a quarter of the total) produce fruit and vegetables worth around €47 billion. At the same time, there are around 1,500 producer organisations, covering 50% of fruit and vegetable production. Despite its economic and social importance, many Europeans are still unaware of the characteristics of the European sustainable production model.



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In this context, **FruitVegetablesEUROPE, the European Fruit and Vegetable Association**, together with the national associations of the sector in three producer countries, has launched a generic promotional and informative campaign in **France, Germany, Spain, Poland and Greece** which will run during the period 2019-2021 under the name **“CuTE: Cultivating the Taste of Europe. Quality, variety and freshness with Europe’s fruits and vegetables”** with an investment close to €4.8 million.

Through this campaign, **FruitVegetablesEUROPE** aims to increase awareness in the European market of the specific characteristics of both fruit and vegetable agricultural production methods in the European Union (greenhouse and outdoors) and their properties (varieties, quality, flavour, etc.). This sector has seen a lack of information among consumers on European Union production models and on the stringent parameters for quality, traceability, food safety and environmental sustainability.

Founded 60 years ago, **FruitVegetablesEUROPE** is the European association representing EU fruit and vegetable production and trade at the European level, integrating around 4,000 companies. Based in Brussels, it acts as a link between sectoral and regional stakeholders and policy makers in European institutions, giving a voice to European fruit and vegetable production and trade.

Over the years, it has become an important player in the sector and regularly works with European institutions and international organisations (such as OECD, UNECE and CODEX Alimentarius), among other important associations.

Participating in this promotional campaign, together with **FruitVegetablesEUROPE** whose role as that of programme coordinator, are:

- **The French Association of Tomato and Cucumber Producers (AOPn Tomates et Concombres)**
- **The French Association of Strawberry Producers (AOPn Fraise)**
- **The Andalusian Association of Fruit and Vegetable Producers' Organisations (APROA)**
- **The Polish Association of Fruit and Vegetable Producers (ZGPOiW)**
- **The Greek Association of Fruit, Vegetable and Juice Exporters (INCOFRUIT)**



## 1. - The campaign: informative and promotional actions

The campaign's main event is a **Road Show (EUROTOUR)** and, within this context, a mobile greenhouse lorry measuring over 10 metres long which will feature the greenhouse production method as it visits different cities in Spain, France and Germany over 37 days.

There will also be other informative activities in these countries, Poland and Greece, including **meetings with the media, bloggers, influencers, opinion leaders and stakeholders.**

At a global level, the European campaign aims to increase awareness in the internal market (**Spain, France, Germany, Poland and Greece**) of the specific characteristics of both the agricultural production methods of fruit and vegetables in the EU (**greenhouse and outdoors**) as well as the properties of European fruit and vegetables (**varieties, quality, taste, freshness, sustainability, food safety**).

Europeans want to know more about the products in order to select the best and, therefore, production models, traceability and variety must be given visibility to make the consumer's decision an easier one. Through this dissemination and visibility campaign, the high quality of the European production model, respect for the environment and sustainability, food safety and the overall characteristics of the EU agriculture industry will be featured.

The campaign mainly targets three audiences: young parents (18-44 years), children and pre-teens (6-12 years), as well as journalists and opinion leaders.

The products to be featured within the promotional campaign's framework, both in greenhouses and outdoor farming, will vary according to country:

- In **Spain and Germany**, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, courgettes, aubergines, watermelon and melon will be promoted.
- In **France**, tomatoes, cucumber and strawberries.
- In **Poland**, apples.
- In **Greece**, table grapes, watermelon and melon.

## 2. - Production systems

Quality, traceability, food safety, environmental sustainability, technological development, innovation and more— European fruit and vegetable production methods are at the forefront of the world stage. In outdoor farming, as in the case with Polish apple crops and Greece's table grapes, watermelon and melon, or greenhouse farming, particularly linked to southern Spain and France (it is, however, increasingly widespread in northern and central Europe), the systems





used

differ from one country to another, although the high standards that have allowed these productions to be successful and their progressive internationalisation do not vary.

#### ➤ **Outdoor farming**

A widespread example of this system can be found in Poland. A favourable climate, clean environment and 500 years of farming history help apples from this country meet the highest quality standards, as seen by the certificates obtained by producer organisations (**GLOBALGAP**, **BRC**, etc). Applying the principles of integrated production makes production as close to natural production as possible.

The technologies used over the years, and the attention to detail in the stages of production, harvesting, storage, preparation for sale and the entire logistics chain guarantee consumers tasty, safe and healthy fruit at reasonable prices.

#### ➤ **Greenhouse farming**

In Europe there are different types of greenhouses, depending on the climatic conditions of each region.

In France, greenhouses occupy an area of 11,500 hectares. They mainly use the sun's energy to achieve optimum conditions for cultivation, combining it with renewable energies, such as solar energy or wood, and with cogeneration systems, through which thermal and electrical energy is obtained. In addition, the CO<sub>2</sub> released during this process is used by plants for photosynthesis. Furthermore, instead of soil, other natural substrates are used such as coconut fibre, which, being inert, prevents the development of mould and bacteria, thus reducing the use of phytosanitary products.

Spain has the highest number of greenhouses in Europe. They are mainly located in Almeria, occupying an area of 30,000 ha. right next to the sea. Thanks to southern Europe's favourable climate (19 degrees on average and more than 3,500 hours of sunshine per year); the only source of energy is the sun, without the need for fossil fuels.

Production under these plastic covers is notable thanks to its high efficiency in the use of water and nutrients, as greenhouses are equipped with drip irrigation systems that allow water to be at the foot of each plant. And because of the high density of plants, greenhouses are a **carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) sink**. It should be noted that these constructions are slowing down climate



change in regions such as the Almerian Poniente and, therefore, in much of the province thanks to the “**albedo effect**”; that is, the proportion

existing between the luminous energy that affects a surface and that reflected in the atmosphere, contributes to reducing the temperature on the surface which would otherwise be much higher.

Furthermore, the greenhouses of southern Europe are pioneers in the application of **biological control techniques**, which consist in the use of beneficial insects to naturally combat pests, while **bumblebees are increasingly being used for the natural pollination** of flowers, thus ensuring the subsequent formation of the fruit. Fruit and vegetable production in solar greenhouses is certified at the highest level of quality standards:

- **IFS**
- **Global Gap.**
- **GRASP: Risk Assessment on Social Practices**

## **Myths and realities of greenhouse farming**

### **Product flavour**

There are many myths circulating among consumers regarding products and greenhouses which the campaign would like to clarify, with the hope of improving information, knowledge and transparency concerning this production sector. Some Europeans have the misperception that greenhouses accelerate or induce ripening, leading to a lack of flavour in fruit and vegetables. On the contrary— the reality is that taste is not affected by greenhouses but by the variety itself, the type of seed, how it is fertilised and irrigated, and when it is harvested.

It should be noted that fruit and vegetables produced in solar greenhouses ripen on the plant, not in refrigerated trucks, and arrive to market in one to two days. It is a fresh product— from the plant to the table! And they can be very tasty as well as healthy.

In fact, many of the varieties famous for their flavour, such as raf tomatoes, cherry and cocktail tomatoes, Fashion and Bouquet watermelons, mini vegetables, and Ramiro and Palermo sweet peppers are produced in greenhouses.

### **Worldwide reference in the fight against pests: the “green revolution”**

The fruit and vegetable sector has been a pioneer in the implementation and management of integrated pest management (IPM) programmes. This process has been defined as the “Green



Revolution”, turning

greenhouse crops into an example at the global level for the successful implementation of highly sustainable strategies.

Biological pest control or integrated pest management uses natural predators to kill pests in a more environmentally-friendly way, thus improving the working environment and food safety of products. This avoids or reduces the use of phytosanitary products, which do not always give good results and can leave residue behind.

### Greenhouses and the social economy

Greenhouse production is closely related to the so-called “social economy”. To give an example, the 30,456 hectares of greenhouses in Almeria, distributed among 12,500 farms of an **eminently family nature**, stand out for their size. In other words, there is little concentration of ownership that multiplies the beneficiaries of the economic model. Furthermore, 62% of fruit and vegetable sales are done through **cooperatives or agricultural processing companies (SAT)**, improving the farmer’s position within the supply chain and their access to finance and technology.

Another noteworthy fact regarding social sustainability is the primordial role played by **women**. In Almeria and other production areas where solar greenhouses stand out, we find a large number of **female farmers, members of cooperatives, agricultural technicians and engineers, packagers, handlers, line managers, saleswomen and managers**. 71% and 30% of the personnel employed in this sector in sales companies and on farms, respectively, are women, while the average total female employment in Spain is at 41%. Similarly, this system promotes **R&D+i and technology, streamlining and the incorporation and integration of foreigners into the labour market**.

**In short, it is a production method seen globally as one of the most efficient which has managed to keep up economic activity and employment in rural areas by slowing down depopulation and halting the advance of desertification, while being sustainable in the use of natural resources and contributing as few activities as possible to help prevent and mitigate the effects of climate change.**



### 3. - The products

Tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, courgettes, aubergines, watermelon, melon, grapes, strawberries, apples and more— European fruit and vegetable production is rich and extensive. This ambitious promotional campaign includes some of the most representative items. The following is a summary of the sector's enormous socio-economic importance in the participating countries:

- **Spain** has a great variety of products marked by quality and sustainability which are very present in European markets. Spanish fresh fruit and vegetable exports reached 12,832 million euros in 2018, with a year-on-year increase of 1% and the volume standing at 12.5 million tonnes, 1% less, according to data from the Customs Department.
- **France** is the third largest fruit and vegetable producer in the EU after Italy and Spain. The fruit and vegetable sector has 31,000 production companies with more than 200,000 hectares and products of great added value, according to producer data. It generates 200,000 direct jobs with a turnover of around 3.5 billion.
- **Germany** is growing as a fruit and vegetable producing country. The country already obtains 4 million tonnes through both field (3.8 million tonnes) and greenhouse (180,000 tonnes) production, although imports are still key to ensuring their supply.
- **Greece's** fruit and vegetable sector is highly important within the country's agriculture industry, accounting for 3 percent of the national GDP and employing more than 12 percent of the population.
- **Poland** is the world leader in apple exports, a product that has become a true economic symbol of the country, and is the fourth largest European producer of fruit and vegetables in the EU, behind only Spain, Italy and France.

### 4. Benefits of fruits and vegetables

Fruits and vegetables are characterised by their adaptability to all types of diets and varying nutritional requirements, so they can meet the needs of different consumer targets. According to the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, incorporating fruits and vegetables into your daily diet can reduce the risk of certain diseases.

There is also scientific evidence showing that when these foods are eaten as part of a healthy diet low in fat, sugar and salt (or sodium), fruits and vegetables can also help prevent weight





gain and reduce the risk of obesity.

Fruits and vegetables are a rich source of vitamins and minerals, dietary fibre and a host of beneficial substances such as phytosterols, flavonoids and other antioxidants. The varied consumption of fruits and vegetables helps to ensure an adequate intake of many of these essential nutrients, in accordance with the conclusions of the medical and scientific community.



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