



## FruitVegetablesEUROPE's feedback:

### on the evaluation of the EU promotion policy for agri-food products

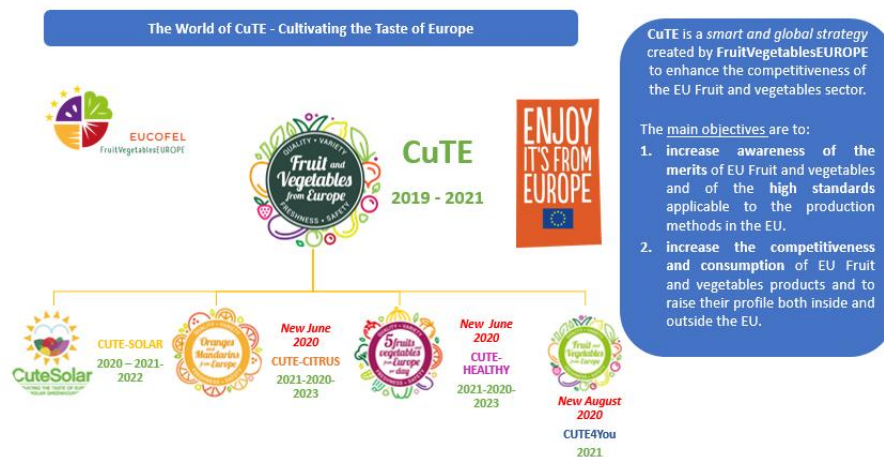
FruitVegetablesEUROPE (EUCOFEL) is the European private sectoral Association representing the European Fruit and Vegetables producers and exporters at the EU level. FruitVegetablesEUROPE's members are national and regional Federations and Associations (mainly PO and APO) and companies from the main European producing countries (France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, and Spain). FruitVegetablesEUROPE's direct members account for more than 4,500 companies.

FruitVegetablesEUROPE and its members are intensely committed and involved in the EU Promotion policy. To respond to the EU Fruit and Vegetables promotion needs, FruitVegetablesEUROPE created the CuTE's strategy in 2018. **CuTE – Cultivating the Taste of Europe** is a *smart and global strategy* to enhance the competitiveness of the EU Fruit and vegetables sector.

CuTE's main objectives are to:

1. **increase awareness of the merits** of EU Fruit and vegetables and of the **high standards** applicable to the production methods in the EU.
2. **increase the competitiveness and consumption** of EU Fruit and vegetables products and to raise their profile both inside and outside the EU.

Additionally, **restoring normal market conditions following the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the EU fruit and vegetables** is also a priority for FruitVegetablesEUROPE.



FruitVegetablesEUROPE is currently implementing two Multi-country PROMOTION PROGRAMMES in the EU internal market:

- **CHAFEA call: AGRI-MULTI-2018 (2019 – 2020 -2021): CuTE – Cultivating the Taste of Europe** (EUFV-CuTE – 826049). Coordinator.
- **CHAFEA call: AGRI-MULTI-2019 (2020 -2021 - 2022): CuTE – Solar: Cultivating the Taste of Europe in Solar Greenhouses** (CuTE-Solar – 874602). Partner.

Furthermore, in the framework of the call for proposals 2020, FruitVegetablesEUROPE has submitted three new proposals:

1. **CuTE-Citrus** (Topic A)
2. **CuTE-Healthy** (Topic B)
3. **CuTE-4You** (Topic – Crisis Covid-19)



All CuTE programmes share a common strategic approach with the *CuTE's strategy* which can be demonstrated through the objectives, messages, audience and communication tools that are meant to be applied. The complementarity between CuTE's programmes is grounded in the commonly shared *thematic (Fruit & Vegetables) and geographic dimensions (Europe)*. Activities complement and reinforce the activities implemented in all CuTE's programmes.

While *CuTE* framework programme is already paving the way for a large awareness raising strategic programme (covering more countries and more population), *CuTE-Solar* (Solar Greenhouses), *CuTE-Citrus* (EU citrus fruit), *CuTE-Healthy* (Healthy diet) and *CuTE-4You* (*Recovering Covid-19*) are or will focus on other thematic, which allow to expand and go deeper into the message and to highlight better the benefits related to European fruit and vegetables consumption.

### Evaluation of the EU agricultural promotion policy

As direct beneficiary, FruitVegetablesEUROPE welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the **evaluation of the EU Promotion policy for agricultural and food products**, which will assess the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance and EU added value of the EU agricultural promotion policy.

FruitVegetablesEUROPE strongly believes that the EU promotion policy is an excellent instrument to enhance the competitiveness of the European Fruit and Vegetables sector. At the same time, the EU promotion policy boost the consumption of EU products in the EU and in third countries. Furthermore, promotion measures contribute to raising consumer awareness of the merits of the EU's agricultural products and production methods, as well as the awareness and recognition of EU quality and organic farming schemes.

FruitVegetablesEUROPE support the EU agricultural and food promotion policy. Nevertheless, as a proposing organisation and having a large experience in implementing EU multi programmes, we would like to contribute to the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence of this policy.

#### How effective were the measures?

*(Have the objectives been met?)*

FruitVegetablesEUROPE considers that the European Union's promotion measures on the EU market and outside the EU reach the objective of increasing the competitiveness of the EU agricultural and food products. Furthermore, the reform of the policy conducted in 2014 has had a general positive impact. Particularly, the possibility to mention the origin and display of brands on the visuals has significantly helped the promotion of the EU agricultural and food products.

Regarding the **budget and the co-financing rates**, we consider that the amounts are partially providing the expected results. In our opinion, such a powerful policy needs a strong budget in the long term to really achieve its objectives. Furthermore, a more balanced split of the budget allocation between internal and third country markets is needed. Even if third countries are very important for EU exporter, the reality shows that the EU internal market with 500M of potential consumers is where the true opportunities are, particularly for high perishable products such a fruit and vegetables. Co-financing rates could also be increased, particularly those for multi programmes.

In general, the **European Commission own actions**, such as high-level missions, participation in fairs, Quality, Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards (SPS) Seminars, communication campaigns and production of market entry handbooks have proven to be effective measures to also promote the EU agricultural and food products.

Having participated in several **high-level missions** to third countries we can confirm that such a kind of activity is particularly important and useful for EU exporters. Nevertheless, an especial attention should be given to the selection of the contractor implementing the action to ensure a high-quality service. Furthermore, in our opinion, the organisation of Business to Business session could be improved to create real business opportunities.

#### How efficient were the measures?

*(Were the costs involved reasonable?)*



FruitVegetablesEUROPE believes that the **new system in place** for the promotion of EU agricultural and food products, particularly the system of application requirements, submission, evaluation, selection, management of promotion programmes and technical support provided to the proposing organisations is efficient and the creation of the Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency (CHAFAEA) has improved the efficiency of the promotion policy. Furthermore, in our opinion a direct EU management is considerably more efficient than a shared management one.

In our opinion, the **European Commission own actions** are in general efficient in promoting the EU agricultural and food products. It is important to highlight the added value of the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards Seminars and the market entry handbooks which provide valuable information to EU exporters. Additionally, Commissioner's high-level missions even if they are a more political tool to promote the EU agricultural and food products, also represent a huge opportunity to consolidate or create new business relationship with third countries operators. Of course, Commission own communication campaigns are also especially important and should be maintained and reinforced.

Concerning the **submission of promotion programmes** to the European Commission, as explained above we very much appreciate the possibility to present different programmes under different topics. This crucial possibility allows proposing organisations to focus the content of the programme to a specific topic and consequently enlarging the opportunities to achieve the final objective of enhancing the competitiveness and boosting the consumption of the EU agricultural and food products. Therefore, we believe that submitting several programmes under several topics contribute to the efficiency of the policy.

### Were the measures relevant?

*(Is EU action necessary?)*

FruitVegetablesEUROPE believes that the Commission **Annual Work Programme** for promoting the EU agricultural and food products is in general relevant to achieve the objectives. Nevertheless, while audience and product are well identified, this is not the same case for the regions.

Unfortunately, there is a big **incoherence between the EU Trade policy and the EU Promotion Policy**. The European fruit and vegetables producers are suffering the consequences of this incoherence and therefore facing great challenges in accessing the markets opened by the FTAs. The trade of agricultural products is obstructed because of long and expensive export protocols, negotiated country by country and product by product.

FruitVegetablesEUROPE would like to highlight the importance of **strengthening the coherence between opening up new markets and the real possibilities for exporting EU fruit and vegetable products to third countries**. Often the entry into force of a new FTA does not go hand in hand with an enhancement of the export conditions of European fruit and vegetables, leaving our sector behind.

FruitVegetablesEUROPE calls on the Commission to consider all European production sectors when fixing its Annual Work Programme on promotion. Furthermore, export protocol should be also taken into consideration to better target third countries markets and the budget allocation.

As already mentioned above, the **European Commission own actions** are relevant to promote the EU agricultural and food products. In our opinion these actions should be maintained and reinforced.

FruitVegetablesEUROPE believes that the use of the signature "**Enjoy! It's from Europe**" is extremely relevant for the promotion of EU agricultural and food products. Being well recognised around the world and sending a strong EU message this signature should be preserved and valorised. The possibility to mention the origin in a second level after the EU message and the use of trademarks is also a positive thing.

### Were the measures coherent?

*(Does the policy complement other EU funded actions?)*



For FruitVegetablesEUROPE the **European Commission own actions** achieve very clearly coherence with the promotion programmes submitted by proposing organisations. The Commission actions and EU promotion programmes are entirely complementary, and both are trying to enhance the competitiveness and to boost the consumption of the EU agricultural and food products.

Regarding the **coherence** of the EU promotion policy with the **promotion measures implemented by the Member States or under private** initiatives we consider that there is a general coherence. All are looking at the same objective, enhance the competitiveness and to boost the consumption, but in different ways and less focused on EU origin.

As already mention previously, the **coherence with other EU policies** is not so well achieved, particularly regarding the EU Trade policy. The current trade policy is not sustainable either at the environmental or the social level. The Fruit and Vegetables producers are suffering the consequences of free trade agreements. Products are being imported with much laxer phytosanitary regulations. If we want to bet on a sustainable food model, we must prioritize the European Fruit and vegetables consumption.

FruitVegetablesEUROPE agrees that **the Farm to Fork strategy must reflect the ambition of the Green Deal**. However, in our opinion:

- the incentives proposed in the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork strategies are not sufficient and appropriate for EU farmers to achieve an ecological transition.
- the reduction of the use of pesticides needs to be driven on scientific criteria. The European Commission must present comprehensible alternatives to the use of the current pesticides.
- there is a need for coordinated actions to contribute to a sustainable food system that will achieve a neutral environmental impact.
- it is necessary to urgently act to reduce the food waste and food losses at the EU level.
- EU conventional Agriculture complies with the most demanding standards of quality and food safety in the world. Therefore, not only organic agriculture should be considered.
- it is necessary to increase the number of actions regarding the information and promotion of the EU mandatory labelling of origin, particularly for Fruit and Vegetables, within the EU.
- we need concise and realistic proposals that are backed by strong budgetary support.

FruitVegetablesEurope believes that no one is to be left behind; the environmental transition cannot leave the burden on European farmers. European farmers are struggling to keep the sector alive, which is very much affected by intense international competition.

### Was there an EU-added value?

*(Can or could similar changes have been achieved at national/regional level, or did EU action provide clear added value?)*

For FruitVegetablesEurope, both the **EU promotion policy and national/regional promotion policies** are able to achieve the objective to improve competitiveness of the agricultural sector. Nevertheless, in our opinion, the EU promotion policy having more budgetary resources and a bigger scope can better achieve the objectives. Furthermore, the EU promotion policy measures strongly contribute to spread the EU message on the internal market and in third countries.

Additionally, the **tools and events set up by the EU promotion policy** strongly help to enhance the communication and collaboration between stakeholders at the EU level and in the Member States. CHAFEA portal is a valuable tool and Info Days are extremely useful for proposing organisation and potential beneficiaries.

As already mentioned, the most **essential benefits of EU promotion policy measures** are the scope and the budget. The EU promotion policy can better contribute to spread the EU message. Unfortunately, this is less the case for Member States promotion actions.



### How can the EU agricultural and food promotion policy be improved?

The creation of an independent Agency, the Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency (CHAFEA) has improved the efficiency of the promotion policy. In our opinion, the **Agency should manage all promotion programmes** funded by the EU budget (simple and multi). A shared management only complicate things and could create misinterpretation by Member States making only difficult for proposing organisation to implement the programme. The system in place for multi programmes has proven to be an excellent and efficient management system.

The decision to move **the Agency (CHAFEA)** from Luxembourg to Brussels seems to be a good decision which will make easier attending meetings and having contact with project officers in charge of the promotion programmes. Currently (before Covid-19 pandemic), attending meetings in Luxembourg were difficult, traveling time consuming and expensive.

Regarding the **eligibility criteria**, we consider that the EU should ensure that all beneficiaries represent EU interests and not third countries interests. In that sense, a particular attention should be given to this matter.

As already mentioned, the EU promotion policy needs a **strong budget** in the long term to really achieve its objectives. Therefore, the current budget should be maintained or increased in the coming years. A **better allocation between internal and third counties markets** should be achieved. In our opinion, according more resources to the EU internal market programmes is essential.

Regarding the **application system**, we consider that it is clear and easy. Furthermore, having one call for proposals per year facilitate the preparation and submission of proposals. In our opinion, the **evaluation of the proposals** should give a better score and priority to proposals with a “real EU dimension”.

### Conclusion:

**The EU promotion policy is an excellent and essential tool to enhance the competitiveness and to boost the consumption of the European Fruit and Vegetables sector.**

The European fruit and vegetable production models are at the forefront of the world. The technologies used for years, the attention to detail in the production, the harvesting, the storage, the preparation for sale and the entire logistics chain guarantee consumers an excellent taste, safety and healthy fruits and vegetables at reasonable prices. The European Fruit and Vegetables sector guarantees its commitment and responsibility in the continued supply of food with the highest guarantees in safety and quality matters.

Therefore, FruitVegetablesEurope believes that it is crucial to providing positive information on the benefits and advantages of the European fruit and vegetables and to increase the knowledge and awareness of consumers who are unaware of the characteristics of the EU fruit and vegetables.

For FruitVegetablesEUROPE the future Promotion policy should ensure:

- **A strong EU budget.**
- **A better allocation between internal and third counties markets.**
- **More resources for the programmes implemented in the EU internal market.**
- **An Annual Work Programme considering all European production sectors and coherent with the real possibilities of exporting to third countries.**
- **A coherence with other EU policies.**

*Brussels, 11<sup>th</sup> September 2020*