

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

3 September 2020

ESSA & Freshfel Europe join forces to kick start multi-level food crisis management collaboration & dialogue to learn from past experiences & prepare for future scenarios

On 2 September 2020, over 200 industry and public sector stakeholders from across Europe and beyond gathered at ESSA and Freshfel Europe's Food Crisis Management Event to analyse former as well as hypothetical food crisis situations, the lessons learnt from them, and best crisis response approaches. Business operators, crisis management experts, national authorities and European Commission officials discussed the reputational damage and health hazards that food crises have represented. Participants were then challenged to react to two future scenarios, one of which inspired by the on-going COVID-19 pandemic.

As a multi-level and multi-sectorial event, the Food Crisis Management Event showcased ESSA and Freshfel Europe's commitment to facilitate structures and coordination within and between private companies, sectorial associations and institutions dedicated to food crisis management. The long-term vision of the organisers is to foster cooperation between stakeholders to better manage potential future crises in the agri-food sector, with a view to further developing effective crisis strategies, and raising awareness of crisis management good practices. The [meeting](#) reviewed, with the support experts, the management of former food crisis situations, namely food hygiene and food fraud cases. The meeting also dedicated discussions to hypothetical future crisis scenarios and how they should be managed by actors across the supply chain in conjunction with national authorities and the European Commission. Inspired by the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, the last panel discussion focused on the role of misinformation in the management of food crises.

European Commission DG Santé Deputy Director-General Claire Bury opened the event and congratulated the initiative by underlying: *"Managing food crises inevitably happens when dealing with food safety. The Commission is committed to working with stakeholders towards a better preparedness of all actors for the proper management of food crises"*.

Eglé Baecke, ESSA Secretary General, affirmed that: *"We hope that this event will encourage the private and public sectors to put a collaborative crisis management mechanism in place at national and European levels. Therefore, we invite private and public sectors to find ways of cooperation. The importance of this has become evident based on the outcome of discussions during this event. The large number of participants at the event both from the industry as well as from national and European authorities across Europe demonstrates the high level of interest and importance of learning how to prevent crises and improve crisis management. The fresh produce industry hopes that this event serves to further reinforce good cooperation between business operators and authorities on crisis management. Cooperation must be a continuous process and applied in practice, e.g. through crisis simulation exercises."*

Following the event, Freshfel Europe General Delegate Philippe Binard remarked that, *"The fresh produce sector strives for good practices in production and trade. However, this is reliant on a high level of cooperation with authorities and other actors. Collectively we need to foster effective modes of collaboration to better manage potential future food crises"*.

Summing up the debate, Philippe Binard concluded: *"There is no such thing as zero risk. Priority should therefore be to work collectively towards the prevention of crises and be prepared to act if a crisis occurs. Transparency plays a big role in crisis management. It is based on a long-term confidence between public and private stakeholders. During the crisis and recovery period, good and consistent communication is essential. All stakeholders involved in a crisis should set up communication tools among each other as well as to the public. European and National Authorities play a big role in informing the public as well as in restoring consumers' confidence. Open collaboration is therefore a key element of successful crisis management and prevention"*.

ENDS

Note to the Editors:

More information about the Food Crisis Management Event is, including the full programme, available on the ESSA website [here](#) and the Freshfel Europe website [here](#).

The European Sprouted Seeds Association (ESSA) brings together European producers of sprouted seeds and traders of seeds for sprouting. ESSA promotes the interests of the European sprouted seed growers, provides a forum to discuss issues affecting the European sprouted seeds sector and gives opportunities to discuss common issues. For more information, contact the association at info@sproutedseeds.eu or visit the association website www.sproutedseeds.eu

Freshfel Europe is the European Fresh Produce Association, representing the interests of the fresh fruit and vegetables supply chain in Europe and beyond. Freshfel Europe currently has over 200 members, including both companies and associations. For more information, contact the association at info@freshfel.org or visit the association website www.freshfel.org.