



February 2017

Mid-term update on EUFRUIT activities and preliminary results

EUFRUIT is a Horizon 2020 European funded project aiming to **facilitate the access to knowledge and disseminate existing research and innovation potential for the benefit of the fresh produce sector and consumers**. Altogether, it gathers a consortium of 21 partners from 12 different countries with a total budget of 1.8 M for 3 years (March 2016-2019). The consortium focuses its activities on **4 crucial thematic areas** for the competitiveness and innovation potential of the European Fruit sector:

- 1) new cultivar development
- 2) minimise residues on fruit and in the environment
- 3) optimise storage and fruit quality
- 4) enhance sustainable production systems.

As such, EUFRUIT acts as a **knowledge platform** while providing unique networking opportunities for academics and researchers partners, fruit business operators as well as decision makers. Currently in its second year, EUFRUIT's activities have begun to yield some interesting results.

Fruit quality and storage/handling optimisation

Most of the consortium's partners involved in this thematic area have focused on both technical and chemical methods for improving the maintenance of fruit quality after harvest. Interestingly, the two technologies that have proved to be particularly successful in maintaining fruit quality are **DCA-storage** (Dynamic Control Atmosphere) and postharvest treatment with **1-Methylcyclopropen**, a synthetic plant growth regulator that is used commercially to slow down the ripening of fruit and to help maintain their freshness. **Reducing food loss** (e.g. due to fungi infections or bruising) as well as **reducing energy loss** (e.g. by using new cooling technologies like electronically commutated fans) in fruit storage were also among the main research topics. Other partners have opted to focus more on testing different **fruit quality analysing technologies** (through destructive and non-destructive measuring methods) as well as on storage conditions of new apple and pear varieties and different stone fruit cultivars.

Sustainable fruit production systems

A comprehensive overview on the present status of best practices of sustainable production that growers apply today as well as recent developments in sustainable fruit production that are currently being developed was presented during the last meeting of the working group on sustainable fruit production systems. The main progresses



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identified for the future revolved around the following three focus areas:

- **fruit thinning:** focus on the development of decision support models (DSS) as a tool that can help growers to make the right decisions about chemical and manual thinning, through measuring and prediction of the physiological reaction of the trees.
- **water/nutrients:** focus on the flow of water in the tree, modelling of the soil moisture, sensor testing, plant physiological reaction to different water stress levels in different stages of the season, usage of waste water, usage of satellite images to estimate dryness, buffering more water from spring and winter time by increasing organic substance levels in the soil.
- **organic fruit growing:** focus on netting, rain protection, biodiversity, green products, acceptance, registration and development of new products, bird shelters, and pre-cultivation.

EUFRUIT is a dedicated platform to secure that existing research are fully exploited by the fruit sector, maximizing the research investment into effective exchange of best practices and converting knowledge into innovative agriculture practices across Europe. From the fresh produce sector, both AREFLH (Association of the Regions producing fruit, vegetables and horticulture products) and Freshfel Europe (European fruit and vegetables Association) will be actively involved in the dissemination of the project achievements to the sector.

END

Note to the Editors: The Assembly of European Horticultural Regions (AREFLH) main missions are:

- to represent its 19 member regions and 25 AOPs, from 7 European countries;
- to defend the economic and social interests of the fruit, vegetable and horticultural sectors in Europe;
- to foster exchanges of best practices, partnerships and joint projects between regions and professional organisations;
- to actively seek new solutions for the main issues affecting the future of the fruit and vegetables production in Europe.

For more information: www.areflh.org

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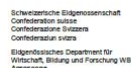
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