

# **THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN FRUIT SECTOR IN EUROPE 2030**

## **A WORKING ABSTRACT**

**BY THE EUFRIN WORKING GROUP ON HORIZON 2020**

EUFRIN (the European Fruit Research Institutes Network) is a voluntary network created to facilitate international cooperation among fruit researchers. The Board of this network has identified the need for a sector-wise organization of the fruit chain in Europe, with the goal of defining a Strategic Research Agenda for the sector. The present condensed document argues in favor of a coordinated action by concerned researchers and fruit chain stakeholders leading to the formulation and implementation of such Agenda with an outlook to 2030.

### ***Current size of the EU fruit industry***

The European fruit industry is a relevant sector of the EU agroindustry as, with less than 3% of total land use, it produces around 17% of the value of the total EU agricultural production. The combined fruit and vegetable sectors involve about 1.4 million farm holdings, with a total chain turnover of about 120 billion euro.

### ***Eu fruit industry and global challenges***

Fruits represent an ideal food as they deliver unique nutritional value conferring protection from cardiovascular diseases, obesity and cancer, associated to taste, freshness and naturalness. Securing a steady supply of fruit and fruit derived products for the EU consumer is a must, vis-a-vis the food challenges that lie ahead in terms of projected demographic growth, climate change, sustainability and competition from

third countries. If Europe is to maintain a secure and safe supply of fruit, it must invest in research leading to technological innovation to be funneled into the chain.

### ***Constraints in the fruit industry***

The European fruit sector is faced with: (i) reduced fruit consumption; (ii) increased competition from low-labor costs, non-EU countries who are often quick to adopt state of the art technology; (iii) diminishing availability of skilled labour; (iv) high susceptibility to pests and diseases of most commercial varieties. In spite of these weaknesses, current state of the art is that horticultural research has been underfunded, and the horticultural sector faces the risk of being unable to respond to the upcoming challenges listed above.

### ***Vision of EUFRIN***

The **EUROPE 2020 Strategy** calls for a model of growth capable of addressing Europe's future **societal, economic** and **environmental** issues. Such growth must be **smart** (based on education, knowledge and innovation); **sustainable** (based on a resource-efficient, greener and more competitive economy); **inclusive** (based on high employment, and economic, social and territorial cohesion). The fruit sector is in an excellent position to contribute to this growth via the **adoption of innovation** resulting in an improved and more competitive European fruit supply chain.

### ***The Fruit sector contribution to EU Society***

A broad supply of consumer-oriented, healthy, accessible, convenient fruits and fruit-derived foods will be secured. Resulting benefits will include improved health, development of specialist expertise throughout the supply chain, education through knowledge exchange, wealth creation for the rural environment, empowerment of rural areas and landscape preservation.

### ***The Fruit sector contribution to EU Economy***

The European fruit chain will retain and increase its competitiveness by adopting novel, eco-innovative technologies. These will secure greater profitability by means of

increased labor efficiency, improved quality and productivity, reduced waste, innovative products and increased consumption of fruit and fruit-based products.

### ***The Fruit sector contribution to EU Environment***

European fruit production systems will contribute to the preservation of the environment through the adoption of an array of eco-innovative technologies delivering better products and reduced wastage under threats from climate change and limited natural resources. This will be achieved through energy efficient systems and innovative management tools which will optimize the use of production factors, and minimize the carbon, water, mineral nutrients, pesticides footprint of the fruit chain while improving land-stewardship.

### ***The fruit sector contribution to development and uptake of Innovation***

Innovation adoption must become a trademark of the European fruit sector for it to achieve a Smart, Inclusive and Sustainable Bio-Economy. A common strategy is needed among the fruit sector actors for making sure that the knowledge arising from research leads to maintaining and creating employment, contributing to consumer-demand-related food quality and safety, contributing to unique landscapes, delivering novel fruit-based products that respond to the needs of future European societies, continued adaptation of the sustainability concept in the fruit sector and minimizing energy consumption.

### ***Moving Forward***

As Horizon 2020 is approaching, the tools and ways to interact with the EU Commission are changing, and are expected to rely more and more on innovative forms of involvement of local, regional, national and international resources. Stakeholders in the Fruit Chain throughout Europe will be called upon to assess and endorse this Vision, and to cooperate in forging the Strategic Research Agenda. EUFRIN is at an ideal interface in the Fruit Chain to act as a collector and coordinator of this demand for research, and also to be proactive in organizing the supply of research, creating the critical mass needed to tackle the complex issues facing the Sector in the future.