

Sud de France Export featured at Medfel

Perpignan is not only a fruit and vegetable distribution base to be reckoned with (Saint-Charles is Europe's top fruit and vegetable load-splitting centre, handling over 1.5 million tonnes in transit) but also the successful venue for the 2nd Medfel exhibition.



Medfel has consolidated its position as the top spot for the Euro-Mediterranean fruit and vegetable trade, attended by most of the countries involved and a large number of their leading operators. Above all, this show has raised the profile of the regional brand, Sud de France Export, a quality label developed by the Languedoc-Roussillon Regional Council to promote certified agri-food products from the region, including fruit and vegetables. «Sud de France Export is managed like a collective brand, complying with a quality charter and emphasising sustainability», explained Chantal Passat, who is responsible for the agri-food area. With economic development as the objective, multi-product promotions are organised with supermarket chains in France and other European markets. They emphasise the south of France's art of living and the gourmet quality of its products, attuned to the rhythm of the seasons.

Port Vendres confirms good growth in sea-freighted fruit and vegetables, with over 300,000 tonnes coming from Morocco this season. «Although French imports of Moroccan products have fallen by around 20% this year, we have seen a 19% rise in shipping through our port», said its chairman, Edouard Raymond.

Medfel is also a meeting point for innovations, as shown by the new ready-to-use soups and salads

presented by Sud Primeur. Created by nine well-known chefs (including 5-star holders), the company's range of pasteurised soups is already a big export success, for instance in Dubai and Russia. Duo Fraicheur is a great combination: a crudité salad (130 g) sold together with a fruit salad (250 g). The port is part of the MP2 association set up by the Pyrénées-Orientales General Council to manage and promote the Department's various logistics platforms: the port of Cerbère, the road/rail transport hub of Le Boulou, Grand Saint-Charles logistics centre, Perpignan airport and Rivesaltes logistics park. A total of 2.6 million tonnes of fruit and vegetables pass through here, including 600,000 t using combined sea, road and rail transport.

Anecoop France, which distributes 75,000 tonnes of the group's products, confirms that its summer season ambitions for its famous seedless watermelon brand Bouquet will be helped by a number of promotions aimed at consumers, with activities in stores and wholesale markets and advertisements on the underground and trams in Paris, Lyon and Lille. The company sold 14,000 tonnes of this leading brand in France and elsewhere last season. «1500 tonnes of mini watermelons complete the range», pointed out the manager, Miguel Abril. The Anecoop group sells over 101,500 tonnes of

EDITORIAL

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How about ethical trade for European growers?

How about more ethical practices from the European retailers, rather than increasing fair trade with more overseas countries? The survival of many European producers organizations is at stake. The main professional organizations have been ringing the alarm bells for months, and so have provincial agriculture authorities. AREFLH has been lobbying the European Commission and European Parliament to implement a market crisis management scheme, as in the milk industry. The French government has just taken the political initiative by forcing retailers to adopt "more ethical commercial practices" with fruit & vegetable producers, committing them to lower margins and trade discounts. International harmonization of phytosanitary rules has a very long way to go, but we shall be underlining sustainable initiatives. The carbon footprint is being taken seriously by European growers. GLOBALG.A.P. is helping to harmonize agricultural practices. Some UK & German retail chains are also giving social and environmental responsibility a boost by funding ethical programs and labelling low carbon footprint produce. FRESHFEL is working hard to lift trade barriers and harmonize plant health regulations in order to stimulate international trade. In view of the slowdown in local consumption and developments on foreign markets, overseas opportunities are a priority.

watermelons throughout Europe, of which 76,500 t are seedless and 25,000 t seeded. Mediterranean Fruit Company is a marketing initiative by leading companies in the Italian fruit and vegetable production, technology, packaging, logistics and services sector. Its members include GF group (leading fruit importer), Infia (the world's top punnet manufacturer), Unitec (Italy's top grader manufacturer), Besana (no.1 in dried fruit and nuts), Mazzoni (table grapes) and Apofruit (no.1 in organic produce and summer fruit). Guanter Rodriguez handles around 60% of customs transit and 20% of fruit and vegetable freight transport between Morocco and France. The company is based at Perpignan, where it has a 10,000 m2 logistics centre. The manager, José Rodriguez, also confirms that sea freight from Morocco is continuing to grow and now accounts for over 30% of the company's throughput (over 10,000 tonnes). Lacour SAS has confirmed its top position as an importer at Saint-Charles. It has 88 employees, distributes 90,000 tonnes and offers over 120 product lines. Its top-of-the-range brands are Château L (considered the «vintage» label), Picolino (for «assured quality») and Gustave («a passion for taste», the best grape and melon selection).