

For immediate release

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The Spanish Ministry of Agriculture and the Region of Murcia show their support for the World Citrus Organization in its official presentation at Fruit Attraction 2019

Today the newly founded World Citrus Organisation (WCO) was officially launched at Fruit Attraction, Madrid. With this official presentation, citrus fruits are finally placed at the same level of coordination worldwide as other fruit categories, such as pears & apples, kiwis, avocado or red fruits, which already have their own global platforms. The WCO will act as the global platform for dialogue and action between the citrus producing countries worldwide. The core aim of the WCO is to facilitate member countries to better face common challenges and seize opportunities for the collective benefit of the citrus sector, in a spirit of cooperation and transparency.

Led by AILIMPO, the Spanish Lemon and Grapefruit Interbranch Association, and the Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA), sector representatives from Argentina, Chile, Italy, Morocco, Peru, Spain, and South Africa decided to join forces today to create a global citrus platform where together they may address the many multifaceted changes experienced by the citrus market over recent years. Other countries that were unable to attend the meeting have also committed to the project, and the remaining global producers are invited to join the organization.

The primary objective of the WCO is to facilitate collective action in the citrus sector, for both fresh and processed categories. Most recently the sector has been faced with an extensive array of significant issues of global concern including growth in production, overlapping of seasons, changing climate conditions resulting in varied quality and biosecurity challenges, increased competition within the citrus category and between other fruit categories and food products as well as stagnating fruit consumption. The WCO will facilitate member countries to better face these common challenges and identify opportunities for the collective benefit of the citrus sector.

Specifically, the WCO's mission is to:

- Discuss common issues affecting citrus producing countries.
- Exchange information on production and market trends to prepare for the next decade to come.
- Foster dialogue on policy issues of common concern.
- Identify and promote Research and Innovation projects specific to the citrus sector.
- Liaise with public and private stakeholders on citrus-related matters to highlight the importance of citrus producers and the need for a fair return.
- Promote the global consumption of citrus.

During the official presentation in Madrid, the Director General of Agricultural Production and Markets of the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Esperanza Orellana, congratulated the citrus sector for the initiative, emphasizing the importance for Spain, leader in the production and export of citrus fruits, to be at the forefront of this project. The Counsellor of the Region of Murcia, Antonio Luengo, also greeted the participants and expressed his support for the new organisation. "It is important that the world citrus community works together to face common challenges and learn from each other," he said, adding that, leaving aside the competitive factor, it is essential to share information and experiences for the collective benefit of the sector, which is of key strategic importance for Murcia and for Spain.

Freshfel Europe, the European Fresh Produce Association, whose Secretariat is based in Brussels, Belgium, will coordinate and administer the WCO. The next meeting, where the formalities for the foundation and future structure of the organisation will be formalized, will take place at FruitLogistica 2020 in Berlin.

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Note to the Editors:

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