


More than a third of the European Commission's (EC) latest round of agricultural promotion funding will go to the fresh produce sector, with Greece as the leading recipient by far. 

The EC announced yesterday it had approved 41 programs worth €130 million over the next three years, including an additional €30 million in EU funds made available following the Russian ban on imports of EU food products in August.

"Promoting EU agri-food products on global markets is a strong and proactive response to the Russian Ban," Agriculture and Rural Development Commissioner Phil Hogan said in a release.

"The increased funding for promotion measures will continue to contribute to the success story of the growth in exports of high quality EU agri-food products on the world market."

Of the total, around €46 million will be destined for campaigns that are mostly focused on fresh fruit and vegetables, however within that the Centro Servizi Ortofrutticoli (CSO) in Italy will also spend part of its €5.2 million on processed produce, while a consortium of Polish farmers will spend its €5.4 million on produce, livestock and poultry.

Greece accounts for almost 28% of the funding dedicated to the fresh produce sector, and 22% of all funds due to a significant amount of support for its olive and olive oil industries. Beneficiaries from Greece's produce sector include the stonefruit-focused Consortium of Production Cooperatives of Imathia and a group of kiwifruit growers, as well as companies such as Gouster, Nespar and Nestos.

France follows Greece with 14% of the total due mainly to dairy promotion funding, while Italy accounts for 11% as like Greece its olive and olive oil sectors are heavily supported. French produce group Intefel will receive €4.3 million while the Italian Association of Apple Producers will get €1.3 million.

Other groups to benefit from the scheme include the U.K. Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board's (AHDB) potato division, the Irish Food Board, the Dutch Potato Organization (NOA), Belgium's Flanders' Agricultural Marketing Board (VLAM), AgrarMarkt Austria, Spanish strawberry group Interfresa in Andalusia, the Romanian National Mushroom Growers Association, the Bulgarian National Horticultural Union (BNHU) and Cyprus-based Cyprofresh Citrus Sedigep.

In the release, the EC said 17 of the programs would target the internal EU market and 24 will focus on third countries.

"This is a significant change in comparison to the previous wave of programmes, where nearly two thirds of the schemes targeted the internal market," the release said.

"This is most likely due to the additional 30 million EURO announced by the European Commission last year in the wake of the Russian ban on imports of certain EU agricultural products as a measure to help find alternative markets.

"In spite of the restrictions imposed unilaterally by the Russian Federation, total EU agri-food exports to third countries increased by 2% in value in the period August-December 2014 compared to the same period of the previous year."

The third countries and regions targeted are: the Middle East, North America, South East Asia, China, Japan, South Korea, Africa, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Australia and Norway.

Moreover, five of the accepted programs are so-called multi-programs, comprising joint promotion campaigns by organizations from different Member States.

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