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## PRESS RELEASE

### **European Producers Warn of Growing Threats to Fruit Processing Sector**

The European fruit processing sector<sup>1</sup>, which provides a wide range of convenient, traditional, healthy, and long-shelf-life products to consumers, is facing significant challenges that impact its competitiveness.

For several years, the fruit processing industry has been facing threats due to declining fruit yields across Europe. This decline results from a reduction in available acreage and lower yields. The loss of active substances to combat certain pests, exacerbated by climatic changes and weather extremes, poses an existential threat to growers. The number of orchard farmers has been decreasing, as has the overall acreage. In addition, a severe shortage of seasonal workers and fruit pickers means not even diminished crops are likely to be fully harvested. As a result, the overall quantity of European-grown fruit for industry is insufficient and uncertain.

Regarding this year, after a disastrous last year, the impact of climate change is being felt again this season, with severe shortages for selected fruits due to spring frosts, hails, storms and heavy rain. This has particularly affected black cherries, strawberries, raspberries, blackcurrants, plums, and sour cherries in Poland, Serbia, Macedonia, Turkey and Hungary, as well as rhubarb. In Spain and Greece the peach and apricot crop was damaged due to rain, hail and frost, and plant diseases that are more likely to spread as the climate gets warmer. Greece reports that due to frost in March and April cling peach crops are down more than 30%, apricots more than 50% and pears more than 60%, and Spain has also seen 30 % – 40 % reductions.

As a consequence, fruit prices for peaches and pears are high, for apricots very high, and for strawberries, cherries, sour cherries, blackcurrant, rhubarb and many other important raw materials for the European fruit processing industry prices have reached unprecedented levels. Beside the costs, for some products, especially cherries and black currants, but also many organic fruits, production will not cover market needs.

Preserved fruit prices will have to rise significantly to ensure continuity of supply in the coming years.

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<sup>1</sup> European Producers of Canned & Frozen Fruit, Jams, Fruit Preserves, and Compotes

The EU's fruit preserving sector plays a crucial role in ensuring food security by offering long-shelf-life products. The sector's viability is essential for both consumers and local employment.

In view of the above concerns, the sector is calling for:

- More awareness among all partners in the value chain for these developments.
- A renewed appreciation of preserved fruit products to ensure a future for the European fruit processing sector.

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*PROFEL is the European Association of Fruit and Vegetable Processing Industries, representing over 400 companies in 12 European countries, producing canned vegetables, frozen vegetables, dehydrated vegetables, jams and fruit preserves, frozen fruit and canned fruit. The members of PROFEL employ more than 80.000 people. The combined turnover of our members amounts to an impressive figure – roughly €22 billion. Members annually produce approximately: Frozen vegetables: 3.300.000 Tons; Canned vegetables: 2.100.000 Tons; Canned Deciduous fruits and compotes: 1.000.000 Tons; Fruit preserves and jams: 485.000 Tons; Dried vegetables: 50.000 Tons.*