

Brussels, 18<sup>th</sup> April 2013

## **Contribution to the Consultation on the review of the CAP schemes providing agricultural products to school children (here: School Fruit Scheme)**

*PROFEL is the European Association of fruit and vegetable processing industries (canned vegetables, frozen vegetables, dehydrated vegetables, jams and preserves, canned fruit and compotes), representing over 500 companies in 15 EU countries.*

### **Scope of the Scheme**

Of the different policy options proposed, the idea of merging the SFS and the School Milk Scheme would be to the detriment of an improved and more focused SFS. The two schemes and their products are too different, and the nutritional message, which is the primary objective of the SFS, would be weakened as a result.

Regarding the SFS, healthy processed fruit and vegetable products that are eligible under the scheme have up to now not seen the up-take in the national programmes they deserve. Fruit and vegetables – both fresh and processed - are known for their health-promoting properties; and are associated with protection against a broad range of human chronic diseases like cancer and heart disease and play a crucial role in the fight against obesity. We therefore call for processed fruit and vegetable products to be better integrated in the existing scheme, both as far as distribution and accompanying measures are concerned.

- Processed fruit and vegetables are a **good source of vitamins, antioxidants, dietary fibre and phenolic compounds**<sup>1</sup>
- They contribute in a significant manner to the intake of **essential nutrients** in our daily diet; and to comply with public health recommendations - which is why they are included in national “5-a-day” schemes and are part of other national nutrition plans such as the PNNS in France
- processed products comply with **highest quality and hygiene standards**,
- they bring flexibility to the scheme due to their strong **convenience factors** such as **long shelf life; availability all year round and stable prices**

<sup>1</sup> Study on the nutritional benefits of processed fruit and vegetables <http://www.profel-europe.eu/publications-positions/publications/study-nutrition> & expertise scientifique collective INRA 2007 “Les fruits et légumes dans l'alimentation :enjeux et déterminants de la consommation” [www.inra.fr](http://www.inra.fr) ; [www.easyvegetables.com](http://www.easyvegetables.com)

- in the context of putting an emphasis on seasonality, processed fruit and vegetables are **valid alternatives to fresh produce**
- they can contribute considerably to the overall goals of the SFS:
  - discovering new tastes and accessing new types of fruit and vegetables and their mixes
  - changing children's eating habits and raising their awareness
  - teaching the concept of what constitutes one portion of fruit and vegetables in the context of 5-a-day campaigns (both in terms of portion size and variety) - thereby supporting classroom teaching on the importance of sufficient fruit and vegetable intake.
  - Connecting food to farming

The fruit and vegetable processing industry has over the last years developed a wide range of healthy and innovative products to make fruit and vegetables more accessible. Yet this is not reflected by the inclusion of processed products by Member States in their national strategies. Healthy fruit compotes in particular are a good example: they help children discover new tastes and are great fun!

### **Accompanying measures**

The fact that the accompanying measures are presently not financed from the EU budget and that there are no additional minimum requirements as regards their implementation means that there are wide discrepancies in the approaches at Member State level.

PROFEL fully supports the proposal to make the accompanying (educational) measures eligible for EU co financing.

At the same stage these measures – as a proper part of the programme - should be supported by a pedagogical school kit that informs in a ludic way about the importance of a balanced diet, the nutritional qualities of both fresh and processed fruit and vegetables, and the origins of food. Such a school kit needs to comply with a set of criteria defined at EU level. The development of tool kits may be done by professional organizations of the fruit and vegetable chain as long as they comply with the EU criteria. Furthermore, professional organizations should be involved and consulted on the tool kit criteria at European level and during implementation at national level.

**In conclusion, the benefits of processed fruit and vegetable products are today not sufficiently recognized in the existing programmes, and we appeal to encourage their better inclusion in the distribution of fruit portions, and to assure they are a validated component in the school kit.**