

# Tips for finding buyers on the European fresh fruit and vegetables market

When looking for potential buyers, you need to be well prepared. Know your strengths and weaknesses, but also be selective in choosing your trade partner that can best represent your company on the European market. Find your potential buyers by using the tips below about information sources, databases and trade events.

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## 1. Search for buyers that best fit your business

There are many different importers of fresh fruit and vegetables. Roughly speaking, however, you can distinguish between importers that are dominant in supplying large retailers on the one hand and specialised importers that are more focused on trade and wholesale on the other (see Table 1). The retail suppliers are fewer in numbers but have a dominant share in the sector, while specialised importers can offer you a sales channel for specific products such as organic, ethnic or exotic fruit and vegetables.

Table 1: Type of buyers

	Large importers and service providers	Specialised importers and traders
Types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Service providers to large retailers</li><li>• Contract buyers</li><li>• Retail purchase centres</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Traders/suppliers to service providers and wholesale (spot market)</li><li>• Specialised buyers of specific fruit categories (for example, citrus specialists)</li><li>• Importers of niche, exotic, organic and ethnic products</li></ul>
Advantages	Supply programmes, fixed-price, long-term or seasonal contracts, pre-harvest financing, supply security	Flexibility, expertise in specific products

Disadvantages	Strict quality and food safety standards, minimum required volumes, mandatory packaging options	Spot sales (price fluctuations)
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Greenyard Fresh France</a> (France)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Nature's Pride</a> (the Netherlands)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Wealmoor</a> (the United Kingdom)</li> <li>• <a href="#">OGL Food Trade</a> (Germany)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">SpecialFruit</a> (exotics)</li> <li>• <a href="#">BUD Holland</a> (exotics)</li> <li>• <a href="#">OTC Organics</a> (organic)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Eosta</a> (organic and Fairtrade products)</li> </ul>

Search for buyers that offer the most security. Buyers with retail supply programmes should be the most reliable, but they are also the most demanding. Fixed-price buyers provide a more secure deal than consignment, but they are harder to find. If working with a minimum guaranteed price, look for buyers with a large and proven network, and negotiate a minimum price that at least covers your costs. The experience of your buyer is important, even more so when supplying a specific or difficult product such as papaya or young coconuts.

Companies that typically deal with wide assortments and extensive services to large retail buyers are, for example, [Wealmoor](#) (the United Kingdom), [Greenyard Fresh France](#) (France) and [Nature's Pride](#) (the Netherlands). Importers that are more specialised include [SpecialFruit](#) and [BUD Holland](#) in exotics, and [OTC Organics](#) and [Eosta](#) in organic and Fairtrade fresh products.

Buyers may initially be reluctant to work with new suppliers, so know your strengths as a company and present these strengths well. Buyers of fresh fruit and vegetables depend on good suppliers and you as a supplier must try to excel. At the same time, importers have gotten a much more facilitating role in the supply chain, while production and transparency have become much more important. As a supplier, you can benefit from this trend by finding an importer that can become an extension of your business.

Be selective, and find potential buyers that match your type of product and volume. Buyers which are eager to buy your product and which promise good results are not necessarily your best choice. Sometimes, they will try to reduce their own risks at your expense.

### Tips:

Be careful with whom you choose to do business. Ask around what other people in your sector know about a specific company and their reputation. Also make sure that your buyer is reliable and financially sound.

Ask your potential buyer which types of end-clients they supply and what their volumes in the past years were.

Be realistic and remember that importers also depend on the developments of the market. You can use their experience and market insights, but they cannot promise you a certain result.

## 2. Visit trade fairs and use their online catalogues

A good way to find buyers is by visiting trade fairs. Many European businesses use these trade fairs to manage their relations and show their presence on the market. Trade fairs are therefore an ideal place to meet in person with various importers.

They are also a great opportunity to find background information on your new target market(s) and present your company directly to your potential customers. This process clearly means that you will make costs. However, you will find a large concentration of relevant prospects in one place. It is worth the investment if you come prepared.

Most trade fairs have an online exhibitor catalogue. These online catalogues have search engines, which you can use to find buyers per product or product group. They offer relevant information such as buyers' websites and contact details, making them a good starting point to prepare for a trade fair visit.

The main trade fairs in the fresh fruit and vegetable sector are Fruit Logistica in Berlin, Germany in February, and Fruit Attraction in Madrid, Spain in October. For specific markets or segments, you could consider going to other events as well.

### Most important international trade fairs in Europe

[Fruit Logistica](#) in Berlin (Germany) is the largest and best-known trade event for fresh fruit and vegetables. The trade fair offers a [virtual market with names of exhibitors](#), and a [networking tool to find business partners and schedule meetings](#).

[Fruit Attraction](#) in Madrid (Spain) has gained importance over the last years, growing 10% in 2019 and attracting almost 100,000 visitors from 140 countries. In the [online exhibitor list](#), you can find the participating companies. Compared with Fruit Logistica, you will find a relatively large number of southern European companies. However, the timing can also be a good reason to visit Fruit Attraction – the exhibition takes place in October, almost 4 months before Fruit Logistica.

### Congresses and national events

[Macfrut](#) (Italy) presents a wide variety of companies that are active in fresh produce. The trade fair is ideal to get to know Italian buyers of fresh fruit and vegetables, which you can find in the [exhibitors catalogue](#), but it has less international appeal than Fruit Logistica and Fruit Attraction. The [Tropical Fruit Congress](#) during the fair may attract a more selective group of potential buyers of tropical fruit.

The [London Produce Show](#) is a specific networking event and can be interesting when the United Kingdom is your target market. It mainly [exhibiting British companies of fresh fruit and vegetables](#), and related services and technologies.

The [Amsterdam Produce Summit](#) is a new event that gathers international produce and retail professionals for discussions, conferences and networking.

The German Fruit & Vegetable Congress or [Deutscher Obst & Gemüse Kongress \(DOGK\)](#) is a 1-day event with plenary presentations and parallel forums about all the major current issues in the supply chain. [Participating companies](#) include European importers as well as German retailers, which makes it a relevant venue if you can find a way to meet them efficiently within a day.

[Medfel](#) is a trade show in France for all types of companies that are active in fresh fruit and vegetables, mainly from the Mediterranean region. You can expect purchasers from retailers, producers, importers and technology providers, which you can find through the [exhibitor list](#) (mostly in French).

## Specialised events and trade fairs

[Biofach](#) is a relevant trade show for suppliers of organic food. Several specialised companies for organic fruit and vegetables also present themselves here. You can find them by searching the category of fruit, vegetable, potatoes, mushrooms in the [online exhibitor and product list](#).

A few products have specific events in Europe such as the [Global Berry Congress](#) in Rotterdam, an annual event with news and insights for international soft fruit businesses. This event includes a space for exhibition and networking.

## Non-European events

[Asia Fruit Logistica](#) takes place in Hong Kong or Singapore. Since many European traders have become interested in Asian markets, you can expect several of them to be there. A few also exhibit, which you can find on the [Virtual Market Place](#). The day before the trade event, you can visit the [Asia Fruit Congress](#).

### Tips:

Include the trade fairs [Fruit Logistica](#) in Berlin and [Fruit Attraction](#) in Madrid in your annual planning, because they are the principle trade events that gather most of the European fresh fruit and vegetables professionals. Also make use of their online exhibitor catalogues.

Take into account that most of your potential buyers are present on trade fairs to sell and are less focused on buying. To get the most results out of your visit, you must prepare well, and try to make contacts and appointments

Use the [Toolbox with tips to successful trade fair participation](#) of the association of the German Trade Fair Industry, such as the 10 steps to a successful trade fair and checklists.

Check the [Event calendar of Fruitnet Eurofruit](#) for additional events in the fresh fruit and vegetable sector.

## 3. Visit wholesale markets

Visiting wholesale markets can give you an idea of the type of products that are sold in the region. However, they can also be a good place to find buyers; for example, by browsing the wholesale market website or by walking around in person. To meet with decision-makers from companies at the wholesale markets, it is recommended to schedule meetings.

- [Rungismarket](#) (Paris, France), the most famous wholesale market in France
- [Mercamadrid](#) (Madrid, Spain), one of the main wholesale markets in Spain
- [Mercabarna](#) (Barcelona, Spain) , one of the main wholesale markets in Spain
- [Grossmarkt Hamburg](#) (Hamburg, Germany), close to the port of Hamburg
- [SogeMi Mercato Agroalimentare Milano](#) (Milan, Italy), one of the largest wholesale markets for fresh fruit and vegetables in Italy
- [New Spitalfields Market](#) or [New Covent Garden Market](#) (the United Kingdom), 2 wholesale markets for fresh products in London

### Tip:

Come early when you visit wholesale markets, as they start extremely early in the morning and usually close before midday.

## 4. Use online news platforms for information and promotion

Online news platforms are good sources of information about buyers, markets as well as other companies in the fresh fruit and vegetable sector. You can find news articles of private businesses, including from potential business partners, but you can also try to get your own story published. This option makes them the ideal place for promoting your own company. There are several publications and news sites that you can use for advertorials or publishing your own news item:

[Freshplaza.com](https://www.freshplaza.com) (English) and [Freshplaza.es](https://www.freshplaza.es) (Spanish) are news sites for fresh produce with daily updates. They also publish stories about specific companies.

[Freshfruitportal.com](https://www.freshfruitportal.com) is an online news site for fresh produce and also publishes [industry announcements](#).

[Fruit.net](https://www.fruit.net) has a number of regional publications in the fresh fruit and vegetable sector. If you are among the largest exporters in your country, [advertising with Eurofruit](#) can be a good option to show this position.

### Tip:

Promote your company by sharing developments and updates of your company – try to make use of free publicity through news platforms and social networks such as [LinkedIn](#).

## 5. Register with trade directories

You can use trade databases to find potential buyers, but their directories are also useful to present your own products. Some trade directories charge for membership to publish your information or contact other traders. Sometimes, you can use a free trial to start with and then see whether it is worth paying the annual fee.

After your registration, you can either join as a supplier or directly look for buyers. Be selective in the directories that you are using and make sure that you leave a professional impression. Posting randomly on many sites may look cheap and even desperate.

Beside the listings of sector associations, there are no specific databases for the fresh fruit and vegetables sector. General databases and trade platforms are mentioned below.

- [Food Companies](#): Directory and marketplace for food companies
- [Organic Bio](#): International directory of organic food companies
- [Green trade](#): A marketplace for organic products
- [Kompass](#): Global B2B database
- [Global buyers online](#): a place to search for the latest trade leads from buyers and importers from all over the world
- [Europages](#): Directory of European companies; a professional portal that encourages business-to-business exchanges

## 6. Contact your local business support organisations

Contact your country's chamber of commerce, sector association or local business support organisations (BSOs) to see whether they have tips or services to find potential buyers of fresh fruit and vegetables in Europe.

Sector associations in your home country will be able to provide you with relevant information about your sector. Some will also be able to give you information on your target market in Europe. As a registered member of a sector association, potential buyers from Europe also have a way of finding your company.

Business support organisations and trade promotion agencies go further with their assistance in finding potential buyers, such as the organisation of trade missions and trade fair participations.

## Examples of sector associations

South Africa: [Fruit SA](#), a non-profit organisation of the South African fruit industry with several member associations such as the [Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa \(CGA\)](#) and the [South African Table Grape Industry \(SATI\)](#).

Peru: [AGAP Peru](#) defends the interests of the agricultural export chain and is linked to specific associations such as the [association of Hass avocado producers \(ProHass\)](#).

Chile: The [Association of fruit exporters from Chile \(ASOEX\)](#) represents exporters and has created the website [Fruits from Chile](#) to promote the products of its members.

Morocco: The [Moroccan Interprofessional Federation for the production and export of Fruits and Vegetables \(FIFEL\)](#) groups together a number of associations such as the [Moroccan association of fruit and vegetable producers and exporters \(Apefel\)](#). Together with the government, they run the programme "Maroc Vert" (2009-2020), which improves the production, and which promotes the export of fresh fruit and vegetables.

Jordan: [Jordan Exporters and Producers Association for Fruit and Vegetables \(JEPA\)](#) trains and helps its 250 members to export their products.

Ethiopia: The [Ethiopian Horticulture Producer Exporters Association \(EHPEA\)](#) promotes the interests of its producing and exporting members in flowers, vegetables, fruits, herbs and cuttings, contributing to the horticulture industry boom in Ethiopia.

## Examples of export & trade promotion agencies

Peru: [PromPerú](#), the Peruvian Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism (Mincetur), and the [Exporters Association \(ADEX\)](#) are strong promoters of Peruvian export products. They organise an impressive pavilion with exporters of fresh fruit and vegetables at Fruit Logistica in Germany.

India: The [Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority \(Apeda\)](#) covers fresh fruit and vegetables, among other sectors, and has introduced the [trade portal Agri Exchange](#), where they connect buyers and suppliers.

Egypt: The [Export Development Authority \(EDA\)](#) is involved in trade missions and trade fair participation for Egyptian exporters, including in the fresh fruit and vegetable sector.

Guatemala: [AGEXPORT](#) is the exporters association in Guatemala which prepares companies for export and which connects them to international markets.

Commercial attachés working in your country's embassy in Europe are a point of contact as well. They often have useful information about the market and economic or commercial attachés are sometimes very much involved in helping you enter a market – the service level is different for each country.

## 7. Participate in European support programmes

There are organisations in Europe that help exporters from overseas with support programmes and useful information. Several of them promote imports from developing countries and can also help you to get in contact with European importers. Check with them to see whether there are specific programmes for your country or possibilities to find buyers for your product.

**CBI:** In addition to an extensive range of market studies, the [Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries \(CBI\)](#) in the Netherlands offers export coaching programmes that help you to access the European market. They are only open for application during the application period and for the selected countries of a programme. CBI has a starting project for [Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Lebanon](#) (2019–2023), and active export promotion projects for [fresh fruit and vegetables in Jordan](#) (2018–2022), [agrofood in Moldova](#) (2018–2021) and for [Connecting Central America to the European fresh fruit and vegetable market](#) (2018–2021). [Check the current projects](#) for the latest details.

**Import Promotion Desk (IPD):** The IPD brings together the interests of German importers with those of exporters in emerging growth markets. [Fresh fruit and vegetables is one of the sectors in which they operate](#). In 2020, the IPD will again support a selection of suppliers from Egypt, Ethiopia, Ecuador, Peru, Ghana, Ukraine and Ivory Coast during Fruit Logistica 2020. During the trade fair, these suppliers will present themselves to European buyers with products such as mangoes, avocados, pomegranates, grapes, strawberries, physalis, chilli peppers, baby corn and sugar snaps, among other things.

**SIPPO:** SIPPO helps business support organisations (BSOs), such as chambers of commerce and export promotion agencies, to increase their export promotion capacity and services to export-ready companies. The supported BSOs that work with natural ingredient exporters can be found in 8 countries: Colombia, South Africa, Indonesia, Albania, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Tunisia. Additionally, SIPPO supports BSOs with export promotion services in processed food products from Peru, Colombia, South Africa, Tunisia and Morocco.

**Finnpartnership:** Its mission is to increase commercial cooperation and to promote business partnerships between companies in developing countries and Finland. They offer a [free-of-charge matchmaking service for companies in developing countries](#) to help find business partners in Finland.

### Tip:

Regularly check the activities of export promotion agencies such as the [IPD](#) and [CBI](#), and apply for export support programmes that are relevant to your company.

## 8. Use member lists of sector associations in Europe

Look for sector associations in Europe, and find the names of fruit and vegetable traders in their member lists. You can find several associations and leading companies through [Freshfel Europe](#), the European Fresh Produce Association, and the forum for the fresh fruit and vegetable supply chain in Europe and beyond.

“Freshfel Europe is a membership association, whose members and associated members are national associations, organisations, and companies with an interest in the European fresh fruit and vegetable sector. Freshfel Europe’s members are from across Europe, and work along the whole supply chain from producers to wholesalers, traders, logistics and retailers.” ([Freshfel](#))

Its members include the following.

Germany: [Deutscher Fruchthandelsverband](#) is the German association that represents the interests of companies from all areas of trade in the fruit and vegetable sector. Its members (look for “Mitglieder”) account for approximately 70% of all fresh fruit and vegetable sales in Germany.

The United Kingdom: [Fresh Produce Consortium \(FCP\)](#) is the United Kingdom’s fresh produce trade association. It counts a wide variety of [700 member companies](#) that relate to the fresh fruit, vegetable and flowers industry.



France: Chambre Syndicale des Importateurs Français de fruits et légumes frais ([CSIF](#)). On their website, you can find a [list of French importers of fresh fruit and vegetables](#).

The Netherlands: [GroentenFruit Huis](#), the Dutch association for companies that are active in the fresh fruit and vegetables industry. You can [find their members on the website](#) by selecting an activity or product (use Google to translate the key words).

Belgium: [Fresh Trade Belgium](#) is the professional federation for [companies active in the fruit and vegetables sector in Belgium](#).

To find partnerships with producers of fresh fruit and vegetables in Europe, you can address [the members of EUCOFEL FruitVegetablesEUROPE](#), which lists producer organisations in France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Spain.

### Tips:

Make your trade request as specific as possible when approaching sector associations. Generally, they are not there to facilitate foreign suppliers or to share extensive data on their members. However, you can try to ask for their help when you have a clear focus and make your request in the interest of their members.

Do some preliminary research on the companies that are on the member lists of sector associations before approaching them. Knowing what kind of company you are contacting leaves a better impression. Tell your contact why you are specifically interested in their company.

## 9. Attract buyers to your website

Web searches are very popular among buyers, so be sure that your company can be found by using the most common search engines. Normally, this website is the first place where buyers will see whether you have a well-established company. If you do not appear in their web searches, or when you have an unprofessional or unfinished website, they may assume that you are a small exporter which is unable to fulfil their demands. Remember that your website is the main online communication channel, which should fully reflect your business and commercial strengths.

An example of a modern website in fresh fruit is [Burke Agro](#) in Nicaragua, which uses storytelling and quality images to present their business. Their story includes their main strength of being a socially engaged and sustainable company.

Things that you can do to optimise your website:

- Make sure that your website provides a complete picture of your company, its identity, product information (quality and sizes), packaging options, impressions of your production and processing, certifications, social and sustainable practices, and so on.
- Update your website regularly to ensure a properly functioning website but also to obtain a higher listing in search engines. Regular news items about your activities or market updates on your production of fruit or vegetables can add attractive content to your online presentation.
- Share your website URL on different sector websites such as sector associations, trade databases and news websites (for example, in news items on [Freshplaza](#)). The more your website is mentioned on the internet, the better your website will score in search engines.
- Websites should be written in good English and in the language of your target market(s), if possible.



- Use SEO (search engine optimisation) to get more traffic to your website. To do so, you can register for [Google Webmaster Tools](#).

## 10. Use social media for networking

In order to find buyers across Europe, you can use business networking platforms such as [LinkedIn](#). LinkedIn is the most important medium for professional use and includes relevant groups for many industries. You can join groups such as [Fruit import and export](#) (>16,600 professionals), [Fruit Logistica](#) (>1,600 professionals) or the Dutch platform [Groenten & Fruit \(GFActueel.nl\)](#) (>2,700 professionals).

Other country-specific sites such as [Xing](#) in Germany and [Viadeo](#) in France are used as well, but on a much smaller scale. Alternatively, you can choose to post articles and news about your company or share videos. These methods are more passive ways to let buyers find you.

When you are active on social media, make sure that your contributions are professional and enhance your company's image. Do not spam many sites randomly with information that is irrelevant. All sites operate on the basis of implicit codes of conduct about how they should be used. The same applies to communication tools such as Twitter, WhatsApp and Facebook: be professional and selective in your posts.

### Tips:

Learn [how to create a B2B social media strategy](#) and the [3 steps to B2B social media marketing success for your business](#).


Join specific groups related to the fresh fruit and vegetable trade on [LinkedIn](#) to find and communicate with potential trade partners.

Read our [Tips for Doing Business with European buyers of fresh fruit and vegetables](#) and [Tips for organising your export](#), which can help you further understand how to enter the European market and what it takes to become a successful exporter to Europe.


This study has been carried out on behalf of CBI by [ICI Business](#).

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