

10 tips for finding European buyers on the European fresh fruit and vegetables market

Last updated:

11 December 2023

When looking for potential buyers, you need to be well prepared. Know your strengths and weaknesses, but also be selective in choosing a 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.

Contents of this page

1. [Search for buyers that best fit your business](#)
2. [Visit trade fairs and use their online catalogues](#)
3. [Visit wholesale markets \(when possible\)](#)
4. [Use online news platforms for information and promotion](#)
5. [Contact your local business support organisations](#)
6. [Use member lists of sector associations in Europe](#)
7. [Register with trade directories](#)
8. [Participate in European support programmes](#)
9. [Attract buyers to your website](#)
10. [Use social media for networking](#)

1. Search for buyers that best fit your business

There are many different importers of fresh fruit and vegetables. You can roughly distinguish between large service providers and specialised importers. Service providers programme the contracted supply for large retail chains. Specialised importers are more focused on trade and wholesale on the spot market (see Table 1). There are fewer retail suppliers in numbers, but they have a dominant share in the sector. Specialised importers can offer you a sales channel for specific products such as organic, ethnic or exotic fruit and vegetables. Between these types of buyers there is usually a degree of overlap in products and services.

Table 1: Type of buyers

	Large importers and service providers	Specialised importers and traders
--	---------------------------------------	-----------------------------------

Types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service providers to large retailers • Contract buyers • Retail purchase centres • Integrated importers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traders/suppliers to service providers and wholesale (spot market) • Specialised buyers of specific fruit categories (for example, citrus specialists) • Importers of niche, exotic, organic and ethnic products
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), less programmed supply (less stable)
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenyard Fresh France (France) • Nature's Pride (the Netherlands) • Wealmoor (the United Kingdom) • OGL Food Trade (Germany) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SpecialFruit (exotics) • BUD Holland (exotics) • OTC Organics (organic) • Eosta (organic and Fairtrade products)

Search for security and experience

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. Negotiate a minimum price that at least covers your costs. The experience of your buyer is important, even more so when supplying a vulnerable or niche product, such as papaya or young coconuts.

Companies that 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.

Create contact moments and show supplier excellence

Buyers may initially be reluctant to work with new suppliers, so be aware of your strengths as a company and present these strengths well. Buyers of fresh fruit and vegetables depend on good suppliers. Once these buyers have established their supply chains, it will take time before they take on new suppliers.

Being persistent is the main thing you can do as an exporter. Plan periodic contact moments with potential buyers and listen to their priorities. Inform them about your crop and show excellence in product handling and

compliance. Sometimes you can use your seasonal window to find opportunities in potential supply gaps.

Reduce risks and value partnerships

A lot is offered on the international market, but the European standards are becoming more demanding. This is being done to avoid risks in terms of quality and costs.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to find good clients. Be selective and find potential buyers that match your type of product and volume. Buyers that are eager to buy your product and that promise good results are not always your best choice. Sometimes, they will try to reduce their risks at your expense. In the long term, partnerships are usually more valuable than quick sales.

Over the years, importers have gotten a much more facilitating role in the supply chain. Meanwhile, production, sustainability and transparency have become much more important. As a supplier, you can take advantage of this trend by finding a partner to represent your business.

Tips:

Make choices that make sense. When looking for buyers, consider your specific product, local logistical infrastructure, production capacity and so on. For example, if you can ship several containers a week, find the stability of a programmed supply. With niche products and irregular maritime logistics, it is better to find a specialised partner that deals with exotics and/or airfreight.

Ask your potential buyer what types of end clients they supply and what their volumes have been in the past years.

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

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.

Check out how to build a buyer-supplier relation by reading [CBI's Tips for doing business with European buyers of fresh fruit and vegetables](#).

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 various importers in person.

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. Trade fair participation means that you will make costs. However, you will find a large concentration of relevant prospects in 1 place. It is worth the investment if you come prepared.

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

Figure 1: Entrance of Fruit Attraction in Madrid



Source: ICI Business

Most important international trade fairs in Europe

Fruit Logistica	<p>Fruit Logistica in Berlin (Germany) is the largest and best-known trade event for fresh fruit and vegetables in Europe. It normally takes place in February. In 2023, the fair hosted over 2,600 exhibitors. You can find Exhibitors of Fruit Logistica on the website. The official Fruit Logistica Mobile App allows you to connect with exhibitors and plan meetings with attendees.</p>
Fruit Attraction	<p>Fruit Attraction in Madrid (Spain) has gained importance over the last years. This trade fair attracts 1,800 exhibitors. 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 normally takes place in October, almost 4 months before Fruit Logistica. You can find the participating companies from previous fairs in the online exhibitors' catalogue. Fruit Attractions has also launched 'LiveConnect', a trade community platform and professional social network for the fruit and vegetable sector connecting businesses 365 days a year.</p>

Figure 2: The 2 main European trade fairs in numbers



Source: ICI Business

Congresses and national events

Macfrut	<p>Macfrut in Rimini (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. The event has less international appeal than Fruit Logistica and Fruit Attraction. In 2022, they attracted 830 exhibitors and 38,500 visitors. During the fair, there is usually an additional event or congress that may attract a more select group of potential buyers of tropical fruit. For example, in 2023 there were the International Blueberry Days and a Tropical Fruit Congress in 2024.</p>
The London Produce Show	<p>The London Produce Show is a specific networking event and can be interesting when the United Kingdom is your target market. It mainly exhibits British companies that supply fresh fruit and vegetables, and related services and technologies.</p>

The German Fruit & Vegetable Congress	The German Fruit & Vegetable Congress or ' Deutscher Obst & Gemüse Kongress ' (DOGK) is a 1-day event. It has plenary presentations and parallel forums about all the major current issues in the supply chain. Participating companies in 2022 included European importers and German retailers, making it a relevant venue if you can find a way to meet them efficiently within a single day. Being able to communicate in German is highly recommended.
Medfel	Medfel is a trade show in Perpignan-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	Biofach is a relevant trade show for suppliers of organic food. Although the theme is organic food in general, several fruit and vegetables companies present themselves here too. It normally takes place in February, so you can combine your visit with Fruit Logistica in Berlin. You can find relevant exhibitors through a product search . However, they also host a digital platform (Talque) that help you prepare for the fair and use a matchmaking tool.
Specific events	A few products have specific events in Europe, such as the Global Berry Congress in Rotterdam. This congress is an annual event with news and insights for international soft fruit businesses. It includes a space for exhibition and networking.

Non-European events

Asia Fruit Logistica	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 of them also exhibit, together with 800 other exhibitors from more than 40 countries.
----------------------	--

Tips:

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

Prepare well and try to make appointments before participating in trade fairs. This way, you will make the most results of your visit. Remember that most of your potential buyers will attend trade fairs to

sell, so they will be less focused on buying. Read the [Tips on doing business](#) for business etiquette and building relations.

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 [Fruitnet](#) event calendar for additional events in the fresh fruit and vegetable sector.

3. Visit wholesale markets (when possible)

Wholesale markets can be good places to find buyers. They give you an idea of the type of products sold in the region. The best way is to walk around in person, but several marketplaces also have websites you can browse. To meet with decision-makers from companies at the wholesale markets, it is recommended to schedule meetings.

Some of the wholesale markets also offer [guided tours](#), such as Rungis in Paris. In the short term, you can also use the available online directories:

- [Rungismarket](#) (Paris, France): the most famous wholesale market in France;
- [Saint-Charles](#) (Perpignan, France): a regional hub that connects northern markets with southern produce
- [Mercamadrid](#) (Madrid, Spain): 1 of the main wholesale markets in Spain;
- [Mercabarna](#) (Barcelona, Spain): 1 of the main wholesale markets in Spain;
- [Grossmarkt Hamburg](#) (Hamburg, Germany): close to the port of Hamburg;
- [SogeMi Mercato Agroalimentare Milano](#) (Milan, Italy): 1 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.

Figure 3: Wholesale market Marcabarna in Barcelona



Source: [ICI Business](#)

Tips:

Arrive early when you visit wholesale markets. They start extremely early in the morning and usually close before midday.

Use clear information on your labelling and packaging when doing business with companies on wholesale markets. This way, other wholesalers can easily find you by looking on the boxes displayed by your clients.

4. Use online news platforms for information and promotion

Online news platforms are good sources of information. They often share information about different markets, buyers and other companies in the sector. You can find news articles from potential buyers, 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 you can use for advertorials or publishing.

- Freshplaza: [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, updates and innovations of specific companies.
- FreshFruitPortal: [Freshfruitportal.com](https://www.freshfruitportal.com) is an online news site for fresh produce and also publishes [industry announcements](#).
- Fruitnet: [Fruitnet](https://www.fruitnet.com) has a number of regional publications in the fresh fruit and vegetable sector. If you are among the larger exporters in your country, [advertising with Eurofruit](#) can be a good option to show your dominance.

Tip:

Promote your company by sharing developments and updates of your company. Try to take advantage of free publicity through news platforms, such as [Freshplaza](#), and social networks, like [LinkedIn](#). Make sure you focus on interesting topics for your buyer. Plan your marketing efforts according to the availability of your supply.

5. Contact your local business support organisations

Check if there is a chamber of commerce, sector association or local business support organisation (BSOs) in your country. Contact them to see whether they have tips or services to help you find potential buyers of fresh fruit and vegetables in Europe.

Branch organisations and associations will be able to provide relevant information about your sector. Some will also be able to give you information on your target market in Europe. If you register as a member, potential buyers from Europe will also have a way of finding your company.

Business support organisations and trade promotion agencies go further with their assistance in finding potential buyers. Among their activities are 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 sector 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 \(Apefel\)](#).
- 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.
- Kenya: [Fresh Produce Exporters Association of Kenya \(FPEAK\)](#) links members to international markets.

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. Every year 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, as well as other sectors. They also 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. Economic or commercial attachés are sometimes very much involved in helping you enter a market – the service level is different for each country.

Tip:

Be specific in your needs when contacting support organisations and understand the type of services they can offer. If your question is specific, they can provide better input or redirect you to the right person. For example, instead of asking for help with finding a buyer for your product, ask them what databases you can use. Alternatively, ask what type of events they organise to connect to buyers.

6. Use member lists of sector associations in Europe

Sector associations and their member lists can be good places to find names of fruit and vegetable traders. [Freshfel Europe](#) is the European fresh produce association. They represent members throughout the supply chain. This includes producers, traders, wholesalers, importers, exporters, logistics providers and retailers. Here, you can find some leading companies and several national associations. National associations can give more detailed overviews of their respective markets.

National associations that are Freshfel members:

- Germany: [Deutscher Fruchthandelsverband](#) is the German association for fresh trade. They represent the interests of companies from all trade areas 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 (UK): [Fresh Produce Consortium \(FCP\)](#) is the UK'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 French importers](#) of fresh fruit and vegetables as members ('Adhérents').
- The Netherlands: The [Fresh Produce Centre](#) is 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.
- Belgium: [Fresh Trade Belgium](#) is the professional federation for [companies active in the fruit and vegetables sector in Belgium](#).

Tips:

Make your trade request as specific as possible when approaching sector associations. Generally, they are not there to help 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 companies and association members 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.

Use your browser's translator function to translate websites into your own language.

7. Register with trade directories

You can use trade databases to find potential buyers. This can help you identify buyers, but their directories are also useful to present your own products. Some trade directories charge for membership or for connecting with traders. Sometimes, you can use a free trial to start with and then see whether it is worth paying the annual fee. After registration, you can usually make a supplier profile and look for buyers.

Beside the listings of sector associations, there are no specific databases for the fresh fruit and vegetables sector. Still, general databases can be useful to leave your contact details and product offer. For example, the company Biofresh from Uganda has made a [profile in Organic-Bio](#).

General databases include:

- [Organic Bio](#): International directory of organic food companies;
- [Kompass](#): Global Business-to-Business (B2B) database;
- [Europages](#): A professional portal with European companies that encourages business-to-business exchanges.

Trade platforms with concrete buyer-seller offers are growing in popularity. Although the number of European fresh produce buyers is still limited, this is a way to diversify your acquisition. Some platforms are:

- [Green trade](#): A marketplace for organic products;
- [Tridge](#): A food and agriculture sourcing hub that provides trade data, a supplier database and transaction services;
- [Global buyers online](#): A place to search for the latest trade leads from buyers and importers from all over the world;
- [Alibaba](#): A non-specialised trade platform with a section for agricultural products.

Tip:

Be selective in the directories and trade platforms that you are using, and make sure that you leave a professional impression. Posting randomly on many sites may look cheap or even desperate. Remember that most European buyers prefer to do business the conventional way. Personal contact and trust are crucial.

8. Participate in European support programmes

There are European organisations that help exporters from developing countries. Some of them help with promotion or to get you in contact with European importers. Others focus on technical development, which also can improve your profile with buyers. Check with them to see whether there are specific programmes for your country or possibilities to find buyers for your product.

Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI)

Besides extensive market information, [CBI](#) offers export coaching. Their coaching programmes 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 started projects for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables in [Ethiopia](#) (2021-2025) and [Lebanon](#) (2019-2023). Another project in [Kenya](#) (2021-2026) focuses on women entrepreneurs in multiple sectors, including fresh fruit and vegetables. Countries where projects were recently finished include [Jordan](#) (2018-2022), [Moldova](#) (2018-2021, agrifood) and [Central America](#) (2018-2021). [Check the current projects](#) for the latest details.

Import Promotion Desk (IPD)

[IPD](#) brings together the interests of German importers with those of exporters in emerging growth markets. [Fresh produce is 1 of the sectors they operate](#) in. IPD helps exporters to prepare for the European market and provides matchmaking services. IPD supports a range of countries including (2023) Egypt, Ivory Coast, Ecuador, Ghana, Kenya, Colombia, Morocco, Peru and Ukraine. At Fruit Attraction 2022, IPD presented exporters from various of these partner countries.

SwissContact

[SwissContact](#) is a foundation for technical cooperation. They have 30 projects in over 20 countries, supporting sustainable development. They do this by providing access to skills, knowledge, markets, technologies and financial services. Improving these aspects can help you find buyers more easily.

Open Trade Gate Sweden (OTGS)

[OTGS](#) is part of the National Board of Trade Sweden. They support companies from developing countries with exporting to Sweden and the European Union (EU). You can find market information and get answers to your questions about rules and procedures through them. They also offer [valuable tips on how to find business partners](#).

Finnpartnership

[Finnpartnership](#) promotes business partnerships between companies in developing countries and Finland. They offer a [free matchmaking service for companies in developing countries](#). This service can help you find business partners in Finland.

Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)

[EEN](#) is the world's largest support network for small and medium-sized businesses. The network focuses on innovation and international growth and works in all sectors. There is a [database of partnering opportunities](#) to exchange business and technology leads. This includes finding partners to distribute your products. Most network partners are based in Europe, but there are a growing number of [local network contact points](#) outside of Europe.

Tip:

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

9. Attract buyers to your website

Web searches are very popular among buyers. Be sure that your company can be found using the most common search engines. Remember that your website always offers the most complete presentation of your company. It should fully reflect your business and commercial strengths.

Your website is the first place where buyers will see whether you have a well-established company. If you do not appear in web searches, buyers may assume you cannot fulfil their needs. If you have an unprofessional or unfinished website they, may not consider you to be a suitable exporter.

An example of a modern website in fresh fruit is [Burke Agro](#) in Nicaragua. This company uses storytelling and high-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:

1. Provide a complete presentation of your company – Make sure that your website shows a complete picture of your company. Think about its identity, product information (quality and sizes), packaging options, impressions of your production and processing, certifications, social and sustainable practices, and so on.
2. Update your website regularly – To ensure a properly functioning website but also to achieve a higher listing in search engines. You can add attractive content by posting regular updates about your activities.
3. Share your website URL – By sharing your URL on different external websites, your website will do better with search engines. Try to get your URL on websites of sector associations, trade databases and news websites. For example, you can try to publish on [Freshplaza](#).
4. Use correct English – Websites should be written in good English and, if possible, in the language of your target market(s).
5. Use SEO (search engine optimisation) – SEO will attract 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. It includes relevant groups for many industries. You can join groups, including:

- [Fruit import and export](#) (> 80,000 professionals), a group that has grown very rapidly
- The Dutch platform [Groenten & Fruit \(GFactueel.nl\)](#) (> 3,800 professionals)
- [Africa Import Export Trading](#) (> 304,800 professionals), a network powered by Africa Business Communities. It is a community for people involved in international trade in Africa.

Other country-specific sites (such as [Xing](#) in Germany and [Viadeo](#) in France) are used as well, but on a much smaller scale. You can also use [Vimeo](#) or [Youtube](#) to share videos about your company. These tools 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 using implicit codes of conduct on how to use them. The same applies to communication tools like 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](#). Connecting to people on

LinkedIn is a great way 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](#). These tips can help you further understand how to enter the European market and what it takes to become a successful exporter to Europe.

[ICI Business](#) carried out this study on behalf of CBI.

Please review our [market information disclaimer](#).