

Global Coalition of Fresh Produce

Building resilience in unpredictable times

Report of the panel discussion

Organised in collaboration with Fruitnet

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LOGISTICS HUB
FRUIT LOGISTICA

As it sails into 2026, the fresh produce industry continues to face systemic volatility: shifting trade flows, geopolitical shocks, and unpredictable regulatory environments. Last week, at the Logistics Hub at Fruit Logistica, the Global Coalition of Fresh Produce brought together industry leaders to explore how these stresses affect shipping rates, capacity, reliability, and the integrity of perishable cargo. Moderated by **Steve Alaerts** (Foodcareplus, Belgium and Chair of the Supply Chain Council at IFPA, the International Fresh Produce Association), the conversation seamlessly moved from “which challenges are we facing today” over “what would a resilient model for fresh produce logistics look like” to “what can we do, concretely, to make this vision a reality”.

What stood out:

Greg Palmer, Vice President, Trade and Market Development at the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) and Chair of the Global Coalition of Fresh Produce, highlighted three common supply chain disruptors: increasing transit delays, volatile import tariff structures, and rising cybercrime. According to Palmer, what matters most to shippers globally today is digital traceability and transparency; in addition, there is an urgent need to improve both capacity and speed in shipping lanes worldwide.

Werner van Rooyen, COO of the Fresh Produce Exporters' Forum (FPEF) of South Africa and leader of the Working Group on Logistics of the Southern Hemisphere Fruit Alliance (SFA), called for more transparency and predictability in dealings between all actors in the logistics chain. Van Rooyen said that clear and stable pricing, contract terms, and service conditions are a prerequisite for sustainable, resilient supply chains. Another key element proposed by Van Rooyen is the prioritisation of fresh produce: fruits and vegetables are highly perishable products and should be given priority over non-perishable items in shipping, handling, and port transit and customs clearance procedures.

Tineke van de Voorde, Key Account Manager Shippers & Forwarders at the Port of Antwerp–Bruges, shifted the focus to the crucial role of port authorities as “connectors” between operators in the supply chain. Van de Voorde's key message was a call to action: cooperation across the chain can help resolve major challenges. Port congestion, for one, requires port authorities to play a key facilitating role in the flow of information between operators.



Dirk Hoffmann, Reefer Manager at DP World, issued a stark warning to the audience: climate change is not something that will happen some day—it is already happening. The fresh produce industry must urgently develop innovative solutions to reduce its logistics footprint. Hoffmann offered a concrete example: the newly launched DP World Atlas service, connecting Morocco with Belgium and the United Kingdom, is shifting up to 150 000 tonnes of produce from road to sea, cutting carbon emissions by about 70 percent.

Alexis Taylor, Chief Global Policy Officer at the International Fresh Produce Association (IFPA), closed the loop by bringing in industry organizations. In Taylor's view, these groups can help turn the vision of resilient logistics chains into reality by developing and promoting common good practices: standards, instruments, and behaviours that promote transparency, efficiency, and fairness throughout the supply chain. A prime example is IFPA's Supply Chain of the Future, offering functional solutions aimed at ensuring that fresh produce moves seamlessly from farm to table.

How do we go from here?

Alaerts tied the discussion back to the opening question: what concrete actions can we take to make the vision of resilient and efficient supply chains a reality? A key element that resonated throughout all interventions was the need for a foundational framework—a fundamental, structural set of shared values, principles, or guidelines to underpin, guide and support behaviour and processes throughout logistics chains. Upholding the central principles of collaboration, transparency, and fairness, this foundational framework would break down silos, offer a common understanding and language, and align actions with the shared goal of efficient and resilient global logistics chains that bring high-quality fresh produce from the grower to the consumer, with less waste and fair rewards for everyone. Alaert's closing remark was an invitation to all those involved in fresh produce logistics to come together and jointly formulate a foundational set of values to anchor and transform global supply chains.

It is time to move from dialogue to commitment.

Join the discussion!

The Global Coalition of Fresh Produce is firmly committed to playing its part in the transition towards efficient, fair, and resilient global supply chains for fresh produce. We will act as a key facilitator in the discussion towards a foundational framework of shared values and goals that will enable this transition. Whether you are a producer, exporter, logistics service provider, port operator or authority, or otherwise involved in the shipping of fresh produce: help shape the future of global fresh produce logistics and become involved now!

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