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Press Release

14th Saint-Charles Export General Meeting

The fourteenth Saint-Charles Export General Meeting, chaired by Mr Julien Batlle, was held in strict compliance of sanitary rules and allowed the members of the Group (*Financial Institutions, Professional Associations and Trade Unions, Territorial Communities and Consular Chambers*), to openly discuss the current issues of the platform and the fruit and vegetable, and transport and logistics sectors.

This meeting was an opportunity to go over the results of 2019, which was full of action for Saint-Charles Export, including participation in meetings concerning the railway line between Perpignan and Rungis, the defence of the Franco-Spanish Bilateral Agreement, not to mention the signature events that are the very essence of Saint-Charles Export: several international buyers' receptions and very substantial involvement of the group at the MEDFEL trade shows in Perpignan and FRUIT ATTRACTION in Madrid.

As everyone knows, these meetings could not be held in 2020, and being able to gather together is greatly missed by the profession today! This demonstrates, if it was needed, the importance of these actions carried out by Saint-Charles Export for the benefit of businesses in the area, and professionals are eager to be able to return to trade shows.

Despite this profession's key events being cancelled, Saint-Charles Export has been able to bounce back by taking action within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic:

“Actions for Perpignan’s teaching hospital”

Every Wednesday between April and June Saint Charles International organised 5 collections for healthcare personnel, with more than 5 tonnes of fresh fruit and vegetables being collected and distributed in over 1,600 baskets from 2.6 to 3.6 kg. Meanwhile, Saint-Charles Export donated more than 2,000 FFP2 masks to the teaching hospital in Perpignan.

“Establishment of a permanent working group for crisis management”

Even before the lockdown of 17 March, a “*Coronavirus*” working group was established within the Saint Charles International platform. This joined together business leaders and administrations.

The idea of this working group was particularly to benefit from knowledge, advice and recommendations from ARS and PST 66 in the face of COVID-19, as well as the expertise of the DIRECCTE (regional directorate for companies, consumption, work and employment), the CPAM (local sickness insurance fund) or the URSSAF (Organisations for the Collection of Social Security and Family Benefit Contributions) on the different measures implemented by the State to support businesses, in particular those to facilitate childcare or work disruption for vulnerable people, but also deferments and/or exemptions from charges etc.

All relevant information from these working groups was therefore distributed to all companies of the platform.

“Pooling of resources to buy surgical masks and hand sanitisers”

Saint-Charles Export and the National Syndicate of Fruit & Vegetable Importers & Exporters (SNIFL) of Saint Charles introduced a pooling of masks and hand gels, not only to benefit all member companies, but also any company or institution in the area that requested them. This service was opened to as many people as possible, which shows that despite the organisational difficulties encountered, the platform has lost nothing in terms of solidarity and humanity!

Some figures on resource pooling:

- 812,000 masks
- 2,321 litres of hand sanitiser (*in the form of 100- and 500-ml bottles and 5 L drums*)
- 348 sachets of hydroalcoholic gel-soaked wipes
- 282 disinfectant sprays

In terms of forecasting, different projects were discussed during this General Meeting, including:

“Saint-Charles 2020-2040”

On 21 March 2019, with institutional partners, communities and representatives of professionals from Saint-Charles, the first meeting on this topic made it possible to establish the roadmap of sites which are essential for the completion of this major project.

So, it was decided by Perpignan Mediterranean Metropolis (PMM) to deliver a *“Global study on the long-term evolution of Saint-Charles”* with the aim to **sustainably rethink the overall development of the platform, its traffic plan, services to be provided to users, property, secure access and opening up of the site, parking and receiving heavy goods vehicles in the zone, signage, mobility, energy mix etc.**

This project consists of *“State / Region / PMM / Saint Charles International”* joint funding.

The first actions carried out by PMM was to commission AURCA (*Catalan Pyrenees-Mediterranean Urban Planning Agency*) to carry out a first dynamic diagnosis on the state of play and the development prospects of the zone.

The first actions carried out by the DDTM (*Departmental Directorate of Territories and the Sea*) made it possible to recruit engineering and expertise from all players in the development of the territory (*public/private*) and to collect financial support from various public bodies (*EPF Occitanie/DREAL Occitanie/Ministry of Ecology - Directorate of Infrastructures and Transport*).

This General Assembly also made it possible to express particular thanks to Perpignan Mediterranean Metropolis, to the Occitanie Pyrenees-Mediterranean Region, to Crédit Agricole Sud Méditerranée and to the Banque Populaire du Sud, who once again confirmed their support in all steps and actions undertaken by the group.

Julien Battle ended by announcing *“our group has demonstrated flexibility and agility. It has dealt with various crises by pursuing and adapting its model and actions with the sole aim of meeting the needs of our SMEs and Micro SMEs, and as long as this philosophy is ours, as long as we progress in “project” mode, Saint-Charles Export will have a bright future ahead and its purpose cannot be contested.”*

Saint-Charles International is the top European hub for marketing, transportation and logistics in the fresh fruit and vegetables sector. Based in Perpignan, in Pyrénées-Orientales, it is worth 1.95 billion euros, handles 1,768,000 metric tons of fruit and vegetables, and employs 2,200 people. Production is concentrated mainly in the Mediterranean area.

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