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== Press Release ==

FRUIT ATTRACTION: back to “normal” with success!

Just back from Madrid and the 13th annual Fruit Attraction trade show, members of Saint-Charles Export report on a resounding success for this major European fruit and vegetable sector event. Turnout from the group was fantastic.

After the live event was cancelled in 2020 and without any face-to-face international trade fairs for 18 months, the event is finally back to "normal" and was deemed a great success by the entire profession. Saint-Charles Export's member companies are particularly satisfied with the event where they were able to meet customers and suppliers on the Saint-Charles Export stand. This year the stand had the largest surface area since creation of the fair in 2009.

95 member companies of Saint-Charles Export attended. Such strong participation is constant from one year to the next. This can be explained in part by the date which coincides with the beginning of the winter campaign - an ideal time for doing business. Spain is also one of Saint Charles International's major suppliers, making it important for Perpignan companies to attend. Benefits were once again clear from the outset, with many excellent meetings. Participants from all sectors, including producers, importers/exporters, carriers, logistics companies, forwarding agents, bankers, credit insurers, equipment suppliers, and IT service providers, were impressed by the dynamic atmosphere on the Saint-Charles Export stand.

This year, Saint-Charles Export had a total surface area of 464m² with 368m² for the group and 96m² for individual stands.

Saint-Charles Export also participated in the Bio Hub for the 3rd year in a row. This year the group had an individual corner stand of 12m² for one of its members that specialises in organic fruit and vegetables. This 13th edition of Fruit Attraction Madrid was important for Saint-Charles Export. Having sorely missed meeting and reconnecting with other professionals, finally getting back to “normal” physical contact with suppliers and customers was a welcome relief.

The group's stand was designed to facilitate contact and encourage meetings, essential to this sort of event, while also respecting health guidelines. The 60 work spaces had seating for 240 people. With a kitchen in a corner of the pavilion, 3 barmen and 24 waiters served guests in the group's area plus individual stands for Saint-Charles Export and AD'OCC, the regional agency for economic development.

The Saint-Charles Export stand also included an area for the European TRAILS project *which the Syndicat du Lotissement de Saint Charles International is supporting*. The aim was to promote the use of rail transport with other modes of transport for cross-border flow of goods between France and Spain on the Mediterranean side. The TRAILS project aims to reduce CO2 emissions, reduce congested road traffic, and increase company competitiveness by improving the quality and quantity of connections.

The fair was the ideal opportunity for presenting the progress and results of the project, begun in 2018, to producers, traders, transporters, and logistics companies in the European fruit vegetable sector and maritime and rail operators present. It was also an opportunity for discussion about multimodal transport and cross-border transactions.

Members of the group greatly appreciated the strong attendance, despite the health crisis, of many French and international buyers who contributed to the fair's success. Fruit Attraction is "a trade fair for conducting business". All the services and events organised by Saint-Charles Export over the three-day event received unanimous acclaim from attendants who were able to make contact and do business in a friendly atmosphere.

In addition to the expected majority of Iberian producers and suppliers, there was an increase in South American professionals, and in French and Italian exhibitors who maintained their traditionally strong presence.

Group members expect the fair to "generate new business opportunities" every year. Clearly, their expectations were met once again!

Events during the fair included buffet lunches hosted by Saint-Charles Export with Banque Populaire du Sud and Crédit Agricole Sud-Méditerranée on the first two days. These events abounded with excellent discussions conducive to business and were greatly appreciated by the companies and their clients and suppliers.

Saint-Charles Export's received funding for the event from the Occitanie/Pyrenees-Mediterranean region and Perpignan Méditerranée Métropole.

Saint-Charles Export offered a "turnkey" service to member companies with a range of solutions. The new stand design which was spacious with a number of islands received unanimous approval.

Despite the late confirmation of the event, Saint-Charles Export took a gamble in June, booking a larger space. A gamble which paid off to member companies' satisfaction.

Located at the centre of the 2,000m² France pavilion, the Saint-Charles Export stand generated strong and positive energy that also benefited the other French companies present.

The "turnkey" service offered by Saint-Charles Export provided for more than just fitting out of the stand and organising activities at the fair. Saint-Charles Export has also been helping its members with logistics for several years. *In partnership with the Agence de Développement Economique de Perpignan*, members are able to book travel at a lower cost. A group train-and-hotel package provided nearly 80 people with train travel from Perpignan and accommodation in Madrid. With daily shuttles organised between the hotel and the venue, members were able to focus on doing business.

Once again, the French Ambassador in Madrid invited professionals from the French fruit and vegetable sector to a reception at Madrid's French embassy. An event organised with Interfel (*Interprofession Française des Fruits Et Légumes*).

Key details of this year's Fruit Attraction Madrid trade fair:

With the participation of 1,300 companies (*1,770 in 2019*) from 43 countries (*58 in 2019*) spread over 8 halls occupying 40,500m² of exhibition space (*55,938m² in 2019*), and 65,000 visitors from 108 countries, Fruit Attraction achieved a major exploit, despite the uncertainty that prevailed until just a few months before. It was back to "normal" with success!

*Saint Charles International is the number-one European hub for marketing, transport, and logistics in the fruit and vegetable industry. Based in Perpignan in the Pyrénées-Orientales department of France, a €1.95-billion market of 1,768,000 tonnes of fruit and vegetables is handled by 2,200 people employees. Activity is concentrated in the Mediterranean area.
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