



## Apples from Belgium, Germany, Italy and The Netherlands savoured finally in Thailand

### The companies

Founded in 1945, **VOG** is the South Tyrolean Fruit Growers' Co-operatives Consortium. Headquartered in Terlano, Italy, it consists of 12 cooperatives representing more than 4,600 family farms working in 10,800 hectares of land. Altogether, they harvested just over half a million tonnes of apples during last year, selling in 74 countries.



**Elbe-Obst** is a recognized Producer Organization with about 350 associated fruit growers, founded in 1968 and based in the district of Stade, Germany. The members grow pome, stone and berry fruit on an area of about 5,500 hectares. They produce mostly apples, and reach around 180,000 tons of fruit per year. Elbe-Obst's role is to help small growers bundle their supply, to sell in Europe and export abroad.

Mr. Axel Schuback, chairman and farmer of Elbe-Obst

### The impediment: Thai import requirements restricts access of EU apples

The importation of plant products require a prior authorisation granted to each exporting country, involving detailed pest risk assessments, an audit of control bodies in Member States and an inspection of orchards interested in producing fruit for export to Thailand. The requirements are quite detailed and can be deemed burdensome. In the case of Thailand, applications for the permission to export apples from four EU countries have been pending since 2015.

### EU action brings results

The EU's Market Access Partnership has been acting constantly to facilitate the process by highlighting the fact that all EU Member States are following the same, harmonised phytosanitary rules.

- The European Union Delegation and national embassies have regular meetings with Thai administration, which help conveying the interest of the industry, but also to exchange information.
- The EU Delegation have also advocated undertaking grouped assessments and audits in several countries. This has been taken up by Thailand, helping achieve good results for more EU Countries in one go.



- In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020, the European Commission and EU Delegation have advocated for carrying virtual audits, in order to expedite the backlogs.

These efforts have yielded results in 2020: Thailand has authorised the importation of apples from four EU countries, Belgium, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands. This has allowed, among others, VOG and Elbe-Obst to start offering their apples to Thai consumers.

### **The view from the companies**

*“We entered the Thai market for the first time in September 2020, major milestone for us that has enabled us to keep growing our global presence. This year we sent 14 containers to Thailand from September to December. The feedback we have received from our customers has all been very positive”.* – Mr. Walter Pardatscher, CEO of the VOG Consortium.



The sales team of the VOG Consortium.

*“After the Russian embargo on fresh fruits and vegetables, market access to new countries is a major concern for all European fruit producers. We are all more than happy that the EU was able to negotiate this successful dossier. Now we can supply apples to this important country in South East Asia.”* – Mr. Axel Schuback, chairman of Elbe-Obst.

### **The view of the EU sectorial association**

*Whilst Member States have to negotiate export authorisations one-by-one, the support of the EU in the past years has been essential to coordinate these efforts and build synergies among Member State. The coordination of apple dossiers to open the Thai market and the organization of a joint visit of Thai inspectors in orchards in Belgium, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands is a good example of the benefits that joining forces at EU level brings to all European fresh fruits and vegetables growers and exporters.* – Mr. Philippe Binard, Freshfel Europe’s General Delegate, the European Association representing the interests of the fresh fruit and vegetables supply chain in Europe and internationally.