



Goodness by nature

www.responsiblyfresh.eu

BELORTA
redefining fruit & vegetables



The Association of Belgian Horticultural Cooperatives is the owner of the Responsibly Fresh collective sustainability label.



www.vbt.eu

PROGRESS WITH RESPECT FOR THE ELEMENTS OF NATURE

Through their sustainability efforts, the fruit and vegetable producers and their VBT cooperatives make an important contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.

Progress



Eating tasty and healthy, with attention for **food safety**, **food thrift** and **responsible packaging**.



Fruit and vegetable producers and their cooperatives are aware of the importance of the **health, safety and wellbeing of their employees**.



The horticultural cooperatives annually allocate a substantial budget to **scientific and applied research**, actively looking for **innovation and improvement**.



From a cooperative mindset, and looking broadly at sustainable development, producers and their cooperatives also engage with **projects in the South**.

Respecting the elements of nature



Being mindful of water consumption is **essential**. The horticultural sector uses as much collected and stored rainwater as possible. For sorting processes, drinking water is used for food safety reasons, but as **thriftily** as possible.



Three quarters of producers are taking energy-saving measures to reduce the **energy consumption**. Almost half of them produce energy on site, mainly through photovoltaic cells, CHP and even residual heat.



The crops capture **CO₂** and diverse forms of emissions are limited as **much as possible**. The VBT cooperatives have developed different initiatives to limit the impact of transport inherent to their activities.



Producers are taking measures to **retain soil structure and nutrient content and to curb soil erosion**. VBT cooperatives have supported their producers in the correct application of integrated crop management and protection. Biodiversity is important and natural pollination is essential for good fertilisation and production.



Goodness by nature



The cooperative fruit and vegetable sector further improves its sustainability

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF A RENEWED APPROACH



NATURALLY HEALTHY

From 2019 onwards, the fruit and vegetable producers and their VBT cooperatives will promote their sustainability efforts under the slogan 'Goodness by nature'. The aim is to emphasise that their products, which are naturally healthy, are being produced with minimal impact on the environment.



IN COOPERATION WITH THE VALUE CHAIN

Where and when possible, the fruit and vegetable producers and their VBT cooperatives will approach other stakeholders in the market to establish initiatives that will encourage healthier eating and continued sustainable development. In cooperation with the different links in the value chain.

With 'Responsibly Fresh', the fruit and vegetable producers and their cooperatives – associated within VBT - have made collective efforts towards sustainability. They first looked at getting their own businesses in order. By obtaining the necessary certificates and inspections by external parties, they've been able to show meaningful progress. After 6 years and 3 sustainability reports, it is now time to come into the open.



HEALTHIER EATING

A priority for the fruit and vegetable producers and their VBT cooperatives is encouraging consumption of their healthy and sustainable products, as well as promoting food thrift, out of respect for its inherent value and in cooperation with the consumer.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The fruit and vegetable producers and their VBT cooperatives are inspired in their sustainability efforts by the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. In fact, they've highlighted eight, in cooperation with the world community.

COOPERATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IS SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Together

The cooperative is a business model that is defined by democratic decision-making. Membership is voluntary and open. The cooperative members, who maintain their autonomy and independence, are co-owners and have a say in the management of the cooperative.

Strong

Typically, a cooperative will not strive for profit. Rather, it will look to maximise its goal, namely getting their member-producers a fair price for their products. Jointly approaching the markets gives producers more leverage.

In good and bad times

VBT cooperatives do everything in their power to win as much of the national and international markets as possible for their members. Just as it's the case now for the entire agricultural sector, the horticultural sector is under pressure. But the strength of the cooperatives helps the sector through periods of hardship.



The advantages of working in cooperatives

- The VBT cooperatives **advise** their producers when it comes to production and sales planning to ensure the offer matches demand.
- The VBT cooperatives oversee the correct application of **quality systems** and handle **quality control** procedures before, during and after harvest.
- In conjunction with producers' activities, **storing, sorting and packaging** can also be done through the cooperatives. In doing so, a substantial amount of the logistical workload is taken over by the cooperatives.
- The VBT cooperatives share their market knowledge with member-producers and stimulate innovation on many levels.
- The VBT cooperatives create **strong brands**. In association with the VBT, the Responsibly Fresh collective sustainability label was added. Joint initiatives for the benefit of market support.