

Case requirements of the private sector: Food safety policy of The Greenery

Introduction

The Greenery B.V. is one of the leading concerns in Europe in the vegetable, fruit and mushroom sector. The company has a turnover of circa € 1,7 billion and has 2,100 employees, 1,800 of whom work inside the Netherlands, and 400 outside – mainly in Belgium, Germany, Spain, Italy and the United Kingdom.

The Greenery Netherlands is a business unit of The Greenery and is a distribution, sales and marketing company of fresh produce whose shares are owned by the horticultural cooperative VoedingsTuinbouw Nederland (VTN). The 2,000 producer owned companies who are members of the VTN sell their products via The Greenery.

In this case several examples are given on how the Greenery works out its policy on safe food. The main requirements of The Greenery are included in The Greenery Quality Assurance System. As the Greenery states:

Quality and food safety are key areas of the Greenery's policy. Our aim is to supply our customers and the consumer with a complete range of fresh, flavoursome, healthy, safe and sustainably produced fruit, vegetables and mushrooms all year round, both now and in the future.

From: Brochure "Providing Safe Food. Second Nature To Us"

This case shows how existing requirements such as EUREPGAP are being used in practice and included in quality systems of a big company as The Greenery who is a key player on the distribution of food products as well as a seller of those products. This document can be used for benchmarking on how requirements are being applied in practice in the EU. You can also have a look at the website of The Greenery, see the external links at the summary page of this document.

Food safety

It might look like a hype in Europe, but food safety is a key issue. Food safety is very closely related to product quality and was formerly assessed on the basis of external characteristics such as uniform size and shape, sufficient ripe and damage free aspects. Today, issues are added such as environmentally sound production, taste, working conditions at the grower and safety.

Along the food supply chain hygiene standards are stringent starting at the grower and ending at the supermarket shelves. The Greenery uses tracking and tracing methods, which makes it possible to trace the origin of the fruit and vegetables and track their route from the grower to the shop.

The Greenery Quality Assurance System

In order to demonstrate that The Greenery products are being grown responsibly, The Greenery uses the Quality Assurance System, which comprises the following systems:

- Basic The Greenery Quality Assurance System
- EUREPGAP
- Hygiene Code
- The Greenery UK Standard

Basic The Greenery Quality Assurance System

All growers of the Greenery are obliged to follow the Basic The Greenery Quality Assurance System. By doing so, they show that their work conforms to statutory requirements and the additional regulations of The Greenery relating to record-keeping, crop protection, use of soil fertilizers, food safety, hygiene and working conditions.

EUREPGAP

The Greenery has adopted the EUREPGAP requirements relating to food safety, the environment, working conditions and nature conservation and encourages its growers to join the scheme. By the end of 2002, all the produce delivered to retailers conformed to EUREPGAP standards.

➔ [For more information](#) on EUREPGAP, please see the related document.

Hygiene Code

Customers may specify extra requirements on hygiene on activities such as sorting and packing. The growers supplying these customers follow the Hygiene Code, which meets the highest customer standards for the areas of hygiene and food safety preservation. This includes requirements such as drawing up cleaning schedules and keeping a system for counting knives and scissors.

The Greenery UK Standard

The UK market, in general, attaches great importance to environmentally friendly cultivation methods, hygiene and food safety, which are all subject to specific requirements. For this reason, The Greenery has developed a special UK Standard. The Greenery UK Standard combines the EUREPGAP requirements with additional regulation of grading and packing by horticultural firms. It can be described as a combination of EUREPGAP regulations and the Hygiene Code, with additional specific requirements for record keeping and inspection. Growers who implement this quality system in their business meet special UK requirements and can therefore supply the UK retail chains.

Recent developments



The Greenery has recently been granted the fairtrade Max Havelaar quality mark for fresh fruit and vegetables, namely for bananas, mangos, avocados and citrus fruit from various developing countries.

Naturelle, the business unit of the Greenery specialised in organically grown produce, can import these goods and label them with the Fair Trade Organics-logo.

➔ [For more information](#) on Max Havelaar, please see the related document.