



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO INDIA

The Ambassador

New Delhi, 3 April 2020

Dear Principal Secretary,

I am contacting you once again as a matter of urgency in relation to the current difficult logistic situation in Indian ports.

Notwithstanding the instructions sent by Government to mitigate the adverse impact of the lockdown on the logistic chain, the situation remains challenging: inbound shipments have not been unloaded or not been cleared by customs brokers; several containers could not get delivery and pick-up services due to understaffing and to the restriction of movements.

This is particularly worrisome when it comes to perishable goods such as fresh fruits and vegetables. Fresh produce cannot be left indefinitely in ports, especially in the absence of appropriate refrigeration along the delivery chain.

In light of the above and considering that there are significant numbers of European fruit containers stuck in Indian major and minor ports - and more to arrive in the upcoming days - I would kindly request that prompt action is taken to ensure that their unloading and clearance is given the highest priority. It is crucial to ensure that appropriate circulation permits are swiftly granted to truck drivers, importers, clearing agents and port workers in order to allow the fast unload, inspection and transport of perishable items. Efforts should be made in a timely manner to ensure the functioning of the complex logistical machinery at the ports and afterwards for the benefit of the entire food supply chain.

I take this opportunity also to kindly ask competent Indian Authorities to reiterate to all Port Authorities, Health, Plant Quarantine and Custom Officers that fresh fruit and vegetables imported from the European Union shall not be subject to any additional precautionary quarantine. As clearly indicated by FSSAI with letter no. 11023/19/2020-QAD, there is no evidence of a food borne transmission of Coronavirus: food imported into India from Europe is safe for human consumption. As stated by FSSAI, spreading this information is crucial in order to counter false propaganda, which may cause panic and adversely impact the smooth conduct of our bilateral trade relations.

We will be grateful to Indian competent Authorities for instructing customs, plant quarantine and port health officers to refrain from stopping any cargo of fresh fruit on grounds of transmissibility of Covid-19 or of alleged non-compliance with standards.

Dr. P.K. Mishra
Principal Secretary
Prime Minister's Office
South Block, New Delhi

You can rest assured that the European Union, the main destination of Indian agricultural exports, is doing its best to keep its ports operational notwithstanding the Covid-19 pandemic. The European Union has already implemented trade facilitation measures¹ for imports of agricultural products including organic products in the course of Covid-19 lockdowns.

We will be grateful for all efforts that India will direct towards establishing a fast lane in ports for perishable items, in order to prioritize the transport of essential items.

Yours sincerely,

(e-signed)

Ugo Astuto

Ambassador of the European Union

cc.:

Mr. Rajiv Gauba, Cabinet Secretary, Government of India

Mr. Gopal Krishna, Secretary, Ministry of Shipping

Mr. Anup Wadhawan, Secretary, Department of Commerce

Mr. N Sivasailam, Special Secretary (Logistics), Department of Commerce

Mr. Diwakar Nath Misra, Joint Secretary (Agriculture), Department of Commerce

Ms. Nidhi ManiTripathi, Joint Secretary (European Union), Department of Commerce

Mr. Atish Chandra, Joint Secretary (Plant Health), Department of Agri. & Farmers Welfare

Mr. G S G Ayyangar, Chief Executive Officer, FSSAI

¹ Legislation can be found under the following link: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1585733432410&uri=CELEX:32020R0466>