

**Title** Current status of the fresh cut produce industry: Where to next?

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### **Abstract**

The fresh cut industry has seen an incredible growth in countries with advanced economies. Fresh cuts at one point constituted nearly 20% of fresh produce sales in some European countries. However there are signs that this growth is slowing down and in some countries there appears to be a decline in sales. Growth has slowed down in the United States and Australia as well. There are many reasons why this is occurring. Some of these reasons, including economic instability are beyond the control of the fresh cut industry. However there many other reasons of why perhaps the growth is slowing down. Some of these reasons have been identified through customer surveys. Importantly, quality, freshness, variability, food safety concerns, nutritional concerns, value for money, un- interesting tired old products and product presentation seem to be at the top of the customer dislike list. This presentation will discuss the current status of the fresh cut industry and what changes are needed to reduce the slowdown in sales in this important category. The presentation will focus on quality issues that the industry needs to tackle next in order to maintain momentum in the market place. Issues like food safety indicators, quality indicators, and nutritional indicators must be reassessed and redesigned to meet customer expectations.

The fresh cut industry will need to consider issues such as local products, environmental management at both farm level and processing site level to appease consumer concerns in these areas.

To gain consumer confidence in this category the industry must tackle issues that start from the farm and go through to the plate of the consumer. The industry must listen to the consumer and be seen to address the consumer concerns. This presentation will show that when the fresh cut industry listens to the consumer sales can increase even under economically unstable times.