



**For immediate release**

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**SHAFFE closes 2020 with virtual Northern America meeting and reflects on priority areas for association activities to aid Southern Hemisphere exporters in 2021**

**SHAFFE has closed the 2020 association year with its now virtual North America meeting. Gathering SHAFEE’s members from across the Southern Hemisphere, the meeting examined market trends and developments during the Covid-19 pandemic in the U.S. market, which continues to grow at an average pace of 5% over the past 5 years to a market value of roughly \$ 4 billion USD for Southern Hemisphere exporters. The meeting marks the last in an increased virtual meeting schedule in 2020. The frequency of SHAFFE meetings was increased in 2020 to respond to the challenges of Covid-19 crisis management, replace trade fair and physical meeting opportunities, and increase the association’s capacity to quickly respond to the ever-changing trading environment.**

The SHAFFE North America meeting, traditionally falling in the period of the PMA Fresh Summit, was held virtually on 1 December 2020 with high participation from SHAFFE member countries. The U.S. and Canadian market are important outlets of Southern Hemisphere fresh produce and comprise one third of U.S. temperate fruit imports with roughly 1.2 million T and a market value of \$ 3.3 billion USD as well as one fifth of the Canadian temperate fruit market with roughly 244.000 T worth \$ 550 million USD<sup>i</sup>. While final trade figures for 2020 have not yet been made available, SHAFFE members report on a smooth and non-restrictive trading environment despite the continued impact of the Covid-19 pandemic especially on the U.S. market. Northern American markets continue to grow on an average 5-year level of 5% in value driven by high value imports such as berries, avocados and table grapes. SHAFFE members welcomed increasing investment in an improved logistics for logistical fruit trade environment in the U.S., such as the building of new irradiation and cold treatment facilities, which will further facilitate fruit supplies in the region.

The intensified virtual meeting schedule for 2020 with regular bi-monthly meetings has proven to be highly beneficial to SHAFFE members. During the Northern America meeting, SHAFFE President Mr. Anton Kruger (South Africa) affirmed the value of frequent SHAFFE meetings commenting that, *“During the course of 2020 we have observed increased participation and heightened exchange by all SHAFFE member countries. This year SHAFFE has acted as a valuable platform for in-depth discussions on matters such as food safety, sustainability and importantly the management of the Covid-19 pandemic.”* Looking ahead to 2021, the organisation will continue to increase its activity on sustainability and food safety matters as well as market intelligence to accompany Southern Hemisphere exporters through an ever-changing trading environment.

Ms Nelli Hajdu, who has acted as SHAFFE Deputy Secretary General since 2016, was appointed Secretary General for the association at the beginning of 2020 in February. Ms Hajdu takes over the helm of the association from Mr Philippe Binard and will continue to guide SHAFFE’s heightened work for member countries and scope of association activities into 2021.

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<sup>i</sup> Trademap,