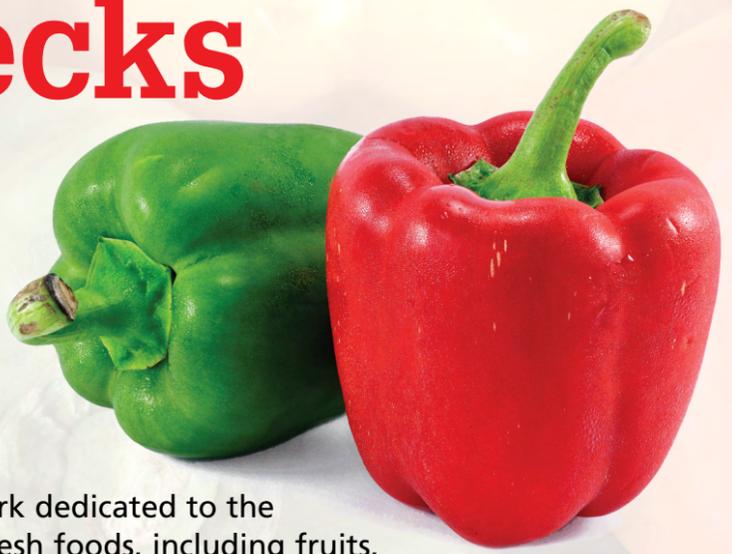


Processing pecks of peppers:

A look inside Fresh Park Venlo in the Netherlands



Fresh Park Venlo is a logistics park dedicated to the processing and distribution of fresh foods, including fruits, vegetables, fish, and meat. More than 130 growers, brokers, traders, distributors, and retailers work in the park, which is located on 130 hectares (about 320 acres) in Venlo, a city in southeastern Holland on the German border. What follows is a look at a fresh pepper's journey through the facility.



▲ About 2,000 trucks arrive at and depart from Fresh Park Venlo daily. The Dutch government has designated the Venlo region one of five "horticultural clusters of importance" within Holland.



◀ Shown here is a pepper packing facility, where the vegetables are sorted using cameras and vision systems, and then packaged. With its easy access to multiple modes of transportation, Venlo is ideally situated for this type of operation. For instance, rail lines are only 900 meters (300 feet) away, while the European Container Terminal (ECT) has an inland port within two kilometers (1.2 miles) of the park with boat and barge connections.



▶ Products handled at Fresh Park Venlo's various facilities come from more than 300 growers. About 70 percent of the growers are located within 100 kilometers (62 miles) of Fresh Park. The Venlo region alone has some 18,000 acres under cultivation, which means workers are often preparing items that were harvested just hours earlier.



▲ Peppers are fed onto trays that ride on a conveyor to sorting. During local non-growing seasons, suppliers import vegetables from southern Europe and northern Africa for processing at the park's facilities. Fruits are imported year round, mainly from Europe, Central and South America, and South Africa.



▲ A sorting system separates the peppers by size and type, and drops them into chutes. Fresh Park Venlo was started as an auction site for growers, and half of the produce handled here is still sold through daily auctions.

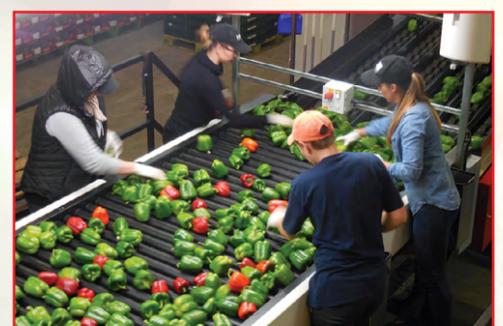
▶ Fresh Park Venlo is dedicated solely to fresh food production and distribution. Only food companies are allowed to operate in the park. In addition to peppers, local products commonly handled at the site include tomatoes, cucumbers, white asparagus, lettuce, and soft fruits like strawberries and blueberries.



◀ Pallet jacks and lift trucks take packaged peppers to docks for transport to retail stores and wholesalers. Much of this product will be consumed in Germany. Located just a few kilometers from the German border, Venlo offers access to 30 million German consumers within a two-hour drive.



▲ While most of the peppers will be sent to regional stores, some will be exported worldwide, including to the U.S. Using air cargo services at Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport, exporters can get these peppers to produce markets in New York within 48 hours.



▲ A combination of automated systems and human workers assures gentle handling of the peppers during inspection and processing. Depending on the season, between 1,500 and 3,000 people work at the facilities within Fresh Park Venlo.



▲ An automated tote stacker keeps crates used to hold products neatly stored within the facility. Most of these will be returned to growers by truck to be refilled.



◀ Many of the peppers will be packaged for resale, such as these brightly colored "stoplight" packs that include a red, yellow, and green pepper. A rotating table is used to make packaging easier. These types of operations are slated to be automated in the next few years.