
talking heads

Javier Rico, Euroberry Marketing

Javier Rico is the managing director of Euroberry Marketing, a Huelva, Spain-based grower-marketer of soft fruit. Euroberry Marketing is 50 per cent owned by Hortifrut Chile, which provides much of the company's out-of-season volumes, with the remainder owned by Atlantic Blue, the Spanish blueberry grower whose production forms the backbone of the company's business.

How did you first get into the fresh produce business?

In 1994, I was working in the Commercial Office of the Spanish Embassy in Santiago de Chile as a commercial advisor. This permitted me to be in contact with many companies doing business with Chilean companies. One of them, Merco San Jose, a strawberry and stonefruit grower, proposed that I go back to Spain to lead the export department. And I did.

When did you start working for Euroberry?

It was seven years ago, when the former managing director, Francisco Ortuzar, contacted me to join Euroberry as commercial manager, with the aim of replacing him in three years' time when he went back to Chile. Those three years became 18 months, as he was assigned to develop the Asian market.

Where did you work before?

I worked for seven years in Medina Group as



Javier Rico finds a daughterly hug far more relaxing than the spa treatment

commercial director. The president of the Group was a pioneer in strawberry growing in Huelva and owned the first strawberry nursery in Spain, Viveros California. It was an honour to work for him, as it was his vision of the business that made me love the sector even more than I did.

What do you see as the biggest challenge facing the fresh produce industry?

These days, you can grow everything in almost every single country and be competitive. However, we all too frequently forget that the final goal is to please the consumer. This has to be an obsession for all the leading fruit companies: to find out what the consumer really loves and wants.

Describe your typical day-to-day schedule?

As Euroberry is involved in both Spanish and overseas

campaigns, we are always "in season". A normal week involves keeping in permanent contact with our clients, coordinating our sales teams in Holland and Spain, getting updates from the production department in Huelva, participating in conference calls with Chile, Mexico and Argentina, having weekly meetings reviewing budgets, costs and results, meeting suppliers, and many other things.

What's the first thing you do when you sit down at your desk?

Information is crucial, so it is very important to know early in the morning what is going on in production and in the market. At the same time, I analyse the daily reports and check emails.

Do you prefer doing business over the phone or via email, or both?

The email is a magnificent

communication tool. We also use video conferences and Skype. But important things in business always require a personal telephone call, as there are some small details that require a full, intensive conversation.

How many people are there on your team?

In total, Euroberry is formed by 11 people, including sales, logistics, administration and finance.

How much travelling is involved in your work?

It depends, as every year is different, but on average I spend around 60 days a year abroad.

Where have you been lately and where are you planning to go next?

The last place I visited was Morocco, and my next foreign travel will be to Germany.

What do you love in particular about your job and what, if anything, would you change?

The fresh produce business is always changing, so every year produces something new. The weather can be a crucial partner or it can be your enemy, as it has such a huge influence on the production and consumption of fruit.

What do you do in order to unwind after a tough day at work?

At the moment, going home to hug my one-month-old little daughter is better than any spa. ■