

Less chemicals and better soil use are the main objectives of the Banagreen corporation, an Ecuadorian enterprise dedicated to improving banana production and boosting imports for its 15 producing associates. 

In a conversation with www.freshfruitportal.com, engineer José Uyaguari said the association strives to create awareness among producers. They want growers to understand the impact of actions such as indiscriminate chemical usage which, according to Uyaguari, has left the soil less fertile and productive.

Banagreen, located in the Oro province, compares itself to the Small Banana Producers Association of El Guabo which uses an environmentally friendly guarantee on its exports.

"We want to find the same market prospects but we set ourselves apart because we manage our plantations differently. Environmental protection is an objective for us by reducing the use of chemicals as much as possible. We want to make our conventional fruit into an organic line," he said.

For the Banagreen spokesman, most businesses do not worry enough about the process undergone by food products, such as postharvest practices.

"They only care about buying the fruit, without worrying about the damage being done to the environment," he said.

"Treatment with organic products gives better fruit quality and because of that, we are changing our way of operating on the farms, using chemical but under an organic line so that we can recover our soil," he said.

The land issue is very sensitive for Uyaguari, since years of agriculture use have left it tired and with little organic material.

"We are doing land diagnostics. We are giving our producers an annual nutrition program with the objective of decreasing fumigation cycles."

While the banana industry has been hard hit by black Sigatoka, Uyaguari said the use of chemicals must be balanced and reduced as best possible.

"We know that we cannot change the treatment to be 100% organic overnight, but we will be changing to provide better consumer security that the use of chemicals is very low," he said.

The market and new products

Banagreen currently exports 10 containers to the United States a week. The company is also in talks with an important European super market chain with presence in the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Spain and Germany.

"We haven't closed talks still due to details such as shipping packages, which we have not worked out and because we need to give them a buyer guarantee that the fruit will arrive with excellent quality," he said.

Uyaguari added that they are already sending fruit over to attract consumers in such countries and that the same importer is interested in other exotic fruits such as pineapples and cherimoyas.

In terms of growth, he said they are not thinking of expanding their growing area so as to avoid overproduction before they have set markets. In 2013, however, he predicted that shipments could reach 50 containers a week.

Photo: Banagreen

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