

By José Antonio Hidalgo, Executive Director of the Association of Banana Exporters in Ecuador (AEBE).

It was a year we all lost someone or something of value in our lives and learned to value what we have and who is by our side.

This year we have the opportunity to stand up, to create, to start from scratch if necessary and to honor the memory of those who are no longer with us, but whose legacy lives on in their work.

For the banana sector, 2020 was a year that tested not only our ability to innovate but also our resilience and our unity.

We went to work despite Covid-19 which was and continues to be a threat, hanging over us like an invisible enemy.

We strengthened biosecurity measures so that we could continue exporting our products, and although a major part of the economy was paralyzed, we continued with the same passion and commitment as always to move the economy of the country.

We came together with the start of a banana association focused on a strategic vision including all participants along the supply chain.

Focusing on competitiveness as well as social and environmental sustainability, we worked toward the objective of having a greater prevalence in the generation of public politics.

Promoting the growth of foreign trade, the generation and development of jobs for workers in rural zones.

Now that we look back, although we can say that we are a resilient and united sector, the challenges will continue.

We will deal with the ongoing increase in costs, excessive fiscal pressure and water shortages in Santa Elena, the province where our bananas grow.

At the moment there isn't enough attention from the authorities, the lack of trade agreements with countries such as China, Japan and Korea and the Euroasia zone puts us at a disadvantage against our competitors.

The latent threat of the [Tropical race 4 fungus](#) that can devastate the country's plantations continues, so the need for research and development of new strains and fungicides is extremely pertinent.

One of the biggest challenges we face is that the regulatory framework of the banana sector should be updated according to the new sustainability demands.

We hope that with the arrival of new authorities in May of this year, the situation changes and won't punish the sector that has been part of the solution, not the problem.

The arrival of the new year fills us with hope. We reaffirm our commitment to be proactive and work to overcome the challenges that prevent us from developing our potential further.

That we don't lack work, that we don't lack innovative ideas, that we don't lack strategic allies, that we don't lack the light, clarity nor humility to prioritize the common good; but above all: that we don't lose our families who give meaning to this effort.