

Nicofruta: 20 years of fresh and responsible products



With 20 years of experience in the production and marketing of fruit, Nicofruta is a company of Italian origin that sells pineapple from Costa Rica to the European market.

Since the beginning of its operations, Nicofruta has focused on supporting producers and small grower organizations in the application of production protocols with environmentally responsible management that includes reducing or eliminating the use of agrochemicals, but also addressing social development issues for producers, their families and surrounding communities.

Nicofruta's work with producers has resulted in international certifications such as Fairtrade, Organic for the European Union, and the United States, Biosuisse, Rainforest Alliance/UTZ, Globalgap, BRC, Zero Residue

Pesticides, and recently Agroprevent COVID19. All these certifications have confirmed the company's commitment to sustainable agricultural production.

From sustainable pineapple to biodiversity-responsible pineapple

For Nicofruta, environmental commitment goes beyond certification. After 20 years of marketing pineapple as the main export product, the company is seeking to improve the production environment with an innovative approach that includes biodiversity as a major player in the sustainability spectrum. That is why, since 2018, the company has begun implementing a project that promotes the conservation of ecosystems.

One of the main characteristics of biodiversity-responsible production is respect for nature: *“Instead of taking things away from it, we provide it with conditions. Nature recognizes this, we have great satisfaction when we see extraordinary animals that were no longer seen on the farms; we have achieved the connection of biological corridors in several farms and this has allowed animals to pass through and remain in their natural habitat”, explains Jorge Sanchez, General Manager in Nicoverde (Nicofruta's subsidiary).*

The promotion of agricultural production based on respect for the environment, biodiversity and all ecosystems in general gives Nicofruta the greatest benefit: guaranteeing healthy and safe products for consumers, demonstrating as an added value that pineapple production can be compatible with the conservation of biodiversity.

Public-private partnerships for sustainable and responsible production

Since 2018, Nicofruta has signed a public-private partnership with the develoPPP.de program, an initiative of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

(BMZ), which seeks to encourage private sector participation in issues of importance to business, but which coincide with sustainable development. The implementation of this alliance in Costa Rica has been carried out by the German Cooperation for Development, GIZ, and has allowed the company to conserve the ecosystems in its productive activities.

The alliance was born with the objective of developing capacities in the small pineapple producers of the country and improving Nicofrutta's technical knowledge on the inclusion of biodiversity in production, to become aware of the application of new tools for biodiversity management such as the Agricultural Biodiversity Check; but also to satisfy the company's need to transmit more knowledge to pineapple producers and the organizations with which they work and provide them with fruit.



"The most positive thing about working with the GIZ is that we share a vision in the development of biodiversity and business, and our interest in supporting small producers with tools that support their work in the field and allow us to differentiate their product in international markets, which will surely be highly appreciated by consumers."

As a result of this alliance, Nicofrutta expects that by 2021 there will be zero residues of pesticides in the production process, using biological products produced in the company's Biotechnology Laboratory, such as fungi, bacteria, nitrogen fixers, fertilizers, etc.

Likewise, the company expects that the organizations and producers that are part of its value chain are prepared to comply with Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance/UTZ, Globalgap, Organic and other certifications to ensure quality, safety, and biosecurity.

Marketing pineapple and facing the pandemic

For Nicofrutta, the main challenge during the COVID-19 emergency has been to establish immediate protocols to protect its collaborators in the packing plant in Costa Rica and minimize the risk of contagion. The company established a protocol for informing personnel, as well as cleaning and disinfecting actions at the entrance to the facilities, both for people and for vehicles, trucks, containers, etc. The use of masks is mandatory, as is a temperature check when entering the facilities.

To guarantee consumers the process of packaging and exporting the product - in this case fresh pineapple - has been another challenge faced by the agrifood sector in dealing with this pandemic. This challenge made Nicofrutta the first company in Latin America to be internationally certified under KIWA BCS' AGROPREVENT COVID-19 protocol; an Agro-Food



Prevention protocol against COVID-19, endorsed by the Polytechnic University of Valencia (UPV) through the Kiwa-UPV Chair.

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"This certification assures our clients and final consumers that we apply a certified international protocol for the preventive management of COVID-19, thus minimizing problems of product contamination and the health of our personnel."

This certification joins the actions implemented by the company such as the installation of ozone equipment in the packaging area of the packing plant, to disinfect the environment from bacteria, coronavirus, and others. This type of equipment was also installed in the post-harvest area and in the cold storage warehouses for the fruit.

Nicofruta's commitment to delivering safe and responsible products to its consumers is confirmed every day. The company is celebrating 20 years of experience that demonstrate that pineapple production for the German market can be sustainable with the contribution of many actors, but mainly with the business commitment to change paradigms in agricultural production.