

FUTURA FOCUSES ON FRESH FUTURE

Futura is a young and dynamic company founded at the end of 2010 by a group of people each with a decade's experience of electronic sorting and grading of fruit and vegetables. Since 2012, having researched the market extensively, it began producing and selling Logika-branded graders – modular, electronic machines described as simple, robust and dependable for a range of different fruits and vegetables. Fresh Focus Italy caught up with the firm's managing director Omar Papi to find out more.

"We have expanded our Logika range, which was designed originally to handle traditional products like apples, citrus, peaches, kiwifruit etc, to cover those tropical fruits that are gaining more and more market share, like avocados and mangoes, as well as dates and dragon fruit – a product that is hardly known in Europe," Papi reveals. "Because our grading machines are very modular and customisable, we are able to add the necessary accessories and variations so that these 'new' products can also be graded."

Perhaps significantly for a company which might once upon a time have dedicated most of its energy to selling its technology in Italy or more broadly within Europe, Futura's focus is largely elsewhere, with 85-90 per cent of its turnover generated outside of Europe. "We pay a lot of attention to the CIS countries, so Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan," Papi explains. "As well as these countries, we have long-established organisations in places like India, UAE, Morocco, Egypt, Israel and Kenya. As for Europe, the most important country without a shadow of a doubt is Spain."

That geographical dislocation can be an advantage, Papi insists, provided you make the right allowances, for example by making systems more user-friendly and, in many cases, translating them into local languages. "As a result, our client finds themselves in front of a far more simple and intuitive system," he says.



what might almost be described as an apple industry grapevine has materialised, to the apparent benefit of all involved. "The nice thing is, we are now able to work more closely and learn the kind of things about what the market is doing that we couldn't previously," explains one producer on condition of anonymity.

PRESENTATION SKILLS

In the realm of marketing, Italy's apple companies continue to excel, forging strong links with consumers and customers alike. A recent redesign for Vog's Marlene brand has apparently been well received. "The restyling and the new brand strategy have been met very positively and our customers have been very happy with them," says Gerhard Dichgans. Having rolled out new visuals and promotional materials last November, a series of advertising activities began in March, including television and other media commercials in Italy and Spain, as well as promotions in Belgium, the Netherlands and Norway. The brand's multi-format campaign in the Benelux, for example, incorporated social networks and initiatives aimed at trade professionals, including a contest for retailers to win a trip to South Tyrol.

"The Netherlands and Belgium are important markets for our consortium," Dichgans notes. "The receptiveness of these countries is also due to the spending capacity of consumers, who understandably have high expectations. This explains our decision to focus more closely on these markets, speaking their language and taking account of their own individual traits. We hope that the possibility of visiting our land through the ad-hoc competition that we have organised together with our Marlene clients in Belgium and the Netherlands gives trade professionals an extra tool to promote the origins of our apples, as well as the fruits themselves." In Norway, meanwhile, Marlene held its first ever tastings in the country this year at Coop Mega stores in Oslo, plus it was present in the finish area at the recent Alpine Ski World Cup in Kvitfjell.

CHANGING TASTES

"Val Venosta Apples has invested heavily in research and the introduction of new varieties in recent years," says Josef Wielander, general director of Vi.P. There is the 'traditional' adult consumer who mainly prefers a 'classic' apple... but there are also new consumers who are young and ready to explore."



For v.i.p.'s Val Venosta brand, the focus has been on amicizia, friendship, as a theme running through its latest marketing campaign, which also featured what is believed to be the first-ever promotional tie-in with Disney by an Italian fresh produce company. "For 2018, we have tried to convey the concept of Friendship with a capital F in a concerted manner across all of our marketing, communication and promotional activities, based on values of sincerity, trust and passion," explains Benjamin Laimer, marketing manager for Val Venosta Apples.

At the start of February, the group began communicating its new message online using an eye-catching, 12-second message designed to highlight the commitment of Val Venosta growers to cultivating fruit like they would a friendship. Then in March, consumers were invited to vote for their favourite greengrocer, with a chance to win cars both for themselves and for their nominated winner. A further vital piece in this year's Val Venosta campaign was the arrival of its co-branding partnership with Disney, which saw characters from the iconic films

Frozen and Cars 3 adorn packs of Pinova and Gala apples. Young consumers were able to collect special stickers found in flowpacks containing four small-sized pieces of fruit and stick them to a special poster downloaded from the v.i.p website. ●

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 OPPOSITE—New Val Venosta apple packaging featuring the Disney stars
 ABOVE—Marlene takes its new I Am Marlene campaign to Norway



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