

FULL SERVICE BY MEANS OF GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS



As the world grows smaller since physical distances are bridged in a trice, markets are changing more rapidly every day. In general, a company operating internationally needs to have the capability and capacity to adapt to those rapid market movements in order to stay competitive in a sustainable way. Besides an increased market velocity, standardized

products are dominating the consumer markets in terms of branding, quality and product characteristics.

If we take into consideration the global fresh produce market, the above-mentioned drifts are clearly visible throughout. Fresh produce companies need to anticipate the high velocity of market demands and requirements in order to stay competitive and, even more critical, to stay profitable.

Margins in the fresh produce market nowadays are ‘marginal,’ if you do a relative comparison with other industries. However, there is one phenomenon that makes this global fresh produce industry quite distinctive. In spite of the distances and product standardization, the global fresh produce market will always be characterized by a sense of cultural differences, expectations and tastes between countries in terms of varieties, product characteristics, packaging, etc. It should be emphasized that the business game of being competitive and profitable in the global produce industry could only be played with a perspective of thinking globally and acting locally. Global thinking makes a company in this industry efficient and a year-round player, while local-acting provides a company to do business in an effective way.

The Van Rijn Group is one of the oldest global operating fresh produce companies in the world. The company was founded in 1855 in the famous greenhouse area known as “Westland” in the Southwest of the Netherlands and developed itself during the last 155 years as an expert for product categories of fruits, vegetables and potatoes. Around those product categories, the Van Rijn Group has built an extended global network. The network is not only focused on the products itself, but also on facilitating a full service throughout the value chain, from production to final end-user sales. In this way, the Van Rijn Group is able to generate value for its customers by creating network synergies from a global perspective at the one side and tailor-made packages for its customers at the other side.

The critical factor in following such a full-service strategy is the creation of stable and long-term partnerships in the markets in which

you are operating. As mentioned before, the global fresh produce market is characterized by market differences between countries. Therefore, market knowledge is imperative for bringing the organization’s strategy into practice. As a global operating company, the Van Rijn Group has the opinion that all relevant local market knowledge and its implications cannot be generated in-house. Long-term partners in the different countries throughout the world do bring this local market knowledge and its implications to the table since they are, by their nature, wise on the part of the market itself due to being a producer, service company, retail organization, foodservice company, etc. In sum, we are convinced that an inter-organizational approach in the form of long-term partnerships is absolutely necessary in order to serve our customers in the best way possible. In our opinion, an *intra*-organizational approach would never match the value creation as such.

In line with our vision as described above, we are always looking for new partners or extending our existing partnerships in order to fine tune our operations. Since North America is one of our most important

sales markets, the Van Rijn Group decided to visit the ‘resurrected’ New York Produce Show and Conference.

Not really sure what to expect, we have been positively surprised by the effectiveness of the show. Since the New York Produce Show and Conference was a relatively small-scale regional show, compared to the larger PMA

Fresh Summit, or even the huge Fruit Logistica in Berlin, the focus of this show was totally on networking and making new contacts, turning this into a complete breath of fresh air. In our opinion, a focus as such made the New York Produce Show more effective and accessible than the bigger shows of PMA Fresh Summit and Fruit Logistica.

The Van Rijn Group was able to consolidate its global approach with a local fulfilment for the North American market. Regardless of fine-tuning with our existing partners from North America, we were able to find new potential partnerships in the field of local production and logistics. Today, we consider those two fields as critical in order to supply our final customers with produce 12 months a year as efficient and effective as possible.

In sum: At Van Rijn Group, we are convinced of the success of the New York Produce Show and we definitely will attend again next year.

Editor’s Note: The New York Produce Show and Conference, presented by the Eastern Produce Council and PRODUCE BUSINESS, held its inaugural event in November, 2010. Though focused on the greater New York and mid-Atlantic region, a number of attendees came from out of the country. We asked Frank van der Windt at Van Rijn Group why he attended and what he got out of the event. This was his reply.

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By Frank van der Windt

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