



By Maura Maxwell

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## ***Ekland presents new board line-up***

The soft fruit specialist's recently appointed CEO brings more than 30 years of marketing and branding experience to his new role



(l-r) Rodrigo Ocampo, Patrick Ballew, Gabriela Pavia and Roy Ekland

**C**hico, California-based Ekland Marketing has unveiled its new management structure at Global Berry Congress 2017.

Patrick Ballew assumes the role of CEO while Rodrigo Ocampo has been named chief financial officer. Ballew's wife, Gabriela Pavia, joins as a member of the board of directors.

Ballew is an intellectual property attorney with 30 years experience, specialising in the worldwide commercialisation of new plant varieties.

Formerly a director and shareholder of Global Licensing Association, which holds the rights to the Pink Lady brand in Chile and New Zealand for the US market, he said he would be bringing this marketing and branding experience to bear in his new role.

Reflecting on the results of a poll

commissioned for the conference and conducted by UK market research group Ipsos Mori that suggested that marketing premium berry varieties direct to the consumer could help to differentiate products and boost sales, Ballew noted: "sensory branding is one of the key factors in improving sales of strawberries as it helps consumers make more intelligent choices."

"When you have a great variety like Florida Fortuna you need to make sure that you put the name right in front of consumers."

Ballew praised the "solid foundations" laid by Ekland's founder Roy Ekland and said the company would continue to deliver healthy returns to growers while introducing its strawberry production to some of the most deprived areas of the world in partnership with USAID in order to transform rural economies.

"Our philosophy is built on doing well by doing good through a merging together of ethics and technical know-how," Ballew explained.