



By Tom
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Delassus proud of 2020 effort

From its effective response to Covid-19 to winning an award for its redesigned website, Morocco's Delassus stands by the year's achievements



For Moroccan grower-exporter Delassus, 2020 was a year of challenges, but the company is proud of what it managed to achieve, not least in the way it responded to the threat of Covid-19. Despite the pandemic impacting on every part of the business, from production, picking and packing to exports, quick and effective action appears to have served the company well.

"Fortunately our sector is still in business, unlike many others," said commercial and marketing director Fatiha Charrat. "Having said that, we have thousands of workers at Delassus, which means that Covid-19 is a subject that is at the heart of our daily work. Of course, from March we adopted all the required measures and on top of those, we are conducting random tests across our five packhouses and our 3,000ha of production. To give you an idea of what that means, at our Duroc packhouse, where we employ 800 workers, we reached around 2,200 tests as of 1 November. This helps us to secure continuity and sustainability of supply for our customers."

Naturally, costs have increased as the company has acted to Covid-proof its facilities. "At the moment, we are analysing the exact financial impact," said Charrat. "Even the cost of transporting workers from the villages to our operations has doubled as we ensure social distancing is maintained. On our packing sites, we believe the increase in costs is around 25 per cent, as we work with two shifts and have increased the number of disinfections."

In addition, Delassus has been unable to receive its customers to show them its farms, produce and packhouse facilities. On the other hand, at least labour availability has been no issue for the company, with various sectors including tourism severely affected by the lack of business.

Following lockdown measures in the spring, Delassus saw a massive increase in demand for snacking tomatoes, as consumers prepared for the first confinement. However, since May the programmes have remained steady,

"Concerning citrus, our South African partners had a strong season in terms of requested volumes and an increase in pricing, but now the market is normal and prices are even lower than the same period last year," she said. "I guess this is due to the pressure some hard discounters are placing on the market and also the fact that consumers are now used to the impact of Covid-19."

Trucking costs have also returned to normal, according to Charrat. "Between March and May, we suffered from a lack of lorries for exports, and we had to pay £800-£1,600 more per truck to secure availability," she said. "That was a very complicated period, but now costs are back to normal."

Although Brexit still presents a number of uncertainties, Delassus is confident that it can maintain supplies. "The UK market is currently quite stable, with a small increase among our customers," she said. "We are quite positive about Brexit. We are well prepared and we will use both trucks and containers to make sure there will be no

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according to Charrat.

interruption to supplies. Right now, we are also growing

in the North American market, as well as in Germany and the Netherlands."

Despite all the challenges, Delassus this year successfully launched its redesigned website, winning the 'Site of the Day' and 'Developer' prizes from Awwwards, which recognises the best web designs and designers across the world.

"It is quite an innovative platform for the fruit and vegetables industry," said Charrat. "We used the stop-motion technique to create an awesome layout, highlighting the chain from production to packaging. Every fruit was made out of paper by hand, and each scene is composed of hundreds of pictures. The idea is to show how

easy and quick it is to work with Delassus. The site won an award for its design, creativity and innovation, so we are quite proud of what we have achieved in terms of communication."

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