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By Carl Collen

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## Gold standard fruit

### René Noordam has overcome challenges to set up an export business from the Dominican Republic



**W**hen René Noordam sought a new challenge after 14 years running a Polish fruit exporter, he turned to the pineapple sector, an area he had gathered experience in through the Costa Rican market.

In his quest to find better quality product and shorter transit times to Europe, Noordam decided to travel to the Dominican Republic – and the first seeds of exporter Dominican Gold Fruit were sown.

“I decided to travel to the Dominican Republic in May 2017, and I found high-quality fruit but weak points in the packing facilities,” Noordam tells Fruitnet. “On this trip I met local fruit expert Edmundo Guzman, and he travelled with me for a full week – from here, the plan was formed to start a new export company. In subsequent trips we built its structure, and in January 2018 Dominican Gold Fruit was officially opened.”

Ironing out the aforementioned weak points was a key starting point, according to Noordam, and this wasn't limited to packing.

Employees in the Dominican Republic were lacking a lot of knowledge in terms of handling and packaging, mixing different colours or categories up in boxes, while precooling was deemed a totally new concept.

“I cannot understand, when you are growing the whole year round and looking to get the best quality fruit, that you make these kind of mistakes,” he notes. “We have improved things by offering training to growers and employees, and every packing day a manager is there to ensure quality remains high.”

Now, growers are better educated on how to produce to high standards, with Noordam and his colleagues able to demonstrate how investing in employees and cooling facilities has a positive impact on price.

Utilising these newly educated growers and with a three-person board in place, consisting of Noordam, Edmundo and Katherine Guzman, Dominican Gold Fruit now ships mainly airfreighted pineapples, and bananas, with 100 per cent going for export.

The company's main markets are the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, France Spain and Italy.

“Europe is, for now, our key market and we have also decided to explore Europe for organic fruit,” Noordam outlines. “In recent months my wife joined the company and she is in charge of the organic sector. We believe that organics is a growing market in Europe.”

<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

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