

Héctor Echeverría: "Chile involves a great chance for Spanish companies to invest in the vegetable sector"



By César Marcos

The executive director of the [Foundation for Agrarian Innovation \(FIA\)](#) recently visited Chile's major fruit and vegetable production areas of Spain to explain the opportunities in the Chilean agriculture to the most advanced agricultural enterprises. This institution, which is part of the Chilean Agriculture Ministry works with all components of innovation, both in the creation, management and adaptation of products and services that help improve the competitiveness of the agri-food and forestry sector. Héctor Echeverría says in this exclusive interview with Spain a large opened gate for development and investment opens vegetables, because Chile will become a major exporter of such agricultural products. The other major Latin American country bet is to use your vegetable raw materials with high nutritional content and antioxidant for the food industry to develop.

eComercio Agrario. What opportunities of business on agricultural technology in Chile could Spanish and European companies find?

Héctor Echeverría. There are not only business opportunities but also collaboration. Today, in a

global market that demands safe and traceable food products, Chile is a great alternative for the production window counter-season holds. When Europe stops producing, Chile is in full production.

As is the main fruit exported to Europe for many years, Chile has also transformed into an opportunity for European companies to settle in our country, not only from the perspective fruit, but also with other products such as vegetables, thanks to new technologies such as IV or V ranges and processed foods, in collaboration with Chilean producers are already doing a good job. There is also possibility is favored when Chile one of the countries that have free trade agreements signed with the world.

ECA. In relation to the new demands for food by consumers, what Chile can offer?

HE. We have to follow the trends of an informed consumer, who does not eat critical ingredients that contain salt, sodium or too much sugar. Consumers looking for functional foods that provide feelings of well being and that contain nutrients that allow them to be strengthened.

For this one, Chile has a huge reservoir plant level that has conditions, but also inside houses "non-timber forest products" which contain a high amount of antioxidants. Therefore, there is a clear opportunity to be installed in Chile companies that possess an advanced level of development in the field of extraction of active ingredients to be used in the food industry.

In our country, we export wine and fruit to the world, but the new challenge is to use raw materials of high nutritional content and antioxidant for the industry to develop and can provide not only directly to consumers, but the food industry trend-in functional foods, whose market represents around MUS \$ 5,000 in the world.

ECA. What kind of exchange of knowledge and technology in agricultural matters is there actually between Spain and Chile?

HE. Spain has always been our strategic partner. From 1990 onwards, much of strengthening small Chilean agriculture came from the hand of the Basque Country, for example with regard to the implementation of new production systems or the introduction of *latxa*. Today, besides being good fruit exporters, we have tremendous potential to export vegetables to the United States, Canada, Asia and some countries in Latin America. Therefore the Spanish horticultural development, have much to learn.

In fact, I have had the opportunity to visit the horticultural farming in southern Spain, where I checked the development of new technologies of cultivation under coat in Almería, the varieties grown and processed vegetable industry. My visit, I draw the reality that there is a large space in Chile for the marketing of greenhouse systems, development of new varieties of vegetables, work IV or V ranges. In short, in Chile there is a great investment opportunity in the business of

vegetables and the extraction of active ingredients for the food industry.

ECA. What challenges in Agribusiness is his country facing?

HE. In Spain, it is clear that a large door for development and investment opens vegetables, because Chile will become a major exporter of vegetables, but without competing directly with Spain, but to other markets further north ours.

We must also move forward in line with reducing the water footprint and carbon footprint, to work in good agricultural practices and to help our farmers to reap the benefits of running businesses in the agricultural world.

Finally, we face a problem which must find global solutions for youth work in the field by a big bet of new technologies in production methods, logistics, tracking and tracing, etc. It remains an arduous task not only for veterinarians and agronomists to stay in rural areas, but food engineers, physical or chemical.

ECA. Apart from its participation in the conference in Almeria on "Challenges and opportunities for businesses in agricultural innovation in Chile", what other stops on his tour of Spain and Europe highlight?

HE. In Valencia, we were able to learn about all the work that INIA has developed, particularly in relation to five new varieties of citrus. Researchers think this center are on the right path in crop adaptation to climate change, since the cultivation of some of these varieties being used 20-25% less water.

With regard to water efficiency we have much to learn from Spain, but also from other countries like Germany. In Bavaria, we are working in a cluster for the use and reuse of water, and increasingly scarce and precious natural resource for agriculture.

ECA. What measures is Chilean agriculture implementing to address the challenge of climate change?

HE. Chile is a country that emits a very low level of emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs), we are nevertheless involved in projects in particular with the Ministry of Environment of Germany for GHG reduction in the fruit industry. As Foundation for Agrarian Innovation (FIA) have developed fodder projects to reduce emissions in livestock.

Climate change is a problem that affects everybody, not just agriculture. We must make a

commitment to fight him and are consumers who need to pressure those who produce food to do so with the intention of contributing to the improvement of the environment.