Manel Simon: "China is a great opportunity if you work with rigor and prudence"

By Milagros Jurado

The production of fresh fruit is one of the pillars for the internationalization of Catalan agri-food sector, whose autonomous region lies between the main producing areas of fresh fruit in Europe, holding fourth place in world production of pear and twentieth that of Apple. With Manel Simon, CEO of the Business Association of Fruit of Catalonia (Afrucat) we talk about issues that concern the future of the sector as the TTIP, exports to third countries or the potential of the Chinese market.

In his view, what does and what threat the TTIP opportunity for exports fruit of their autonomous community?

Manel Simon: Transatlantic Trade and Investment Treaty (TTIP) opens the door to a production of the northern hemisphere, with which we agree in time. They are very efficient large plantations which would be difficult to compete. Anyway, *it is important to go into detail to analyze reciprocity that govern these will have to trade and the need to apply the same regulatory production restrictions entering the EU for those that already apply to European producers*. The positive part of the treaty would expand market opportunities. Above all, to avoid protectionism large North

American market and take advantage of years when climatic variability decanting for our production.

> "At the moment the European Union is very restrictive with the application of plant protection products and not make sense that in the context of a possible TTIP, they were allowed in imported fruit"

How would you describe the health status of fruit exports in Catalonia? What are its main challenges?

M.S: Health of exports in Catalonia is excellent, beat records year after year. We are growing in two ways: to increase our market share in the traditional destinations, such as the German market, and positioning in third countries.

What can you tell us of the potential of the Chinese commercial space, after the Asian giant authorize exports of Spanish stone fruit, and what benefits would accrue to the productions of their autonomous region, where lie the most representative companies in the sector?

M.S: China is a great opportunity for those who work with rigor and prudence. *Not all varieties, not all logistical and above all qualities can not be exported to China*. This huge market has great consumption potential, *especially for that part of the population that prioritizes purchases of imported products for their food security charge, against indigenous production.*

To what extent is estimated from the Association that the Brexit could affect to Catalan fruit exports to the UK?

M.S: It is still unclear how they will be trade relations with the United Kingdom. The first consequence of Brexit has been the depreciation of the pound against the euro, *with the consequent pressure to the purchase price of European fruit*. It will be important to analyze how the situation affects UK-USA relations and TTIP, as the UK is one of the signatories of the transatlantic treaty and a possible cessation of relations with the EU could accelerate relations with the British. It's all to see.

Towards what new foreign markets should turn Catalan fruits productions? Do Ibero-American countries are among them?

M.S: *The export of Catalan fruit is very diversified but still trying to take advantage of any new destination that is feasible in terms of logistics and quality*. Not to forget or neglect our primary business asset that remains the European Union.

> "In the export to third countries, the goal must be finding value and the reduction of

pressure on our main traditional market, Europe"