

3 QUESTIONS TO JACQUES DUTERTRE, FRESHPACK'S CEO

« To keep increasing harmoniously in France, we must start export »

In 2012, the Freshpack's co-founder celebrated the 30 years of his company, which shows a good growth since 5 or 6 years, despite of the crisis. "The spirit of service" deeply-rooted, the trading company believes in future. To take the challenge, it bets on human resources and expand its team to target new businesses.



- 1- Your perspective on the trading job has changed when you became a producer?
- 2- How you create a cooperation relation with suppliers?
- 3- Is it easy to do?

INTERVIEW

Question 1- In 1982, you founded with Mr Paque the trading company Freshpack, which became in 2011 the only owner of a prawn fishery. Your perspective on the trading job has changed when you became a producer?

Producer and transformer! The company's life has changed in 20 years, especially when we developed processed products, like cooked meals, with a Thai transformer and we took 70 % of Pechexport's capital, a Malagasy prawn fishery, in 1998. We imported prawns since 2 years when it experienced difficulty? We decided to support it and to invest in this company's capital, which owns today 7 freezer shrimper and a processing factory that offers works to 450 people. The only took the last 30 % in 2011. But, our presence since 20 years in various jobs permitted us to build different relationships with our suppliers. We understand more their daily life and, then, it is easier to build a cooperation relationship based on the Freshpack's credo: service, quality, innovation.

Question 2- Concretely, how does this translate into a company?

Very simply! By building a team. Without human resources, we can do nothing. In the trading world, a lot of companies stopped living by the retirees of their founders. I don't want this to happen in Freshpack. This year, we have recruited two new staff members to start exporting. Now, Freshpack have a team of 14 people, and the average age is 35.

I want the spirit that drives us with Franck to be transmitted to this young people, that they want to work.

To succeed this, we can't fall into a rut, we have to propose new products with added value to our customers, while listening to our suppliers, but also to our suppliers, while sharing the needs and the desires of our customers. By being traders, we have an active role in translating. Our customers, wholesalers, manufacturers, actor of medium and large supermarkets, we all need reactivity, novelty, and mainly quality. We have talked with our suppliers and we explained the importance of being engaged in certification processes, like BRC. In the same way that we are going to do for organic or MSC products, etc. It requires to move to measure the situations, to hear their problems and to understand them. The context of nowadays makes more complex the access to source material. It is essential to have faithful suppliers.

It is true that some markets, like the fresh product one, are sometimes more gainful for them than a French market particularly demanding in terms of quality. Inside Freshpack, 3 staff members are in charge of the quality monitoring, of guaranteeing a quick rotation of the products, etc. This politic in which we invested in since 5 or 6 years, by recruiting people, pays off in 2012. We are being more and more contacted by suppliers who come and see us spontaneously with the desire to work in another way. It participates to the company's growth and turnover, which reached €50 million in 2011.

Stay humble, it doesn't make us a big actor, but it rewards our efforts in a context where the euro is weak against the dollar. In 2010, it lost 15 % of its value. It is more than our margins! We can be able to explain this to our customers.

Question 3- Is it easy to do?

I think that the customers understand, but it is hard for them to hear it. The economic situation is hard for everybody. Our stocks could provide a cushion but, it is not speculative stocks and we want to keep quality in our products, we need to find solutions. It will be our big challenge in 2013, with our first target markets Eastern Europe or Northern Europe.