



Left: Mr. Santiago Brown, Managing Director Brown Breeding S.A and Preesman Plant Bv C.E.O, Mr. Bob Goedemans.



## Brown Breeding comes to Kenya through Preesman

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Brown Breeding S.A. is an Ecuadorian flower breeding company, preparing to make its debut in July 2014 through Preesman Plants B.V. Brown Breeding has been operating in Ecuador for the last 9 years but has over 12 years experience in the flower industry. Speaking to Hortfresh Journal at the 2013 International Flower Trade Expo, Mr. Santiago Brown, the Managing Director, said that they are really excited to make their African Debut next year, having been doing trials for the last nine months with Preesman. These trials are meant to establish which flower varieties to introduce to Kenya given the climate and altitude conditions. “We believe we have

appropriate varieties and breeding methods that will bring hybrids that will work well in these (Kenyan) conditions.”

With plans to go into Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda, through Preesman, Brown Breeding is gearing towards “breeding a colourful future” as the Preesman slogan goes. Back in Ecuador, says Mr. Brown, “Brown Breeding has been concentrating mainly on roses for the Russian market which is one of the premium rose markets in the world along with Europe and USA.” For the longest time, Ecuador and Brown Breeding in particular were focusing more into large headed roses with long stems and an even

longer vase life. This is because the labour costs in Ecuador are four times as much as in Kenya and thus it only makes more sense to do large head roses so that they can be sold at higher prices. This has since changed as Brown Breeding realized that there exists an increasingly important market for smaller head size roses with shorter stems, both in Ecuador and abroad.

The Equator line (latitude 0), like in Kenya, passes through Ecuador which means that it enjoys a tropical climate, a considerable difference is that it rains there more often than it does in Kenya. The main growing areas are Cayambe, El Quinche, Machachi, Laso

and Tabacundo, where Brown Breeding has one of their trial stations.

Ecuador, generally speaking, is a great testing ground for roses, this is because the country has focused their attention on producing and exporting premium roses throughout the world; it is easier for the International market to embrace any new varieties coming from there. The main growing areas are at an average of 2,800 meters above sea level. The Ecuadorian roses have one of the highest quality standards; Mr. Brown attributes this to post-harvest management, human resources practices, soil cultivation techniques and high altitude "slow" growing. However, Mr. Brown adds, most costs related to introducing a new rose variety in the market are higher in Ecuador than in other countries.

We jokingly asked if there were plans for a brown rose to which Mr. Brown said that the market doesn't particularly like brown, or black roses for that matter. There is an interest in blue roses, but these are GMO (Genetically Modified Organism) plants, where researchers in a very smart way have introduced new genes from other plants to produce a desirable blue color. These plants are commonly known

as transgenic plants. Producing transgenic plants is forbidden by law in Ecuador and in many countries in Europe. Roses have a genetic complexity that allows researchers to discover many new characteristics within the rose DNA without having to add genes from any other species. Nevertheless, a blue rose, will be very hard to come by without DNA technology.

On the matter of country laws, Mr. Brown went on to say that 'Kenya has proper laws and intellectual property protection, and that this is an incentive for Brown Breeding to be here'.

Their local partner Preesman, with the leadership of C.E.O Bob Goedemans, has also been collaborating with Egerton University on researching new varieties of flowers to introduce to the Kenyan market. Their main researcher, Alejandra Tapia is an Ecuadorian which is their strongest point given that Ecuador is among the best and biggest rose exporters in the world. "Cooperating with Brown Breeding also means that we can bring in a lot of additional knowledge from Ecuador to further fine tune our breeding & selection processes," Says Mr. Goedemans.

Initially from Holland, Preesman have now fully moved their operations into Kenya with a new



location in Nakuru where they will have a show house ready in July 2013. They had set up in Magana for a period before they moved to the Nakuru farm which is three times bigger. "We try to breed not only varieties but also create an environment which can be very successful for our employees, our clients and our partners. Very soon we will announce another

partnership, which again shows it is time for the market to cooperate more close on different fronts." One of the exciting varieties that they introduced into the market was Madam Red which is a Red Rose named in honour of their close client, Madam Sally Kosgei of Zena Roses. Madam Pink, a pink mutation out of Madam Red is about to be launched soon as well.

