



One on one with



Dick Raamsdonk

The second edition of IFTEX Expo Kenya is scheduled to take place from Wednesday June 5 to Friday June 7 at Visa Oshwal Center in Westlands, Nairobi.

Due to the great interests that growers, exporters and suppliers have shown towards the show, we at Hortfresh Journal sort to know more about the expo from its organizer, General Director HPP Exhibitions, Dick van Raamsdonk.

Please tell us more about I.F.T.E.X.?

I.F.T.E.X gonna be here, coming in for the second time. It is a grower's exhibition, where we focus on growers exhibiting and visiting. So far the exhibition preparations are going on very well; a lot of growers are signing up again, as well as we have new growers, that are desiring this year to exhibit in the show. We are still expecting and hoping that we will be able to extend the exhibition; Oshwal Centre has

place downstairs in the basement, and we hope that we will grow this year, and with space needed in the parking lot, that will be transferred into exhibition hall. We will need some adaptation, it will take time to develop that, but we are confident we can do that.

So the second edition of IFTEX is on track, we have almost all growers from last year exhibiting again and a lot of new growers, so the show is growing; flower growers

from Kenya but also with suppliers. The success of the show last year, it look like is paying off and seen the growth of the new companies from Kenya as well as from outside.

On the visitor's side, we are expecting a lot of buyers coming to the show this year, from all over the world. The success of I.F.T.E.X last year has spread out, and buyers of flowers, worldwide know now that there is

an important exhibition in Kenya. So we are expecting also from the visitor's side; many more buyers coming to the show in June.

The show went into the next level, and it is rely becoming the show not to be missed, the show of Africa and we also hope that in time growers from other countries, around Kenya such us Uganda, Tanzanian will decide and exhibit in the show. In short IFTEX should become the flower trade show of Africa that is my aim and become a world prayer in the world of flowers trade shows.

This Expo is heading again for a 'sold out', how has been the space booking?

Space booking is going on very well; I mean of course we were expecting to go a bit more quicker, but elections of course play a big role, that delays decision making a bit; that is the bottom line and that is normal but after the election we expect that the show will be full, before the end of March, which we expected in the end of February will now become a month later.

What have you undertaken this year to make the expo a success?

Nothing much more than making it bigger and better; bigger means more exhibitors and better means more visitors, that is what I am doing, I am building a show for a sector in Kenya, that need to be built and right now the two important stones are bigger and better, more exhibitors, more visitors, that is what right now is important for the show and that is our aim for this year.

What should the exhibitors expect?

What we are building; the building stones; more visitors more buyers. They expect more buyers from all over the world, that will buy Kenyan grown flowers.



What are your expectations?

I am expecting the same of course; as I said bigger and better; I am expecting more exhibitors more visitors and I can see now already that, we will have more exhibitors, that already shows, and if you look at the visitors side, it is a bit early now to see how that will develop. I am confident but it is a bit too early to say we will have now let say more visitors that is at this moment just too early. The expectation is there, the realization of exhibitors is there already. We have more exhibitors; you know that is being realized as we speak, more visitors are an expectation because it is a bit early now.

Where do you see the event heading?

I see the event heading as one of the three most important flower growers exhibition in

the world. It gonna be in the top three; soon of the most important platform events where buyers and growers get together, and I think the other two are Ecuador and Holland, and the third one will be Kenya.

You are organizing about 5 more other exhibitions this year (New York, Addis Ababa, Nairobi, Moscow and Holland), of the five which is the biggest or most interesting though I know they cater for different markets?

Holland of course is the one which is very important, but of course that exhibition has also a more diverse profile. There also plans there, there also different types of products, it is difficult to compare but if you look at the most pure flower trade show, it is the one of Kenya, without any doubt. As a flower growers trade exhibition it is the show in Kenya, that is number one.

Well I must say that I like the way you organize, the way you keep exhibitors informed, you are hands on. Where do you draw your strength, to run up and down?

Commitment, belief, mission, my character that is the way I am, when I belief in something I rely go for it. I think those are the key words, mission, commitment, the will, the way I am to get things done, and that is the only way to get things done, to get on top of it. When I saw the opportunity in Kenya a few years ago, having full grown industry lacking a national exhibition, with the importance the Kenya plays in the world of cut flowers, I said; wait a minute this is a heaven for me, I can put all the elements together and get this thing going. I know of course before flowers went to the auction, that was it, growers were lazy, so to speak, there was no

marketing effort, there was no marketing need, there was no direct sales need, that has changed, flower growers are going direct this days and that of course a need to come out and that is where I come in.

That is where I said fine, let get those buyers and growers together, not where flowers are sold though, but where the flowers are produced in Kenya. And when I saw that happening, I said it is now or never. I needed a good place, and locally found the Oshwal Centre, the only place in the country that can hold this type of show, this size and also has the possibility to grow.

General comment, may be to the flower growers

Kenya is a light in the flower industry, a light in the whole industry, the only country where I will say there is, this moment growth; not only this moment, a change of few years. Kenya is a light of the flower industry because things are happening here, things that are not happening in other parts of the world. Somehow Kenya is the only country in the world where floriculture has positive development. There are problems all over the world in floriculture, and somehow growth is similar to Kenya. Growth is happening in Kenya that is positive development; my question is why are things going so well in Kenya, compared to the rest of the world

in floriculture? I can mention all of the important competitions, the other parts of the world flower are being produced, and there is only one light and that is Kenya. You ask me why, I don't know, I don't have the answer, but I am glad I can be part of the light; to do my part of job. What we do is what our profession is, and that is bringing buyers and growers together; organizing which is a profession, I know it is an undervalued profession, but it is a profession and of course you need to have the knowledge of the industry. Because I am running up and down, one of the advantages of running up and down is that you meet a lot of people; I mean today I am in Kenya last week I was in Ecuador next week I am in New York and you talk to the industry, you know what is going on. That how I know that Kenya had a good Valentine but if you go to Ecuador they had a terrible Valentine.

Is the show going to be held annually or biannually?

The point is once it is a supplier's show, biannual is more than enough, you don't ever think of doing annual. Once it is grower's show, it has to be annual, because growers want to sell every year, they want to sell every moment, so the world of selling and buying flowers is changing, so many times within a year that waiting two years in a row you would lose the momentum, you would lose the business. If you are in the supply industry, develop don't go so quick, so every two years is enough. But once it is grower's show, you can't wait two years that is like a life time, and that is why the show is annual because it is grower's show. Ok supplies are exhibiting but the growers need to have business each and every single moment. You wait two years you miss the momentum you miss the business. So

a grower's show has to be annual and suppliers show can be biannual, which doesn't mean we don't know what gonna happen in the future but another reason why this show is now yearly is we have to put it on the map.

What about Ethiopia Hortiflora?

Ethiopia is a supplier's show. Most of the growers in Ethiopia, they sell to the auction so they don't have that need to sell direct so much. So it is another type.

Last thing, the strength of HPP, is that we are so long and so deep in the floriculture world. We have enormous database we have a lot of contacts so we are able to bring buyers to Kenya, that is one of our strength and if you have that strength you can put up a show like this in one year.

