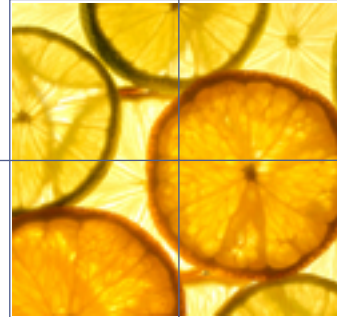


## In search of new market niches

Interview with Enrique Fuentes,  
García Ballester.

By Raúl Sánchez Costa,  
eMarket Services, ICEX



“An electronic market means reduced costs in seeking out new market niches.” Enrique Fuentes, international sales representative for the citrus company García Ballester<sup>1</sup>, which had €35 million in revenues in 2006 and has 500 employees, is clear on the issue. At this company, they work with one goal: to improve the quality of the raw material to offer a product that always satisfies clients’ demands.

Its 100 years of experience, guaranteeing excellence in its dealings and service, have led the Spanish company to make enormous efforts in exploring new markets that enable it to grow in the fruit sector, which is ever more aggressive due to the high level of competition. That is why García Ballester got into the business of distributing its product all across the globe. Today, over 95% of its production is exported to countries as varied as the United States, Canada, Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, Croatia or Russia. Its drive to expand has encouraged it to experiment and discover new ways of dealing in foreign trade, including the electronic market.

“In five years of experience, we have found new clients and suppliers in countries that are hard to access; especially in distant markets,” remarks Fuentes, who admits that it is not as efficient in closer markets. “Certainly, some products require direct contact; not so much so with others,” says the Spanish company’s representative.

### Streamlining commercial transactions

Efficiently incorporating companies into e-business by reducing costs, improving supply processes and increasing revenue aims to streamline commercial transactions. García Ballester operates on established electronic markets that guarantee security both for the company and for the supplier or the client. This requires nothing more than a computer connected to the Internet, protected by antivirus and antimalware software. “We have never considered this a major expense. On the contrary, we are interested in this type of trade because it leads to cost savings,” he says.

The citrus company registered in 2002 as a user on the Spanish InfoAgro portal ([www.infoagro.com](http://www.infoagro.com)) and the Fruitnet joint venture ([www.fruitnet.com](http://www.fruitnet.com)) to open doors to new markets by creating a catalog, although it has also participated in tenders. “One of our

<sup>1</sup> [www.garciaballester.es](http://www.garciaballester.es)

clients invites us to participate in two or three tenders a year, open to a certain number of companies with which they maintain a given level of confidentiality,” explains Fuentes. The companies participating in the bid trust in the products offered and in each other. They also prevent the profitability of their bids from reaching figures lower than initially planned. To ensure the success of the tender, the bidding rules must be explained clearly and the supplier must know what to expect before, during and after the event.

### **E-commerce negotiation**

With the use of e-Markets, negotiation has crossed borders and even evolved into a new type of trade between businesses, thanks to its immediacy and savings. According to Fuentes, however, the traditional sales channels remain the same, and he has not yet detected any change in the way an agreement is reached. “We believe that e-Markets can offer more benefits to small companies than to the larger ones, since they include the option of conducting business in distant markets with minimal costs.”

“In our experience, how companies do business in the coming years will depend on the product and the client as always. Efficient use will depend more on which buyers are targeted for the sale,” explained Fuentes.

The company’s entry into these electronic markets has been “amazing”, due to the scope of the commercial actions carried out and their flexibility. Turnover in 2006 reached nearly €2 million, and the company managed to contact one client and two suppliers.

The international sales representative also concedes that they will undoubtedly continue to use e-Markets as a business tool because of their financial benefits, despite lacking the figures that demonstrate tangible benefits at present. “Our aim is to remain committed to these markets, since our company faces constant challenges: achieving economies of scale, reducing distribution costs, obtaining higher quality raw materials at a better price, among others,” he pointed out.

Following several years of experience, the Spanish company is convinced that the electronic markets offer a simple, economical way of identifying trade partners, increasing exports and promoting its products on markets they would never have imagined. By getting involved in them, García Ballester has a wide range of suppliers and clients, as well as greater opportunities for savings.