



# Cooperating with the **whole value chain**

Improving quality  
Increasing yields  
Meeting **consumers'**  
expectations



## The Moroccan Strawberry Project



Bayer CropScience

# The challenge of consumers' expectations



Laragel/Lara-Agri's workers harvesting the strawberries

## *How it all started*

Consumers are becoming increasingly demanding in terms of food availability, quality and price. Consequently, retailers across the world are striving to respond to these market demands. Morocco is no exception as this North African country is a major exporter of fruit and vegetables, mainly to Europe but also to other countries such as Canada and Russia. Thus, Morocco is hugely impacted by what is happening on the other side of the Mediterranean.

And what better way is there of meeting these demands than to return to the field?

Retailers, importers, processors and growers are now working closely together to produce and sell healthy, high-quality, good-looking produce. Since Bayer CropScience is one of the world leaders in plant protection products, it only seemed natural that the company should contribute its expertise and experience to help the different players in the value chain to face up to the different challenges they confront. This is achieved through the food chain partnership projects, which are a voluntary approach based on transparency, traceability and shared responsibility.

Laragel/Lara-Agri, a major strawberry producer in Northern Morocco with 80 hectares of land, was perfectly aware of the increasingly demanding markets they are dealing with. So, they signed up for the project along with Gomez, one of the UK's leading produce companies supplying the major supermarkets (including Tesco) as well as the wholesale, convenience store and food service sectors.







## *What we aimed to achieve*

The intention in launching this project was to involve all the players in the food value chain – from field to fork – in the production of healthy, high-quality strawberries by combining the knowledge and expertise of the farmer, packer, processor and retailer. The ultimate objective of this project is to optimize the use of effective, low residue level, low toxicity and environmentally friendly crop protection products, combined with good agricultural practices. This approach enables all participating parties to achieve high standards in terms of produce quality and environmental sustainability.



## *Who is involved*

**Laragel/Lara-Agri:** The objective of the spray programme elaborated by Bayer CropScience is to permit the production of strawberries to meet the requirements of customers such as Tesco, mainly in terms of accepted residue levels. This food chain partnership creates an additional guarantee to strengthen the company's position, be it on the fresh produce or frozen market. It also allows the company to extend its presence and have access to new markets, as well as satisfying the requests of the most demanding customers.

**Gomez:** A. Gomez Ltd. has been supplying the UK market with fresh produce for more than 60 years. Gomez sources fruit and vegetables from South America, Northern Africa and European countries. Laragel/Lara-Agri send Gomez especially selected strawberries that are grown in northern Morocco to supply Tesco, the UK's leading supermarket chain. The project is a selective answer to meet and exceed consumers' expectations.

**Bayer CropScience Morocco:** It is essential to develop products that satisfy the customers' expectations and offer the best possible solution for all interested parties. This goal is being achieved by cooperating with all the members of the strawberry value chain and by implementing a wide range of activities (information, training, best possible solutions, etc.) that add value to each segment's business.

Mohamed Madkouri, Technical Director of Bayer CropScience Morocco, Ali El Aïmani, Marketing region of Bayer CropScience Morocco, and Mohamed Ouarki, Engineer of Laragel/Lara-Agri controlling the quality of strawberries



# The confidence-building solution

The partners involved in the project wanted to establish a programme that was integrated into the entire strawberry production process and did not just involve crop protection products. This involved adapting the programme to suit the local soil and weather conditions in Morocco. Thanks to the very professional technical assistance provided by Laragel/Lara-Agri and regular consultations with specialists from Bayer CropScience, it was possible to develop the best solution for the crop. The project got under way in 2008 and the initial stages have run smoothly.

**Spray programme:** The spray programme, a crucial factor in the entire process, was adapted to the specific conditions in the strawberry fields.

**Quality control:** Analyses were carried out at several stages of the growth process. The quality of the strawberries grown by Laragel/Lara-Agri was regularly monitored by Bayer CropScience's field team and by staff from the Moroccan Head Office. Bayer CropScience scheduled three residual analyses for December 2008 and January and February 2009, and three additional residue analyses are to be undertaken by Laragel/Lara-Agri.



**Follow-up:** During the campaign, visits by Bayer CropScience specialists to, and conversations with, Laragel/Lara-Agri technicians proved crucial in adjusting the initial programme to the real conditions encountered and dealing with difficulties met on the way. One important feature of the programme was a farmers' training course in December 2008. Here, the focus was on product stewardship, the safe use of crop protection products, routes of exposure, user protection equipment, measures to be taken in the event of accidental contamination, and waste management.

**Mehdia Mounir, Market Research & Food Chain Manager of Bayer CropScience Morocco, and Mohamed Ouarki of Laragel/Lara-Agri**







**Relationships:** By building up relationships and keeping in touch with all members of the value chain, the partners in the programme were able to tackle the specific challenges facing this strawberry producer in Morocco.

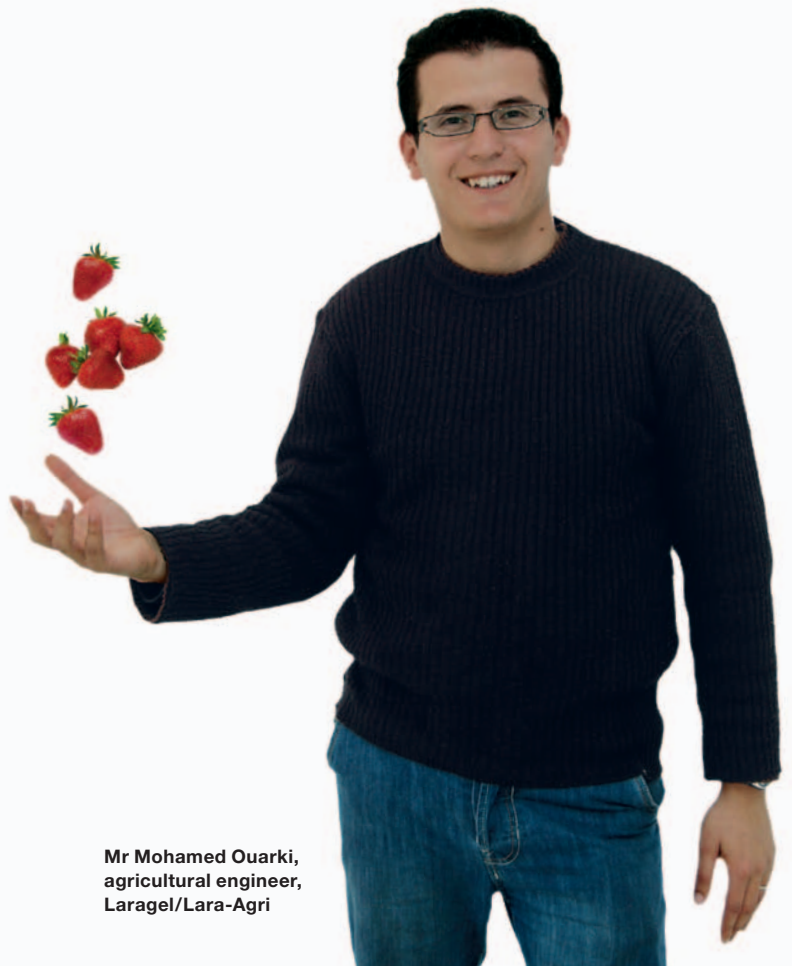
Even at this relatively early stage, it is clear that Gomez is confident that the strawberries it is importing are of high quality and that a good residue management programme is in place, thanks to the close cooperation and interaction between Laragel/Lara-Agri and Bayer CropScience.

Bayer CropScience sees itself not just as a supplier of crop protection products but also as a provider of a comprehensive package, including added value services for all members of the value chain. “This programme helps us build long-term relationships and allows us to react faster to changing expectations, be it of growers, retailers or consumers,” says Mehdi Mounir, Bayer CropScience Morocco’s Market Research and Food Chain Manager. “What is more, it also offers undeniable mutual benefits of trust, flexibility and profitability for all the players in the value chain.”



## *What we plan to achieve*

**Sustainability  
+ traceability  
+ quality  
= added value for every  
partner in the food chain**



Mr Mohamed Ouarki,  
agricultural engineer,  
Laragel/Lara-Agri



Consumers are becoming increasingly conscious of the need for healthy nutrition. Food chain partnerships help to supply consumers with high-quality fresh produce, which forms the basis of a healthy diet. But such partnerships can only succeed if they involve every player in the food chain – from the farmer and processor to the exporter or importer and retailer. Bayer CropScience has the global experience and cutting-edge expertise to create a successful partnership at every level.

For more information contact:

**Food Chain Partnership Team**  
**BAYER S.A. Morocco**  
**Tour Balzac**  
**Angle Bd d'Anfa & Rue de l'Epargne**  
**20050 Casablanca**  
**Morocco**

**Phone:** +212 (0)22 954 863  
**Fax:** +212 (0)22 392 413  
**Email:** mehdi.mounir@bayercropscience.com

**Global Food Chain Team**  
**Bayer CropScience Aktiengesellschaft**  
**PM-MBE-Food Chain Management**  
**Alfred-Nobel-Str. 50**  
**40789 Monheim am Rhein**  
**Germany**

**Phone:** +49 (0)2173 38 5184  
**Fax:** +49 (0)2173 38 3833  
**Email:** foodchainpartnership@bayercropscience.com  
**Internet:** <http://www.foodchainpartnership.bayercropscience.com>

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