

The Perishable Specialist has much experience importing berries

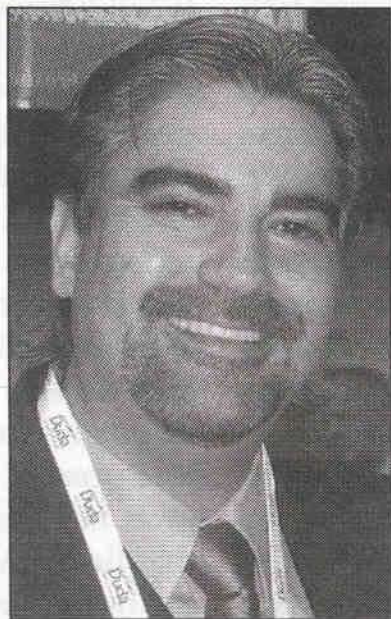
BY BRIAN GAYLORD

Frank Ramos has been importing fresh produce into the United States for 18 years, the last five years with his own business — The Perishable Specialist Inc.

Six months ago, the company moved into a 3,000-square-foot office in Doral, FL, next door to Miami.

The Perishable Specialist is a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week family customs brokerage operation. Mr. Ramos is joined by his wife, Ana, and more than a dozen other staffers.

The Perishable Specialist is licensed by the U.S. Customs



Frank A. Ramos

Service, which allows it to act on behalf of its customers with government agencies such as the U.S. Customs Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Food & Drug Administration, U.S. Fish & Wildlife and Marine Patrol.

"Importers are my customers, but I'm a bridge service with the exporters," Mr. Ramos said. "I deal with the key players in berries. We're all on the same team. I have direct contact with shippers and a great relationship with the freight importers."

Mr. Ramos has been in the importing business for 18 years, including 15 years as an independent. For 10 of those

years, he had a partner, though he has been on his own for the past five years. He jumped into the business with both feet, including offering up his cell phone and his home contact information to his customers. In fact, he is always connected to his work staff through phone or walkie-talkie.

"You have to love it," Mr. Ramos said. "I started as a messenger, and I fell in love with it."

The Perishable Specialist has six people working in the office to coordinate much of the business. The company's runners in the field physically meet the product at the airport and shipping docks and deal with agricultural inspections and custom inspections at the point of entry.

Two key members of Mr. Ramos' team have 13 years and eight years, respectively, working with him.