

The Perishable Specialist: customs broker extraordinaire

BY CHRISTINA DiMARTINO

A collective 36-years of experience as licensed customs brokers have resulted in a passion for husband and wife team Frank and Ana Ramos in their Miami business, The Perishable Specialist Inc.

"I oversee the container division of the business, and Frank handles the air freight business," said Mrs. Ramos. "We cut through the red tape for our customers. With international perishable shipments increasing continuously and the often-tedious amount of legislative regulations to sort through, it can be an overwhelming task for companies who need to be concentrating on their businesses. It's our job to make sure product gets into the country, cleared through U.S. Customs [& Border Protection] and the [Food & Drug Administration], and on its way to its destination in an expedient and efficient manner. We are able to clear cargo at all ports in the U.S."

The Perishable Specialist's capabilities expand beyond its expertise at the Miami International Airport. It extends to clearing containerized ocean cargo at major ports in Miami; Philadelphia; Newark, NJ; Wilmington, DE; Houston; national ports.

The Perishable Specialist is totally dedicated to its customers. The Ramos' cell phones are always on, and they publish their home phone number in the *Blue Book* and in all their contact information.

In the tropical category, Ms. Ramos said that most items are coming into the United States from Costa Rica.

"The country is a year-round exporter of yams, yucca, chayote and dasheen (which is also known as taro root), Eddoes and Malanga," she said. "The past few weeks, we're also seeing container loads of dasheen from Nicaragua. We are currently clearing limes from El Salvador and Guatemala, mangos from Guatemala and a really nice quantity of large papayas from Belize. This crop suffered considerable damage from Hurricane Dean, but these container loads are a good indication that the product is making a strong recovery."

Mrs. Ramos said that the company is also currently clearing avocados from the Dominican Republic and a limited number of pineapples from Costa Rica.

firm is the middleman, handling government clearances between shippers and importers.

"We handle all the customer's needs as related to customs clearance and FDA inspections," said Mrs. Ramos. "Everything that comes into the country today has to be examined. We also coordinate cold storage protocols and fumigation procedures when necessary. Yams, for example, must be fumigated, so we coordinate the process. It's important that we stay abreast of product requirements that are brought into the country, so we are constantly having to stay abreast of what is coming from where, what the import requirement is on the item and if protocol is required."

The Perishable Specialist represents all the major players in the perishable industry, and

it maintains strong relationships with customers that import from Argentina, Chile and Guatemala. In 2007, it visited all three countries prior to the upcoming season in order to gain a better understanding of the needs of the importers and exporters.

"But we also handle product from other regions of the world, including the Mediterranean," said Ms. Ramos. "We work with the importers further by helping them decide between the list of warehouse choices in their import zone where treatments or cold storage is provided. Miami does not have an approved cold storage warehouse for protocol procedures, so we advise customers to conduct protocol while product is in transit, or direct those containers to northern ports, which we can advise on."

The Perishables Specialist is celebrating its first year in its new facility in Doral, FL, about five miles from Miami International Airport's perimeter.

"We bought the shell and developed the space to our specifications," said Mr. Ramos. "It is helping us to

excel even more in our efficiency factors. We are an intricate part of the logistical chain, and we are hands-on with every detail of importing perishables. Our efficiencies and services set us apart from other companies. We cater to importers' every need."



Husband and wife team Ana and Frank Ramos own and operate The Perishable Specialist Inc., a customs brokerage.

Esteban Capote - 1972

Tradition as rich as
the soil it was planted in.

Malanga
(mā-LAN-gah)

Since their days of growing potatoes in Alquizar, Cuba in the early 1900's, the Capote family has owned and operated one of the premiere tropical root, fruit and vegetable companies in the US. J&C Tropicals is a family-run business rich in tradition and culture, which has grown into one of the leading growers, importers and distributors of tropicals in the world. From Cuba to Miami, J&C has remained true to its "roots."