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**La Dona Breaks Record for Air-Freighted Pineapples**

*Consumers Showing Preference for Ripe, Artisan Pineapples Over Sea-Freighted Fruit*

**Rotterdam, The Netherlands (October 9, 2019)** - A new record has been set for pineapple exports by air freight in a single month in the country of Panama, according to that nation’s customs office. The record-setting amount of 34,500 kilos was shipped by La Dona, a Panama-based grower and exporter founded by Edna Vergara, a highly respected figure in Central American agriculture.

La Dona is focusing on an artisan-style approach, shipping high-color, high-maturity Air Pineapples to high-end markets in Europe. This allows La Dona to deliver pineapples with unparalleled sweetness and maturity, traits which consumers may not have experienced before.

“Shipping via air allows you to place a product in the markets on the other side of the word in 24-48 hours. It allows us to send fruit that has a very high-level maturity and a very high level of sugar content, which would be the ultimate pineapple experience for people who haven’t ever tasted a golden pineapple from Panama. If you let the fruit mature on the plant like this, it’s a whole different experience, and you couldn’t send pineapples like this any other way,” said Paul Vergara, La Dona’s Director of Pineapple Operations and son of La Dona founder Edna Vergara.

Artisan-style Air Pineapples, grown on small farms like La Dona’s, are a stark contrast to the low-color, low Brix level fruit being shipped by competitors. “The large growers in Costa Rica and Ecuador have been flooding the market with green fruit, which has low sugar content and high acidity. Our pineapples are meant to be eaten golden-ripe and with a sweet, translucent interior. We are averaging 16-17 Brix content on high-color fruit, which ensures a super-sweet flavor,” said Dax Cooke, Head of Global Sales for La Dona.

"We are offering exclusive distribution in wholesale markets across Europe with no more than one provider per hall. We also work with premium retailers, who focus on quality, and we’re getting good results. Kilo prices of pineapple shipped by air sold for up to €2.80 each last month in the Rungis market, as opposed to the price of €0.80 fetched by cases shipped by sea. With transportation adjusted it’s more than double the price of green fruit,” added Cooke.

For small, artisan growers like Edna Vergara, Air Pineapple is a winning strategy. By shipping record amounts of air-freighted pineapple from Panama, La Dona is providing consumers with the sweetest, ripest fruits possible.

**About:** Founded in 1977 on a one-hectare farm in Panama, the journey of Edna Vergara and La Dona is a story of innovation and perseverance. For her vision and leadership in the realm of Panamanian agriculture, Edna Vergara was granted the Agricultural Person of the Year award in 2007. Partnering with agribusiness management firm Farmfolio in 2018, La Dona has grown from a small family farm to a thriving export business - but has never lost sight of the values of its founder, Edna Vergara.

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