

# Ecuador

## Bouncing back with trade and investment

The eighth-largest economy in Latin America, Ecuador's vast oil reserves and abundant natural resources have kept it on a steady growth path over the previous decade. GDP growth averaged 2.8% between 2010 and 2019, and GDP in current US dollars more than doubled between 2005 and 2020, jumping from \$41.5 billion to \$95.8 billion.

The economy was hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic, with GDP contracting by 7.5% last year, although the country won praise from the World Bank for taking decisive actions to mitigate the worst of the crisis by expanding to social safety net and launching loan moratoria to help businesses survive. Growth is forecast to surge by 9.5 percentage points this year as a result.

A recent change in political leadership will also support economic recovery. In May 2021, conservative banker Guillaume Lasso won the presidential elections, and his victory bodes well for revitalized trade and investment.

"Ecuador must also mean a promise of balance in common life, balance between the causes of its people, balance between economic growth and social justice. Two cornerstones that will be the foundations of a prosperous and equitable country," he said at his inauguration speech.

The Ecuadorian economy already benefits from solid fundamentals, including a strong and growing export base. The oil and gas sector is an important pillar of the economy, accounting for roughly a quarter of total exports as of 2020, although the country is also a major agricultural exporter: it was the world's top banana exporter last year, with an 18.4% share of the global market. Rapid recent growth in food processing and textiles manufacturing has helped bolster exports in recent years: according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, merchandise exports rose by 15.6% between 2010 and 2020 to hit \$20.2 billion.

Exports receipts will likely jump in 2021 as global oil prices continue on an upwards trajectory, and in July 2021, state oil company Petroecuador announced that crude oil revenues hit \$3.2 billion during the first half of the year, exceeding 2020's full-year total.

Lasso will build on Ecuador's powerful



Guillermo Lasso  
President of Ecuador

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macroeconomic fundamentals with plans to attract and incentivize private sector investment across a variety of high-potential sectors. Local business leaders already know the country's competitive strengths.

"Ecuador is never dull, we have so much optimism and so many opportunities. We're a rich country, people are very friendly, and the private sector has proved that it can survive volatility and support growth in better times," said Ricardo Cuesta Delgado, CEO of Produbanco.

Perhaps most importantly, Lasso has announced plans to integrate Ecuador

into the Pacific Alliance trade agreement, which includes Chile, Peru, Colombia, and Mexico, Latin America's most trade-friendly countries. Restrictions, burdensome regulations and discrimination in certain sectors will become a thing of the past under his leadership, he promised, because the time has come for Ecuador to turn a new leaf:

"Ecuador declares that its doors are open to world trade ... We will not persecute anyone. We will not bow to anyone. We will govern for everyone. This means not governing in favor of one privileged sector, and not governing against anyone," he said.



Operation DP World Posorja Port

## Chaide y Chaide - Quality and care support international expansion

Ecuador's robust recent population growth has already played an important role in supporting manufacturing activities and consumer demand, and it will continue to do so as the country exits the pandemic. According to the IMF, Ecuador's population rose by more than 6% between 2016 and 2020 to hit 17.5m and will rise by another 9% between 2021 and 2026 to exceed 19m. This leaves leading domestic mattress manufacturer Chaide y Chaide well-positioned to expand its business.

Chaide y Chaide was established in 1975, growing steadily over the decades and reaching an annual production capacity of 3000 mattresses per day at facilities in Quito and Guayaquil. Its 60% market share makes it the leading firm in the industry, and the company's longevity and successful track record are supported by strong investment in top-of-the-line equipment, processes, and products, as CEO Carmen Barriga de Stisin explained:

"With the new machinery acquired almost two years ago, we're able to produce a variety of high-quality foams, for our own needs and for other industries; we are also exporting to Colombia, overcoming the currency exchange barriers."

Honesty and transparency are core values at Chaide y Chaide, and Stisin stressed that the company's role in supporting Ecuador's economic and social development remains a major focus. At the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, for example, the company moved quickly to donate more than 7000 mattresses to people in need, at the request of the authorities.

It kept an eye on the business at the same



time, moving to launch an online sales channel and implementing the strictest sanitary and social distancing precautions at its factories in Quito and Guayaquil, to keep things up and running safely. Sales revenues were barely dented as a result, and if 2021 is anything to go by, the company will be extremely busy in the coming months: sales are forecast to reach \$76 million in 2021, up from \$65.8 million last year.

This puts Chaide y Chaide in prime position to resume its nascent international expansion. Having already established operations in

Colombia and Bolivia, the company is now examining new opportunities in other countries:

"We are inspired by the idea of offering our customers the best product so they can enjoy a good rest and live a healthy life!", she concluded.





# Produbanco

## Ecuador's top corporate lender goes phygital

Ecuador's GDP growth is forecast to rise around 11 percentage points y-o-y in 2021 after a sharp contraction last year, supported by steady credit growth to the private sector. The country's banking sector had already clocked a strong performance over the previous two decades, with non-performing loans plunging from 8.4% of total gross loans in 2002, to just 2.7% in 2019, and decrease modestly in 2020 to 2.6% despite facing severe economic shocks. Domestic credit to the private sector rose considerably over the same period, from just 18.1% of GDP to an all-time high of 46.2% in 2020. With digital banking on the rise in the wake of Covid-19, innovative financial institutions like Produbanco are set to capitalize on new growth opportunities in the post-pandemic era.

Produbanco has been active in the Ecuadorian banking sector since 1978, when it began offering products and services to corporate clients. Its deep experience in the market made it an attractive choice for foreign investors, and in 2014 the bank was acquired by the Promerica Group, consolidating with Banco Promerica Ecuador to become a single financial institution. This gave it a major competitive advantage, as CEO Ricardo Cuesta Delgado highlighted: "Grupo Promerica has a presence in nine

to a worldwide network of corresponding banks. Our network is very efficient." With a fresh capital injection and new mandate to expand its lending portfolio beyond its traditional customers, including SMEs and consumers, the bank has expanded quickly in the years since 2014. Leveraging its international strengths has kept the bank at the forefront of the financial services industry, and it has maintained its long track record of stability and integrity when doing business with clients and partners. Its



countries across Central and South America, and our added value is that we can operate in other economies by contact with our banking colleagues in different countries. We're the leader in the corporate market, even though there are two banks that are larger than us. We have been the top corporate bank in the country for many years, and this is because of our experience and access

risk profile remains one of the best in the industry, and it is ranked AA+ by BankWatch and AAA PCR-Pacific Credit Rating. Now serving all segments of Ecuadorian society, Produbanco is a truly universal bank. It weathered the pandemic well, recording a 12.2% y-o-y increase in current accounts and savings account deposits in 2020, while total deposits rose by \$428 million to hit \$4.45



Ricardo Cuesta Delgado  
CEO - Produbanco

billion, equivalent to a 12% share of total banking system deposits. The bank's loan portfolio rose by \$11 million over the same period, while assets under management stood at \$5.5 billion by end December, up 6.6% y-o-y. Looking ahead, Mr. Cuesta is optimistic: "2022 and 2023 are going to be important years for the country. We should gain momentum as far as the growth of the economy, and the bank is very well positioned to help develop the productive sector and contribute to this important growth. Our expectation is to continue to grow our market share."

Produbanco will maintain its competitive advantage by continuing to invest in innovation and digital offerings. The bank reports that adoption of its digital channels by customers had already been growing prior to the pandemic, and this trend accelerated in 2020. At the onset of Covid-19, the bank moved swiftly to update its digital strategy, adding a new subsidiary, Ecuapayphone, which offers the Payphone and Payphone Business apps to clients for payments and collections using P2P, B2P and B2B, Visa, Mastercard and other credit and debit cards. Later in August its fourth subsidiary, ProContacto Soluciones Inteligentes, offering customer services through digital channels and messaging to maintain the highest quality client care.

Given its deep history and physical presence in the country, Produbanco is not planning to go fully digital in all segments, but as Mr. Cuesta explained, an ongoing transformation from physical to "phygital" will keep the bank at the forefront of the industry:

"We are a traditional multi-segment bank but we are going to be digital for everybody, in the sense that what the segment and client requires that's what we'll be involved in. We expect that this is something our shareholders will really appreciate going forward."



# IASA - Integrity and teamwork to support Ecuador's economic development

As its vaccination campaign progresses steadily, Ecuador's economic recovery is beginning to take off. This is particularly evident in key industrial sectors. Mining exports are forecast to surge by 74% this year to hit \$1.6 billion, while the construction sector is expected to expand by nearly 4% in 2022 as the government channels new investment into infrastructure and housing. Contractors will be scrambling to meet rising demand, meaning the country's leading equipment supplier, IASA, will play an important role in future economic growth.

Founded in 1924 and based in Guayaquil with presence in other 17 locations across the country, IASA supplies and repairs construction, mining, transportation, power generation, and industrial equipment and vehicles for a variety of important industries. For nearly 100 years the company has developed a reputation for integrity and teamwork, supporting economic growth and development by keeping Ecuador's industry up and running. As Executive President, Luis Fernando Gomez Illingworth, says: "What we do as a company is to source and support key industries that are highly related to the progress of our country. Much of the equipment that we supply is used in construction, mining, power generation, and other areas of significant social and economic impact. For example, food is transported on roads by trucks to supermarkets, most likely trucks that we distribute on roads built by machines that we supply and service. In essence, what we do is team up with our customers towards contributing to progress, the progress of our nation and our society."

IASA's main product line is Caterpillar equipment, followed by Mack and Volvo trucks, with a broad portfolio, including machinery, trucks, buses, engines, generators, and forklifts. Among other brands that the company represents are SEM, Metso, MacLean, Schwing Stetter, Weiler, BYG, and AK Purifiers. From forklifts and excavators to industrial engines and generators, IASA is able to cater to almost any industrial need.

It is especially active in the mining sector, where it supplies the bulk of the country's mining equipment, including heavy-duty Caterpillar trucks, making it an integral player in the sector's development. Given the growth projections for Ecuadorian mining, this business line is likely to become a major future growth driver. But equipment supply is just one of IASA's many competencies. Critically for its clients, the company also



Luis Fernando Gomez  
Executive President - IASA

offers spare parts for all of the equipment it sells, as well as repair and maintenance services to ensure operations keep running smoothly. These can include laboratory oil analysis, component reconstruction and reconditioning, preventative maintenance contracts, and condition monitoring for machines, engines, generators, and other critical equipment. As a result of these strengths, the group has been able to expand its operations into Panama, as well as form new alliances, such as a joint venture with Valvoline to blend and distribute oil in Ecuador, Colombia, and Peru; and it remains open to new partnerships in high-potential areas.

"The growth opportunities that we see right now are in what we call product support, that is, parts and service. Every year, we sell equipment and machines; but the most critical part is servicing those products. This is our core competency

and where we add the most value in the distribution chain. We place a high emphasis in providing the highest level of service, always focusing on keeping our customers' equipment fleet running. An area where we also see growth potential, for example, is providing service to our customers' entire equipment fleet," said Gomez.

IASA's offerings are so comprehensive because of its strong corporate culture, which has always focused on developing the best human capital. IASA's group employs close to 800 people in Ecuador, including 300 technicians. All of its technicians are trained under a full scholarship program at an in-house school before they start work. They exit the two-year program with a technical degree approved by Caterpillar and the Ministry of Education plus a full-time job.

The Covid-19 pandemic was challenging for the company, but it remained resilient by focusing on serving the needs of the country, its customers and its employees. IASA stepped up its outreach, servicing key activities such as, power generation in critical areas of need (for example, hospitals), waste management, agriculture, among others, and undertaking measures to protect its employees as they worked during the worst of the pandemic. Some of its key sectors were impacted by national and international lockdowns, but the losses were modest, and recovery has been swift.

"The first six months of 2021 were very good for us, despite the fact that logistics chains worldwide are very complicated right now. There are delays, and equipment availability and lead-times are an issue, but we have been working with our suppliers and partners to help fill the gaps. There are good reasons to have a positive outlook, vaccination is going well in Ecuador, activity is resuming and we see growth ahead. I believe things are definitely moving in the right direction," Gomez concluded.





## Consorcio Nobis - Leading the Way

Nobis is a solid and innovative investment management holding committed to the development of our country. It integrates several leading companies in various sectors such as agro-industrial, real estate, commercial, tourism, hotel, port, and mining. As a management principle, it applies the triple impact approach (social, environmental, and financial), maintaining a sustainable guideline in its social practice with the Foundations: Nobis Ecuador and The Nobis Foundation USA.

Nobis started its international expansion in 2014 with the integration of "La Universal" as a part of a three-branch enterprise called "BIA", which included investments in culinary, coffee, confectionery, and sweets, owning companies in several South-American and Central American countries. By 2017, we became partners of DP World. A port company with its headquarters in Dubai that has a presence in 60 countries worldwide with 128 business units. In 2019 we became partners with a Canadian Company that has investments in mining since 2014. During the worst period of the Covid pandemic, in 2020, we evolved into an Investment Management Holding.

Among the advantages that Nobis can offer to foreign investors is a solid reputation earned throughout the years. A skilled and professional team with experience and corporate governance that defines, supervises, strengthens making flexible goals and can



Isabel Noboa Pontón  
Executive President - Consorcio Nobis

undergo digital, technological, professional or pandemic changes as needed. Our management constantly monitors our social impact.

Ecuador is like an oasis in Latin America. The strength of the US dollar as a currency, a strategic location of the country on the continent, initiatives and approaches thanks to public-private

partnerships, and political stability make our country attractive to the eyes of investors. On the other hand, the complex political and economic situation in neighbouring countries further strengthen our image. Therefore, all of us, the actors in society, must work to create the necessary environment for this long-awaited attraction of investments and carry out our responsibilities.

The Free-Trade Zone administered by DP World in Guayaquil - Ecuador, is strategically located in the heart of Latin America and thanks to its direct connection between Europe (Rotterdam, London, Hamburg, Antwerp, The Hague), Asia (Shenzhen, Hong Kong, Kaohsiung, Ningbo, Shanghai, Busan) and the international maritime terminals of DP World that operate alongside said Free-Trade zone since 2019, drives Ecuador to make large strides consolidating itself as the most relevant regional hub of the west coast of the South Pacific.

The industries and logistics companies that settle in the Free-Trade Zone administered by DP World in Ecuador will have the opportunity to provide services and goods to their clients within the region of Latin America and. Further, more effectively, offsetting the high costs of producing and importing goods and services from the Far East.



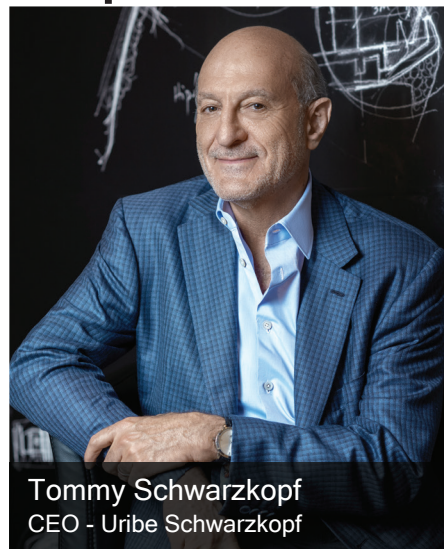
## Uribe Schwarzkopf - Delivering Ecuador's finest properties

After a punishing period of pandemic restrictions, Ecuador's real estate sector is set to boom. The central bank projects construction activity will rise to comprise 7% of GDP in 2021, led by new growth in residential real estate construction, with residential profitability set to jump by 7% y-o-y in select areas, while housing prices are forecast to grow by an average of 4%. Uribe Schwarzkopf has already made a name for itself in real estate, and it is set to capitalise on rising demand for top-quality properties across all segments of the industry.

Uribe Schwarzkopf is Ecuador's leading architectural planning, design, and construction company. Founded in 1973 and based in Quito, the company is an absolute institution. It boasts a long track record of excellence, having delivered more than 140 innovative and exceptional projects to date. Tommy Schwarzkopf, company CEO, explained how the firm was able to carve out success in a sometimes-overlooked locale:

"Quito is a bit unknown to the world, but it's starting to be discovered more internationally as the real gem of South America. For American and Canada retirees that have been coming to Cuenca, Ibarra and some to Quito, it is very easy to become residents when you make an investment. The US dollar is our currency and that allows them to have stable income and expenses. A lot of them have been buying apartments in the valley here in Quito, and we have been here to meet that demand."

Today the company is Ecuador's undisputed real estate innovator, designing, planning



Tommy Schwarzkopf  
CEO - Uribe Schwarzkopf

and promoting large projects in Quito and its surrounding valleys, and literally changing the city's skyline in the process, setting new architectural and environmental benchmarks for the city. In addition to residential buildings, Uribe Schwarzkopf has completed office buildings, shopping malls and hotels, going from one success to another on the strength of its unique approach to doing business.

What sets the company apart is its intense focus on healthy urbanism and creating communal

environments that improve the quality of life, in partnership with the world's most renowned architects and architectural firms. These include Bernardo Fort-Brescia at Arquitectonica in Peru and Miami, YOO in London, Philippe Starck in Paris, Marcel Wanders in Amsterdam, Carlos Zapata in Venezuela and Miami, the French master Jean Nouvel, Canadian-Israeli talent Moshe Safdie, Tatiana Bilbao in México, BIG by Bjarke Ingels in Denmark, and the Chinese firm MAD, among others.

Uribe Schwarzkopf also generates a positive social impact, supporting the cultural agenda of the city and leading the inclusion of more women in the construction industry in Ecuador. More than a half of the firm's employees are women, as well as 10% of the workforce at the construction sites, surpassing the 2% average rate in the country.

Upcoming changes in real estate legislation are expected to further support resurgent growth, and Schwarzkopf is confident the company will ride a wave of new demand in underserved areas:

"We are still growing. Our principal business is middle-class housing, and we also make a couple office buildings. But we anticipate we will participate in social housing projects a bit more once the laws of urban planning are changed. The outlook is quite positive."



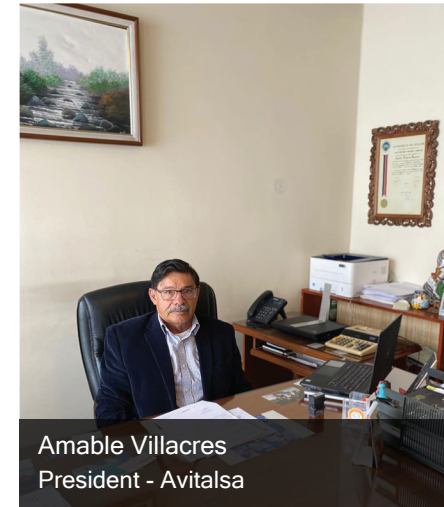
Uribe Schwarzkopf

## Avitalisa - Growing through integration and consumer focus

Ecuador's "economic recovery is underway", the International Monetary Fund noted in December 2020, praising the government's progress in its reform programme. The IMF released a \$2bn tranche of funds to support the country in response to its success in pushing fiscal, governance, and transparency reforms in the difficult environment of the global covid-19 pandemic. These changes should help support long-term growth and buttress the economy from further shocks.

They should also bolster the agriculture sector, which accounts for 10% of value-added GDP, according to the World Bank. A recent Global Monitor report highlighted the advances that Ecuadorean agriculture has made in recent years, partly thanks to government support, including favourable lending conditions, targeted subsidies, and schemes to improve soil and water. The integration of new agricultural technology has also boosted productivity.

The driving force in the sector is private businesses, of which poultry producer Avitalisa is a leading example. Founded in 1995 by four poultry experts, the company has benefitted from its specialisation, consumer-focus, and ongoing investments. "Firstly, we have knowledge of the business; we know what we're doing," says Amable Villacres, Avitalisa's president and general director. "Secondly, both employees and managers are



Amable Villacres  
President - Avitalisa

empowered by the business. And thirdly, we have a very active participation from our integrated partners, who without being directly part of the business are the main source of our production."

For the first ten years from its foundation, Avitalisa reinvested any profits to secure its long-term strategy and growth path. It has benefitted from its diversification within the poultry segment; 40% of its sales are live chickens, and 60%

processed. The latter share includes whole chickens and various cuts for consumers, as well as products for the food industry, such as chicken fat, pulp, and mechanically separated meat.

The company works closely with its suppliers - around 80 independent farmers - to secure consistently high-quality meat which its customers can trust. As the company grows, it will seek to diversify its supply as well as its output, following its carefully-plotted strategic plan.

"We have also created loyalty in our suppliers, because of our integrated system," says Villacres. "We get our poultry mainly from the USA, but we would also be interested in working with suppliers from other producing countries, such as France, China, and Argentina."

Villacres asserts that investors in Ecuador can tap into the country's growth as the economy opens up. Segments including fishing are already seeing strong inflows of FDI. "Ecuador is an excellent place to do business," he says. "There are many internationally-owned factories being built in the country, and some local companies are selling stakes to foreign investors and achieving higher growth."



## Corporación Palmar Sustainable banana producer gears up for new growth

Ecuador's diversified, export-oriented agricultural sector and robust base of cash crops are set to play an important role in supporting future growth. The country's high-quality banana crops have helped it become the world's top banana exporter: it supplies more than 6% of total global banana production, and banana exports comprise more than 10% of total export receipts, making the sector a vital pillar of the economy. As global demand for fresh fruit rises, leading producer Corporación Palmar is set for significant expansion.

Active in Ecuador for more than 25 years, this third-generation family-owned business produces natural, healthy, and top-quality Ecuadorian bananas. The company's long and successful track record and expansive portfolio of international clients is largely owing to the efforts of its founder, according to Danilo Palacios Márquez, executive director:

"My father Euclides Palacios started as a taxi driver in a banana company. After he finished that job he decided to open his own business, buying bananas to growers and sell to exporters in "El Guabo" city. He is the glue that holds the family together, and we are now a big corporation as a



result of his tremendous efforts," he said.

Palmar plays a critical role in the Ecuadorian economy. It exported one million boxes of 22 XU type bananas weekly during its first operating season alone, and since then, exports have average 17 million boxes annually. Sustainable practices are crucial for the company, and as Palacios explained, maintaining the highest social and environmental standards has also been key to the company's success:

"We have excellent relations with our partners and clients, and we over 25 years we have developed a good list of clients. We are always seeking to improve our operations, which has

helped strengthen client relationships. Our products have all the necessary social and quality certifications, like BPA, SEDEX, Global Gap and Rainforest," he said.

As Palacios looks to the future, he's got his eye on one of the world's biggest and most high-potential consumer market: East Asia. Consumers there prefer to buy premium products, and Palmar specializes in the top-quality bananas, so expanding across the Pacific makes perfect sense.

To do this, the company will need to significantly expand its existing operation. With the right techniques, Palmar could harvest as much as 3,000 boxes per hectare, up from 1800 currently, allowing it to further capitalize on Ecuador's natural competitive advantages as it moves into its next growth phase:

"This country grows the best cacao, the best bananas, the best shrimp and the best flowers in the world. We are in the middle of the world, and we offer only the very best. The demand for top-quality crops will remain high, and we will be ready to deliver," Palacios concluded.





## Corporación Marzam - Ecuador's leading fuel shipper rides a wave of fresh demand

After a challenging 2020, Ecuador's maritime shipping sector is on track to regain major momentum in 2021. The industry has undergone rapid recent growth - between 2012 and 2019, cargo shipping volumes in the country rose by 34% - and the post-Covid recovery is already being felt. As the pandemic ebbs, global shipping costs are skyrocketing, and firms like Corporación Marzam are set to benefit from a maritime renaissance.

Established in 1981, Corporación Marzam is an integrated shipping firm comprising specialized companies that offer comprehensive services to shipowners, operators and other companies in the industrial, automotive, oil, shipping and fishing sectors. Corporación Marzam has always viewed the its primary mission as contributing to the economic growth and development of Ecuador, especially during crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic, as its president and founder Mariano Zambrano Segovia explained:

"When the pandemic hit, one of our main goals was not to fire anyone, because we knew that we couldn't contribute to the country with unemployed people. Everyone needed to pull together to come out from this difficult situation. I think as businesses we have an obligation to think not just about our business, but about our country too, as we're a fundamental part of Ecuadorian society."

At present, Corporación Marzam is focused on transportation and commercialization of fuels and liquids with its fleet of five tankers: Andes IV, Andes V, Andes VI, Rio Amazonas and Farallón. It is also active in transporting containers by land through tanker vehicles, heads and platforms, with each of its departments overseen by a team of highly-trained personnel dedicated to top quality



Mariano Zambrano Vera, Commercial Manager | Mariano Zambrano Segovia, Founder | Maria Pilar Zambrano Vera, CEO

customer service. Highly-skilled staff played a pivotal role in helping the company adapt to the challenges of 2020, and by expanding its business into exports last year, Corporación Marzam was able to find opportunity in a crisis.

As he looks to the future, Zambrano said he is open to partnerships that will support further expansion into new high-potential business lines such as lumber and agriculture. Ecuador is a major producer of mahogany,

bananas, rice, and fish, and as life returns to normal, demand for these exports has nowhere to go but up:

"We have always had the objective of working hard in order to improve, for example by investing our profits into more and better infrastructure. Our clients have been working with us for more than 20 years, so they know us and how we work. Economies go up and down, but companies that remain over the years are there because we do things right," Zambrano concluded.

## MediSystem - Healthcare visionaries transform the sector

Ecuador's burgeoning healthcare industry is set to play an important role in supporting economic diversification and long-term macroeconomic growth, and there is certainly plenty of room to grow. Healthcare expenditure was just over \$520 per capita in 2019, while insurance penetration was less than 1% of GDP in the same year. Sharp-eyed innovators like MediSystem are set to capitalize on the huge opportunities this presents.

Founded in 1993, MediSystem manages and invests in health-related businesses, and it is transforming the country's health sector with a team comprising top-tier investors with deep experience in the healthcare and insurance industries. Partnerships have been a crucial part of Medisystem's investors' history, and its partners include Sura, the biggest Colombian financial group, Hospital Metropolitano, Inversiones Navarra, and the South African firm Discovery-Vitality, amongst others. Tech partners include IBM's Watson and Apple. Through its corporate governance the company maintains a game-changing approach to delivering health services based in its core values: transparency, ethics, accountability and environmental care and sustainability.

Medisystem has risen from humble roots and early struggles to become a true pioneer; in fact, the market did not exist until the company created it, as Juan Sevilla, CEO of Medisystem Holding explained:

"We started back in 1993 with Saludsá, our prepaid medicine company. At that time it was a start-up, with no legal frame work for this type of company, more related to medical providers than the traditional health insurance. Some years later we also saw a big need for healthcare and we decided to invest and started Veris, our care company and with it



Juan Sevilla  
CEO - MediSystem

we founded Medisystem Holding, which holds our health sector investments together. We remain the largest company of our kind in Ecuador, and the most profitable in Latin America, which we have done by developing the most important network of outpatient

centers that provide medical care through specialists."

Its care company, Veris, has expanded its operations from two small centers in Quito and Guayaquil, to 14 centers providing 60,000 consultations per month. It has hired more than 400 specialized doctors, and expanded its service model to become totally digital in dental care and financial coverage. More significantly, it has opened up its capital base to invite employees and select providers to invest. To date, 260 individuals have done so.

To this day, Medisystem maintains a game-changing approach to delivering health services, and transparency is of the utmost importance, as is sustainability. All business lines of the company are certified carbon neutral, and Medisystem has been working with providers to expand these principles across all facets of the business.

Sevilla has a global vision for the company, and plans for international expansion are in the works. MediSystem is already making an impact on Ecuadorian healthcare; next up, Sevilla hopes to see it export the model across the region:

"We already have foreign investors. Overall, we are used to being partners and we have expertise in the care sector. Everybody who visits us appreciates our passion for quality service, our will to grow and our platform for healthcare service. We are very open, we are planning to go international, and we are particularly interested in partners that will bring new technological innovation," he concluded.

MediSystem®

## Leading the pack in LATAM consumer goods

Retail growth in Latin America has been robust in recent years, supported by a burgeoning base of value-added manufacturers and rising personal incomes: according to the World Bank, GDP per capita in Latin America and the Caribbean rose by nearly 20% over the previous decade to end 2020 at \$15,900 in current US dollars, while the retail market is expected to surpass \$300bn in value for the first time next year, up from \$263bn in 2017. As the world reopens after a punishing pandemic, the future looks especially bright for Indurama, the region's leading appliance manufacturer, and Marcimex, Ecuador's top appliance retailer.

Overseen by their parent company Grupo Consenso, Indurama and Marcimex have set the standards for excellence in their respective industries. Indurama traces its history back to 1972, and boasts decades of success across 20 countries in Latin America, South America and the Caribbean. Marcimex, meanwhile, has risen to the top of the domestic retail industry with an expansive product offering comprising everything from tablets and smartphones to furniture and motorcycles. As Marcelo Jaramillo, CEO of Grupo Consenso explained, both

have been successful because of their collaborative approach to doing business:

"The main goals of any business are to create value, to look at opportunities and bring the best offerings to our customers, creating opportunities for our employees to grow in both ways personal and professional"

Consenso group provide a total of 4000 direct jobs, making them an important contributor to national economic development. Indurama plays an especially important role in supporting industrialization and skilled job creation, while Marcimex is setting the standards for retailing in Ecuador on the strength of its diverse products and quality customer service.

"We are living at the time of fast transformation, and we are moving into it. There are a lot of funds and investors looking at Latin America as a result, Ecuador in particular stands out. It is a small country



## TropicalFruit Export - Ecuador's Global Fruit Champion

A deal with sovereign bondholders and a \$6.5bn funding package from the International Monetary Fund led ratings agency Fitch to upgrade its rating for Ecuador in September 2020, despite the difficult global climate. Fitch forecasts a "stable" outlook for the Latin American country, with growth expected to near 5% this year.

The economic recovery will be supported by Ecuador's export-oriented sectors, including the large banana-growing industry. Ecuador is the world's largest exporter of bananas, accounting for a third of global shipments, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation. Bananas contribute 10% of the country's overall export earnings.

With a footprint in markets from the United States through Europe to Japan, TropicalFruit Export is a key contributor to this success story. With exacting quality standards and a long commitment to sustainability, the company can meet the requirements of demanding global buyers and increasingly sophisticated and ethically-aware consumers. "We have the same mentality as consumers in North America and Europe," says company president Edmundo Uribe. "We are convinced that if you have a very deep vision of sustainability you are going to be more efficient. Sustainability is profitable."

The company's certifications include USDA Organic, Rainforest Alliance, and Global GAP.



Edmundo Uribe  
President - TropicalFruit Export

TropicalFruit Export was the first Ecuadorean banana producer to become carbon-neutral, and it sponsors more than 1000 hectares of forest in the Amazon to offset its emissions. The company is focused on efficient use of water and energy, reusing waste where possible, and ongoing evaluation of its suppliers to ensure that they meet environmental standards.

This approach has won the company clients

including six of the world's leading retailers - Walmart, Schwarz Group, Aldi, Costco, Ahold Delhaize, Carrefour - and other companies that have allowed it to reach large supermarkets like Germany's Lidl, as well as importers like Pratt in the UK and SIIM in France. TropicalFruit Export is open to partnerships in a range of countries worldwide. "We have better logistics operations than many exporters, which was a benefit during the covid-19 pandemic," says Uribe. "We have strong and stable relationships with suppliers that allow us to maintain growth. We have a very efficient and precise operation, and we're looking for partners with similar values and vision of sustainability."

While its supply is almost entirely from independent growers, TropicalFruit Export also operates its own small farm, to help strengthen its understanding of the growing business and how its suppliers operate. Over the longer term, this may develop into a farming operation to bolster the company's supply. Uribe is confident of the future, both for his company and his country. "I think Latin America is in the process of becoming a global leader," he says. "If you want to invest and take part in that, you should come to Ecuador. We have been open to the world for 200 years, and we have stability and a logical approach to business."

