



## Feature No. 27: BioCentinela Producers and Exporters



When an epidemic of white spot disease infected shrimp farms throughout Latin America in 1999, Javier Barragan seized the opportunity to enter a market with a proven record of steady growth: organic aquaculture. In this momentous decision, Javier saw an advantage in being able to tap into the intersection between environmental and economic concerns, because while he is a self-described lover of nature, the entrepreneur whom the children called “naturaleza” growing up is a tenacious businessman as well.

Javier is known for his ability to take well-calculated risks, and the conversion of his enterprise, BioCentinela, to sustainable production eight years ago has fueled its success ever since. By becoming the first Ecuadorian company to be officially certified as an organic producer, BioCentinela has benefitted from participation in a \$97.5 million a year global market for organic shrimp products and is now a steady supplier for several major brands including Tesco, Marks & Spencer and Switzerland’s Coop. The company has achieved a reputation for quality by exceeding organic standards since its certification by Naturland in 2002; each component of BioCentinela’s operations is monitored for environmental impact from feed material to packaging and processing. Javier is also cognizant of the well-being of his community, particularly since aquaculture has become notorious for destroying coastal ecosystems, and he has used company profits to regrow 50 hectares of misappropriated mangrove. Most recently, Javier has gone further in his pursuit of triple-bottom line business practices by working with the Fairtrade Labelling Organization (FLO) to establish guidelines for fairtrade aquaculture standards.

For Javier, environmental and social considerations are not just about principles but profits as well. His organic shrimp receive a significant price premium over conventional products, and the company has gone from a startup with a \$30,000 loan to an enterprise valued at \$6 million. Future growth prospects for BioCentinela are impressive, with \$2 million in sales in 2006 expected to rise to over \$6 million by 2009. The company has received investment from EcoEnterprises and is considering raising additional capital to improve production efficiency and increase shrimp exports to its current sales regions in Europe and the U.S. Always looking to augment his brand’s prominence in the sector, Javier aims to establish a local Association of Small Shrimp Producers in addition to bringing more farms under the BioCentinela umbrella. However, any companies that partner with BioCentinela must take the organic process seriously, not merely as a means to “greenwash” their brand, because as Javier himself emphasizes: “Being organic is being honest. It’s integrity. It’s a way of being.”



For more information about BioCentinela, visit <http://www.biocentinela.com> or see the company’s profile at [www.new-ventures.org](http://www.new-ventures.org).

*Written by Derek Newberry for the World Resources Institute ©2007 - The Rising Ventures Series features innovative small and medium businesses (SMEs) in emerging markets that deliver social and/or environmental benefits. These businesses have been identified through the New Ventures ([www.new-ventures.org](http://www.new-ventures.org)) and Development through Enterprise ([www.nextbillion.net](http://www.nextbillion.net)) projects. To view other Features in the Series, visit <http://www.new-ventures.org/risingventures>.*