

“Ensuring Protection is the real lesson learned”

Following the MAPFRE event held in Santiago de Compostela, we **interviewed Jesús Manuel Alonso Ecurís, Chairman of Jealsa**. Trained as an industrial engineer, he joined the family business in 1981, where he was General Manager from 1986 to 2015. On that date, he took over the role filled by his father, the founder Jesús Alonso.

Question: Jealsa was founded in 1958. It has been in business for almost 70 years and, although it maintains its family demeanor, it has become a multinational company with a strong international expansion, with activities in other sectors. Do you believe that the risks faced by your activity have changed over the years?

Answer: Absolutely. And not only because the company itself has evolved, for example, from one factory to seven in locations as diverse as Chile, Brazil, Guatemala, and Spain, of course, but also because the company itself has changed. **Organizations are becoming more complex and, with that, the risks we face are growing.**

Q: In an activity such as canning, besides the risk of fire and associated losses, what are the main risks to be protected against?

A: Although it may seem obvious, the first thing to do is to **draw up a risk map of the company and from there, try to protect ourselves against any eventuality**. From cyber-attacks, non-payments, civil liability risks, labor risks, etc.

Q: In the fire on May 8, 2021, in which 11,000 square meters were affected. What was your first thought upon receiving the news? What was your first concern? And what were the first decisions you had to make?

A: It really seemed unbelievable to me. How could this be happening to us?! That was the question I was asking. They were very complicated hours, but from the very beginning my main concern was the safety of the people and the situations of all our employees and their families. The next day, Sunday, the objective was different. **We launched a Crisis Committee with three key goals:** maintain employment, continue to serve our customers, and rebuild. That was our roadmap.

Q: Jealsa is a family business, in which its workers are also local families and its economic contribution is key to the region. How do you remember those first days following the claim? What

was the response of the workers and residents of Boiro?

A: We couldn't be more grateful. **From the very first moment, the displays of support and affection were unanimous.** Institutions, customers, providers, collaborators and, of course, our neighbors, sent us their signs of affection and solidarity. The highest political representatives of Galicia and the surrounding area have visited our facilities. The works council also played a fundamental role, coordinating and communicating to the team the decisions that were being made, and helping us to implement the measures as quickly as possible.

Q: Two years after the claim, have you been able to fully restore your business? Have you been able to maintain jobs?

A: We are proud to have recovered part of the business in only 12 days. **We were able to continue to meet our commitment** and ended the year with only a 1% drop in sales and, the following year, 2022, with the highest revenue to date. In the current fiscal year, we have continued to grow despite the widespread decline in consumption and the shrinking markets.

Q: In the aftermath of such a devastating claim, the importance of good risk management is highlighted. How would you rate this internal figure or task as a company? What do you consider having been the main lessons learned?

A: We did not have the Risk Management function assigned to a person with the required skills. This is the real lesson learned: **having a person and an organization transversal** to the entire Jealsa Organization, reporting directly to the Chairman, to ensure the protection of all our Assets, from prevention to detection and the isolation/containment of emergencies.

Q: What has been the role of insurance in such a contingency?

A: Fundamental in business continuity, both in the recovery of what has been lost and in the resumption of activities. **And I am particularly grateful to the MAPFRE executives who supported us from the very beginning.** Feeling safe while working is priceless! Thank you very much!