

# talking heads

## Torsten Berens



Mr Berens says he might take part in the Hamburg half-marathon this year

**Torsten Berens is managing director of Hamburg Wholesale Market and a member of GFI, the German Wholesale Markets Association. He was also recently nominated as a director of the World Union of Wholesale Markets, an appointment that is set to be confirmed at the annual WUWM Conference, which is due to take place in Mexico City on 23-25 April.**

When did you start working for Hamburg Wholesale Market?

**TB:** I joined the market authority as deputy managing director in 2006 and I then became managing director on 1 January 2008 following Wolf Rohde's retirement.

Where did you work before?

**TB:** In my former job I was responsible for managing all of the fun fairs and big events in Hamburg on behalf of the local authorities. I did that for four years between 2002 and 2006, and part of my role was also to look after street markets.

What do you see as your biggest challenge?

**TB:** As managing director of Hamburg Wholesale Market, I think it would have to be coping with rising competition within the fruit and vegetable industry from retailers in general and discounters in particular. Around 60-65 per cent of fresh produce sales in Germany are through

supermarkets, but the traditional wholesale sector still has a big part to play and our challenge is to keep this going.

Describe your typical day-to-day schedule?

**TB:** I usually arrive at the market around 6-7am, although a couple of days each week I will start between 2am and 4am when the market is opening. If there is time, I walk around the market hall and talk to the wholesalers, although I normally leave this until after 8am when they are less busy. Later, I check for messages with my secretary and then have meetings with the market's four divisional managers – technical, administration, services and marketing. Then I check my emails and make any phone calls I need to make. With over 2,000 employees and nearly 480 companies working at the market, there is always something to do.

Do you prefer doing business on the phone or via email, or both?

**TB:** To be honest, a lot of the time I am talking to people face to face, which is the best way if there is time. Email certainly saves time, however, and the most important thing is to use any means at your disposal to talk with people.

How many people are there on your team?

**TB:** There are 43 people in the Hamburg Wholesale Market management team.

How much travel do you have to do for your work?

**TB:** A lot! As a member of GFI and working with WUWM, it's important for me to visit other markets around the world and to learn about what other markets are doing. I recently attended Fruit Logistica in Berlin and then in February went to visit Borough Market and New Covent Garden Market in London. This month I'm off to Mexico for the WUWM Conference and then I'll be back for a GFI marketing meeting in Saarbrücken. Then, in June, there will be a WUWM retail conference in Hamburg.

What do you love in particular about your job and what, if anything, would you change?

**TB:** I love the fact that I meet so many people in my job. What's more, no day is like another, which is great. The only thing I would change is I would like to have more time for my colleagues.

What do you do to unwind after a tough day at work?

**TB:** Twice a week I go for a run – they hold a half-marathon here in Hamburg every year, so maybe I will take part this time. I also like walking my dog. At the moment, I'm looking for a motorbike to replace the one I sold three years ago. I wasn't using it at the time, so I sold it, but I now realise that was one of my biggest mistakes! My favourite make of bike is Ducati, so hopefully I can find one soon. ■