

COO OF AGANOVA

# MARCOS BARRERA

“The next decade will be the decade of optimization and efficiency”

Aganova’s technologies to detect and analyse leaks in water networks are key to minimizing non-revenue water. Marcos Barrera joined the company this year as Chief Operating Officer to be part of the company’s global expansion.

 BLANCA MARÍA ÁLVAREZ ROMÁN

A water engineer and industrial engineer, Marcos Barrera began his career two decades ago in water infrastructure construction internationally, as well as in water network leak detection services. Since then, he has participated in the development of desalination and urban supply projects with Abengoa; through its North American subsidiary, he worked on the company’s largest hydraulic project. He adds to this background his successful experience as a start-up managing director. In this interview, he shares his vision as COO of Aganova and discusses the company’s new developments.

**Eight months ago you assumed the position of COO of Aganova. What does this step represent in your career? What attracted you to Aganova to decide to join its executive team?**

It is a personal and professional challenge that I was eager to assume. Aganova is a company in full development, with an enormous value proposition. The moment is an ideal one, due to the huge relevance of water loss reduction in a water-stressed world and the impetus given to the company by the joint investment of Emerald and Cimbria Capital shortly before I joined.

**How do you expect your presence in this new position to advance and optimize the company’s activity?**

I am delighted to bring with me experience and knowledge, but business is a team effort. My role is to collaborate with the rest of the management and guide the team on this journey, commercial and technical, increasing customer value, creating the right environment and facilitating everyone’s growth while expanding the business. Our mission is clear: to bring to the market affordable solutions that through their periodic use achieve a reduction in drinking water losses globally.

**Your arrival comes after the investments of Emerald and Cimbria Capital, which have marked the beginning of this global expansion phase. In what context do you think these moves took place?**

They are two funds with a remarkable track record of investing in water technology companies; they know this market perfectly. The supply of quality water is one of the challenges facing humanity in the coming years; pollution, population growth and climate change are increasing the pressure on existing resources. It is time to focus on efficiency and technological advances that will enable us to adapt to and overcome these challenges. The next decade will be the decade of optimization and efficiency.

Aganova’s technology brings digital innovation and tools for direct inspections in the field, from the inside of the pipelines in service, providing a mixed approach, more adapted to the reality of the infrastructure. We can thus offer a quick diagnosis that also allows a quick repair of leaks. We locate the leaks and



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classify them by severity, and the client can repair them efficiently in record time, optimizing the civil works to what is strictly necessary, minimizing inconvenience to neighbours, water waste, energy expenditure and the resulting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Continuous use of this solution also provides a reliable diagnosis of the condition of the network.

### What do you consider to be the most significant changes in Aganova's new structure and to what extent do you think they can benefit the new business development?

Expansion requires greater specialization and new areas have been created. We are able to cover issues such as stable commercial coverage in almost any country, or the creation of subsidiary companies. Another novelty is the adaptation of the structure to the commercialization of technology and service contracts on a subscription and pay-per-use basis.

We can now deliver the Nautilus® inspection equipment for arterial water

mains or primary feeders and train a partner's or customer's field staff in several weeks, executing real projects together. Once their technicians are certified, they continue with the field inspections and we analyse the data and issue the reports. We also continue to offer the complete services implemented by Aganova, but this formula allows us to accelerate our expansion.

### What are the technological strengths of Aganova that have contributed to this synergy?

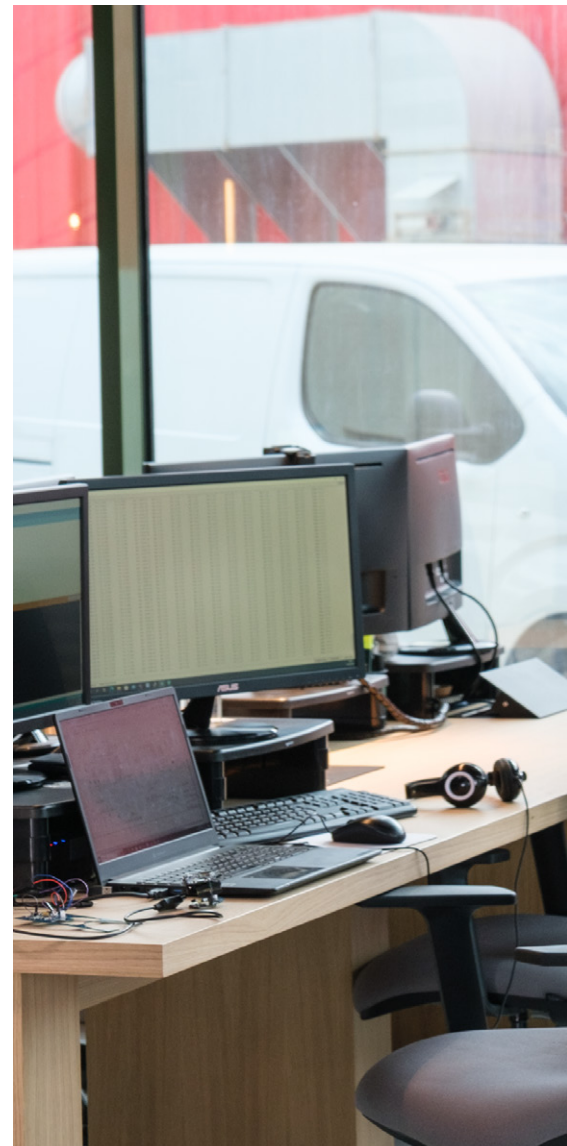
The combination of digitalization and physical inspection devices allows for the remote management of many simultaneous projects executed anywhere, facilitating collaboration with partners and customers. None of this would be possible without the more than 3,000 kilometres of inspected pipelines, the comprehensive development of hardware and software or the artificial intelligence algorithms.

Our new Nautilus® sensors, for example, allow us to provide information beyond the detection of leaks in a single inspection of several kilometres. We can now know the pressure at each point of the inspected pipeline or record unexpected velocity changes to investigate section constrictions or obstructions in critical pipelines in service.

The Jábega® wired solution, with acoustic and visual CCTV inspection,

also for in-service pipelines, can investigate up to 600 metres per inspection and helps us to clarify what is really happening at those points, which is critical to plan the actions that need to be taken to solve the problem.

### Finally, what regions of the world are you focusing on for this new phase? What do you consider to be the most suitable markets for implementing your technological solutions in water infrastructure analysis?



**"We have adapted our structure to the commercialization of technology and service contracts on a subscription and pay-per-use basis"**

The market has interpreted the use of this in-line technology in different ways, depending on the location, urban growth rates, budgetary resources, or even the cost of water collection.

The Persian Gulf countries, for example, have adopted this solution as a 2-in-1 strategy, i.e. they do annual inspections of their arterial water mains with Nautilus® and at the same time as they repair the leaks detected, they check the conservation status of the networks and plan upgrade or replacement actions. It results

in great efficiency and considerable savings of time and water. The cost of one of these inspection campaigns and the cost of repairing any leaks found pays off in less than a year in these places.

In Europe, however, with a few exceptions, the solution is still seen as a reactive rather than a preventive maintenance tool, being tendered as part of operation and maintenance contracts rather than as systematic and independent network audit projects. Obviously, the technology is also useful in re-

active maintenance, but this does not take advantage of the full potential of the solution, which is greatest when long lengths are analysed, with an unmatched cost per kilometre. In Europe, there are cities where half of the water lost in a water system is lost in the arterial water mains, which usually do not represent more than 10% of the total network length. It seems that it would be a good way to save water to inspect that 10% of the length, now that technology has made it accessible to all.

