

*Recognising female talent and entrepreneurship*

## **María José Cascajo, founder of HC Clover, named winner of the '2023 CaixaBank Women in Business Award'**

- **CaixaBank has recognised María José Cascajo for her enterprising spirit, strategic vision, transformative leadership, and commitment to society.**
- **María José Cascajo will also be one of the Spanish businesswomen honoured at the IWEA Awards 2023, which this year will be presented as part of the IWEA conference, to be held in Turin (Italy) from 5 to 7 November.**

**Madrid, 5 October 2023**

María José Cascajo, founder and chief financial officer of the pharmaceutical firm HC Clover, has been named the national winner in the seventh edition of the 'CaixaBank Women in Business Award' which recognises the talent and professional excellence of female business owners in Spain, and promotes networking between the world's leading female business leaders.

Out of the 13 territorial winners, the jury for the awards, consisting of a group of CaixaBank executives and managers, selected Madrid's María José Cascajo for her enterprising spirit, strategic vision and transformative leadership. These qualities have helped boost HC Clover, cementing it as an international and diversified company in the pharmaceutical sector, and a recipient of awards for its innovation in just 15 years.

María José Cascajo stated: "This recognition provides, on the one hand, great satisfaction and, on the other, an important opportunity. We are very satisfied to have our effort and dedication of the past 15 years recognised. Growing as we have, developing new products in a novel way from a pharmaceutical point of view, is not easy, and that makes it very rewarding to have this work acknowledged. It also represents an important opportunity to make the project more visible, and I think it could especially help me with the new initiatives I am launching, and that will have a highly social component where women will feature prominently. And so I want to take this chance to thank both CaixaBank and the entire team at HC Clover who have been at my side over these last 15 years".

María José Cascajo, who has a degree in Political Science from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, and a Global Executive MBA from IESE, founded the pharmaceutical company HC Clover in 2008. Since then, the company has undergone a growth and diversification process that has led her to expand the staff to 400 employees and its international presence to 45 countries.

Today, the company specialises in the manufacture of soft gelatine capsules for third parties, a sector in which it develops, manufactures, markets and registers pharmaceutical and veterinary products, dietary supplements and nutricosmetics. The company also has 16 production lines in different pharmaceutical formats for dietary supplements and for primary and secondary packaging.

As a result of this growth, HC Clover is involved in building a new plant with the capacity to manufacture more than 1.5 billion capsules, and will be FDA certified.

In addition, María José Cascajo has led the intense internationalisation process of HC Clover, with the opening of a production plant in Brazil and research into new markets. The pharmaceutical firm is currently present in 45 countries.

Finally, in its decision, the jury of the 'CaixaBank Women in Business Award' also took into consideration the executive's social commitment. Currently, HC Clover allocates 0.15% of its proceeds to NGOs with projects in Asia, Latin America and Spain.

As the winner of the 'CaixaBank Women in Business Award', María José Cascajo joins Inés Juste, chairwoman of the Group Juste; Rocío Hervella, founder and CEO of Prosol; Arancha Manzanares, Vice-president of Ayesa; Lina Mascaró, president of the Mascaró Group; Pilar Martínez-Cosentino, vice-president of the Cosentino Group; and Maite Casademunt, chairwoman and creative director of Lola Casademunt, all of them previous winners of the 'CaixaBank Women in Business Award'.

## The IWEA Awards

As the winner of the 'CaixaBank Women in Business Award', María José Cascajo will also be one of the Spanish businesswomen honoured at the IWEA Awards of the International Women Entrepreneurial Challenge (IWEA), the worldwide network of leading female business leaders from all around the world who cooperate on a global level through chambers of commerce and business organisations with the goal of connecting and developing female leadership.

Every year, as part of the IWEA Annual Conference, the IWEA Awards are presented in order to recognise and support female entrepreneurs all over the world, thus increasing the visibility of these women who make up a significant and decisive segment in the development of the global economy of the 21st century. This year's annual conference will take place from 5 to 7 November in Turin (Italy).

In the fifteen years that the awards have been running, IWEA has awarded 501 businesswomen from 48 countries. The companies led by these businesswomen have a combined workforce of over 338,000 people and an annual turnover of \$44.3 billion.

## CaixaBank's commitment to diversity and business excellence

The 'CaixaBank Women in Business Awards' fall within the Wengage diversity programme, a CaixaBank-wide project developed by people from all areas of the bank based on meritocracy and promoting equal opportunities, striving to encourage and implement diversity in all its dimensions: gender, functional, generational, LGBTI, cultural...

Wengage includes internal measures to foster flexibility and work-life balance, raise awareness of diversity and enhance the role of women in the bank; as well as external initiatives for customers and society, focused on promoting diversity and equal opportunities along four lines of action: leadership and entrepreneurship, innovation and education, sport, and rural settings.

A total of 42.7% of managerial positions at CaixaBank are held by women and 40% of seats on its Board of Directors are occupied by women, some of the highest ratios in the sector. As a result of this commitment, CaixaBank is among the top three companies in the world on the Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index 2023.

The project is also promoted by the CaixaBank Business division. The bank has consolidated its stance as a leading bank for businesses thanks to its specialisation model, with products and services tailored to the specific needs of its customers. CaixaBank Business provides its services through 220 specialised centres and branches throughout every region of Spain, staffed by 2,200 highly qualified professionals with a solid reputation in business consulting. The company has specialists in financing, foreign trade, treasury, tourism, real estate, and SMEs, who offer a personalised service beyond financing to support and promote the corporate sector.

Internationally, CaixaBank supports its corporate customers with various operational solutions that provide effective access to 127 markets in different countries, and offers the best guidance for their operations abroad.