# Geoffrey Parrillo – Founder, Isla Frio



***The pharma industry operates with very specific processes and quality control standards, which can vary from company to company. We understand that, and we make it a priority to adapt to these needs***

09.04.2025

Tags: Puerto Rico, Americas, Isla Frio

*Isla Frio provides state-of-the-art temperature-controlled storage solutions for pharma, among other industries. Founder Geoffrey Parrillo discusses the company's efforts to adapt to the demands of the pharma industry, offering solutions such as FDA-approved validated rooms. He also outlines Isla Frio's unique real-time tracking technology, weighs in on the steps Puerto Rico needs to take to strengthen its position as a major logistics hub, and reflects on Isla Frio's commitment to the island where it has not only benefited from tax incentives, but also contributed to the local economy.*

**Could you introduce Isla Frio and explain its core business and strategy?**

Isla Frio began operations in 2020, starting with the construction of our state-of-the-art freezer facility. We offer a range of temperature-controlled storage options, including a dedicated freezer set at -15°C for formal storage, our main freezer at -5°C with 2,500 pallet positions, and a cool dock with 300 pallet positions at 36°C. In addition, we provide Controlled Room Temperature (CRT) with flexible temperature and humidity controls, along with ambient dry storage options. Our goal is to cater to the diverse needs of our clients with highly flexible, specialised cold storage solutions.

**Around 30 percent of Puerto Rico’s GDP comes from the life sciences industry. What role does this industry play in your operations today?**

As we look to expand our facilities, we are keenly listening to the market to understand the needs of the life sciences sector. We are actively exploring what storage requirements the industry has, and how we can best accommodate those needs. For example, we have encountered specific temperature requirements during initial discussions, such as -14°F, which would necessitate more dedicated spaces for certain goods. Our flexibility allows us to provide tailored storage solutions that can adapt to the varying needs of different companies within the life sciences sector, while ensuring their products are kept in optimal conditions.

**With a high demand from the pharma industry, how has Isla Frio adapted to meet these needs, and how has the industry reacted to your offering?**

We have made significant strides in adapting to the demands of the pharma industry. We have a variety of certifications and validations to ensure our facilities meet the industry's stringent requirements. For example, we have FDA-approved validated rooms. The pharma industry operates with very specific processes and quality control standards, which can vary from company to company. We understand that, and we make it a priority to adapt to these needs. While we may not always be fully approved initially, we work closely with each client to ensure that we meet their particular requirements. Whether that involves meeting specific temperature controls or other operational processes, we ensure compliance with whatever their internal standards are. The goal is to not just provide a space for storage but to offer a level of trust and flexibility that pharma companies expect. This allows us to work alongside them and meet their evolving needs.

**What would you say are your key competitive advantages compared to other local companies that have also obtained certification?**

One of our key competitive advantages is being a newer, more agile company. We have grown thoughtfully and in the right way, focusing on providing exceptional service that truly stands out. Unlike larger companies, we pride ourselves on our ability to make quick decisions. When you call us, you get straight to the point—there is no navigating through layers of bureaucracy. We are always accessible, and we respond rapidly to our clients' needs.

For instance, on a Saturday night, we had a client who was running low on supplies stored with us. This shortage was going to halt their main production line. We quickly mobilized our team, made a delivery, and kept their operations running. That kind of flexibility and responsiveness is something

many larger companies simply cannot provide. As a smaller, more nimble company, we can tailor our growth to our customers' needs. We do not expect them to adapt to us—we adapt to them, which gives us a significant edge in meeting the specific demands of each client.

**In terms of location, most of your competitors are based in San Juan, close to the airport. How does Isla Frio's location impact your operations?**

We are located in Cedra, about 45 minutes from San Juan, which some might consider a bit of a distance. Personally, I am from Rhode Island, and even in such a small state, people are reluctant to drive 10-15 minutes, so I understand that some may see our location as less convenient.

That said, our facility is brand new, clean, and equipped with state-of-the-art monitoring systems, including cloud-based temperature and humidity control that tracks data. As for the distance, we are actually centrally located on the island, which has proven to be beneficial for many of our customers. We can reach the north, south, east, and west of Puerto Rico easily, which gives us a distinct advantage when it comes to distribution.

While we are not immediately next to the port or airport, we still manage to offer daily deliveries to these locations. For customers opening new locations across the island, we are also able to provide pick-ups and deliveries in places like San Juan, Ponce, and even Aguadilla. While Aguadilla is a bit more remote, with talks of a new airport and potentially a cold storage facility, we would be able to service them as well if needed.

**Can you tell us a little bit about the real-time tracking and unique barcoded system technologies Isla Frio has implemented ?**

Our warehouse management system (WMS) is RF-based, meaning that everything coming in or out of the facility, as well as any movements within the storage areas, is tracked via barcode scanning. We keep detailed information on each lot, including expiration dates, production dates, arrival dates, and shipping data. We also log who moved the products, when they were shipped, and how many times they have been moved within the facility. This robust software is paired with a customer portal, allowing our clients to access their inventory in real time. Every customer has their own user credentials, so they can monitor their stock and track products whenever they need to.

**With the rise of AI in various industries, is Isla Frio exploring any AI applications, or is the focus currently elsewhere?**

As of now, our primary focus is on optimising our current operations. However, AI is certainly something we are looking into for the future. Initially, we are looking at AI for surveillance purposes—enhancing security measures in and around our facility. As we expand and fully utilise all areas of our building, we will begin assessing how AI can further streamline our operations and improve efficiency. The potential applications are vast, but we are taking a measured approach to ensure we grow strategically.

**How do you think the government's recent changes and initiatives will impact the island's logistics sector, particularly in life sciences?**

I think a few key factors need to be addressed for Puerto Rico to strengthen its position as a major logistics hub. First and foremost, the power grid —especially after the impact of Hurricane Maria— is something that needs urgent stabilisation. Reliable power is crucial for any industry, and while there are ideas circulating about alternative energy solutions, such as nuclear mini-plants, the fact remains that stable power is a fundamental need.

Puerto Rico's current challenge also involves the Jones Act, which requires all shipping to be done through US carriers. While some argue this creates inflated costs, it is part of the landscape here. To become a logistics hub, collaboration between companies will be key. The industry needs to move away from being strictly competitive and start working together as collaborators to meet the demands of the market.

There is a concerted effort to get stakeholders to collaborate, but sometimes there is a disconnect between the needs of the industry and what is available. For instance, when we were looking to expand our storage capacity, the process was somewhat complicated as banks want to know who will be using the facility before they will finance it, but companies are often hesitant to commit until the infrastructure is already in place. This kind of challenge is something that needs to be addressed for the industry to thrive, but I do see positive steps being taken in the right direction.

However, as we have grown, we have moved beyond the initial growth phase. Now, the challenge has shifted to making people aware of us and helping them recognise the services and facilities we offer. It is about bridging the gap between the needs of the market and what we can provide. As

we continue to expand, our focus is on ensuring we are known for our service and that people connect with what we offer.

**What is your vision for Isla Frio's future growth and its role in Puerto Rico?**

Our goal is to become a trusted and well-regarded storage facility, not just for pharma, but for any temperature-controlled storage needs, whether it is for food, pharma, or other industries. We want to be known for delivering top-tier service, wherever it is needed. After Hurricane Maria, everyone struggled with storage issues, from pharma to the food industry. Our mission is to make sure our clients never have to worry about their product—it is as if they are keeping it themselves. We want them to trust us with their products just as much as they would trust themselves.

**What is the timeline for your renovations and expansion projects? When can we expect to see them become fully operational?**

Right now, we are in the middle of a growth phase. We have had a financing offer in place, but the question is whether to commit to expanding the entire facility at once or do it room by room. To make that decision, we need more firm commitments from companies who require temperature-controlled storage. We are getting there, but it is a slow process. I think part of that is due to the broader industry's hesitancy, even though there is a clear demand for more storage. It is a bit frustrating, but we remain optimistic about the future.

We are still figuring out whether to expand all at once or in stages. We are not rushing the process, and the timing depends on receiving more firm commitments from potential clients who need this type of storage. Once we have those assurances, we will move forward with the expansion plans.

**On a more personal note, you mentioned that you were a dentist before transitioning to Isla Frio. How has the journey been for you, making such a big career shift?**

It has definitely been a learning experience, but I have been fortunate to have a great mentor, Paul Robbins, who guided me through the transition. While the fields of dentistry and logistics are very different, I have found that many of the skills in business—particularly when it comes to providing excellent service—are quite transferable. I have applied the same quality principles from my dental career to this one, and I truly believe that the key to building a successful company is surrounding

yourself with talented, hardworking people. Our team works incredibly hard every day, and I am extremely proud of what we have built so far.

As for Puerto Rico, I am now an Act 23 resident [a resident who benefits from tax incentives] and fully committed to the island. Isla Frio is an Act 60 [Resident Tax Incentive Code] company, and it has been a big part of our journey. There is often a misconception about Act 60 residents, with some people thinking it is just about tax incentives. However, our company came here with a solid plan, and we did not rely solely on SBA and USDA loans to get started. We also invested USD 4.5 million of our own funds. We started with just three employees, and now we have grown to 16. We have done it the right way—not just for the success of our company but for the benefit of Puerto Rico as well. This is now our home, and we are fully committed to contributing to the island's growth and success.

**What final message would you like to leave for our global readers?**

My message is simple—do not let the distance deter you. While we may not be right next to the port, we are centrally located on the island, and we provide exceptional service. Once people make the trip to see our facility, they are always pleasantly surprised by what we offer. We are adaptable, and our service truly is second to none. So, come visit us, and we will show you what we can do.

**See more interviews**