

inside... PUNDIT LOOKS AT PMA AND UNITED • SUMMER MERCHANDISING • NEW JERSEY PRODUCE HERBS • CALIFORNIA/BAJA TOMATOES • FLORAL LIGHTING • CALIFORNIA PEARS • DRIED PLUMS GRAPES • GEORGIA GROWN SUPPLEMENT

JUNE 2010 • VOL. 26 • NO. 6 • \$9.90

producebusiness

MARKETING • MERCHANDISING • MANAGEMENT • PROCUREMENT



Under Forty



The DOLE brand is synonymous with high quality and safety standards for fresh fruit and vegetables.

Dole leads the way in nutritional education, helping consumers to achieve a healthy lifestyle.



Reader Service # 3



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Georgia's proximity to Eastern markets and its vast array of fruit and vegetables make the state perfectly poised to capitalize on the locally grown demand.

THIS MONTH'S WINNER:



Marja Moyer
Merchandising Services
Manager
Safeway Inc.
Pleasanton, CA

How To Win

To win the PRODUCE BUSINESS Quiz, the first thing you have to do is enter. The rules are simple: Read through the articles and advertisements in this issue to find the answers. Fill in the blanks corresponding to the questions below, and either cut along the dotted line or photocopy the page, and send your answers along with a business card or company letterhead to the address listed on the coupon. The winner will be chosen by drawing from the responses received before the publication of our August issue of PRODUCE BUSINESS. The winner must agree to submit a color photo to be published in that issue.

As a Merchandising Services Manager for Safeway, Marja works closely with the produce and floral department to help increase their exposure throughout the store. "I work in the internal advertising department and help create layouts to assist in maximizing the exposure of produce and floral. Last year, I worked on the locally grown program, developing its look and feel. I also work closely with produce vendors to develop in-store merchandising programs."

Though Marja officially joined the Safeway team in 1996 and has been supporting the produce and floral departments since 2002, she has been working with the chain indirectly since 1983, when she produced Safeway ads through an external vendor for the company's Northern California stores.

She relies on PRODUCE BUSINESS to keep her informed on what's happening in the industry. "I've been reading the magazine for about one-and-a-half years," she estimates. "I like to see what's going on with other retailers and current events. I count on it to keep me abreast of situations."

WIN AN INDOOR/OUTDOOR ELECTRIC GRILL

Never let the weather stop you again from grilling up your favorite burgers or vegetables. The grill can range in temperature from 170° to 410° F. The large, non-stick cooking surface can accommodate up to three NY strip steaks at once.



QUESTIONS FOR THE JUNE ISSUE

- 1) Rock Garden's new line of herbs comes in what kind of special packaging? _____
- 2) What are the names of the two varieties of peppers grown by Sun World? _____
- 3) During what months are Jersey Fresh blueberries available? _____
- 4) Name two of the upcoming events that will feature Georgia peaches. _____
- 5) In what two California cities will you find Coosemans? _____
- 6) What is Baero's booth number at the International Floriculture Expo? _____

This issue was: Personally addressed to me Addressed to someone else

Name _____ Position _____
Company _____
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Photocopies of this form are acceptable. Please send answers to:
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WASHINGTON GRAPEVINE

A report on the inside happenings of government.

SUBMITTED BY DAVID GOMBAS, PH.D., SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, FOOD SAFETY & TECHNOLOGY • UNITED FRESH PRODUCE ASSOC.



Harmonized Audits And Standards

In mid-May, the Technical Working Group (TWG) of the Produce GAPs Harmonization Initiative released its first Draft Harmonized Standards. The draft represents a major step by the TWG toward establishing a single audit standard for an industry that has been plagued by myriad auditing bodies and standards. The Grapevine sat down with Dr. David Gombas, senior vice president of food safety and technology at United Fresh to find out just what the Draft Harmonized Standard means for the industry.

Grapevine: Given the process used to create it, the Draft Harmonized Standard is a “greatest hits” of the multiple current standards in place. How does this help keep what works and change what doesn't?

Dr. Gombas: Every GAP audit or food safety standard we've considered was developed by a group of experts, and was tested and accepted by at least some part of the industry. That meant we had some great raw material to build on. We looked at these standards and asked, “What's applicable to a wide range of commodities, size operations, regions and production and handling practices?” We were able to select the best wording from each.

GV: Are there any aspects of the auditing process that are already standardized?

DG: At the 50,000-foot level, all GAP audit standards and processes are already the same. They can all trace their genesis to the 1998 *FDA Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* (aka, the GAPs Guide), which recommended that growers have a food safety plan that considers the potential for pathogen contamination from agricultural water; compost and soil amendments; produce handlers and their equipment; tools and containers; and animals, both domestic and wildlife. These are still the primary food safety risk factors in agricultural production today.

GV: What have been the biggest hurdles in the process?

DG: We've had two concerns so far: buy-in on the harmonization process and the harmonized standard. It's easier to create a new standard than to build on an existing standard — I believe that's why we have so many out there. So we were concerned that the TWG might slip into that mode — creating new words rather than harmonizing those that are already being used.

Also, many companies and customers already have their favorite audit — the one they best understand and trust. Audit organizations obviously believe the standard they are using is best. So we were concerned that vested interests would pull the TWG toward one standard or another.

I'm glad to report that neither issue has emerged. The TWG stuck to the process of harmonization to complete this first phase, and everyone worked together to choose the standards that best met the needs of harmonization, regardless of their own preferences.

GV: The biggest successes?

DG: The biggest success so far has been the support from stakeholders. There has been tremendous participation from the industry on the TWG. There are now more than 100 participants, including some from Canada and Mexico. We've also had strong financial support, in terms of meeting hosts, from Darden, McDonald's, Yum Brands/Taco Bell, Texas AgriLife Extension Center, U.S. Foodservice and Sysco, and more organizations committed to host future meetings.

The second success has been from the Steering Committee — the produce industry business leaders who have to buy-in on the need for harmonization and will have to accept the harmonized standard when completed. Last month, at the joint meeting of the Steering Committee and the TWG, faced with the reality of a standard that was ²/₃ drafted, the Steering Committee reaffirmed the need and their commitment to the vision of “one audit, performed by any credible third party, acceptable to all buyers.”

GV: What are the potential savings created by the Draft Harmonized Standard?

DG: Today, there are more than a dozen GAP standards being used by and for the produce industry, all more than 90 percent the same in what is being audited, yet all slightly different in expectations and how the audit is performed. If there was one audit that a critical mass of buyers would accept, everyone would use it. For those being audited, multiple, slightly different audits are an unnecessary diversion of limited food safety resources, without actually improving food safety. For customers of those audits, the audit differences make it difficult to compare operations. Having a single standard that is used consistently by all audit organizations provides a common yardstick for measuring operations' food safety practices, and allows those operations to concentrate their resources on managing food safety, instead of managing different audit expectations.

GV: Now that the Draft Harmonized Standard has been released, what is the next step?

DG: Now that a first draft has been assembled, the TWG faces a greater challenge: Adjusting the draft to apply to the widest possible range of commodities, regions, size operations and production practices.

When we began the process, it wasn't clear whether a single standard for all GAP operations would be possible. However, the process has taught us that even though the food safety plans may vary from operation to operation, the audit questions appear to be the same. Whether that stays true as we get into the final details of the harmonized standard remains to be seen but so far, we are optimistic that the Steering Committee's vision of “one audit, performed by any credible third party, acceptable to all buyers” can be achieved.

A copy of the Draft Harmonized Standard is available online from the United Fresh website at: http://www.unitedfresh.org/newsviews/gap_harmonization.



Food Safety Stakes Just Went Higher

The past few weeks have been a troubling one for the produce industry. There were recalls of Romaine, spinach and sprouts. Most of the issues had to do with salmonella, but there was a hitherto almost unmentioned variant of *E. coli* — *E. coli* 0145 — that surfaced as well. Even Fresh Express, widely credited as a paradigm of food safety, did a recall out of — as is so often said in these circumstances — “an abundance of caution.”

The confluence of these recalls demonstrates that the trade’s approach to food safety issues may require some serious rethinking. None of the recent recalls were of a scope remotely comparable to the spinach crisis of 2006 or to the Salmonella Saintpaul tomatoes *cum* chili pepper crisis of 2008. None of the May 2010 outbreaks caused the FDA to issue industry-wide recommendations not to consume, but the implications of this cluster of outbreaks is profoundly troubling.

First, as horrid as the situations were with spinach and tomatoes in 2006 and 2008, they at least came to an end. Functionally, there was a “recommendation not to consume,” which was lifted shortly thereafter. The industry had, of course, a serious and difficult job to do in rebuilding consumer confidence, but there was a clear moment to begin doing so.

Testing has become very prevalent and the indications are it will become more so. More testing, in the absence of some others substantive change, will mean finding more pathogens. This will mean more recalls. As in the past few weeks, we can imagine a sort of steady drumbeat of recalls, spiked by an occasional illness report. This steady murmur of news reports and incidents is likely to do more to undermine consumer confidence than a big recall declared finished.

Second, more than three years after the spinach crisis caused by *E. coli* 0157:H7, it turns out that almost no one, in the industry or the government, was testing for other pathogenic strains of *E. coli*, such as the 0145 implicated in the Romaine recall from Freshway Foods in May. In fact, it is not clear that there exists easy ways to test for the so-called “Big Six” — the six highly dangerous variants of *E. coli* beyond *E. coli* 0157:H7.

Yet such pathogens are significant problems. Earthbound Farm does testing for these strains, and Will Daniels, senior vice president for food safety at Earthbound, told *The New York Times* that one out every 1,000 samples tested, or a tenth of one percent, test positive for unwanted microbes, mostly the “Big Six.” Earthbound’s testing program is extensive, but not extensive enough to be statistically valid — leaving open the possibility that the incidence is higher than Earthbound reported.

It wasn’t very long ago that nobody had ever heard of 0157:H7. Now, all are becoming familiar with 0145. What is next? Obviously, pathogens are moving targets. We now know we have to wrestle to find ways of dealing with the “Big Six,” but, beyond that, who knows what mutations are occurring to create the food safety problems of tomorrow?

Third, this *E. coli* 0145 seems to shatter another certainty: That food safety is primarily a problem of those with weak immune systems. Initial indications are that *E. coli* 0145 seemed to affect healthy young people. Potentially, this means a large outbreak could seriously affect many more people.

Fourth, we learned that traceability won’t save us. The hope has been that great traceability can narrow the scope of outbreaks so they don’t cause industry-wide damage. But the nature of produce is that pathogens can’t be reliably localized. If the source is believed to be river water, for example, knowing the exact field something grew in does not automatically restrict the sphere of interest to that field.

Fifth, the inclusion of Fresh Express in the recall list is a milestone as well. Even though it was only a precautionary recall, it indicates that the industry should be under no delusions that even the best industry efforts guarantee against shipping a product with a pathogen.

In the midst of all these food safety matters, an issue in the organic industry has raised doubts about the ability of both government and auditing bodies to maintain standards. HerbThyme Farms was sued for allegedly selling product labeled organic that was conventional. The company’s executives responded to the class action lawsuit by acknowledging in public interviews that a switch had, in fact, happened. They defended themselves based on frequency and intent.

The striking thing about the matter is not that someone may have cheated. It was that the transgressions were discovered by neither the auditor who signs off on the company’s organic certification nor the government agency running the organic program. Yet it is these exact same groups, auditors and the government, that trade buyers and consumers rely on for assurance that food safety procedures are being followed. Yet if they can’t assure the integrity of organic certification, what makes us think they can assure the integrity of food safety procedures?

The solution is not clear. The industry may have no choice but to be more blunt with the facts about eating raw foods that are grown exposed to the elements. The demand for consumer product testing is certain to grow. We may need changes in laws to rearrange liability so as to change incentives. If it is really unacceptable for anyone to ever get sick from eating our products, the cost of keeping that promise has just clearly gone up.

The industry should be under no delusions that even the best industry efforts guarantee against shipping a product with a pathogen.



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www.veggiesmadeeasy.com

Reader Service # 1

Broccolini is a registered trademark of Mann Packing Co., Inc.

PANDOL BROS. INC. DELANO, CA

David Sudduth has assumed the newly created position of director of global operations. He will be responsible for the company's operations in California, Mexico and Chile, and will oversee a team working in harvest logistics, quality control and packing, along with a 20,000 square-foot packing facility in Delano. Sudduth has more than 20 years of experience in export/import trading and operations and previously worked for Pandol Bros. in the early 1980s as an import trade manager.



Scott Reade was hired as vice president of sales and marketing, a newly created position. His duties will include providing the vision, leadership and management necessary to help ensure the company's strategic and financial success. He will be responsible for all aspects of the sales and marketing functions, including growing the client base through distribution channel diversification as well as customer segment diversification.



UNITED STATES POTATO BOARD DENVER, CO

Don Ladhoff will lead the retail efforts of the Domestic Marketing Program, providing key input to strategy and guide the tactical execution of the potato demand-building program. Most recently, Ladhoff was the president of BrandForce, which he founded in 2008 to assist clients such as Butterball, Chiquita and T-Mobile. Ladhoff earned his retail experience in a succession of roles, from store management at Safeway to regional sales positions with Pepsi and The Wine Group.



DOLE FRESH VEGETABLES MONTEREY, CA

Chris Mayhew was promoted to director of marketing for salads. After working in the marketing department for Naturipe Farms, Mayhew returned to Dole and started working as marketing manager. She later became senior marketing manager and then director of marketing. She has an MBA with an emphasis on marketing management from Golden Gate University in San Francisco and a Bachelors of Science in business marketing from Cal State University at Chico.



SOUTHERN SPECIALTIES INC. POMPANO BEACH, FL

Dana Giaccone was hired as manager of West Coast operations, based in Los Angeles, CA. She has experience in the produce industry, working with growers, processors and foodservice distributors to expand their customer base and develop product lines. Most recently, Giaccone held the position of regional business manager for River Ranch Fresh Foods. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in agribusiness from California Polytechnic State University.



PRODUCE MARKETING ASSOCIATION NEWARK, DE

Maria Lena "Mylene" Pacheco joined the staff in a newly created position of vice president of member value creation. She will lead the creation of value for PMA's membership worldwide, including understanding member needs and developing value offerings to meet or exceed those needs. Pacheco has more than 15 years of experience in product management, new product and service development, market research and marketing with a customer-centric focus.



PRO*ACT MONTEREY, CA

Jennifer Osborne has joined the Client Services Team as West Coast client services director. She will work closely with PRO*ACT distributor members and customers to target new business opportunities and increase the value relationship with PRO*ACT products and services. She was most recently director of sales for Classic Salads and has held previous sales and management positions at Fresh Innovations, Dole Fresh Vegetables, Fresh Express and Grower's Express.



Anthony Molinaro has joined the Client Services Team as Northeast client services director, based in New Milford, CT. He held previous produce and distribution management positions at Alliant Foodservice — now U.S. Foodservice — and Monteverde Produce.



NEW PRODUCTS

NEW APPLE SNACKERS

Crunch Pak, Cashmere, WA, has added to its line of Apple Snackers. These nutritious snacks contain combinations of fruits and other healthful snacking options such as dips and cheese. Some of the line additions include apples with peanut butter and raisins, apples with cheese and crackers and apples with caramels and chocolate. The new Apple Snackers began shipping in May and have a suggested retail price of \$1.99 to \$2.29.



Reader Service No. 300

FLAVORED ALMOND SNACKS

Mariani Nut Co., Winters, CA, has introduced a new line of flavored almonds. Packed in convenient 6-oz. resealable bags, some of the flavors include Wasabi and Soy, Honey Roasted, Roasted and Salted and Natural. This product line meets the needs of consumers who want a quick, healthful and flavorful snack and helps retailers capitalize on those consumers who are recognizing the heart-healthy benefits of almonds. The new foil package features a California almond orchard in full bloom and has a suggested retail price of \$3.99.



Reader Service No. 301

HAND TOMATO SLICER

Maxwell Chase Technologies, Atlanta, GA, has released the MCT 5 Hand Tomato Slicer. Specifically designed and engineered to produce precision-cut slices, the machine slices six tomatoes per cycle while removing and collecting the unwanted end pieces. Key advantages of this machine are the reduction in labor cost and the simplicity of use. The slicer integrates with the company's Fresh-R-Pax super absorbent trays, resulting in a dramatic improvement in shelf-life of up to 14 days.



Reader Service No. 303

EARTH-FRIENDLY PACKAGING

Christopher Ranch LLC, Gilroy, CA, has expanded its line of environmentally friendly pouches. The 1-lb. bag for whole peeled garlic along with other packs are manufactured to use 80 percent less material than previous containers, conserving refrigerator space while saving on transportation costs. The new eco-friendly bag, which is 100 percent recyclable, is projected to save more than 500,000 pounds of plastic each year.



Reader Service No. 304

Produce Watch is a regular feature of PRODUCE BUSINESS. Please send information on new products, personnel changes, industry, corporate and personal milestones and available literature, along with a color photo, slide or transparency to: Managing Editor, PRODUCE BUSINESS, P.O. Box 810425, Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425, or e-mail us at info@producebusiness.com

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We Are Packers



We Are Merchandisers



Announcing
NEW HERB PACKAGING
1-oz Reclosable,
and Single-Serve...
Modified Atmosphere
Packaging to Extend
Shelf-life

RESTAURANT-STYLED SALAD KITS

Misionero Vegetables, Gonzales, CA, has expanded its Garden Cuts product line by launching a new line of restaurant-style salad kits. The kits come in four varieties, including Iceberg Wedge, Romaine Caesar, Butter Wedge and Cosmopolitan, and contains lettuce, dressing, condiments and toppers. The salad kit was developed to target customers that are missing the dining out experience due to a restricted cash flow.



Reader Service No. 305

ALL-NATURAL SALAD KITS

Dole Fresh Vegetables, Monterey, CA, has the industry's first widely distributed prepackaged salad kits. All Natural Dole Salad Kits combine farm-fresh lettuces and vegetables with all-natural toppings and salad dressings. These all-natural ingredients include nuts, croutons, cheeses, seasonings and dressings. They are free of artificial colors or flavors. The kits are being rolled out to stores in the United States through June of this year.



Reader Service No. 306

BOLTHOUSE CARROT WASH SAVES FUEL

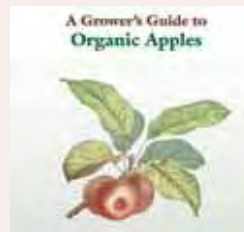
Bolthouse Farms, Bakersfield, CA, has identified a new way to curtail spending, enhance sustainability and save more than 317,000 gallons of fuel. Eco-friendly carrot wash stations cleanse the carrots' soil that would otherwise add weight to the load and require more gas. This also saves more than 55,000 tons of nutrient-rich topsoil. The washout stations are only one example of the corporate sustainability efforts underway at the company.



Reader Service No. 307

ORGANIC PRODUCTION GUIDES AVAILABLE

New York State Agriculture Commissioner, Patrick Hooker, announced the availability of nine new organic production guides that provide information for farmers on how to produce certified organic crops, including apples, blueberries, grapes, lettuce, potatoes, spinach, strawberries and cole crops, or those belonging to the mustard family. The free guide also offers organic integrated pest-management techniques for fruit and vegetables crops.



Reader Service No. 308

SALAD TRACKING TOOL

Fresh Express, Salinas, CA, has announced the creation of "Your Salad Story" micro-site and Leaf Locator tool. This online resource will enable consumers to view the growing region of their salad product, meet the experts and follow the journey of their Fresh Express salads from farm to fork. It aims to clarify quality and food-safety practices for consumers.



Reader Service No. 309

THIRD-PARTY HELPS MSQ

Mexico Supreme Quality, Nogales, AZ, is using third-party endorsers to help set the tone for Mexico's Supreme Quality, or MSQ certification program with U.S. retailers. The ambassadors, or regional produce importers, help retailers understand and accept the MSQ program. To date, more than 350 individual growers or exporter communities are represented by the program, covering more than 30 Mexico states.



Reader Service No. 310

COLORFUL HARVEST MOVES TO SALINAS

Colorful Harvest, Salinas, CA, held a ribbon cutting ceremony and reception to celebrate the grand opening of its new headquarters in Salinas. This move makes Colorful Harvest the first produce company of its size to establish its headquarters in the heart of downtown Salinas. The company chose one of the most distinguished buildings in downtown Salinas for its new headquarters to make a statement of support for the community. The move will help boost the city's economy and bring the company closer to its new cooler operations.



Reader Service No. 311

MANGO RIPENESS GUIDE AVAILABLE

The National Mango Board, Orlando, FL, has released the *Mango Maturity & Ripeness Guide*. This guide includes the top six commercial mango varieties: Ataulfo, Francis, Haden, Keitt, Kent and Tommy Atkins, and the five stages of maturity/ripeness for each of them, represented with internal flesh photos, color swatches and ranges for firmness and Brix levels. It is intended for use at the retail receiving point.



Reader Service No. 312

CALIFORNIA GIANT ENHANCES TRACEABILITY

California Giant Berry Farms, Watsonville, CA, is using HarvestMark to test its 4-lb. clamshell traceability level and evaluate its overall system from the field through distribution. This is the second season the company is working with HarvestMark's program, adding a valuable consumer component to the process. In an effort to determine consumer interest, impact and demand for the traceback system, the company has added a callout feature on its labels encouraging consumers to visit HarvestMark's Web site.



Reader Service No. 313

TESTA PRODUCE GOES GREEN

Testa Produce, Chicago, IL, is on its way to becoming the first U.S. food distributor to operate in a facility certified as LEED Platinum by the U.S Green Building Council. The company built its new headquarters on nearly 13 acres of long vacant land in the Chicago Stockyards Industrial Corridor with a focus on maximizing the long-term savings and minimizing environmental impact. It features the most advanced sustainable technologies and is designed both for future expansion and additional green updates as new technology emerges.



Reader Service No. 314

SONORA SPRING SUMMIT AND AWARDS

The annual launch of the Mexican grape season was celebrated April 15-16 in Hermosillo, Sonora, during the Sonora Summit. Organized by the Sonora Grape Growers Association, it included a special ceremony for the Mexico Supreme Quality Master of MCS Awards, honoring receivers who excelled in Mexico produce procurement and promotion. This year's winners were: Charlie's Produce, Seattle, WA; Sun Fed, Nogales, AZ; Mas Melons & Grapes, Nogales, AZ; Spartans Foods, Grand Rapids, MI and Supervalu, Eden Prairie, MN.



Reader Service No. 315

TWEETING SUPERFRESH

Domex Superfresh Growers, Yakima, WA, has redesigned its Web site to provide greater emphasis on immediate communication. The company has also begun using Facebook and Twitter to engage consumers and increase product awareness. Domex also has a separate Twitter account for retailers, called Fresh Category, managed by the Superfresh Category Management team.



Reader Service No. 316

Produce Watch is a regular feature of PRODUCE BUSINESS. Please send information on new products, personnel changes, industry, corporate and personal milestones and available literature, along with a color photo, slide or transparency to: Managing Editor, PRODUCE BUSINESS, P.O. Box 810425, Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425, or e-mail us at info@producebusiness.com

PMA FOODSERVICE REVIEW

Look for these fine companies at the PMA Foodservice Conference & Exposition, July 30-August 1, 2010, in Monterey, CA

Booth # 208
B&W Quality Growers
Fellsmere, FL



B&W Quality Growers is among the world's largest growers of watercress and one of America's oldest family farmers. Started in 1870, B&W attributes its success to a single premise of quality: B&W Quality Growers specializes in premium quality watercress, "wild red" watercress and wild rocket baby arugula in convenient table-ready, 100 percent useable cello packs.

Booth # 4
California Asparagus Commission
Sonoma, CA



The California Asparagus Commission can show how operators and distributors have profited from featuring and promoting California asparagus. With the help of other growing regions in the U.S. and the Southern Hemisphere, it is now possible to confidently menu asparagus all year long. New materials and programs designed for foodservice will help you take full advantage of America's most popular side dish.

Booth # 78
C.H. Robinson Worldwide Inc.
Monterey, CA



C.H. Robinson got its start in the produce industry over 100 years ago, providing fresh fruits and vegetables to the settlers of the Dakotas and Minnesota. Today, C.H. Robinson is one of the largest produce sourcing and non-asset based third-party logistics companies in the world. We source the highest quality products while integrating value-added logistics, distribution and information reporting services.

Booth # 3
Chilean Blueberry Committee
Santiago, Chile



The Chilean Blueberry Committee's mission is to improve the competitive position of the Chilean fresh blueberry industry and develop international markets. The company's main objective includes maintaining the highest quality standards of the industry. We want to know what materials and programs are needed to help you increase sales of fresh blueberries in foodservice.

Booth # 2
Chilean Fresh Fruit Association
Sonoma, CA



The Chilean Fresh Fruit Association is showcasing new materials, tools and case histories that confirm the many ways operators and distributors have profited from featuring and promoting Chilean fruit. See the list of the many fruits that can now be confidently menued because of their seamless 12 month supply. The CFFA materials and programs designed to help you increase your fresh fruit volume.

Booth # 76
Del Monte Fresh Produce
Coral Gables, FL



Fresh Del Monte offers retailers and foodservice operators an array of innovative solutions to address the changing tastes and lifestyle needs of today's consumers. Our extensive distribution network allows just-in-time deliveries of our premium quality fresh products to your doorstep.

Booth # 72
Hampton Farms
Severn, NC



The Barnes family began farming peanuts in 1917 in Northeastern North Carolina. In 1989, Hampton Farms was founded to complete the circle of services. Now Hampton Farms roasts, packs and markets finished peanut products direct to customers. Hampton Farms' goal is to be the best producer of peanut products in the world.

Booth # 212
Hollandia Produce Inc.
Carpinteria, CA



Hollandia Produce is a multi-faceted agricultural company specializing in greenhouse-grown vegetables. In 2009, the company celebrated 39 years in business. Hollandia Produce is home to the award-winning line of Live Gourmet brand Living Lettuces and Leafy Greens, which are harvested with their roots intact to promote freshness and flavor.

Booth # 32
Mixtec Group
Pasadena, CA



MIXTEC Group is one of the leading executive search firms in the fresh produce industry. Since 1984, we have been providing exceptional executive recruitment, leadership consulting and human capital management services to the who's who of the industry. Our philosophy is simple: The best person in the produce industry is currently working for some company. Why not yours?

Booth # 70
Potandon Produce L.L.C.
Idaho Falls, ID



Potandon Produce LLC is the exclusive marketer of Green Giant® Fresh potatoes and onions in North America. We have several exclusive variety potatoes along with our commodity favorites. Potandon offers an impressive network of over 60 co-packers in 24 states with another nine co-packers in Canada.

Booth # 22
PRODUCE BUSINESS
Boca Raton, FL



Initiating industry improvement since 1985, PRODUCE BUSINESS is the most widely distributed publication in the industry. Exclusively edited for buyers, it provides a monthly dialogue of marketing, merchandising, management and procurement information that helps buyers accomplish the industry's 9-to-13-A-Day goal.

Booth # 215
San Miguel Produce
Oxnard, CA



San Miguel Produce/Cut 'n Clean Greens, has become the leading grower and processor of fresh, nutritious cooking greens and is the No. 1 selling brand in the United States. Over the years, the company has created special processes and technologies to provide naturally fresh, packaged cooking greens. The company remains committed to furthering these efforts for the benefit of the industry.

Booth # 49
Seald-Sweet International
Vero Beach, FL



For over a century, Seald Sweet has been a leader in the produce industry, growing and shipping fresh citrus, grapes, pears and more from the finest growing regions around the world. We provide customers and growers with exceptional value, outstanding service and deliver the finest fresh produce available worldwide.

Booth # 216
Silver Creek Software
Boise, ID



Silver Creek Software is the developer and distributor of Visual Produce, a software program that addresses the needs of produce wholesalers, distributors, packers, shippers, processors, brokers and growers. Visual Produce financial accounting offers customer menus, contract pricing, lot control, route accounting online ordering, EDI, RFID, and quick-data entry screens.

Booth # 227
Stemilt Growers LLC
Wenatchee, WA



Stemilt Growers is a leading tree fruit growing, packing and marketing company. Owned and operated by the Mathison family, Stemilt is the nation's largest supplier of sweet cherries and organic tree fruits, as well as a key supplier of Washington-grown apples, pears and stone fruit.

Booth # 240
Sunkist
Sherman Oaks, CA



The growers of Sunkist are dedicated to delivering high quality fresh citrus, sourced from around the globe and backed by 117 years of expertise in sales, advertising, promotion and transportation. Sunkist is the world's leading citrus marketer, and our name is your assurance of premium quality, exciting taste and exceptional service.

Booth # 216
Tamaya Gourmet
Vitacura, Santiago, Chile



Located in the Limari Valley south of the Atacama Desert, Tamaya farm provides the ideal growing conditions for Tamaya Gourmet's produce. Our best selling and most delicious fruit is the Chilean Carica, a papaya that enhances any dish from a simple appetizer to a hot or cold entrée, a special dessert, or an exotic drink.

Booth # 13
Tanimura & Antle
Salinas, CA



The Tanimura & Antle families have been growing premium fresh produce for over 25 years. Based in California's Salinas Valley, this family-owned and operated business focuses on quality, freshness and innovation to deliver a full line of fresh vegetables across North America, Europe and Asia.

Booth # 41
Wada Farms
Idaho Falls, ID



Wada Farms Marketing Group grows, packs and markets fresh potatoes, onions and sweet potatoes from all growing areas of the country. Wada packs its own label, along with Dole and many other private brands labels for all aspects of the industry. Growing over a billion potatoes annually, Wada Farms is among the largest growers and packers in the industry.

Booth # 213
Wilcox Fresh
Rexburg, ID



Wilcox Fresh is a 61-year-old grower/shipper. We are committed to sustainability, social responsibility, and food safety. With our national network of co-pack partners, we offer the best quality and service in potatoes, onions and sweet potatoes. From private



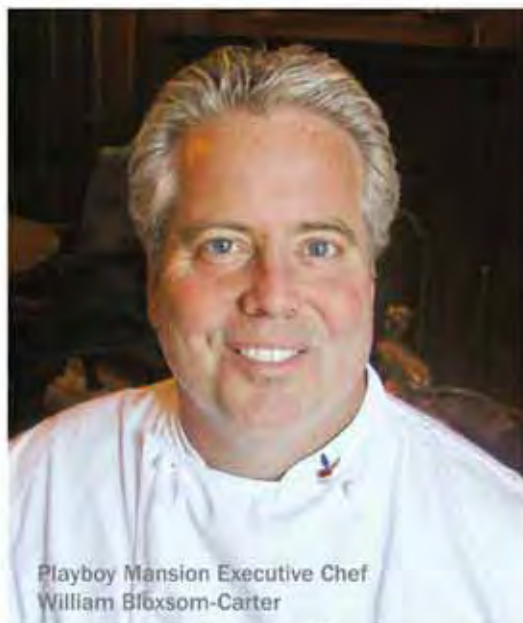
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Support great causes by participating in the 5th Annual **PMA Foundation for Industry Talent (FIT) Golf Tournament** benefitting the Nucci Scholarship for Culinary Innovation, and the **Live FIT 5K Run/Walk** supporting PMA FIT's mission to attract, develop and retain talent for the fresh produce industry.

And, **Field Tours, Locally Grown** education sessions, the **Fresh Perspective: Women's Networking Event** and more!



MONTEREY
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JULY 30 - AUGUST 1

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'Local' Finds A Following

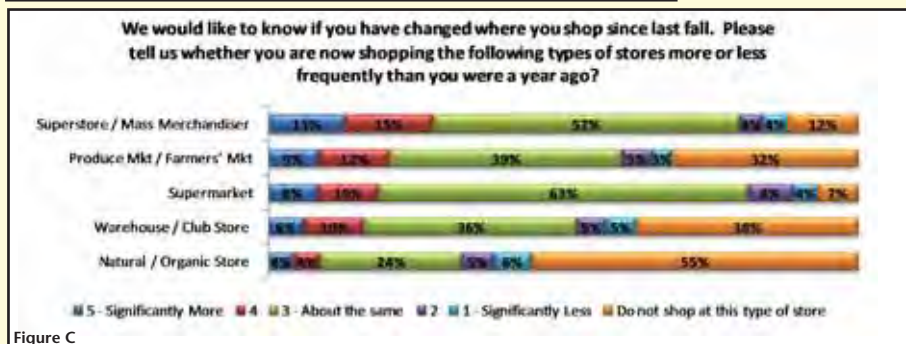
What is the value of locally grown fruits and vegetables? Do consumers view these products differently than the more traditional items they might purchase from a supermarket produce department? Is consumer demand and preference for "local" products changing?

From a benchmarking perspective, these are difficult questions to quantify. Very often, locally grown products move through farmer's markets where there are no scanners, making solid volume tracking quite difficult. In addition, many of the locally grown products selling in conventional supermarkets share identical PLU numbers with the similar conventional items shipped in from out-of-state. So, it can be challenging to measure sales trends in local products. But we can assess consumer attitudes toward local produce to determine what shoppers say is important to them.

Our most recent national study of consumer purchase patterns was completed in December, 2009. While the research primarily dealt with how consumer purchase behavior may have changed due to the recession, we also inquired about specific shopper preferences, including locally grown produce. The survey covered 1,000 consumers nationally who identified themselves as the primary food shopper for their household.

We found that 29 percent of consumers surveyed indicated that they are now purchasing more locally grown produce than in the past (Figure A). About 6 percent of consumers indicated they are purchasing less and only 11 percent of consumers say they do not purchase locally grown produce at all. Compare those answers with purchase patterns for organics: 12 percent of consumers said they are buying more organic produce while 13 percent of consumers said they are buying less. A whopping 36 percent of consumers say they don't purchase organics at all.

Of course, these are self-reported consumer assessments. The answers are not linked to purchase frequency or volume, so we do not neces-



sarily know how these preferences relate to total volume. Nonetheless, this data speak volumes about how consumer opinions are tilting to favor locally grown products and may even be eclipsing organics at the top of the preference pyramid.

In another question, we asked consumers to tell us if they had any food safety concerns about a variety of products from packaged produce, convenience items, local produce, organic items, etc. (Figure B). It is revealing that with regard to food safety, local produce ranked No. 1 with consumers. Fifty-six percent of consumers indicated they were comfortable with the safety of locally grown produce compared to only 44 percent for

of consumers — 32 percent — said they don't shop farmer's markets at all, but it remains significant that consumers solidly indicate that local produce outlets are receiving more shopping trips than in the past.

In numerous recent consumer research studies and focus groups, we've observed that locally grown produce has emerged with significant, new influence over the purchases of a growing number of consumers. In some ways, locally grown has become the gold standard for these shoppers — even bypassing organics — as the benchmark for evaluating produce purchases.

bulk produce, 34 percent for organic produce and 20 percent for imported produce.

Finally, we asked consumers about their shopping habits, including the locations where they are shopping compared to last year (Figure C). Superstores were the big winners with 28 percent of consumers saying they are shopping more often in these outlets. However, farmer's markets were second with 21 percent of consumers saying they are shopping these destinations more frequently. Nearly a third

The Perishables Group is an independent consulting firm focused on innovation and creating value for clients in the fresh food industry. Find them online at www.perishablesgroup.com

Charts courtesy of The Perishables Group

Locally Grown Is A Political Concept

Getting questions answered related to the topic of locally grown is important. Yet getting feedback on consumer attitudes toward locally grown is just one step; it still leaves open the question of what consumers are talking about when they say locally grown.

Wal-Mart defines locally grown as grown within the state of the store where the product is being sold. Whole Foods defines it as within 700 miles of its distribution center. We've seen dozens of studies over the last quarter century and, pretty much, they have all come down the same way: There is loyalty to produce grown in the state where people live — and very little loyalty for the state next door.

This notion of locally grown as a political concept was further reinforced by a focus group series we conducted in the South of England, close to the English Channel. The British, very up on these things, waxed poetic in favor of locally grown — they pointed to the “carbon footprint” and the need to reduce “food miles” and were fierce advocates for the locally grown concept.

Then we asked these British consumers if they would like to see a lot of produce from the north of France — perhaps 20 miles away across the channel — come to their town? The Brits rose in unison to declare that was not at all what they wanted. It turned out they would much prefer produce from the hinterlands of Scotland, 800 miles away, than any nearby French produce. To the British consumer, locally grown was essentially a nationalistic concept: Locally grown meant British-grown.

We suspect that Americans are not all that different. They value their state's produce, a political affiliation, and they value American produce, another political affiliation. But the evidence that consumers in, say, Denver value produce from, say, Idaho, over, say, Oregon, because it is geographically closer — well, the evidence for that is pretty much non-existent.

The research The Perishables Group did regarding consumer perceptions on food safety and locally grown is intriguing and speaks to another issue. If consumers prefer locally

grown produce for reasons of nationalism or political ‘boosterism,’ that is very difficult to overcome and indicates that retailers would be smart to sell in-state and domestic product when they can. If consumers prefer locally grown for reasons, such as food safety, then they can possibly be educated if those reasons aren't based on science. American consumers in focus groups give very specific reasons why they prefer locally grown: They say it is less expensive because they save on trucking; they say it tastes better because it is picked riper; they say it is safer because farmers don't have to use preservatives.

These statements may be true or may be false, but clearly they are subject to debate and persuasion. Taste tests can be done, price comparisons can be given, facts about chemical usage explained. It seems to open a path for national shippers to state their case.

We have found in focus groups that consumers are actually quite skeptical of new ventures when it comes to produce. Local is sometimes a word used in a nostalgic tint as another way of explaining that they want things to be “right.” When we asked consumers if they were enthused about the idea of a new project to grow local cranberries, most thought the concept a terrible idea as the “right” place to grow cranberries, in their minds, was under the spray of the ocean up in Cape Cod, MA. In this sense, the trade's biggest issue may not be marketing local, but marketing the places where produce is grown as the “right” or “authentic” place to grow these products. The California Avocado Commission, with its “Hand Grown in California” campaign, relies on actual California avocado growers expressing their relationship to the farm and the land... this seems on the road to identifying California avocados as an authentically produced locally grown item.

Reported changes in consumer behavior, even if true, can only be judged in the context of a changing environment. If consumers say they are shopping at farmer's markets more frequently, that may tell us a lot about public support for opening new farmer's markets.

There is loyalty to produce grown in the state where people live — and very little loyalty for the state next door.

According to USDA, in 2008, there were 4,685 farmer's markets in the United States; in 2009, 5,274 — about a 13 percent increase in just one year. What is more, many of the newer farmer's markets are being opened in urban areas. So although the response that people are shopping more frequently at farmer's markets may be a heads-up to the industry that there is a stronger competitor around, this may reflect convenience and accessibility to these venues, not any change in attitude toward produce.

The Perishables Group clearly is onto something when saying that locally grown is the new gold standard for produce. But this may be a matter of fashion as much as anything else. Large volume production has shrunk the price differential between conventional and organic. So the beautiful people need another way to show they are special. Lowering the price of Bentleys so they are cheaper than Chevys would not make their existing clientele want to buy more of them. No longer able to provide them the exclusivity they crave, they would go on to something new. Perhaps this explains as much about consumer behavior vis-à-vis organics and locally grown as anything else.

PMA/United Interests Differ: Solution Offered

From Jim Prevor's Perishable Pundit
May 13, 2010



JIM PREVOR'S
PERISHABLE PUNDIT

Our piece, *In Another Move To Court Retailers, United Fresh Joins FMI And American Meat Institute To Co-Locate Event in 2012*, dealt with United's renewed co-location with FMI for its trade show. We also explored broader issues, including how the industry should fund its lobbying efforts. We speculated as to the plausibility of United getting out of the retail show business in exchange for PMA funding its government relations efforts.

The suggestion brought this thoughtful comment:

Bob Carey, well prior to his retirement from PMA's top job in 1996, brought up the idea to me and others of funding government relations work in Washington, D.C. out of PMA's convention revenue stream. Setting aside where this would have left United, the problem I had then with his thought was the issue of control.

In politics, the source of money influences the debate. PMA was, and remains, a trade association whose board is weighted to the retail sector. Meanwhile, many national produce industry political issues are of primary interest to growers and shippers. In addition, most practical political power comes from these same growers and shippers. They are the ones that vote, have farming operations and live in the various districts and states. If a U.S. senator from California wants a direct produce industry opinion on a federal issue such as immigration or food safety, I imagine that Western Growers, California Grape and Tree Fruit League, or California Citrus Mutual might get the first call.

The problem remains: When there is a significant political or regulatory issue over which retailers and growers/shippers disagree, would PMA allow its convention money to be used in a way counter to the interests of its major retailer members?

— Christian Schlect, president, Northwest Horticultural Council

Chris is a sage man and wisely refers to the well-known "Piper Principle," as in, "He who pays the piper, calls the tune." He is undeniably correct. If PMA, as an act of charity or at its discretion, gives annual appropriations to other groups, those appropriations will depend on the judgments of PMA's then-current board of directors. So if there are contentious issues on which PMA's buyer-heavy board disagrees with the production sector, there could certainly be an issue on its funding of United's government relations efforts.

We were suggesting something slightly different, something more akin to a sale. Suppose United sold PMA its show, or at least the retail

component of its show, and agreed not to operate a show focused on selling produce or not to accept exhibitors that sell fresh produce. PMA would agree to pay something for this. It could be a one-time payment, which United would place in a government relations endowment, or it could be an annual payment that United would pledge to use to support government affairs.

In any case, the payment would not be discretionary; it would be an obligation of PMA being paid to United as consideration for United's sale of its retail show and its forswearing the sponsorship of another retail trade show. As such, PMA would not be able to stop the money based on its approval or disapproval of United's position on issues.

There have been, as Chris alludes to, many proposals over the years. We suspect many things are possible, many kinds of relationships doable, but we suspect the prerequisite is giving the associations separate spheres in which to operate. Otherwise, the associations are fundamentally competitive and any hope of alliance is too difficult. This may actually be the last chance for merger discussions. Over the years, two things have happened:

First, PMA's membership has diverged from United's — there are a substantial number of PMA members — and not retail members — who are not members of United. Many are producers and marketers who probably joined PMA to get a discount on booths at its October convention.

This whole issue of board allocation is sort of "inside baseball." We suspect many PMA members have no idea of these matters and just think of PMA as their produce association and assume it represents them in DC. Certainly, we have seen many surveys in which PMA members say they expect and want their association

to do so.

Second, PMA has gradually inched into areas that were once United's sole domain. The hiring of Dr. Bob Whitaker as PMA's chief science officer was something of a watershed. United had a long tradition of having a scientific and technical staff. Decades ago, we were working with Jill Snowdon, PhD, who was United's director of scientific affairs, and, at the time when PMA announced its search for a vice president of produce science and safety, United employed not one, but two top people in this field, Jim Gorny, now FDA's senior advisor for produce safety, and Dave Gombas, vice president of technical services, and current senior vice president, food safety and technology.

In the aftermath of the spinach crisis of 2006, PMA felt it was some-

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Reader Service # 37

what marginalized by its lack of staff in this area. It couldn't help its members as it wanted to; it couldn't participate fully in drafting standards such as the California Leafy Greens metrics; it couldn't address inquiries from government and media. So it acquired its own competency and made this part of its mission.

Although Chris is correct that the political heft comes from the grower-shipper community, this heft is probably shrinking as the country grows and less land and fewer people are devoted to ag. So alliances are crucial. If PMA can bring retailers and restaurant chains — who, after all, are in every congressional district in the country — to support policies that support produce production, that could be a powerful boost for the production sector.

PMA has law firms monitoring issues; it has science and technology people to provide support to regulatory agencies; it has a grass roots program and has funded a large study of economic impact in an effort to boost influence in congressional districts with limited produce farming; and it has a membership that includes many whom have no other associations representing them in DC. How long will it be, especially if the age of activist government continues, before PMA announces it needs to open a satellite lobbying office in the District of Columbia?

There are a hundred reasons to hold off. It would be expensive, government relations can be divisive, with duplication inevitable — not only with United but with regional groups. Still, we suspect it will not be too long before PMA takes this step, unless an arrangement can be made. Just as it took the spinach crisis to show a hole in PMA's staff, so it will only take one legislative defeat for some PMA members to say that the association should do it all itself.

But in the end, having PMA take on the role of lobbyist for produce

growers makes no sense. As long as PMA doesn't take official positions on highly controversial things, it is easy for members to assume it is representing them in DC. If PMA actually starts lobbying for or against NAFTA, for or against the PACA Trust and other controversial issues, then members will realize what PMA is doing and some will object. They may object because PMA is on the wrong side of an issue or because PMA is not aggressive enough on an issue. The most likely thing to happen: Grower-shippers would decide they need a new national association and would start a "New" United. This is all a big waste of industry time and money.

Virtually all the money raised by both associations comes from grower-shippers and those who sell to grower-shippers. If United withdraws from competition with PMA, those grower-shippers will save big bucks from not feeling compelled to support two shows. Those savings, combined with the savings by reducing the duplication of two groups trying to attract retailers, will be sufficient to make a decent investment in United's government relations program.

PMA can still do what it thinks is necessary to represent its members before government and can work with United, WGA and other regional and industry associations as it does today, but it would simply be deciding that it can't be and shouldn't be the lobbying arm for growers. It would also be deciding that growers, the source of all the industry sells, deserve a little representation, too. And without United, many growers, who don't have strong regional associations, would not be represented in D.C.

United's deal with FMI is no panacea. FMI is severely weakened from what it once was and the FMI show is only every other year, leaving United to struggle on its own in the alternate years. The time has come when the industry ought to decide how we will be represented in Washington and how we shall pay for that representation.

United's withdrawal from competition with PMA on retail shows and PMA's decision to allow United to handle the lobbying for our national production sector points to a feasible solution.

Chris mentions Bob Carey. There are many people on the board of PMA who never knew Bob. They should know that Bob always urged the board to be open to United. Bob was, and is, a man grown wise by experiencing much. He remembered the day when a tiny and almost bankrupt association knocked on United's door and pleaded with the then-mighty association, rich with its enormous trade show, the biggest in the business, to take over the little association. United dismissed the applicants — they saw no need for them and sent them packing. Today, we call that tiny group the PMA.

It is said that upon General Cornwallis' surrender to George Washington at Yorktown in 1786, the British military band, which had just been defeated by a wry alliance between the French navy and a bunch of "rag-tag" colonists, played a song. The selection they chose: "The World Turned Upside Down." We think Bob Carey would like the idea of playing that music as background during the PMA board's deliberations on this matter — perhaps a useful reminder that the future is not completely predictable.

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inners of our sixth annual *40-Under-Forty* awards program should be truly honored because they were chosen by their fellow industry mentors. *PRODUCE BUSINESS* conducted an extensive, widespread search throughout the industry to elicit nominations for top young industry leaders under the age of 40. The search involved communication with thousands of executives, consultants, associations and universities.

This year's winners are exemplified by an outstanding array of community involvement. They have demonstrated an extremely high degree of giving back to the people and places that have helped them reach their current positions.

We had far more nominations than we could use. Individual candidates were contacted to highlight their key company, industry and community accomplishments, sharing meaningful examples of how they have been leaders in the industry, as well as their goals and aspirations.

If you were not chosen this year or if you nominated someone who was not selected, please understand that the process was highly competitive, and we encourage you to re-submit updated nominations for next year's competition. We encourage everyone to alert *PRODUCE BUSINESS* of well-deserving candidates and to help praise and support future produce movers and shakers as we look forward to honoring *40-Under-Forty* leaders in 2011.

PROFILES BY JODEAN ROBBINS



Fernando Aguiar, 32
Sr. Account Manager
Naturipe Farms
Naples, FL

Aguiar came to the produce industry straight out of college, starting as an assistant buyer at Shaw's Supermarkets, and quickly developed a passion for the industry. He moved his way up the ranks to become a buyer at both Shaw's and

then Stop & Shop, where he drove significant growth and sales improvement in the organic categories. He then transitioned to the supply side of the industry where he has developed outstanding relationships and is driven by delivering superior performance. In his final year at Shaw's, Aguiar increased sales by more than \$3.75 million and was integral in launching

numerous ethnic products and value-added programs. He focused his efforts on improving consumer experience and launching market-specific neighborhood programs. Some of his passion stems from his 96-year-old grandfather who still farms today in Portugal.

Aguiar joined Naturipe Farms in 2007, working from Everett, MA, as a regional account manager for the Northeast, where he increased overall market share and brought significant sales growth to the region. In January of this year, he accepted the position of senior account manager, managing large national accounts and in just four months has increased sales by more than 16 percent.

He is a member of the New England Produce Council and president of the Prince Henry Society of Taunton, which promotes growing awareness of Portuguese cultural contributions. He has been a panelist for the NEPC Young Professionals in Produce Event, and was part of the 2010 Cor-

nell/Produce Marketing Association Leadership Symposium in Dallas.

He hopes to spend his career in the industry. "For right now, I want to continue to work in the sales and merchandising of berries," he says. "The berry category is so fascinating because it is almost always in great demand. Someday in the near future I would like to be more involved with the grower side of the business because I think this would bring me full circle in the industry...sales, buyer and growing/production."

He names Richard Perlmutter of Stop & Shop, Brian Bocock with Naturipe, and Jim Roberts, formerly of Shaw's and now with Naturipe, as mentors. "Rick helped me learn the importance of relationships in the industry and to treat everyone fairly," he says. "I have learned from Brian to always look at things in a positive light and to see the good in things. Jim has been the most influential person in my career. He helped mold me into who I am. Business ethics, strategic thinking, hard-work, persistence and willingness to try something new are only some of the traits that I learned from Jim."



CarrieAnn Arias, 36
Senior Marketing Manager,
Customer Specific Marketing
Dole Fresh Vegetables
Monterey, CA

Born and raised in Madera, CA, Arias is not from an agriculture family, but was surrounded by the traditions and values of American agriculture. She has been in sales and marketing for the past

13 years in the Salinas Valley. Her primary focus at Dole Fresh Vegetables is working with regional, national and international retail chains to develop and execute marketing plans to promote Dole products. She has partnered with other national brands such as Kraft, Hormel, Pepsi Co., Ford Motor Company, Coca-Cola, Disney and American Idol to create multi-million dollar marketing campaigns. In 2008, she worked with the Produce for Kids organization to develop and conduct a consumer research study on marketing fresh produce to moms and children. Most recently, she played an integral role in the re-launch of the Dole Fresh Vegetables Packaged Salad line.

Arias is active in local, state and national agricultural organizations and donates her spare time to ensuring American Agriculture remains a viable, thriving industry for years to come. In 2007, she was selected as one of 35 women from across the United States to attend the prestigious Syngenta Ag Leadership Symposium in Greensboro, NC. She has held a leadership role in California Women for Agriculture (CWA) for the past six years. Since 2008, she has held the position of secretary for the Ag Awareness and Literacy Foundation, which focuses on educating children and their parents about the role farming plays in their lives as consumers.

Her inspiration comes from the people who live the heritage that is American agriculture. "Produce is one huge family," she says. "Like with any family, there is competition and strife but in the end, those in produce stick together out of heritage, pride and a sense of community that is unrivaled."

She is proud to be in the industry "for the long haul" and looks forward to the future. "My passion for the industry and the people that give it strength and character is infinite," she says. "I cannot think of a more valuable way to spend my future than to promote, protect and honor the industry that truly feeds the world. My goal is to continue to encourage American consumers to eat more produce and respect where it came from."

Looking at various mentors she has met during her career, she notes, "My first day in produce I met Celeste Settrini of Fresh Network LLC, current State CWA president and 2008 recipient of Ag Woman of the Year. Her knowledge of the people and commodities that make Salinas Valley thrive

is vast and colorful." She continues, "Most recently, I met Trent Loos, a rancher in Nebraska and an advocate for U.S. farmers and ranchers. His radio program reaches 17 states and his blog and Web site articles are forwarded all around the United States."



Ines Masallach Armijo, 35
Marketing Director
Imalinx
Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico

Masallach has been working in the produce marketing industry for more than 12 years, and seven years ago, she created a marketing firm specializing in produce, food and beverages for the Mexican market. In 2003, she was a consultant for the development of the children's program for the 5 x Día Campaign led by the Secretary of Agriculture and ASERCA, the government promotion agency for agricultural products.

In a quest for new ways to reach the consumer, she partnered Zespri Kiwifruit and Les Mills Body Training systems to develop healthful food and living workshops with opinion leaders. She was also part of the process of positioning Zespri as the top nutritional item in the high-end format of Wal-Mart Mexico-Superama by working with the supplier and the buyers. This resulted in a 100 percent commitment and loyalty rate from the retailer throughout the season.

She serves as a guest speaker for several Mexican universities, discussing

**"Produce is one huge family.
Like with any family, there is
competition and strife but in the
end, those in produce stick
together out of heritage, pride
and a sense of community that
is unrivaled.**

— *CarrieAnn Arias*
Dole Fresh Vegetables

the diversity of fields where marketing can be applied. For four years she worked as a volunteer in the Salvation Army motivating children of elementary and junior high school until the last one graduated. She attended the 2010 Cornell/Produce Marketing Association Leadership Symposium in Dallas, TX.

She is inspired by the produce industry's legacy, experience, dynamism and innovation. "This industry reminds you daily of values like gratitude, transparency, discretion and trust," she says. "These are all values that Marco, who is my partner at Imalinx and also my husband/coach/boss, and I always say we want our children to grow and live by."

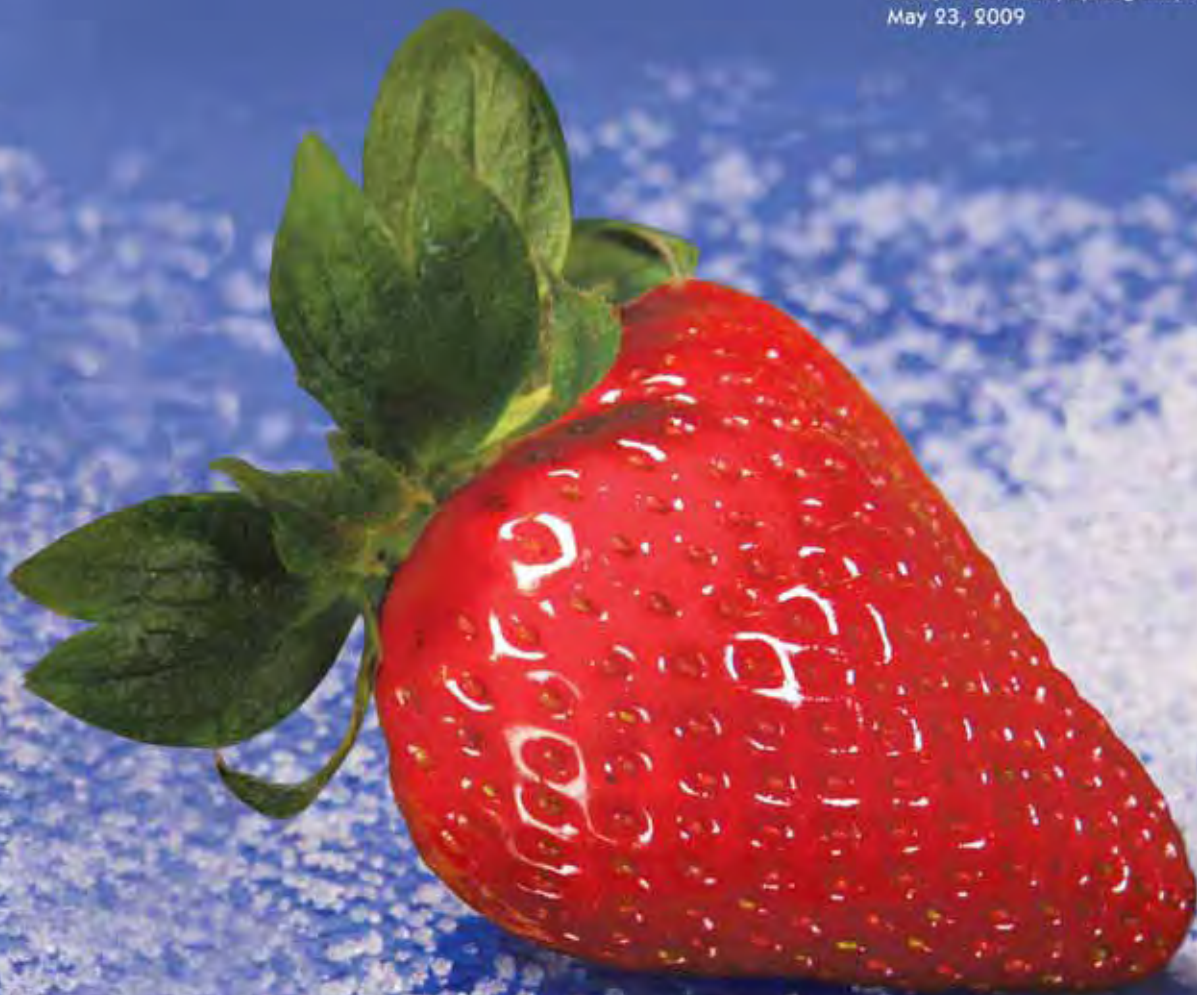
In the future, she hopes to become a reference center for consumers for healthy recipes. She also wants to show and promote Mexican produce to the world, and form part of the initiative to change the way children eat by promoting produce and help them build a better future.

Karen Brux, North American manager for Zespri Kiwifruit, and Gustavo Yentzen, president of Yentzen in Santiago, Chile, are two of her three mentors in the industry. "Karen has shown me an example of a woman with great life balance in the produce industry," she says. "Gustavo has fantastic

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Cathy Dickenson, Spring Hill, TN
May 23, 2009



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focus and objectivity in the pursuit of his goals."

Her third mentor is Seth Pemsler, vice president retail and international for the Idaho Potato Commission in Eagle, ID. "The words of advice he always gives me and his originality are an example and hopefully, one day, I will be half as good," she says.



Bob Biesterfeld, 35
General Manager, West Produce Region
CH Robinson Worldwide Inc.
Eden Prairie, MN

Over the past 11 years at CHRW, Biesterfeld has been heavily involved in helping to form and execute the company's transportation strategy related to perishable goods. The businesses he has led internally at CHRW have experienced very positive growth patterns over time. He has worked closely with both produce grower/shippers and food retailers to improve supply chain performance to support the quality and freshness expectations that consumers demand. He also works hand-in-hand with clients to develop programs to limit the financial risks associated with the seasonality of fresh produce shipments by focusing on demand planning and carrier selection strategies. In terms of community, his team is involved in supporting the Ronald McDonald House and the City of Hope. He sat on the board of directors for the Southwest Food Industry chapter of City of Hope from 2005-2008.

He is motivated every day to work on behalf of clients to help improve their supply chain results. He points to the many moving parts of the supply chain including the ebbs and flow of carrier capacity coming into and leaving the marketplace, the absolute focus on food safety and food security and the continued regionalization and globalization of produce supply. He says, "On one hand, our consumers are asking for more regional, local and heritage agricultural products on their store shelves, and on the other hand, they want year-round supply of high quality fruits and vegetables grown around the world. We must continue to evolve as supply chain partners and develop sophisticated produce distribution models to help our customers manage the process from procurement to delivery in geographies where that infrastructure historically may not have existed in a manner that meets the JIT environment we all work in."

He is also motivated by the opportunities to learn and develop as well as the continual challenge of the industry. He is excited to be part of the leadership team for the Sourcing Division of CHRW and to have the opportunity to continue to develop and shape CHRW's value statement for its future in the produce business. His short-term goals are to get more involved in industry trade groups related to transportation and distribution.

Mark Petersen and Jim Lemke have been mentors for him internally at CHRW. "The great thing about our industry is how closely all of us work across the industry to address issues that face all of us. Essentially, we coach, teach and mentor each other both formally and informally every day," he says. "I learn from my clients every day and would consider many of them to be great mentors."



Andrew Bivens, 37
Salesman
Westlake Produce Co.
Los Angeles, CA

Working in sales at Westlake Produce for seven years, Bivens is responsible for the day to day marketing of melons, apples, pears, cherries and hot house bell peppers for a number of growers in the United States, Argentina, Chile, Holland, Mexico

and New Zealand. Before joining Westlake, he worked for Ralph's Grocery Company for 12 years, holding positions of store department manager, produce inspector and produce buyer.

He is a graduate of the 2009/2010 United Fresh Leadership Program. He is actively involved within the industry organizations including serving on various Fresh Produce and Floral Council committees and serves as the Southern California Mentor for the PMA Foundation for Industry Talent from 2008 to 2010.

In the community, he is involved with the Fundraiser for the City of Hope, the Catholic Men's Fellowship of Southern California as an event organizer and music director and is a volunteer for Stage Light Productions, Prelude Foundation and community baseball programs.

He sees one of the biggest challenges for our industry as educating the newest members. "I believe that our industry associations need to focus more on targeting our newest members and providing them with more programs that will expose and teach them about the industry as a whole," he explains. "This problem has both inspired and challenged me to work with local and national associations to create environments to help those who want to learn and professionally grow within our industry."

In the future, he will focus on growth both at corporate and organizational levels. "I would like to continue to grow this company's business into one of the most reliable grower/shipper/distributors in the country," he says. "As for the industry, I plan to work with the Fresh Produce and Floral Council to create local educational programs and seminars that mirror some of the national campaigns specific for the newer members of our industry in California."

He names his brother, Dave Bivens, produce manager for Ralph's Grocery Company in Los Angeles, CA, Dave Ackerman, a consultant with Deminski, Van Valkenburg and Associates in Los Angeles, and Bob Franks with Westlake as mentors. "My brother was the first produce manager I worked for and his example of hard work, passion for loving what he did for a living and sound integrity inspired me to become a better overall person," he says. "Dave Ackerman was a great teacher while I was an inspector and buyer for Ralph's Grocery Company. He always emphasized the importance of respecting those who work below, alongside and above you. Looking back on my entire career, Bob Franks has been my greatest mentor. Bob's passion for the industry and unyielding work ethic is the best I have ever seen. He stresses the importance of giving back to the industry by teaching others about our many processes and the correct way of going about them. He has inspired me to be a mentor to others."




Katy Blowers, 32
**Marketing and Event Coordinator/
Special Projects Manager**
Church Brothers Produce
Salinas, CA

Blowers is the founder of CB Logistics, the transportation entity of Church Brothers Produce. She built all aspects of the company from the ground up, including paperwork, insurance, logo and graphic design, financial and technology needs, carrier, customer and employee bases.

She has been an integral part of establishing the Disney Garden Vegetable Program for Church Brothers. She stepped into this uncharted territory, again from the ground up, and helped to create the retail line, generating new products, sizes, packaging, graphics and sales and marketing plans. She has facilitated the Canadian Packaging for Disney Garden, which required her to learn and manage Canadian regulations.

Blowers had helped to increase the visibility of Church Brothers, designing and implementing the first 20x30 trade show booth for Church Brothers. Additionally, she has upgraded and designed marketing strategies



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for the company and facilitated its Country of Origin Labeling. Now as a special projects manager for Church Brothers, Blowers has spearheaded the redesign of all current Church Brothers cartons, wherein each commodity will be in a different color.

Blowers is a graduate of United Fresh Leadership Class 14 and served as a member of the United Fresh Member Relations Task Force. She is now an incoming member of the United Fresh Leadership Alumni Board. In the community, she is involved with California Women for Agriculture, the Jr. League of Monterey County and the California Rodeo Marketing Committee. She was featured in *Salinas Californian*.

Blowers is motivated by the constantly changing face of our business. "New challenges and situations present themselves constantly," she says. "You have to always be thinking ahead and learning to adapt to the ever changing circumstances. I love this challenge and enjoy meeting it head on."

While she has been influenced and inspired by the many people of the produce industry, especially in the Salinas Valley, she mentions Lisa McNeece of Grimmway Farms and her husband, James Blowers, as mentors. "Lisa is a very successful business woman in the produce industry who has made a significant impact within her company and the industry, in general, as being a savvy and business-minded leader," she says. "My husband is truly an inspiration and a fountain of knowledge. James has really shown me how to put things in perspective, all the while sharing firsthand experience and knowledge, helping me in my own career."



Yvonne Bull, 38
CFO
Produce Marketing Association
Newark, DE

Bull was hired in 2002 as PMA's financial director, later taking on the title of controller and joining the senior management team. In 2009, she was named CFO and is now responsible for the financial and fiscal management of both PMA

and PMA FIT. She is known as a tireless advocate for doing what's best for the industry and for PMA and skillfully balances the need to provide member value with the need to add revenue. She was instrumental in the development of PMA FIT and the Center for Produce Safety.

She was awarded a Certified Association Executive designation by the American Society of Association Executives and is a graduate of the multi-year Institute for Organization Management program presented by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. She is active in her church where she is an ordained deacon, and is active in PMA staff activities to raise money for various charities, including the American Cancer Society, Haitian relief and Adopt-a-Family.

She is inspired by the people she has met in the industry. "Each person has a unique story that gives you a glimpse into their life's victories and challenges and makes you want to help them be better at whatever it is," she says. "They all want the best for their companies, their employees and the consumers; they want to ensure they take great care in leaving the Earth better for the generations to come. I think that every challenge is truly an opportunity in disguise if we embrace it as such."

In the future, she plans to continue working out opportunities in the produce industry. "The produce industry has so many opportunities to offer," she says. "All you have to do is follow your passion because to me, that is what drives this industry. I enjoy working for my association and truly believe in our mission, our vision and guiding values. Until we reach our goals here, there is still plenty for me to do."

She notes there have been many people including past bosses, association staff and industry members who have given her support and provided valuable insight. She also credits her mother for encouraging her to do

whatever she wanted to in life. "My mom was always there to support me and refused to let me just sit out on the sidelines, but rather pushed to me to get in the game," she says. "When I think of a mentor, I think of a journey in which various people enter your life for seasons at a time that open opportunities for you to grow and learn."



John Cameron, 39
Sales Manager - Southern Division
Desert Glory Ltd.
San Antonio, TX

Working from Arlington, TX, Cameron is responsible for Desert Glory's account management efforts for Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Wal-Mart and Sam's Club. He has restructured the company's FOB program, which resulted in significant revenue gains while greatly reducing shrink. He was able to take the company direct with its largest national account, which dramatically increased revenue and profits. He established a successful working relationship in the club channel and expanded the club business, which tripled revenues. His direct relationship with Wal-Mart increased distribution 150 percent and contributed to a 160 percent revenue growth for the company and reduced costs for Wal-Mart. He achieved 500 percent distribution growth for the Sam's Club Grape Tomato program, increasing revenue by \$20 million.

He is a graduate of Class 15 of the United Fresh Produce Association Industry Leadership Program, and participates in the Washington Public Policy Conferences. In his community, he is involved as a Cubmaster for Pack 52 Cub Scouts in Arlington, TX, where he works with 30 boys. He is a Linear Parks Projects panel member for the City of Arlington and a Men's Ministry Team Leader with the Eden Road Community Church.

Cameron is largely been inspired by the quality of people who work in what he calls the "greatest industry on the planet." He explains, "The produce industry is loaded with extremely bright and admirable people. It is especially great to see competitors work together to solve problems for the common good."

His future plans include increasing involvement in the industry. "I plan to volunteer for the Pack Family Career Pathways. I have been very blessed to have been mentored and coached by some great people who invested in me and took time out of their busy schedules to help me get going in the business. Now, I desire to find ways to mentor and coach others in the produce industry."

He names the late Jacky Pierce of United Supermarkets, Steve Trede of Driscoll's, and Emanuel Lazopoulos of Del Monte Fresh Produce as some of his mentors. "Jacky was a visionary who took the time to mentor and coach me as a young produce manager," he states. "He taught me the value

"The produce industry is loaded with extremely bright and admirable people. It is especially great to see competitors work together to solve problems for the common good."

— John Cameron
Desert Glory Ltd.

of relationships and how important supplier relationships were to United. Steve takes the time to listen, advise and coach just about anybody he is around, and is always willing to lend a hand. Though very busy, Emanuel always found time to talk. He is a very genuine person who believes in giving back and I have been very lucky to have worked with such a sincere person who shared his knowledge with me."



Alfonso Cano, 37
Assistant Produce Director
Northgate Gonzalez Markets
Anaheim, CA

Cano, who began working as a produce clerk 18 years ago, is an inspiring example of how hard work and dedication in the retail sector can result in success. Working in procurement to integrate himself both horizontally and vertically, he developed his leadership skills from the credibility of having 'been there.' His ability to relate to both store personnel and shippers has provided him a unique perspective in his current role. He is considered unique because while he is not a specialist in any particular area, he has the ability to perform all duties at a high level.

Cano has helped separate Northgate from the competition. Under his direction, he implemented changes include setting schematics, promoting merchandisers/buyers from within, setting up direct sources, maintaining local Los Angeles market connections, raising floral opportunities, traveling to growing areas, visiting trade shows, setting up retail competitions with prizes, talking to press and bridging the gap between store personnel and the Distribution Center operations.

While Northgate supports many great charitable causes and community events, Cano is particularly fond of the Santa Ana Boxing Club, a non-profit that specializes in keeping young kids off the streets after school.

Both wins and losses inspire Cano in his work. "I learn from my mistakes and justify them by working them into future successes or unrepeatable mistakes," he explains. "The wins motivate me to keep winning. In this business, you have to prove yourself everyday, and this year's exemplary accomplishments will be next year's base by which to measure further success."

He would like to be a life-long Northgate employee. "Being here in Southern California puts us in the apex of the grocery retail business. As the years progress and we continue to grow, I will continue to represent our company with honor and integrity."

Cano names Northgate company president, Don Miguel Gonzalez, and Ali Moezzi, the produce director who brought him into Northgate, as mentors. "This year Don Miguel will be entering the California Grocers Association Hall of Fame," he says. "El Don is a real-life Horatio Alger story and, along with his family, has allowed me to maximize my potential. Ali saw in me even more than what I knew I had to offer. He allows me the freedom to take risks and chances that take us from where we started to where we will be going."



Allen Davis, 36
Director of Value Added Sales Operations
Dole Fresh Vegetables
Monterey, CA

In his current role, Davis has been integrally involved in the relaunch of the value-added packaging design for Dole. He also plays a leadership role at the company through his involvement in their internal sales and operations group, tackling many facets of the business.

He began his career in 1996 as a sales assistant for Central West Produce in Santa Maria, CA, and after only six weeks was promoted to a full sales person. In 2001, he moved to Tampa, FL, to head up the sales department for Central West's sister company, CalFlo Inc. In 2003, he moved back to California to take a district manager sales job at Dole and has since moved within Dole Fresh Vegetables several times from senior district manager to director of national accounts on the commodity side of the business to his current position.

He is a graduate of the United Leadership program, Class 15. He keeps busy with his wife in many local charities and helps out with the King City Young Farmers on occasion.

He is motivated by the opportunities the produce industry presents because of its unique challenges. "We all know how each day there are new challenges to overcome," he says. "Things can evolve hourly, not just daily. I am inspired by the opportunities the industry offers on a daily basis. Every day is different from the prior, and as a result, a new set of challenges or opportunities must be addressed."

In the future, he wants to be better prepared to address and effectively deal with the complicated and constantly evolving issues influencing the business. "I want to do this for us and our partners, not only from a Dole perspective at a value-added and commodity level, but from an industry/governmental level as well," he says. "Working with the largest fruit and vegetable company in the world really adds extra to my duty to be a steward for healthy eating. Everyone should get involved in the health of America and salad bars for every school in the country."

His father, LeRoy Davis, the Agribusiness department head at Cal Poly, served as a mentor and introduced him to many others who have acted as inspiring examples. "I see on a daily basis some of the people he touched and started out in this business," he explains. "I am also fortunate in that a lot of who I am today as a professional is a result of the people I have been exposed to through being a sales person during my career, including Jack Gresser with Central West Produce, Joe Doud with Pacific Coast Produce, and the late John Borchard with CalFlo Produce/JMB Brothers Inc. I also have benefited from the group of people I have worked with here at Dole Fresh Vegetables, including, but not limited to, Cynthia Nunes, Kevin Fiori, Dick Fisher, Tim Stejskal, Mike Cavallero, Frank Davis, Ray De Riggi and Richard Sawyer."



Tom Deardorff, II, 39
President
Deardorff Family Farms
Oxnard, CA

Deardorff was a practicing attorney until joining the 70-year old family business full-time in 1999. As the youngest member of the fourth generation of the family company, he had the opportunity to pursue non-ag specific education and experiences in order to bring more thought provoking analysis to the business.

He first demonstrated his ability to analyze and lead when tasked with the issues of the company's labor situation, ag/urban interface issues and overall profitability. Tackling first the labor situation at the operation in San Clemente, CA, he worked hard with employees to understand labor needs and evaluate the appropriateness of various employment practices. Ultimately, through his management, the right mix of wages, bonuses, benefits, safety, training and other factors were developed. After conducting the same type of labor audit and program implementations in the Oxnard operations, the company became the first multi-crop grower, packer, shipper company in California to be certified by SAFE (Socially Accountable Farmworker Employers).

He has also been responsible for promoting dialogue that has allowed the company to substantially reduce inputs and move to more environ-

mentally friendly alternatives, become one of the largest organic grower, packer, shippers in their area, and be recognized in the local community and industry for sustainability efforts.

In 2006, he was appointed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to the California State Board of Food and Agriculture, a 15-member board selected to represent a broad range of agricultural commodities, a variety of geographic regions and both the University of California and California State University academic systems.

He notes it is a Deardorff family tradition to serve the industry they love. "Family members have served on virtually all the local, statewide and national organizations where we do business," he says. On that note, he has also served as a co-chair of the Country of Origin Labeling Task Force in 2008, and been a member of the WGA Board of Directors since 2001. He was recently appointed to serve on the United Fresh Grower-Shipper Board.

In the future, Deardorff looks forward to working more on sustainability, organics and innovation. "Sustainability just makes sense," he says. "It is something growers have been doing since the day farming started on this planet, only now we have a term for it. The opportunity is to use the term to drive more thoughtful analysis of existing operations and as a tool to communicate better with customers."

His dad is his mentor and hero. "He was an icon in the industry and to this day, every time I am at an industry function someone tells me what a great person my dad is," he says. "His honesty, integrity, hard work and good nature get recounted over and over in stories from those I meet in the industry. He didn't just speak of the characteristics; he lived them. He set an amazing example of how to be a great husband, father and industry leader that I constantly strive to live up to."



Brian Dey, 38
Produce Merchandiser
Four Seasons Produce
Ephrata, PA

Dey is known as being incredibly passionate about fresh produce and retail merchandising. He is credited for being able to work effectively in chain store, independent retailer and natural/organic food store environments to help them sell more fresh produce through effective promotions, creative displays, merchandising setup and helpful education.

One of Dey's key career accomplishments was overseeing of the daily departmental operations for the 20-store retail chain, Clemens Markets. Before the chain was sold in late 2006, Four Seasons Produce formed a unique partnership with them beginning in 1998 as their produce wholesaler and eventually being given the opportunity in June, 2002, to completely run the day-to-day operations of the stores. With Dey's oversight, Four Seasons increased sales and share of sales for Clemens in a declining marketplace each year during the four-year tenure. Dey was also involved in the implementation of programs such as locally grown and daily sampling, contest displays, themed events for customers, hiring and training of new managers and clerks and ordering equipment for new stores and remodels. He instituted weekly newsletters and merchandising notes not only for the managers, but to be used by the store managers and their assistants as well. Today, he uses the experience to make a difference in customers' expectations of Four Seasons Produce while increasing the sales and profitability for all involved.

Dey is involved in animal rescue, serving as a foster home for homeless animals and currently owns five rescue dogs. He participates yearly in two

He is involved in animal rescue, serving as a foster home for homeless animals and currently owns five rescue dogs. He participates yearly in two

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He is motivated by the new challenges constantly presented in this industry. "Each day brings different challenges from something as complex as resolving a margin issue at one of my stores or as simple as building a display to promote a particular commodity," he explains.

In the future, he wants to stay in the retail aspect of the business, whether it be as a merchandiser or a leader in retail services. "I thoroughly enjoy working with the group of customers that I currently have and I look forward to meeting and working with new ones," he states. "I take great pride in using my hands to build displays, attract consumers and build sales and profit results for my customer base."

He names Wendell Hahn and Ray Tagliatalata, both with Four Seasons Produce, as being instrumental in his success in the industry thus far. "I have had the fortune of having both Wendell and Ray as my direct superiors, and it has been an honor and a privilege to work for such outstanding people in the produce industry. Their direction and guidance through the rigors of retail have greatly contributed to where I am today. More so than great leaders themselves, they are even better human beings, and I cannot think of finer gentleman to be a mentor to anyone in this industry, or in life."



Jessica (Jesse) Eppler, 37
Senior Sales Executive
World Class Flowers
Egg Harbor City, NJ

With almost 20 years in the fresh floral and produce industry, Eppler has emerged as a recognized leader in the floral community. Throughout her career, she has successfully brought flowers to where there have been none. Eppler started at

World Class Flowers at the young age of 19 as a part-time customer service representative, soliciting telephone orders from floral clerks. Shortly thereafter, company president, Robert Gravitz, offered her a full-time position. Within two years, she was promoted to customer service manager, overseeing all current accounts and aiding the sales team in acquiring new ones. Eventually, she moved into a full-time position as senior sales executive managing bi-coastal accounts.

Though she denies complete credit for any accomplishments, noting the fantastic teamwork at World Class, she has been able to succeed and accomplish myriad projects and endeavors. Her current scope of responsibilities is not limited to just selling — she is involved in many aspects of her accounts, including program and product development, market-

ing, merchandising, customer service, sales projections and analysis, buying/production, in-store training and development and warehouse inspections.

She is active in the Susan G Komen Foundation and the Annual Philadelphia Flower Show. She volunteers as an Assistant Softball Coach and Assistant Soccer Coach.

She has long been inspired by the challenges that arise in the business. "In the beginning of my career, floral was a 'store-door,' one-on-one industry," she says. "We dealt with the store owners/clerks. In the past ten years or so, the customer base has switched to a corporate atmosphere, with centralized buying from the consolidation of major chains. I now deal with fewer buyers, but the purchases are much larger and the program demands are multi-faceted."

Her focus, both now and in the future, is to continue to lead floral into a new era. "Because floral has always been the step-child of the produce industry, it has always been my mission to expand existing floral programs and to introduce floral to the many untapped areas of the produce business," she explains. "My goal is to make floral an integral part of every produce program."

She credits many industry women for her development. "I was mentored by prominent women in today's industry, both within our organization and the floral/produce community at large and I hope to pass on that knowledge to future women leaders," she says. "My daughter, Megan, is my most precious accomplishment. I hope that I have shown her that through hard work, dedication and determination, you can succeed and keep your integrity, too!"



Georgina Felix, 31
Foreign Affairs Director
Fresh Produce Association
of the Americas (FPAA)
Nogales, AZ

Throughout her work with the FPAA, Felix has developed systems to help facilitate the flow of commerce between Mexico and the United States.

Working for the FPAA as a consultant for the National Mango Board, she created the first database for mango growers, mango organizations, Foreign Agriculture Ministries, foreign media and mango handlers and importers for all of the Americas. The database was the first of its kind to consolidate all mango entities into one location.

As part of her job at the FPAA, she has facilitated coordination between Mexican Customs, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, ensuring hours of operation for the port of Nogales and allowing for the import of fresh produce on Sundays during Nogales' peak season. One of the key activities of her work with the FPAA is to ensure a continuous flow of produce coming through Nogales and inform members about everything going on along the supply chain. She also must maintain close communication with growers associations in Mexico, to make sure all are working on the same page to achieve common goals for the industry.

Living in and being a part of the Nogales community, she participates in the Annual Boys and Girls Club Fiesta de Mayo fundraising event, the largest fundraiser for the organizer.

She is inspired because agriculture is such a noble industry. "It employs hundreds of thousands of people and feeds millions, and I get the chance to be part of it," she says. "I'm proud to be in Nogales, one of the biggest ports of entry for fruits and vegetables to the United States. What has challenged me the most in the produce industry are the never ending changes in regulations and making sure we communicate all of them to our members."

In the future, she will strive to continue improving communication among the industry with grower associations and government officials.

"Because floral has always been the step-child of the produce industry, it has always been my mission to expand existing floral programs and to introduce floral to the many untapped areas of the produce business."

— Jessica (Jesse) Eppler
World Class Flowers

"We need to continue to develop ways to enhance the trade of fruits and vegetables and to foster the success of our members," she says.

She names Jorge Felix, her father, Lee Frankel, former FPAA president, and Allison Moore, FPAA communications director, as mentors. "My father has been one of the most influential people in my life and most of what I know about this industry is thanks to him," she says. "He has been a grower and exporter most of his life, so I learned the details of this industry from the very beginning. Lee gave me the opportunity to work at the FPAA, and I admire his deep understanding of the industry and the ability to see the bigger picture," she says. "He is a great strategist, and I learned from him to evaluate and try to see all the possible angles of any given situation. Allison took the time to teach me all she knew about the FPAA when I first started and she's been my advisor ever since."



Nathalie Fontanilla, 37
Sr. Marketing Manager,
Product Development
Earthbound Farm
San Juan Bautista, CA

Fontanilla began her career as a food technologist with Dole Fresh Vegetable 11 years ago. During this time, she has represented progressive women in agriculture and has been integral to the

success of building the Earthbound Farm brand and extensive organic product line from the ground up. In her eight years with the company and tenure within the produce industry, Nathalie has made significant contributions that have shaped different areas of the industry primarily in product innovation, packaging technology and leadership.

One of her most notable achievements was the development of the clamshell package for tender leaf salads, an industry first. Development and design of the clamshell tub caused a shift in the industry to move from the bagged salad concept to a rigid clamshell and a new benchmark was set. Most recently, she successfully launched another line of packaged salads that were new to the category — organic washed whole leaf lettuces. These include organic whole leaf Romaine, Heirloom, Butter and Bibb lettuces.

She is a member of the Institute of Food Technologists, Product Development and Management Association and the Sustainable Packaging Coalition. She is a volunteer and serves on the Fund Raising Committee for the Haven of Hope, a non-profit organization that provides a home for abused and abandoned teenage girls in the local community. She is also

"As product developers in the industry, we are constantly challenged with launching the latest and greatest new products that will revolutionize the industry, along with how to bring the benefits of fresh and healthful products to as many people as possible."

— Nathalie Fontanilla
Earthbound Farm

involved with the American Cancer Society Relay for Life and the Susan G Komen Avon 3-day for the Cure, a 60-mile walk to end breast cancer.

Her inspiration and greatest challenges go hand-in-hand. She explains, "As product developers in the industry, we are constantly challenged with launching the latest and greatest new products that will revolutionize the industry, along with how to bring the benefits of fresh and healthful products to as many people as possible. My inspiration is also witnessing the wonderful work of my peers and the products that they have developed."

Her present and future goal is to develop food products that are wholesome, healthful and taste good, with availability on a national level. In the later part of her career she has found a significant amount of satisfaction in mentoring young people entering the industry today.

Dr. Brian Hampson, professor of food science at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, is one of her mentors. "He opened my eyes to the world of food product development," she says. "This is where I developed the passion for food product development." She also credits Dr. Seth Goldsmith, retired director of quality assurance at Dole Fresh Vegetables, and Dr. Yaguang Luo, research scientist for the USDA's Agricultural Research Service, with providing her with fundamentals in processing, packaging and post-harvest handling. "Dr. Goldsmith was pivotal to my development in this area and taught me the importance of continual process improvement to the business."



Ray J. Habelman, 36
CEO
Habelman Bros. Co.
Tomah, WI

A fourth generation cranberry grower from west central Wisconsin, Habelman returned to the cranberry marsh in 1997 after college, where he has worked full time since then. As CEO of Habelman Bros., the world's leading fresh cran-

berry grower and packer, he is guiding the company back to its independent roots in order to more effectively serve the customers' needs.

He has initiated several food safety programs including GMPs, GAPs, global food safety, Nutrient Management Plans and Worker Safety for the company. He has also initiated capital investment projects, including refrigeration large enough to store the entire crop, the latest in optical sorting equipment, an ozone wash to destroy any contaminants on the fruit and new cutting-edge packing facilities. He successfully balances all this while still actively being a farmer and family man to his wife and three boys.

His biggest challenges since returning to the marsh 13 years ago has been the drastic swings in the price of cranberries and increased regulations.

In the future, he hopes to keep Habelman as the most technologically advanced cranberry packer in the industry and continue to expand markets. "This will require constant innovation and expansion, but is absolutely necessary in today's produce world," he reports. "I want to continue expanding our foreign markets. There are still millions of people in the world who have never heard of a cranberry. We must continue to focus on fruit quality and pack-to-order freshness. No matter how volatile the cranberry industry may get, if we can keep our customers happy, we will make it through the tough times."

His mentors have always been the original "Brothers" who helped to grow the company to what it is today. "My uncle Bob, now over 90, is the only brother left," he says. "He, along with my grandpa Ray, and his other brothers, Claire, Kenneth and Lloyd, worked harder than I can ever imagine. They decided to stay in fresh cranberries when most other growers decided to switch to processed. Without their hard work and good decisions, we would not be where we are today."

He is especially grateful to his father for teaching him not only how to raise cranberries, but how to take care of a company. "He showed me

through example how all people should be respected, unless they give you reason not to," he says. "He also showed me how important it is to keep the people who work for you happy and motivated. It's not always easy to do, but without them, it would be virtually impossible to run a company."



Roland Harmon II, 34
Salinas/Nogales Procurement Manager
Chiquita/Fresh Express
Salinas, CA

Harmon is an effective multitasker, a necessary skill for someone managing two procurement teams in two different states. Under his current position, he is responsible for a 14-person team, with the responsibility of supplying all of the fruit

and vegetable raw product for six processing plants across the United States. His team handles more than 30 commodities in several different growing locations.

He has been able to drastically reduce shrink on the procurement side by putting together programs to sell excess acreage of product in which the company may be oversupplied. Additionally, he has substantially driven cost savings by implementing innovative ways to run the business and its processes. He has also accepted increasing responsibility on the commercial operations side of the business, analyzing all of the processes, recipes, etc., to ensure the best quality product is being put on the shelf. This includes looking at everything from the field level all the way to the processing plant.

His inspiration comes from seeing the final product on a store shelf and knowing the hard work and commitment behind it. "I am amazed every day how much hard work and dedication comes from our people and our company," he says. "Most people might see our salads as just an item on a store shelf, but it's amazing how much goes into getting that bag there in the first place. Fresh Express has put food safety on the top of our priority list and that's something else I wish everyone could see."

In the future, he plans to continue to help Chiquita/Fresh Express move in the right direction. "We had a fantastic 2009 and that has sparked me to keep pushing and driving to another successful year in 2010," he says.

He names his current boss, Bill Clyburn, vice president of agricultural operations, as a mentor. "He really gives us the opportunity to learn every aspect of the business and encourages personal development to its full extent," Harmon says. "He has been a great leader and I feel that has helped me with respect to how I approach my team and the opportunities to grow that I give them."



Douglas Hawkins, 31
Corporate Category Manager
Litehouse Inc.
Sandpoint, ID

Hawkins has helped Litehouse build the category through his two different positions with the company. In his previous role as product manager, he helped shape and guide the direction of this broad product mix to an annual growth of nearly

\$10 million and a cumulative growth of more than \$20 million in four years. Today, in his role as category manager, he works directly with customers to help them optimize their promotions and product mix. Hawkins assists customers in analyzing regional flavor trends and seasonal promotional indices so they have the right products at the right price.

Outside of the produce industry, he serves his community in a variety of ways. He served as the youngest elected city councilman in Sandpoint history, has sat on the Economic Development Corporation of Sandpoint,

and now serves as Litehouse's director on the Bonner County Economic Development Corporation.

He has been inspired by a sincere and absolute love of food, as well as a commitment to his company and family. "I not only work for my family's company, but for all 500 families that depend on Litehouse's success

"Retailers that can help draw more people into the produce department from the grocery aisle are not only gaining consumers to high margin areas of their entire stores, but helping reconnect with better food!"

— Douglas Hawkins
Litehouse Inc.

for their livelihood," he says. "We come from a town of 8,000 people and Litehouse has become an essential part of the community."

In the future, his main goal is to help gain more consumers in the produce department. "Retailers that can help draw more people into the produce department from the grocery aisle are not only gaining consumers to high margin areas of their stores, but helping people reconnect with better food."

He also confesses that since he was just seven years old he has wanted to be president of Litehouse Foods someday. "I have spent the majority of my life thus far focused on building the experiences necessary to achieve this goal," he says. "From working in the production department at age 14 to spending two years outside the company after college to help build a broader understanding of the business world, I've been preparing myself."

His longest term mentor in the produce industry is his father, Doug Hawkins, current Chairman of the Board of Litehouse. "All through my childhood, every conversation, every family trip, every chore provided an opportunity to learn more about work ethic, service and our company and the produce industry as a whole," he says.

More recently, other mentors have helped broaden his understanding. Our new company president, Jim Frank, came to us from Albertson's with more than 30 years of experience in retailing," he says. "He has a lot he has been able to, and continues to share with me. My direct boss, Patrick Herbst, has a world of experience in category management and sales. He has been helping me learn more about what our salespeople need so that I can better serve them and has taught me how to see the data from different angles to consider approaches I would not have thought of before."



Jack Howell, 38
National Sales Leader -
Bananas, Fresh and Ready Avocados
Chiquita Brands North America
Cincinnati, OH

Howell began his produce career at age 15 working on the dock of the Hy-Vee warehouse in Chariton, IA. His journey in the industry has resulted in a leadership position with Chiquita sales. He received the General Manager's Award for Sales Excellence in Chiquita's North American Banana Group in 2008, recognizing not only

his sales achievements, but also his leadership role within the company. He was recently given the opportunity to lead the sales organization for Chiquita Fresh-and-Ready Avocados.

From as far back as that first job on the Hy-Vee dock, he has been motivated by how produce is a fun and challenging industry. "In the produce world, it's never if there are going to be challenges, it's how quickly you can react to those challenges and offer solutions to overcome or mitigate them," he says.

Working with innovative, new products is also something that inspires and challenges him. "This industry allows us the opportunity to supply healthful, fun food to the country, which we can all feel great about," he says. "I'm inspired by utilizing technology and innovative thinking to meet consumer needs and increase consumption, quality or overall eating experience with the healthful products we offer."

In the future, Howell wants to continue to find innovative ways to deliver healthful food to consumers. "I'd like to become more involved in industry organizations to work as a whole to help drive consumption of produce," he says. "I also believe that our industry cannot thrive without attracting the next generation of leaders. I was fortunate enough to have great mentors within this industry and one of my goals is to help find, develop and retain the next generation of produce industry leaders."

He names Tip Murphy, his first vice president of sales for Chiquita; Craig Stephen, vice president and general manager of North American Bananas for Chiquita; and Mike Kemp, vice president of procurement for perishables at Save-A-Lot, as mentors. "Tip taught me the importance of developing and cultivating relationships and the importance of conducting yourself in an ethical manner," he explains. "Craig has taught me a lot about the entire global banana industry. He is well respected within our company, treats people with respect and more importantly, has the courage to make difficult decisions. Mike is one of the most honorable people I have encountered in this industry. I began working with Mike several years ago and he taught me the importance of customer service and the collaborative role between suppliers and retailers."



Chase Kaljian, 38
Manager of Real Estate and Facilities
Driscoll's
Watsonville, CA

Kaljian is known for his skills at leading and working with technical cross-functional teams on large-scale and ad-hoc projects. His collaborative leadership style allows him to work well with experts such as DC managers, supply chain analysts,

nurserymen, cooling engineers and employees and to incorporate their ideas. In his position with Driscoll's, he performs agricultural, industrial and office leasing, manages construction of coolers and office space, conducts due diligence and makes recommendations whether to buy or lease land and buildings, manages the company's real estate portfolio, plans office space, oversees security and maintains facilities.

In the last year and a half, he has graduated from a year-long local leadership program called Leadership Santa Cruz County and last year, was fortunate to be selected into Driscoll's Leadership Institute. He is also a member of Driscoll's Sustainability Council.

He takes pride in the healthful aspect of the industry and the integrity he sees expressed at Driscoll's. "People's faces light up when they hear I work in the berry industry," he says. "The company works really hard to uphold its three core values and that inspires me — to see that it is taken so seriously and is not just some corporate mantra. I feel lucky to have been hired by a place like this where content matters more than appearance."

His future company goals include maintaining the appropriate balance of owned versus leased real estate assets with respect to the com-

pany's financing needs and growth plans, and delivering construction projects on time and within budget. His long-term personal goal is to achieve a higher level of proficiency in understanding assets in all their aspects, including production, tax, construction, leasing, legal and water rights.

Kaljian credits Driscoll's stable and loyal workforce as crucial to his professional development. "We have a few elder statesmen of produce who have been with the firm a long time," he explains. "They know a lot and have all blazed new paths in their sector of the industry. Don Roberts, the ex-head of our nursery department; Michael Hollister, senior vice president of sales; Emmett Linder, our vice president of logistics; and Kevin Murphy, senior vice president of production, are just some of the people I look up to and from whom I try to learn."



Ozgur Koc, 33
Director of R&D
Crunch Pak, LLC
Cashmere, WA

As director of research and development, Koc has had a hand in many behind-the-scenes technological advances for fresh-cut apples. He implemented a Food Safety and Quality Program for fresh-cut sliced apple program from farm to table. He has executed a cooperative Research and Development Agreement with the USDA to research fresh-cut sliced apples and to examine the production facility for potential sources of microbial contamination. He is the creator of the innovative package design for the Disney Sliced Apple Program that aims to produce more appealing and kid-friendly products and packages.

He is coordinator and moderator for the Fresh Cut Apple Work Group of the United Fresh Produce Association. He brought together suppliers, sliced apple processors, government and university representatives to participate in food safety and quality discussions and identify the needs for the sliced apple category.

Koc was hired as a QA Supervisor at Crunch Pak. In two years, he was promoted to a QA Manager and became involved in research and development. In 2006, he moved to California to work as a technical project manager for Earthbound Farms Company. After a year, he came back to Crunch Pak as the director of research and development.

"I also believe that our industry cannot thrive without attracting the next generation of leaders. I was fortunate enough to have great mentors within this industry and one of my goals is to help find, develop and retain the next generation of produce industry leaders."

— Jack Howell
Chiquita Brands North America

He has appeared on the Food Network TV in "Unwrapped: The Story of the Sliced Apple" in September, 2006. He is president of the Turkish American Student Cultural Association at Portland State University.

He is inspired by the U.S. culture's demand for nutritious, convenient and grab-and-go healthy foods. "The opportunity for me to apply my theoretical knowledge into practical terms to improve food safety and quality of fresh-cut products really motivates me," he says.

In the future, he hopes to share all his technical and practical knowledge within the industry so it can be used as a guideline, while continuously working to minimize food safety risks.

His mentors include Yaguang Luo (Sunny), Ph.D., research food technologist for the USDA Agricultural Research Service in Beltsville, MD; Matthew Caito, CEO of Imagination Farms in Indianapolis, IN; and Craig Wilson, assistant vice president of food safety and quality assurance for Costco, in Issaquah, WA.



Jared Lane, 32
Vice President of Marketing
Stevco
Beverly Hills, CA

The fourth generation of a farming family, Lane grew up on a farm just outside of Bakersfield, CA, where his father grew grapes. Demonstration of his leadership came at an early age when he became president of his school 4-H chapter and was able to teach younger kids how to raise and show their pigs at the fairs within their districts. His experience in traveling all through the Western U.S. attending shows and auctions inspired him to pursue a career in the marketing of some type of farm product.

His first job after college was at HMC, which began his career in quality control. He quickly moved up to head of quality control and took over all aspects of the handling of fruit arriving at the packing and cooling facility. In 2003, he moved from HMC to Stevco, where he was afforded the opportunity to join the sales team. In just three years he was promoted to sales manager and then, in early 2010, was promoted again to vice president of marketing. During this time he was able to grow Stevco's direct retail business from 24 percent to over 70 percent. Dollar volume rose from \$4.5 million the first year to over \$47 million in 2009.

He is an active member in the Catholic Church, donating his time to charitable events, while mentoring the youth within his parish.

His inspiration is derived from the unique challenges each season brings. "No two seasons are alike," he says. "The new varieties, the culture practice of these varieties and introduction to the consumer with success is a big challenge for the table grape industry. Produce brings new and unexpected challenges everyday, which makes the industry so unique."

In the future, he wants to become more involved in the boards that lobby for safety and farmer and employee rights. He would also like to grow Stevco's sales through added production, new packaging material and concepts. "I have many people throughout the industry who I communicate with to learn about the issues that lie ahead of us and the best way to resolve these," he says. "Taking a proactive approach to markets and issues allows things to be completed at quicker, more convenient pace."

The two mentors in his produce career have been Harold McClarty, president of HMC, in Kingsburg, CA; and Steven Gilfenbain, CEO of Stevco. "Harold brought me into the industry and Steven has allowed me to grow to where I am today," he says. "Both of these mentors have been extremely successful entrepreneurs and have taught me how to make business decisions and solve issues."



Tracie Levin, 25
General Manager
M. Levin & Co. Inc.
Philadelphia, PA

Levin is one of four women involved in the fourth generation of her family's wholesale fruit and vegetable business, which is entering its 105th year of business. She is known for having the drive to get to know the family business from the ground up and spent her first year at M. Levin learning how to ripen bananas. After that, she rotated in and out of all other facets, including buying, selling, administration, human resources, and accounting as well as food safety and revamping the computer system. She currently holds the crucial role of food safety coordinator and is in charge of ensuring that the company, as well as suppliers, shippers and employees, comply with safety standards.

In 2008, she was one of four recipients of the Frieda Rapoport Caplan Family Business Scholarship. This past May, in Las Vegas, she graduated from United Fresh's Produce Leadership Program, Class 15. For the past two years, she has lobbied on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC for important food related issues.

She is inspired by her family's passion for the produce industry. "So far, I have not encountered any other industry where family businesses are so prevalent," she says. "The families involved are so passionate about what they do. They truly love it. I can say that I look forward to a lifetime commitment to the produce industry."

However, the produce industry, so long a business dominated by men, continues to challenge her as a woman. "The fact that women are not as common as men in the produce industry is something that even an outsider to the industry can see," she explains. "My biggest hurdle so far has been how I have had to prove to others that I know as much about the produce industry as a man in a similar position to me. I am glad to see that in recent years there has been an increase in the amount of women coming to work in the produce industry and I look forward to seeing this trend continue."

Her main goal as it relates to the produce industry is to become an integral part of the future of the produce community and to help make and implement changes that will affect the future of the industry. "I would like to be able to be a part of helping to strengthen the field from a young woman's perspective, and it goes without saying that I would like nothing more than to see my company grow and be successful for the next 100 years to come."

Her biggest mentors in the produce industry are her father and other family members working at the company. "I have them to thank for teaching me what they know about the produce industry," she says. "Every day I learn something that I did not know the day before."



Afreen Malik, 36
Manager of Food Safety/
Environmental Stewardship
Ocean Mist Farms
Castroville, CA

Malik manages two areas of responsibility at Ocean Mist, balancing both food safety and environmental stewardship. In the past five years, she has taken ownership of several high profile issues and new programs, including the spinach recall of September, 2006. She also implemented a food safety employee training program.

Malik has worked extensively to develop and advance the objectives of the company's Environmental Stewardship Program. Under her leadership, the program has identified key components and made significant progress towards achieving its objectives.

She has participated as an educator for Hartnell College's Food Safety course for the past three years. She has also volunteered on numerous committees, both food safety and conservation. She currently serves on the Food Safety and Environmental Compliance committees with the Grower-Shipper Association, as well as the Steering Committee of the Farm Food Safety and Conservation Network (FFSCN). She has been a volunteer at the Elkhorn Slough Foundation for the past two and a half years.

She is inspired by the life commitment of those who work in agriculture. "It's the passion I see in those I work with," she explains. "Agriculture is not a career, but a way of life for most of my colleagues. They inspire and challenge me to be better. Of course, the fact that food safety is ever changing keeps the challenges coming my way as well."

Her goals continue to focus on addressing some of the challenges the ag community faces, most importantly, the issue of co-managing food safety and conservation on the farm. "New food safety legislation and our dwindling natural resources, especially water, make this a priority for me," she says.

She credits Joe Pezzini, COO of Ocean Mist, and Art Barrientos, vice president of harvest operations, as mentors. "Joe has taught me a lot about the agricultural community in the Salinas Valley and even more so about general management techniques," she says. "Joe's knowledge and understanding of farming goes beyond what one can learn in a classroom. With his guidance, I've learned to be more patient, pragmatic and overall holistic in my approach to food safety/environmental stewardship as they apply to farming. Art once helped me with one of my first training sessions in Spanish. I used some vocabulary that I had learned in high school, which apparently wasn't understood by my audience. Art very gently helped me find alternative and more appropriate words. He has helped me in similar situations ever since, to bring balance and meaning to everyday tasks."

Matthew (Matt) Mandel, 30
Special Projects Manager
SunFed
Rio Rico, AZ



Considering himself more a facilitator than manager, Mandel has helped elevate his company's visibility and food safety standards through his work. Through a company-wide commitment to service, its third-party logistics and handling services business has grown three-fold over the past two years. Mandel co-developed an Internet portal to grant full supply-chain visibility for the third-party partners, and he also manages SunFed's Global Food Sourcing operation for Wal-Mart. Under his facilitation, the company contracted with HarvestMark for traceability and PTI compliance long before the milestones were promoted.

He is a board member of the Fresh Produce Association of the Americas and the Boys and Girls Club of Southern Arizona.

He is inspired and challenged by the complexity of the business. "This business is an incredibly complex, challenging and rewarding one," he says. "I am forced to think of new ways of viewing opportunities to find the best results for all parties involved. I am also currently balancing work with an MBA program that has stretched me farther than I have ever been stretched. Needless to say, my time management skills are being put to the test on a daily basis."

In the future, Mandel will focus on building on his father's success. "My father started this business 17 years ago and has put a lot of sweat equity into it," he says. "I would like to continue to build this company into the powerhouse I know it has the potential of being. Every day is a new day and this industry changes so rapidly, all I can say is I am fortunate to be able to make

an impact on my company and hopefully the industry as well."

Mandel credits his father as well as members of the FPAA as mentors. "My dad has made something amazing out of next to nothing and I hope to continue to perpetuate that energy and vision," he says. "I am also extremely fortunate to sit on the FPAA board with some great people that I respect and constantly learn from."

Neil Merritt, 38
Division Vice President of Retail Sales
Ready Pac Produce Inc.
Irwindale, CA



Working with Ready Pac for five years, Merritt has moved from marketing to sales in the last year and a half. In his short sales career, he has established and is strategically managing national retail accounts.

In his current position, he is responsible for Southwest division sales for retail value-added produce as well as national accounts such as Kroger, Supervalu and Whole Foods. One major accomplishment was the selling of a Single Serve Salad Program to Supervalu Corporate, leading to a growth of more than 62 percent in one year.

In his previous position as senior director of category and consumer insights, Merritt recruited, trained and managed four direct reports driving key company profit objectives. He also worked to establish category leadership roles with key customers. He partnered with brand marketing teams to accomplish strategic assortment, pricing and promotional objectives for fresh-cut produce and complete meal categories at retail, and in 2007, experienced 12 percent growth.

Merritt is a graduate of the UFPA Class 15 Leadership Program. He is an active member and donor to the Wounded Warrior Project (WWP), being a veteran of the military himself.

He is inspired every day by the dynamics of the produce industry and is challenged by the numerous current issues facing it. "The current economic situation, food safety issues, pricing, unfavorable raw product situations, retailer margin demands and increased competitive pressure have all been a challenge for myself and my company over the years."

His future goal is to progress his career to the point that he can help lead Ready Pac in terms of its sales and marketing vision. "I also want to be extremely active in the UFPA and PMA when it comes to important industry issues," he says.

He credits Mike Celani, his current boss, as an influential mentor. "Given my military background, I'm a huge believer in leading by example," he explains. "In my 12 years within the produce industry I have had many good leaders, but none as inspirational as Mike. He has inspired me through his own work ethic and industry knowledge. His leadership and decision-making abilities are second-to-none."

Karolyn Minaya, 35
Organic Produce,
Sales & Marketing Manager
Agrexco USA Ltd.
New York, NY



Minaya was discovered by Yoram Shalev, then president of the USA branch of Agrexco, while she was working in both print and television commercial sales. She was with the company selling fresh-cut flowers and excelled at managing the post-harvest handling and inventory control of an extremely short shelf-life product. Under her direction, she saw an increase in flower sales by 10 percent each year.

When the company divided fresh produce sales into conventional and organic two years ago, she was given leadership of the organic produce

department. In her first season leading the department, she increased the volume sold by 34 percent and the number of clients by 25 percent. She also accomplished her goal of streamlining produce allocation while minimizing inaccuracies, and the implementation of a year-round supply of various organic products from different sources. To date, she has increased sales two-fold and added five new products on the company's organic tomato line.

Minaya was originally sold on entering the produce industry by the suggestion that it would be a challenge and is motivated by the healthy implication of her products. "To sell and promote a sustainable organic farmed product not only benefits the company, but also our growers as they increase their acreage to grow more, our environment, the consumers and eventually our future."

Her goals for coming seasons include not only improvements in the various facets of this business, but also reconnecting the lost link of the consumer to its soil. "I want to find every opportunity available to pass that knowledge along to everyone I can in the industry and anyone I come in contact with outside of it," she says. "My sales goals include increasing the sales of our line of Bio-Top organic products, while at the same time, increasing the number of new products available in order to drive more growers into sustainable organic farming."

She credits her success to the full support of an excellent team of industry knowledgeable individuals comprised of Ronit Pumpianski, organic tomato product manager, Moshe Malal, organic peppers product manager, Rani Fridlander, marketing division manager, and Amos Or, vegetable division manager. "Amos is a person whose drive and enthusiasm would compel the most discouraged salesperson to perform their best," she says. "His business conduct and positive thinking are inspirational. He is a pioneer on the growth of the organic produce wing of our business along with many others in upper management."



Juliet Olivarria, 38
Sales Manager-BSCC Produce
Sysco
Houston, TX

Based in Salinas, CA, Olivarria is the first woman sales manager for the BSCC Sysco Procurement Office. She began her career in produce in 1993 as a credit clerk for Fresh Choice Produce. Having worked nearly every entry level position, she finally reached her goal of the sales desk in 1998. In 1999, she accepted the position of a produce buyer for Sysco and was able to quickly realize many accomplishments as part of the largest produce procurement office in the United States. In December of 2008 she was promoted to her current role of sales manager.

She is a graduate of Dale Carnegie, and a member of the Women's Food-service Forum.

Olivarria is inspired by her sense of responsibility to the greater produce community. "My responsibility is not just to the people I work for and with, and the shareholders, but most importantly to the consumers that enjoy the products we deliver daily," she says. "My inspiration comes from truly wanting each consumer to have an incredible experience. The fast pace and ever-changing environment in produce keeps things fresh and new."

In the future, she looks forward to increasing her responsibilities at Sysco and in the general produce industry. "I would also love to play a role in increasing America's consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables because it is such a pivotal part of good health," she says.

She counts her father as well as other foodservice professionals as mentors. "As a child, I learned a strong work ethic and integrity from my father," she says. "Early in my career, some of the best produce lessons in life were taught to me by Rick Russo at Fresh Choice/NewStar. Since joining Sysco, I have had many people that have helped me become the leader I am today,

including Jon Greco, Carl Shaug, Joyce Carlin, Brian Cooper and Rich Dachman. However, without a doubt, my strongest mentor has been Mike Hansen. Mike has given me the tools to succeed, the freedom to allow me to make mistakes and learn valuable lessons, and the benefit of constant support. He gave me an outlook in managing that I hadn't known existed and I owe much of my success to his mentorship."



Angela Paymard, 33
Chairman
N2N Global
Longwood, FL

Since taking over Kirkey/N2N Solutions, Paymard has elevated its role as a service provider to the fresh produce industry. As a service provider, she is able to see across the inner workings of companies and across balance sheets and is known for using her knowledge to help companies grow and become better competitors through technology.

As the Chairman of N2N Global, Paymard has successfully revitalized a 27-year-old company and positioned N2N Global as the industry leader for technology solutions. Under her leadership, the company has developed solutions such as the Voice Pick Code and traceabilitysource.com, open source solutions designed to help industry companies with PTI compliance.

N2N has worked alongside the major trade associations, standards bodies, and industry companies to help devise an open standard for traceability and she has put great emphasis on creating low cost solutions so that even smaller agribusinesses can find ways to be compliant.

She is motivated by spending time with clients and seeing how devoted they are to providing the best product the industry has to offer. "I see how hard they try to provide a safe and fair working environment for their staff," she explains. "It's hard not to like the people in this industry. The industry does not lack the desire to find a great solution. And the consumer doesn't lack the desire for a safer supply chain. What's lacking is a solution that works and that is cost-efficient. That is what motivates me every day that I wake up to go to work."

She sees three future challenges for the produce industry: low margins, commoditization of produce and consumer understanding and appreciation of the supply chain. "My personal goal is to assist the industry with these challenges by developing better tools for their toolkit," she says.

The vision and foresight of Reggie Griffin at Kroger has helped guide her. "I am truly impressed with not only his knowledge of the business, but the leadership he has taken in the industry for the benefit of the masses," she says. She also names Terry Rudkin of Sunkist Growers and Jody Gebbers of Gebbers Farms as mentors. "Terry is the type of person who always looks to create a win-win in a given situation," she says. "Jody is an extremely sharp woman who assists her family in managing a very sizable orchard. She's a strong woman and does a great job of watching out to make sure the family is taken care of, whether it's working late to make sure the payroll checks go out, or spending time at a basketball game supporting her family."



Pat Pochiro, 35
Marketing Manager
International Paper
Memphis, TN

As marketing manager for International Paper's Industrial Packaging business, Pochiro has worked closely and diligently with produce growers and shippers for the last several years to introduce, trial and implement sustainable, wax-alternative packaging designs. He was also instrumental in ensuring a smooth integration of the product lines and the supply chain when

International Paper acquired Weyerhaeuser's packaging business.

He recently was honored with a Sales and Marketing Excellence Award within International Paper for his work on a new display-ready carton for the produce industry. This new carton is more environmentally friendly and cost advantageous and was released during the 2009 PMA Fresh Summit this past year.

He has been challenged in the area of developing new recyclable and cost-effective packaging to replace wax boxes and meet the needs of both retailers and growers. He has been leading a team and working with several large customers on trials and then commercializing several products ranging from strawberry boxes to celery and broccoli boxes. While work has just started on these products, called ClimaSeries, it is expected to continue on more commodities in 2010.

Additionally, Pochirio has tackled the issue of seeing whether corrugated packaging could extend the shelf-life of products. A series of trials with growers in the Northwest on cherries, apples and peppers was conducted and the results were encouraging, but he foresees more work to be done in 2010.

He has worked to build International Paper's position from just a supplier to more of a partner with the produce industry. He serves as the IP representative at the annual Produce for Better Health Foundation board meeting, and last year, led IP to exhibit and become involved at the United Washington Public Policy Conference. At the start of 2010, he led an effort to hire an outside market research firm to survey more than 60 grower/shippers in an effort to better understand their needs and wants from both a general and packaging perspective. He hopes this information will allow the IP team to deliver even greater value to the produce industry.

In the future, he wants to become more involved in PMA, United Fresh and PBH. Most recently, he volunteered to help on several committees within PMA when they requested feedback in February. "I look forward to becoming more involved where I can both learn from and contribute to the industry's success," he says.



Kristen Reid, 30
Senior Recruiter
MIXTEC Group
Pasadena, CA

As an executive recruiter at the MIXTEC Group, Reid has partnered on successful search assignments with all three owners. She has also researched, identified and implemented cost savings programs resulting in significantly reduced office expenses and improved search assignment efficiency by implementing software changes for researching functions. She has revamped and designed updated marketing materials and even stepped in to assume complete responsibility for all office management and accounting activities.

As part of her primary role at MIXTEC, she has been involved in the placement of a variety of executives who are helping the organization grow and prosper. Some of these placements represent new talent for the industry.

She is involved with the Fresh Produce and Floral Council, where she sits on both the Luncheon Committee and the Dinner-Dance Committee. She also serves as an adjunct professor at Pepperdine University. By sharing her career experiences and passion with the students, she introduces them to options they might not have otherwise considered.

She volunteers with a variety of organizations related to speech and debate. She also writes grants for a local Urban Debate League (UDL), a program that reaches out to high school students in underprivileged areas. Students who participate in the program are far more likely to graduate from high school, and 90 percent of program participants go on to attend college, many of them with debate scholarships.

She is motivated by the zeal of the industry. "I am most impressed by

everyone's passion," she explains. "People in the produce industry love what they do. It is refreshing to spend time with people who have a sincere commitment and purpose. I am inspired by the people who generously donate their time to different associations to help improve the industry."

In the future, she wants to continue to learn more about the produce industry and become more actively involved. "I am currently taking the initiative to tour at least one new produce facility and meet with at least one key industry leader a month," she says. "I have been very grateful for the opportunity to work with FPFC and would also like the chance to work with national associations such as United Fresh and PMA.

She names the co-owners of MIXTEC and Jin Ju Wilder of Coast Produce as mentors. "The MIXTEC ownership — Chris Nelson, Jerry Butt and

"I am most impressed by everyone's passion. People in the produce industry love what they do. It is refreshing to spend time with people who have a sincere commitment and purpose. I am inspired by the people who generously donate their time to different associations to help improve the industry."

— Kristen Reid
MIXTEC Group

Leonard Batti — are incredible," she says. "Each one of them is passionate about produce. Despite the need to run a profitable business, they always put their clients, candidates and staff above the bottom line. Jin Ju is another passionate person who works hard to give back to the industry. I had the opportunity to meet her at the PMA Leadership Symposium and she has been a great resource and role model. Her success and continued industry involvement speaks volumes about her work ethic, intelligence and people skills."



Bryan Roberts, 37
Consumer Segment Manager
Save-A-Lot
Earth City, MO

Over the 14 years Roberts has been with the Save-A-Lot family, he has served in many different roles within the produce department. His work has evolved from clerical worker, to replenishment buying, to a buyer, to a sourcing manager and most recently, a promotion to a consumer segment manager.

He has negotiated many different national contracts on items that has allowed Save-A-Lot to have a retail market advantage on key items to shoppers. He has worked with licensee retailers in the Michigan area to build a custom ad program to target Michigan business.

Roberts is a member of Class 15 of the United Produce Industry Lead-

ership Program. Outside of work, he is active in his children's life by helping to coach different athletic teams.

He is driven on a day-to-day basis by knowing that he helps bring quality fresh fruits and vegetables to an underserved portion of the population at the lowest possible cost. "Save-A-Lot works hard every day to serve these shoppers with great value on the items they want. When I buy produce, I look to bring the highest quality and flavor profile to our shoppers. We work hard each day listening to our customer's needs and wants."

As he continues his career at Save-A-Lot, Roberts hopes to grow into a role such as the director of produce operations. "My long term hope is to one day become a company vice president," he says. "I continue to work hard and expand my skill set so that I may grow into these long term goals. I remain focused on executing my job with excellence, and hope growth opportunities will open themselves."

Within the category of produce, he wants to continue to grow as an industry leader, and be a person of knowledge within the retail sector. "I hope to become more involved with different industry boards and committees where appropriate, and I believe that my time in the United Fresh Leadership class can afford me that opportunity," he explains.

He names former boss, Mike Kemp, as a true mentor. "He was the leader who not only helped shape my career path as a produce veteran, but also helped me to be a better man," he says. "He taught me that integrity is the leading ingredient in every negotiation. Mike challenged me to grow not only retail product sourcing, but he also challenged me to grow as a leader within Save-A-Lot."



Felicity Robson, 36
General Manager - Corporate
Affairs and Sustainability
OneHarvest
Carole Park, Queensland, Australia

Robson's interest in marketing and communications was fueled while working in the family business, Interharvest, at the Brisbane Terminal Market during her high school years. On weekends and holidays, she spent her time working on the market floor, manning the checkout, driving and working with the merchandising team at store level.

She is a leader of the governance/succession process for the OneHarvest Board of Directors, as well as a leader of the due diligence process for international partnership, representing OneHarvest in the United States in negotiations. She served as a member of the PMA Governance taskforce in 2009, and is an inaugural board member of the PMA Aus-NZ and chair of their Fresh Forums Taskforce 2009-2010. She represents the industry on various committees including the Horticulture Code of Conduct Review, the Food and Agriculture Policy Working Group and the Australian Food and Grocery Council Corporate Affairs and Sustainable Business Practices.

She is a co-founder and board member of Chicks in Pink, a breast cancer charity focusing on the support and care of women and their families. A percentage of OneHarvest's melon sales contribute to Chicks in Pink each year. She is a graduate of the Australian Rural Leadership Program and Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Robson is inspired by her earliest memories of working in the market with her father. "I grew up surrounded by a passion and drive for business that was infectious," she says. "Now I work alongside my brothers with a team of some of the most talented professionals I have met. Balancing the business of family and the family business is the most challenging part of what we do today."

In the future, she wants to meet the challenges faced by the Australian industry head-on. "In both our business and in the industry work through PMA Aus-NZ, I have had a goal of changing the way Australian kids eat for

almost 10 years," she explains. "If we are to build a sustainable, vibrant and viable industry, we must motivate young people to savor fresh each and every day."

She names industry icon Pete Purcell and her father, Rob Robson, as two of her mentors. "Pete has been a part of our family since 1982 when he first came to Australia to run his program for our business," she says. "His passion for the industry and drive to make us better sales people was always so apparent. My father is the most visionary, strategic person I have ever met. His ability to think larger than life, to make bold moves when needed and to step into the unknown has been inspirational and daunting at the same time."

She also credits her grandfather, Duncan Robson, and co-worker, Treena Welch as having influenced her. "My grandfather taught me to stand my ground and hold my head high when I believed in something enough," she says. "He was a market trader through and through, and was one of the hardest workers I have ever met. I have had the privilege of working alongside Treena for most of my career," she says. "She has taught me that I can have an extraordinary career as well as be a passionate partner and nurturing mother."



Gualberto Rodríguez III, 36
President
Caribbean Produce Exchange Inc.
San Juan, Puerto Rico

Since 2005, Rodríguez has headed one of Puerto Rico's leading team of experts in marketing, logistics and distribution of fresh fruits, vegetables and eggs. Founded by his grandfather in 1960, Caribbean Produce Exchange serves more than 400 clients including supermarkets, restaurant chains, wholesale clubs, wholesalers and cruise ships. Caribbean Produce manages an inventory portfolio of more than 1,000 produce items, representing over 3,500 containers per year of fresh agricultural goods.

During Rodríguez's tenure, the company has achieved 11 percent sales growth during recessionary times by increasing service levels to customers and changing marketing strategies while steadily improving operating efficiencies throughout the supply chain. He has developed Puerto Rico's first and only farm-to-store supply chain with cold-chain integrity for fresh produce coming from the U.S. mainland by establishing refrigerated consolidation at facilities inside the Port of Jacksonville as well as its cold-dock, multi-temperature distribution center at the Port of San Juan. He and his team have also created a Produce Academy training program for retail and foodservice customers to address the shortage of experienced produce professionals at the store, supervisory, management and executive levels. More than 150 produce professionals have gone through this training program since its creation in 2008.

He has sustained a consecutive 25-year record as a Blue Book Services Trading Member, the only company outside of the U.S. and Canada with such a longstanding record, and the only Trading Member company in Puerto Rico.

He was a founding member of the Center for the New Economy, the island's only public policy think tank focused on economic development and poverty issues where he currently serves on its Advisory Board. He is an active member of the Puerto Rico chapter of Young Presidents' Organization/World Presidents' Organization International (YPO/WPO).

Rodríguez has found renewable sources of energy and inspiration in the produce industry. "First, I am inspired by the commitment and passion that produce pros at all levels demonstrate as they face a new set of circumstances every week of their careers," he says. "I have a passion for illustrating the island's produce supply system to clients, global suppliers, local growers, trade groups, consumers, policy-makers and anyone who will listen."

His father, uncle and grandfather have been invaluable mentors for decades in developing his leadership and other abilities. "As family, they unconditionally want me to succeed. But my biggest words of admiration and gratitude these days are reserved for the company's General Manager, José A. Currás-Zayas, a 30-year company veteran. José is the consummate authentic leader, mentor, teacher and advisor. My management style and approach has been forever changed by having the privilege of working side-by-side with him. His wisdom, commitment, courage, leadership and creativity make him invaluable to the younger managers wanting to accelerate learning of the ropes of this unique produce business."



Chad Smith, 35
Senior Manager, Sustainability
Earthbound Farm
San Juan Bautista, CA

Smith started as an intern with Earthbound Farm while he was at Stanford University's MBA program, and since becoming their manager of supply chain sustainability, he has relentlessly pursued sustainability initiatives in packaging, power, water, waste and recycling. He is known as an example of industry leadership in environmental stewardship and corporate social responsibility, serving as a catalyst for positive change.

Smith has spearheaded Earthbound Farm's leading off-the-field sustainability programs for more than five years, focusing on all opportunities to reduce waste and environmental impact, primarily in packaging, power consumption and solid waste management. In packaging, he most recently led the effort to replace all PET clamshells with those made from post consumer recycled plastic — an industry first. This innovation earned the 2009 PMA Impact Award for Excellence in Packaging for Best in Environment/Sustainability. In the company's management of energy, he has helped institute regular energy audits to continually identify programs to improve plant efficiency, and he managed approved projects from retrofitting plant lights to launching renewable power installations.

He is motivated by how the produce industry allows for alignment of day-to-day activities with purposeful and meaningful initiatives, most notably helping people eat healthful fresh food. "I've done a lot of analysis on how we can reduce our environmental impact, and I have no doubt that the most important sustainability choices we make are what we put into our bodies," he says. "Most sustainability analysis focuses on the bigger items, like what car we drive or how many flights we take per year or

what model our refrigerator is, but from a sustainability standpoint, there is nothing more important than getting people to eat the fresh fruits and vegetables that our industry is responsible for producing."

In the future, he wants to continue to push the industry toward greater sustainability. "It's not enough that we produce the most healthful and sustainable food," he explains. "We need to also be able to grow, process, package, distribute and merchandise in the most healthful and sustainable ways. There is no reason, economic or ethical, why we can't take this next step as an industry. I want to be a part of that continuing evolution."

Smith has been particularly inspired by the senior management at Earthbound Farm, in particular, founders, Drew and Myra Goodman, and CEO Charlie Sweat. "These three folks are the lifeblood of EBF and have created a culture here that they should be very proud of," he says. "Myra and Drew are examples of how you can create real change and value, even in the face of some pretty extreme adversity, if you are focused and diligent. Charlie is a brilliant businessman, very decisive and blessed with great intuition and people skills. He is a born leader, and he has taught me a lot about what leadership really is."



Abby Taylor-Silva, 32
Vice President, Policy & Communications
Grower-Shipper Association
of Central California
Salinas, CA

Taylor-Silva's responsibility for this 300 member-strong agricultural trade association spans the coastal region of California, encompassing Monterey, Santa Cruz, San Benito and Santa Clara counties. She is the past president of the Central Coast Ag Task Force, past president of California Women for Agriculture's Salinas Valley Chapter, food safety director to statewide California Women for Agriculture and past board member to the Central Coast Young Farmers and Ranchers. She is a member of the Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz Farm Bureaus, the Rotary Club of Salinas and UC Davis' Salinas Valley Alumni Chapter.

She was the executive director of Ag Against Hunger, a non-profit organization providing surplus fresh produce to food banks throughout the West Coast, from 2005 to 2010. She steered the organization to effectively feed more people throughout the West Coast and secure five to 10 new produce donors each year.

Taylor-Silva served as the California Strawberry Commission's communications specialist from 2001-2005, working as its primary media contact, consumer public relations specialist and crisis communications manager. She was recognized as the Salinas Jaycees' 2008 Young Farmer of the Year and received her YF&R chapter's 2010 Star YF&R award at the local and district-wide level.

She takes her inspiration from growing up in agriculture. "My family has lived and farmed in Monterey County for more than 50 years, and my grandfather's family in Michigan grew orchard crops," she explains. "Agriculture is my passion: here in California we grow more than 350 different commodities and feed the world with our nutritious bounty of produce."

In the future, she looks to contribute even more effort to furthering an understanding of the importance of agriculture. "I've just recently joined the Grower-Shipper Association and my primary goals in this position, and throughout my career, are to help our community members understand and appreciate the importance of the agricultural industry," she says. "This industry brings jobs to their towns, gives back to the community through donations to non-profits, universities, city projects and more, and produces America's healthiest food source. My other goal is to be a resource for growers, shippers and processors. New regulations, bills and policies cross my desk every day; I plan to be an advocate for agriculture and a source of information for growers, shippers, processors and legislators."

"We need to be able to grow, process, package, distribute and merchandise in the most healthful and sustainable ways. There is no reason, economic or ethical, why we can't take this step as an industry. I want to be part of that continuing evolution."

— Chad Smith
Earthbound Farm

Her mentors in the produce industry have included her father, a grower, and her mother, a teacher who co-founded the local chapter of California Women for Agriculture. "They are both incredibly hard workers and instilled in my brother and me the importance of setting large goals and working diligently to achieve them," she says. "My other mentors have been people who I've watched lead others with honest communication, hard work, a philanthropic spirit and a passion for continuous self-education. These people have included Tom Krugman, an ag consultant in Olympia, WA, Joe Pezzini of Ocean Mist Farms, and Darlene Din, an ag consultant in Watsonville, CA."



Brian Vertrees, 32
Customer Promotions Manager
Stemilt Growers Inc.
Wenatchee, WA

Vertrees is known as a passionate leader within the Stemilt family and the produce industry. In the six years since coming to Stemilt, he has immersed himself in his role as customer promotions manager. He quickly developed an understanding of the promotion needs of retail customers, yet constantly pushes the envelope by utilizing emerging trends within the marketing world. One example of this is his recent successes in combining social marketing with Stemilt promotions.

In 2004, Brian joined the Stemilt team as customer information specialist and was promoted within two years to his current position as customer promotions manager. Over the past six years, he has created numerous, nationwide promotions for different product lines. His creative mind and understanding of how packaging must be functional for retailers led to the design of Stemilt's Sesame Street Piñata Unistack box, which received a PMA Impact Award for Best in Merchandising/Transportability in 2007.

He attended the PMA Leadership Symposium in January, 2007, and was a 2007 Pack Family/PMA Career Pathways Fund Industry Advisor. In his community, he is an active member of the Mission Ridge Volunteer Ski Patrol and chairman of the Grace Lutheran Church Endowment Fund Team.

Learning the ins-and-outs of agriculture is both a challenge and an inspiration for him. "I get to talk regularly with growers, and I feel a huge responsibility to make sure we are doing everything we can to successfully market Stemilt fruit," he says.

In the future he hopes to join an active committee within the industry where his skills can be utilized. "From PBH, to PMA to United, there are a lot of ways to get connected and more involved, and so I'd like to find one area to focus on," he says. "Additionally, I plan on continuing to be involved as a Pack Family/PMA Career Pathways Fund Advisor. Recruiting the best students is critical to the success of our industry."

His mentors at Stemilt include Roger Pepperl, marketing director, and Norm Carpenter, national merchandising manager. "Not only is Roger my boss, but he's definitely my most trusted mentor," he says. "His experience in this industry is phenomenal and getting to work with Roger every day is an honor. Norm is another veteran in the produce industry and among his many positive traits is his penchant for numbers and an extremely creative marketing brain."

He also names Julie DeWolf, Sunkist director of marketing-retail promotions, and Greg Kimmel, produce manager for Hy-Vee, as mentors. "I met Julie early on in my career at Stemilt through our shared connection with Sesame Workshop," he explains. "She knows how to connect the dots — field to consumer — and is always looking outside the box at how marketing can drive more sales. Greg and I met on a trip he made to visit Stemilt a few years ago. He is one of the most energetic produce managers I have ever met, and someone I rely on for advice regarding what promotions will and won't work at retail."



Eric Viramontes, 36
C.E.O
Mexican Greenhouse Growers
Association ("AMHPAC" Asociación
Mexicana de Agricultura Protegida)
Culiacán, Sinaloa, México

Viramontes has spent years helping the Mexican produce industry accomplish significant development and build bridges among the Mexican and North American produce industries. During the term of Mexican Secretary of Agriculture, Javier Usabiaga, (2000-2005), he was director of export development in the Mexican Federal Government (SAGARPA - ASERCA) where he was responsible for designing, promoting, organizing and executing the model for Promotion Boards in their national agricultural sector. During his time there, 14 Mexican promotion boards were developed, including those supporting avocado, mango, eggplant and Mexican rice.

After leaving the government, he became agricultural manager for Ciruli Brothers, where he carried out production and financial decisions relating to the managed operations. He oversaw various crops and coordinated between growing, harvesting and marketing to ensure a standard of a quality. He was then honored with a position as a member of the founding advisory board for the Mexican Greenhouse Growers Association and was later appointed as the CEO.

Today, AMHPAC has developed into a strong organization dedicated to representing, servicing and defending the Mexican greenhouse industry, and is taking on the availability and development of technical solutions affecting the productivity and operations of members. In February, 2009, they formally launched an initiative called Shielding Program, a commitment from all members to comply with a higher standard, which includes several components from administration, marketing, technical issues and food safety and quality. Viramontes and AMHPAC's shared goal is that by 2012, every single one of their members will meet this standard. The organization has the support of the Mexican Federal Government and other national groups such as Mexico's Supreme Quality and the SQF representative office in Mexico.

His immediate future has him working on the next strategic plan for AMHPAC, which will focus on specific challenges for the next three years. These include growing the organization and promoting better policy and environmental issues.

He notes being lucky enough to have had several terrific mentors in his path. "Don Javier Usabiaga, former Secretary of Agriculture from Mexico,

"As we all realize, the produce industry has changed quite a bit in the last 16 years. Addressing these constant changes and adapting to new environments have been challenging, yet very rewarding and it has fueled my personal development."

— Michael Wise
The Horton Fruit Co. Inc.

showed me that you work for the common good, regardless of your position," he explains. "Chuck Ciruli III, CEO of Ciruli Bros, has been my big brother ever since I moved to the United States. He and his father have taught me a great deal about the industry from the business perspective, but especially Chucky has showed me how to do business and keep in touch with your heart."

Cesar Campaña, chief operating officer of Campana Agricultores, and Lee Frankle, former president of the FPAA, are two more of Viramontes' mentors. "Campaña is the current chairman of the board for AMHPAC and he's taught me about the real world in growing and harvesting produce. And, I learned a great deal from Lee Frankle about being at the steering wheel of a produce organization."



Wendy Ward, 39
Local Sourcing Specialist
Hannaford Bros. Co.
Scarborough, ME

Wendy Ward is the face of local produce in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts and New York. Her passion as a master gardener translates to how she successfully interacts with Hannaford's 200-plus farmers. There is not a

farmer in the five states who doesn't know Wendy personally as she visits their farms, sets up GAP training sessions, works closely with marketing to leverage local produce and collaborates with retail leadership to coordinate in-store local promotions.

Working with an integrated team across various business areas in the company, she has lead the campaign to enhance the local products program called Close to Home, consisting of partnerships with local farmers, hundreds of local producers and thousands of local products sourced from the Northeast. Hannaford is at the forefront among retailers nationwide through its work in collaborating with local growers and state governments to implement food safety requirements at the local level using GAP certification. Ward plays a key role in implementing this.

In 2007, she received the Hannaford Excellence Award for her work with local growers and the Hannaford Culture Award in 2007 and 2008 for her efforts to make Hannaford a fun place to work. She continually looks for opportunities to connect growers with resources, such as grants for those wanting to convert to organic farming or improve food safety, loans for female farm owners, conferences for composting ag plastics, or contacts who might help advise growers where to buy the appropriate cooler for their products.

Because of her work with local growers, in 2008, Hannaford became the first corporation to receive the Maine Department of Agriculture Distinguished Service Award. She is a board member of Tidewater Regional Learning Center Capital Campaign Committee and a United Way volunteer.

She is inspired to work for a company that has been involved with local foods for 127 years, and yet challenged in her efforts to earn Hannaford the proper credit it deserves. "Delivering a strong and sustainable local program has demanded a solid understanding of the ways in which local is unique within our business operations and building the infrastructure to support it," she explains. "I aim to make Hannaford the No. 1 destination for customers seeking high-quality, local products in the Northeast and connect them to the producers supplying these terrific products. Supporting local foods is the right thing to do for all of us — customers, producers, the environment and our business."



Michael Wise, 40
Vice President of Operations
The Horton Fruit Co., Inc.
Louisville, KY

Wise joined the Horton Fruit Co. about eight years ago, eventually working his way up to vice president of operations. His day is filled with the responsibility of buying, selling, transportation, new product devel-

opment, technology upgrades, food safety programs and chasing new business opportunities. He has been involved in several industry programs, including the first Leadership Development Class held at Cornell University and Class 14 of the United Fresh Produce Industry Leadership program.

Since he has been at Horton Fruit, he has successfully developed new retail and foodservice business opportunities in the Midwest and Southeast, which have played an instrumental part in the company's growth. His work in the implementation of category management strategies, as well as comprehensive sales and marketing programs, are key factors in the success of acquiring new business and maximizing sales of existing accounts.

Prior to working for Horton, he worked for Chiquita Brands for eight years in its Great White Fleet transportation operations, Sales Services Group and North American banana sales as a business development manager. Outside of the produce arena, he stays involved with his four children by coaching youth soccer and Little League baseball.

He is motivated by the constant change and need for adaptation. "As we all realize, the produce industry has changed quite a bit in the last 16 years," he states. "Addressing these constant changes and adapting to new environments have been challenging, yet very rewarding, and it has fueled my personal development."

Wise looks forward to the future being just as interesting, as the industry continues to take on challenges. He explains, "Challenges including traceability, food safety, labor issues, rising input costs, water shortages, health care, mergers and consolidations, childhood obesity and the ever unpredictable Mother Nature are just a few of what we'll need to confront. I want to help my company and our customers manage these situations and position ourselves as leaders in the industry who embrace change."

He notes having been fortunate to work with some outstanding individuals throughout his career, specifically Al "Buzz" Horton, chairman of Horton, and Jackson Woodward, company president and chief operating officer. "Buzz's wisdom, integrity and customer-first philosophy is the foundation of our company's success, and Jackson's leadership, passion and progressive vision will guide the evolution of Horton Fruit. These two have been instrumental in my personal and professional growth and are great friends to me and my family."

Take Part In Selecting Next Year's Nominees!

40 Under Forty is an annual feature of **PRODUCE BUSINESS** magazine. If you would like to nominate a young leader for next year's edition, please visit www.producebusiness.com or fax your nomination to 561-994-1610.

Next year's nominees must be under the age of 40 as of March 1, 2011 (born after March 1, 1971).

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Make Produce Sales Sizzle In The Summer

Consumers look forward to the bounty of summer crops, and showcasing what's fresh with clean, clear and creative displays is a guaranteed ring.

BY CAROL BAREUTHER, RD



Grilled stonefruit is a perfect, and unexpected, addition to a summer BBQ.

Summertime is when the produce department really shines. There's a full bounty of freshly harvested domestic produce, everything from apricots to zucchini. However, that doesn't mean merchandising is any less challenging. After all, there's the puzzle of trying to fit an infinite number of produce items in a finite display space and there's always competition from backyard gardens and farmer's markets. What's the solution? Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce and floral for Kings Super Markets Inc., a 25-store chain based in Parsippany, NJ, simply says, "We get creative."

PROMOTE AFTER MEMORIAL DAY

Memorial Day, traditionally the last weekend in May, is the unofficial start of summer. It's a holiday that retailers strive to be prepared for by promoting first-of-the-season fruits and vegetables. However, the real sales opportunity for items like California cherries isn't until the first few weeks of June. Jim Culbertson, executive manager of the Lodi-based California Cherry Advisory Board (CCAB), says, "For us, harvest starts just before Memorial Day.

Accordingly, the best time to promote California Bing cherries is two to three weeks after. Promotions need not be with a deep discount," he adds. "Few crops generate the same seasonal excitement as cherries. Simply let customers know they are available. Cherries offer a fairly good profit margin and retailers can take advantage of this."

While many retailers have already promoted strawberries for Valentine's Day in February, Gloria Chillon, director of marketing for Watsonville, CA-based Driscoll's points out, "The production trend for the entire berry category shows steady volume throughout the summer. The main holidays — Memorial Day, Father's Day and Fourth of July — will all have strong promotable volumes."

Cindy Jewell, director of marketing for California Giant Berry Farms, in Watsonville, CA, agrees and adds, "With larger pack styles available in strawberries, blueberries, blackberries and raspberries, there are many opportunities to drive demand from consumers celebrating holidays and special events during the summer."

Two-pound clamshells of strawberries should be a standard stock item in the summer, advises Jim Grabowski, marketing manager for Well-Pict Inc., headquartered in Watsonville, CA. "Even four-pounders are good to promote for picnics and barbecues. Similarly, 12-oz. blackberries and raspberries offer attractive price points this time of the year."

"For best display," suggests Chillon, "we recommend a Berry Patch strategy. That means having a prominent display of all of the berries in the front of the department. The great thing about this strategy is that if the store has one berry on promotion, the add-on sales of the other berries increase. Additionally, utilize promotions that encourage the purchase of multiple berries. Cross-berry promotions, such as buy-a-strawberry and save-on-a-raspberry-purchase, are very successful. BOGOs are also popular."

New this season, California Giant has completed production of four videos hosted by a professional chef. The videos directly address consumers on such topics as selecting berries at store level, best storage and handling practices at home and simple ways to incorporate berries into recipes.

BASKETBALL OUT, BASEBALL IN

The NBA Basketball Championships take place mid-June. Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Los Angeles, CA-based Melissa's/World Variety Produce, remarks, "Just like the Super Bowl is the big day for

Melon Promotions Celebrate Summer



Photo courtesy of the National Watermelon Board

There's nothing like watermelon to signal summer. This fruit draws customers into the Athabasca, Alberta, Canada, store of Buy-Low Foods, a Surrey, BC-based chain with 16 stores, thanks to the creative display and promotional efforts of Judy Gauthier, produce manager. "We're an hour north of Edmonton and it is cold for much of the year. In fact, during the winter, our produce comes delivered with a quilt over it to prevent it from freezing. So you can imagine how our customers enjoy summer, especially watermelon."

During a 4-week period that runs throughout July, Gauthier builds a different display nearly every week. Last year, for the first week of July, which celebrated July 1 as Canada Day — a holiday akin to the United States' Independence Day — the display featured red and white Canadian flags, half and quartered watermelon in front and whole watermelon in a bin in the back. The next week, the store's display literally took to the streets. Gauthier positioned a bin of whole watermelon accompanied by some children who sat at a small wooden picnic table munching watermelon on the back of a flatbed truck.

Customer Appreciation Day is a week-long celebration where many businesses in the town's downtown area offer special promotions. Gauthier set up a shopping cart of cut and whole watermelon outside Buy-Low. She carved one watermelon into a rose design and placed it in the middle of the display. To draw customers in, she sampled Watermelon S'Mores — small cups filled with bite-sized graham crackers, topped with chunks of watermelon, marsh-

mallows and a drizzle of chocolate.

The last week of the watermelon promotion was a true finale. "I made a train out of four bins of watermelon," Gauthier says. "Then at the end, for the caboose, I had a half bin with cut and mini watermelon. The display really caught customers' attention."

Watermelon is also featured in a big way at Hugo's Family Marketplace, an 8-store chain based in Grand Forks, ND. Lori Begg, produce manager at one Grand Forks location, says, "We'll build a big display with four bins of watermelon at the front entrance to the store. That will grab customers' attention the minute they walk in. We'll also sample the fruit on a tray set on a bed of ice that we refresh every two hours."

Begg will also use the warm summer months and peak availability to acquaint customers with a variety of melon. "We'll set up in-store displays of variety melons right next to the watermelon," she says. "As a result, we've seen sales of Casaba and Crenshaw melons really pick up. Pink honeydew is also selling better. Christmas Melon and Canary Melons are still something customers are getting to know, so they don't sell as well."

Begg scans the Internet for recipes, printing different melon recipes each week to place in a brochure holder next to the display. She also believes in the selling power of sampling. "Weekdays are better for sampling," she says. "It's typically less crowded and you can spend more time with the customer and educate them about the different types of melons, the flavors and how to pick a ripe one."

pb

Peaches Take Center Stage

Peaches are featured in retail promotions across the country each summer.

Last summer, Kings Super Markets, a 25-store chain based in Parsippany, NJ, celebrated the state's local peach harvest with its Beyond the Peach Pie Recipe Contest promotion. The New Jersey Peach Promotion Council also sponsored the contest, which ran during the last three weeks of July. Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce and floral, says, "The idea was to encourage customers to get creative and come up with their favorite peach recipe." It worked. Entry sheets for the contest were available at the New Jersey peach display at each of the chain's stores. Five finalists were selected and asked to prepare their recipes for judging at a NJ cooking studio. The Grand Prize winner, which made Peach

Cupcakes with Fresh Whipped Cream, received a 1-minute shopping spree at Kings, a tote of Jersey Fresh peaches and a Kings cooking studio gift certificate.

Peach Party is the name of a 9-year-old peach promotion that runs each July at Dorothy Lane Markets, a three-store chain based in Dayton, OH. Jose Manzano, produce director, says, "We wait until we can get peaches that Brix very high. Produce managers in each store have refractometers to test the Brix of the peaches on display that day. Then, we list that peach variety's name and Brix level on signage at the peach display. Customers will come in every day to check the Brix level of the peaches. Staff will also sample peaches each day."

It's Peach-O-Rama that draws customers to Metropolitan Markets, a 6-store chain based in Seattle, WA. "This is our 14th year,"

says Dino Medica, produce specialist. "We add new twists every year, but the basics stay the same." During a 4-week period that falls during peak peach production time, the chain sources ripe, ready-to-eat organic peaches from a farm in California and conventional peaches from a grower in Washington. Size and Brix level are important attributes produce buyers consider. The peaches are displayed in the front lobby of each store on two to three Euro tables. A 30-foot banner that hangs over the display announces the promotion. "This isn't a price-based promotion," explains Medica. "The conventional peaches will retail for around \$2 per pound and the organics nearly \$3 per pound. The selling point is quality. The peaches are so big and juicy that you need a couple of napkins when you're eating them." **pb**

football, this is the day for basketball. It's an ideal time to advertise guacamole and salsa ingredients, key limes, hummus, edamame and nuts."

This past summer, the Fresno-based California Table Grape Commission (CTGC)

introduced a pilot promotion that included sales of fresh grapes during San Francisco Giants' games, along with a retail volume contest at a Northern California chain where the winning produce manager was awarded a first pitch at one of the games.

Jim Howard, vice president of the CTGC, reports, "It was such a success that this year's promotion will be run in five markets – San Francisco, Los Angeles, St. Louis, Baltimore and Toronto." The promotion will run from late July to early September.



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"By mid-July, most of the key items are available and it's profitable to promote every week to keep the momentum going. Our recommendation is to promote as much as possible."

— Rob O'Rourke
RJO Produce Marketing

JUNE 20: FATHER'S DAY — A Great Grilling Holiday

Come Father's Day, men across America don aprons, grab tongs and head into the backyard to commune with the grill. Findings from the 2006 Grilling Man and Grilling Woman survey, conducted by the Quixote Group for propane company, Blue Rhino, revealed that about half of men surveyed described themselves as frequent grillers, while only slightly more than one-third of women said they frequent grill. The key is to get Dad to throw some veggies on the grill along with that steak.

"Potatoes, onions and corn are always popular for the grill," says Melissa's Schueller.

"There's good availability of supersweet corn out of Georgia in June, especially for the East Coast," remarks Jason Stemm, spokesperson for the Maitland, FL-based Fresh Supersweet Corn Council. "Corn in the husk sells well for grilling. Shoppers can also grill husked corn in foil. We recommend POS signage or ads that offer easy how-to tips for grilling fresh ears of corn."

"Bell peppers are also popular grill fare," adds Pete Aiello, family owner of Uesugi Farms Inc., in Gilroy, CA. "Mid-June is when peppers begin harvest and they peak in volume right out of the gate. All three colors sell, but in general, we sell two green for every red and for every five to 10 red, one yellow."

As for mushrooms, Joe Caldwell, vice president of Monterey Mushrooms Inc., in Watsonville, CA, reports, "We shift more production to brown mushrooms, especially Portabellos and Shiitakes, in the summer due to their popularity on the grill." This year, the company will introduce four Portabello mushroom caps packaged in a basket-like small cardboard tote. At test markets last year, retailers saw a 30 to 50 percent increase in sales with this pack."

"One category of products not often thought of for grilling is hard squash," notes

Karen Caplan, president of Frieda's Inc., located in Los Alamitos, CA. "Kabocha and butternut, for example, are available beginning late May."

Summer is the perfect time to cross merchandise in the produce department, contends Elena Hernandez, marketing coordinator at Salinas, CA-based Mann Packing Co. Inc. "A BBQ set will entice shoppers to plan their next cookout with an added fresh twist," she says. "For example, merchandise our Broccoli Slaw & Rainbow Salad with ribs. Showcase a summertime staple like potato salad, with our Broccoli Slaw, Sweet

Potato Cubes and condiment products, to create a colorful display." In mid-June, Mann's kicks off its annual Summer Slaw Spectacular promotion. This on-pack offer comes with a \$1 savings when customers buy any two of the company's slaw products. In 2009, the redemption rate was a remarkable 18 percent.

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Reader Service # 36

Locally Grown Produce Stars At Bristol Farms

Locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables have long been sold in the produce departments of Bristol Farms. This year, in response to industry trends and customer demand, the 14-store chain, based in Carson, CA, has launched a year-round locally grown program featuring fresh produce as well as other products throughout the store, such as floral, beef, poultry, deli cheeses and coffee. "The largest concentration of fresh local produce is in the summer," says John Savidan, director of produce merchandising and the man responsible for spearheading the locally grown program. "That's when we'll have fruits such as stone fruit, cherries, grapes, melons and berries, as well as all the vegetables, too. Virtually the entire wet rack is locally grown."

"For Bristol Farms, locally grown means

that the product was domestically grown less than eight hours away," explains Savidan. "Much of the fresh produce we source comes from farms that are virtually within a few hours of our distribution facility."

Banners in the produce department call out the adjectives that customers associate with locally grown, such as quality, freshness, value and sustainability. Bristol Farm's produce buyers purchase product from more than 100 farmer-partners. What's more, this season, five farmers, some with sales relationships with the chain that stretch back more than 15 years, are profiled on signage next to the item they grow. In addition, each locally grown produce item is affixed with a sticker unique to Bristol Farms. This sticker is also fastened to other local products throughout the store, making them easily identifiable.

pb

month of July was designated National Watermelon Month by Congress in 2008. But it doesn't stop there. The Fourth of July is one of the biggest produce sales events of the year, according to Wendell Hahn, director of sales and retail services for Four Seasons Produce Inc., in Ephrata, PA. "There's heavy movement on vegetables like tomatoes, summer squash and corn, as well as fruits such as strawberries, blueberries and watermelon."

Wayne Szabla, principal and family owner of Chicago, IL-based MelonSource Inc., says, "The first and second weeks of June offer great promotional opportunities leading right up to the Fourth of July. It's important to keep promotions going after the holiday as well. It's pretty much a seedless red market," he adds. "Volume is driven by bin sales of whole watermelon, but it's important to offer whole and cut watermelon during the summer to maximize sales."

Gordon Hunt, director of marketing for the Orlando, FL-based National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB), advises, "Offer a variety of sizes, everything from 4- to 5-lb. minis to large watermelons from 15 pounds up to 30." Last year, to encourage consumers to purchase all sizes of watermelon, the NWPB created carving directions to make a large watermelon into a soup tureen or punch bowl and small watermelons into soup bowls or cups. The Board also developed a Watermelon Gazpacho and Green Tea Punch to use with these carvings. "Research shows consumers want to know

more about the health benefits of eating watermelon as well as new ways to enjoy it," says Hunt. "So we helped them do that."

"This season, Pacific Northwest cherries will be available for Fourth of July promotions," reveals Roger Pepperl, marketing director for Stemilt Growers Inc., with headquarters in Wenatchee, WA. "There will also be promotable volumes right into the beginning of August."

Loren Queen, marketing and communications manager for Yakima, WA-based Domex Superfresh Growers LLC, points out, "Cherries work well with red, white and blue promotions for the Fourth of July, especially when they're front-and-center in the produce department." Last season, Domex test marketed a high-graphic display sleeve for its cherries. The sleeve fits over two apple boxes and can be filled with 2-lb. bags or clams. This year, the sleeve is available to all of the company's customers. "Research showed that when this display piece was used as a secondary placement for cherries in locations such as dairy, the meat department next to barbecue items, or the checkout, sales increased by 23 percent," adds Queen.

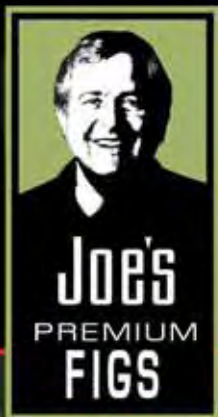
PLANT LOCALLY GROWN PRODUCE IN-STORE

There's been a growing interest by consumers in recent years for locally grown produce, says Frieda's Caplan. "Farmer's

SUMMER FRUIT SHOWCASE

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Reader Service #76



Summer's main holidays — Memorial Day, Father's Day and Independence Day — will all have strong promotable volumes of berries.

Markets are huge and there are a couple of trends at play. First, farmers can make more money selling direct to consumers and not having to pay a distributor. Secondly, they can sell fruit that doesn't look perfect, which is serious competition for supermarkets. As a result, we're seeing more retailers set up parking lot sales and major retailers, such as Wegmans and Meijers, featuring local growers and their products in-store."

Four Season's Hahn discloses, "We offer local strawberries, local tomatoes, local corn and we've got a short local peach window, too. We've got a buyer on the Leola auction here in Pennsylvania. We also buy direct from local Amish and Mennonite farmers in Lancaster County."

"Locally grown is a theme that we can support with our California-grown summer fruit,"

notes Jason Chavez, sales manager for Giumarra Bros. Fruit Co. Inc., in Reedley, CA.

"On the other hand," says Pepperl, "it's hard to be local when you're 2,500 miles away. That's why we're focusing on locale rather than locally grown. For example, our in-store collateral materials will focus on the Matheson family, who own Stemilt, their farming practices and this unique region. We're also reaching out to customers with a locale theme via a new Web site and social networking, such as a Facebook page and Twitter. Our slogan is, "Find us, friend us, farm with us."

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Reader Service #64

advantage of the fact that more consumers are outside picnicking and grilling and will want fresh summer fruit," says Chavez. "Use colorful, attractive displays to promote a varied mix of summer fruit, including peaches, nectarines and plums. Fruit should be ripe, and displays can highlight recipe ideas."

"Kick off the summer fruit season mid-June, with a front page ad, something like Summer Fruit Extravaganza," suggests Rob O'Rourke, senior vice president of retail development for RJO Produce Marketing, in Fresno, CA. "This gets the season going. By mid-July, most of the key items are available and it's profitable to promote every week to keep the momentum going. Our recommendation is to promote as much as possible."

Apricots are a favorite summer fruit. "This season, we'll have white-fleshed apricots called Angelcots from June 15 to July 10," says Frieda's Caplan. "They will be available in clamshell packs."

Domex's Queen says, "We're working on a bagged apricot program — two pounds with four to six pieces of fruit. This is a way to encourage customers to pick up more than they would have if they purchased the fruit loose."

Grapes are also a big seller in the summer. Melissa's Schueller reveals, "Champagne grapes as well as red and green Muscato are available from late June or early July until the first of September. These make good color and interest breaks within the grape display."

This season, the CTGC has partnered with the Food Network in a season-long campaign designed to showcase the culinary ver-

satility of grapes. The multi-faceted promotion will include 30-second vignettes by five nationally recognized chefs who will discuss why they enjoy using grapes in a signature recipe and two to three minute videos preparing these recipes on the California grape section of the Food Network Web site, which can be tagged to a retailer in a particular geo-targeted market. Retailers will also have an opportunity for ads in the Food Network print magazine that can also be regionally targeted. The entire campaign will have the largest consumer reach in the Commission's history, projected at 121 million impressions. Howard says, "We went with the Food Network for a number of reasons. One of them was that we've heard from retailers that they see a sales increase on items featured in recipes aired on the show." **pb**



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Reader Service #38

Abundant New Jersey Produce Proves The Garden State Is More Than Just A Nickname

The push for locally grown and a strong promotional program from the Department of Agriculture has helped Jersey-grown produce stay relevant, both at retail sales and in consumers' minds.

BY CAROL BAREUTHER, RD

New Jersey is the third smallest and the 11th most densely populated state in the nation.

This doesn't sound like a recipe for a vibrant agricultural industry, but it's indeed here. In fact, New Jersey ranks as one of the country's Top Ten producers of blueberries, cranberries, peaches, tomatoes, bell peppers, cucumbers, snap beans, spinach and squash. In 2008, the state's 10,327 farms generated cash receipts totaling \$1.12 billion — the first time in history that the state's agricultural sector, which is third behind pharmaceuticals and tourism in pumping money into the

state's treasury — surpassed the \$1 billion mark. Of this, cash receipts for fruits and vegetables totaled \$374 million.

Al Murray, assistant secretary of agriculture for the Trenton-based New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA), says, "The moniker Garden State fits in every way. We pack a lot of produce into a small area and are a big player in the national and international agricultural market."

A LONG AND DYNAMIC INDUSTRY

New Jersey's temperate climate, sandy loam soils and abundant rainfall are attributes that naturally support agriculture. Murray points out, "Farming in New Jersey has a 300-plus-year-old tradition. Some families can date their farming operation back to the 1600s."

In keeping with this rich history, smaller family-run, rather than large corporate farms, still dominate. New Jersey's some 800,000 acres of farmland translates to an average farm size of 79 acres. Some farms are much smaller, others larger. The state, for example, is home to the world's largest blueberry operation, Atlantic Blueberry, with 1,300 acres.

Efficiency is crucial when land is limited. Murray reports, "Many farmers plant double crops, sometimes three crops, in a season on the same land."

Diversity, too, is key. One hundred years ago, for example, the state had some 3,500 dairy farms. Today, there are only 94. Likewise, 50 years ago, the No. 1 agricultural commodity was eggs. Today, there are only two major poultry farms. Specialty crops now rule New Jersey's farmlands. The state's farmers grow more than 100 different types of fresh



Photo courtesy of New Jersey Department of Agriculture

New Jersey's 800,000 acres of farmland translates to an average farm size of 79 acres.



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fruits and vegetables.

Farmers continue to align their crops with market demand. For example, Peter Bylone, Sr., general manager of the Vineland Cooperative Produce Auction, in Vineland, NJ, one of the largest produce auctions on the East Coast, explains, "Changing demographics have created opportunities for farmers to grow a variety

of ethnic items such as hot peppers, cilantro and tomatillos, as well as fruits and vegetables that appeal to the Asian and East Indian market."

This bounty supports retail and foodservice operations in-state and out. Vincent Consalo, Jr., president of William Consalo & Sons Farms Inc., in Vineland, NJ, says, "We sell produce from New Jersey north to Canada,

south to Florida and west to Chicago. In addition, we're only two-and-a-half hours from New York City, three hours from Washington, D.C., and five hours from Boston. We sit right in the middle. There's only three months of the year we have no product."

Over the years, New Jersey's farmers have kept pace with technological advancements needed to meet industry demands. Bob Von Rohr, director of marketing and customer relations for Glassboro, NJ-based Jersey Fruit Co-Op Association Inc., says, "New Jersey continues to perfect automated bloom thinning to increase the size of peaches. Retailers look for 2 3/4 diameter and larger."

New machinery is also in use to pick blueberries, says Tim Wetherbee, sales manager for Hammonton, NJ-based Diamond Blueberry Inc. "There's a percent loss, so this is still limited to the process market," he adds. To deliver high quality blueberries to the fresh market, Wetherbee notes, "We have color sorters, soft sorters and a cross over belt that will carry off the stem clusters."

Cooling on New Jersey farms is also sophisticated. Thomas Sheppard, president of Eastern Fresh Growers Inc., and owner of

Locally Grown Hits New Jersey Restaurant Menus

Pick up a menu at any one of a number of fine dining restaurants in New Jersey and it's not uncommon to see the words 'local,' 'New Jersey,' or 'Jersey Fresh' highlighting various fresh fruit, vegetable and herb ingredients in a dish's description.

Elizabeth Alger, owner of The Frog & The Peach, in New Brunswick, NJ, and immediate past chairwoman of the New Jersey Restaurant Association, buys from a local distributor who goes from farm to farm and then calls on his restaurant accounts. "He calls us first and lets us know what's available and for how long it will be available. This really helps with menu planning," says Alger. "My chef also relies heavily on the weekly market reports sent out by the New Jersey Department of Agriculture."

This fresh produce is incorporated into the restaurant's regular menu as well as two seasonally changing Farm-To-Table menus that vary by price. Menu items have included, for example, Ricotta Gnocchi with New Jersey Tomatoes, Basil and Parmesan and Chicken Meatballs Stuffed with Fontina and Braised with Local Greens and Black Truffle Tomato Pan Gravy.

Still, distributors dealing in locally grown

produce are not the norm. Matthew Zappoli, chef and owner of Tre Amici, in Long Branch, NJ, says, "There are not as many distributors that handle local produce as I would like. But, we have one guy who sources from New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania, and I get a few items from him, but otherwise I get it myself from the farmer's markets in Long Branch and Red Bank. It's tough to find a farmer who will deliver. It's just not cost effective for them."

Zappoli uses New Jersey eggplant to make eggplant Parmesan, tomatoes in salads, herbs in several dishes and apricots for dessert either poached or on cakes.

Shopping the farmer's markets is also what Chef Mark Smith, at the Tortilla Press and Tortilla Press Cantina, in Collingswood, NJ, does. He also goes straight to the New Jersey farmers themselves. Smith says, "I prefer not to use a middle man or a wholesaler. That's because I've established long lasting friendships and business relationships with many farmers over the years and now routinely stop at their farms to pick up that week's freshly harvested produce."

In season, Smith makes his Pico de Gallo with locally grown Ramapo tomatoes. Grilled Jersey asparagus is served as a side, in salads



Photo courtesy of The Frog & The Peach

The Frog & The Peach uses Jersey-grown produce for its Hothouse Jersey Tomatoes layered with julienned Celery Root Remoulade, Cilantro Oil.

and in quesadilla specials. Sweet corn quesadillas, made with the state's corn, is a hit in the summer. Smith adds, "Each year, I hold several Farm to Fork dinners in which every single course revolves around local farm produce. I also bring in the farmers and we talk to a restaurant full of people before each course, explaining how the food they're eating is grown and harvested and how it's prepared. It's a delicious way to get an education."

For Smith, it's all about taste. "The flavors are so fresh and intense that when we're in season, I routinely reprint all my menus letting guests know which farm the vegetables are coming from. Our guest reaction is everything you could imagine."

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Sheppard Farms, in Cedarville, NJ, says, "We have vacuum cooling, hydro-cooling and force-air cooling capabilities." In addition, Sheppard adds, "The fresh-cut salad companies and chain stores we sell to are adamant about food safety. For example, we're third-party audited, have full traceability and our wells and tissue samples of the crop are tested regularly. Our workers even harvest wearing latex gloves."

Even the selling of produce in the state is high-tech. For example, the Vineland Produce Auction has a state-of-the-art electronic auction clock. Each transaction or

sale takes approximately 20 seconds per lot, in lot sizes of 25 to 164 packages per sale at a time. The auction moves some 7 million packages of produce annually from April to November.

TOP CROPS

Blueberries, followed by tomatoes, peaches and bell peppers were among the Top Ten fruit and vegetables grown in New Jersey in 2009 as ranked by dollar sales, according to the USDA's Agricultural Statistics Service New Jersey Field Office, in Trenton.

Blueberries: Production of blueberries

Top 10 Fruits & Vegetables By Pounds

Item	Pounds (million)
1. Bell Peppers	92.8
2. Sweet Corn	78.1
3. Peaches	66.0
4. Tomatoes	63.8
5. Cranberries	55.5
6. Cabbage	55.2
7. Blueberries	53.0
8. Apples	44.0
9. Cucumbers	40.3
10. Lettuce	36.0

Source: USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, New Jersey Field Office, Trenton, NJ, 2009

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in 2009 totaled 53 million pounds and \$65.2 million, according to USDA statistics. Art Galleta, president and family owner of Atlantic Blueberry Co. Inc., in Hammonton, NJ, says, "The wild blueberry is native to New Jersey. Today, we cultivate high bush blueberries. The blueberries grown in Michigan, the Carolinas and Northwest all come from original New Jersey stock."

The state's blueberry harvest starts mid-June, in time for the Fourth of July retail ads, and will run into mid-August. It's a prime, though potentially competitive window. Galleta says, "The Carolinas and Georgia usually slow down by the time we come in and Michigan typically starts three to four weeks later, so there's a little window. But, Georgia can sometimes run late and into our window."

Virtually all of New Jersey's blueberries are packaged into clamshells. Nick Giordano, vice president of The Fresh Wave LLC, headquartered in Vineland, NJ, says, "The standard pack is one dry pint. Everyone wants to find a packaging niche, so you'll see all sizes, including 18 ounces, 2 pounds and 2³/₄ pounds for club stores. There's no 4.4- or 6-oz., though; we have way too much volume too fast to make the smaller packs practical."

Tomatoes: Production of tomatoes in 2009 totaled 63.8 million pounds and \$33.9 million, according to USDA statistics. It's not so much the soil as it is the temperature that makes Southern New Jersey farmlands bordering the Delaware River so productive for growing high quality tomatoes, says Joe Procacci, president at Procacci Marketing in Vineland, PA. "The nighttime ambient temperatures are two to three degrees higher,

Top 10 Fruits & Vegetables By Dollars

Item	Dollars (million)
1. Blueberries	\$65.2
2. Tomatoes	\$33.9
3. Peaches	\$33.6
4. Bell Pepper	\$31.3
5. Cranberries	\$30.8
6. Sweet Corn	\$22.8
7. Apples	\$17.8
8. Lettuce	\$13.7
9. Cucumbers	\$11.2
10. Cabbage	\$8.7

Source: USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, New Jersey Field Office, Trenton, NJ, 2009

tion for some two-and-a-half months, barring short windows of production out of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, the Hudson Valley, New York and Rochester.”

Peaches: Production of peaches in 2009 totaled 66 million pounds and \$33.6 million, according to USDA statistics. Phil Neary, general manager of Jersey Fruit Co-Op, says, “The benefit we have being so close to a large customer base is that we can pick fruit closer to maturity. Literally, we can pick, pack and ship it and our retail customers will have it the next day.”

New Jersey’s peach season starts the beginning of July and runs through the end of September. Jerome Frecon, agricultural agent and department head at the Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Gloucester County, in Clayton, NJ, says, “Ninety to 95 percent of the peaches are grown south of Trenton. Acreage has been creeping down over the years, but now is steady.”

Approximately 8 to 10 percent of New Jersey’s peach crop is white-fleshed varieties. The state’s nectarine crop is about 5 to 10 percent of the volume of the peach crop and made up of yellow and white-fleshed varieties.

The standard pack for New Jersey peaches is a 1/2-bushel loose-filled box. In recent years, packers and shippers have developed various specialty packs to provide value-added marketing opportunities and to service customers that require special packaging needs. “This means we’ll pack bags, 3-lb. clamshells, 4- to 5-lb. gift boxes, totes — whatever a retailer wants.”

Vegetables: New Jersey’s highest tonnage crop is bell peppers, with production at 92.8 million pounds in 2009. Sweet corn followed at 78.1 million pounds. Also rank-

ing in the Top Ten were cabbage (55.2 million pounds), cucumbers (40.3 million pounds) and lettuce (36 million pounds).

Asparagus is one of the first crops harvested in the state, typically coming in mid- to late April. Eastern Fresh Grower’s Shepard says, “We now offer a 10-oz. microwavable pack of fresh asparagus.”

Greens, like a variety of lettuces, also harvest in the spring and again in the fall. “In between,” says Consalo & Son’s Consalo, “there’s peppers, squash, eggplant, zucchini, cucumbers, about 50 to 60 different types of vegetables. It is pretty diverse.”

Sweet potato and yam production is also on the rise in the state. Fresh Wave’s Giordano says, “These are growing in popularity. We’ll harvest at the end of summer and the supply will last into January. We market them in 3- and 5-lb. bags.”

RETAILERS EMBRACE JERSEY FRESH

Many major retailers have taken Jersey Fresh to heart and promoted state-grown produce in-store. Karen Meleta, spokeswoman for ShopRite Supermarkets, a 46-store chain owned and operated under the

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Jersey Fresh

Jersey Fresh is the Trenton-based New Jersey Department of Agriculture's (NJDA) advertising and promotional program. Its aim has been to help farmers inform consumers about the availability of locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables. The program was developed in 1983, making it the oldest program of its type in the nation. A tracking study conducted in 2002 revealed that 41 percent of shoppers in the New York-Philadelphia metropolitan region were aware of the Jersey Fresh program.

Al Murray, assistant secretary of agriculture for the NJDA, says, "We haven't repeated that study, but the trend for locally grown has really given Jersey Fresh an extra boost in recent years. Consumers now pay attention to where their food is grown. As a result, retailers are now are stocking more New Jersey produce, whereas five or six years ago they were sticking with California product all year.

Budget constraints have whittled the Jersey Fresh operating budget to \$150,000 this year. Even so, radio advertising will be

part of the 2010 season program as will point-of-purchase materials available to retailers. In addition, farmers who register and are licensed with the Jersey Fresh Quality Grading Program can use the Jersey Fresh logo on their product's packages.

Other organizations promote New Jersey produce, too. For example, the Hammononton-based New Jersey Blueberry Industry Advisory Council has sponsored radio advertising and in-store demos in cooperation with the Jersey Fresh program. Last year, to raise public awareness and build retail and wholesale sales for New Jersey peaches, the Clayton-based New Jersey Peach Promotion Council (PPC) launched a successful series of Peach Parties during the month of August at farmer's markets, farm stands, supermarkets and restaurants. Pegi Adam, public relations specialist for the PPC, says "We have revised our Web site so that banners, 5x7-inch price cards, 3x5-inch recipe cards and our 24-page recipe book are available for download."

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Elizabeth, NJ-based Wakefern Food Corp., says, "We're proud to support our local farmers. Working closely with local farmers and Departments of Agriculture, we continually strive to communicate the quality and availability of locally grown produce to our more than 5 million weekly customers." According to ShopRite's Web site, the Medford, NJ, store alone purchases more than \$500,000 in New Jersey-grown produce from the Wakefern Warehouse and directly from farmers.

Foodtown Supermarkets, a chain of 65 independently owned stores based in Avenel, NJ, was among the first to embrace Jersey Fresh. Dean Holmquist, director of produce and floral, says, "We held an outdoor farmer's tent sale in the mid-1980s. It was a big deal. After that, the word was out to our customers and they started looking for Jersey-grown produce each year."

Prior to the start of each season, Holmquist says staff members from the NJDA meet with him and his staff to plan ahead. "This really helps," he says. "As a produce director, I know about when each crop will be available, but meeting with Department staff and then receiving the weekly bulletin updates really helps us gear our ads in a timely manner."

Similarly, all five produce managers at Murphy's Marketplace, a five-store chain

based in Tabernacle, NJ, along with produce supervisor, Ed Blade, will head out on a farm tour in the spring arranged by the chain's major distributor. Most of the chain's local produce is harvested within a 10 to 60 mile radius. Blade says, "Meeting the farmers in person makes the deal easier. As a result, when there's a shortage, they tend to give us the preferred product."

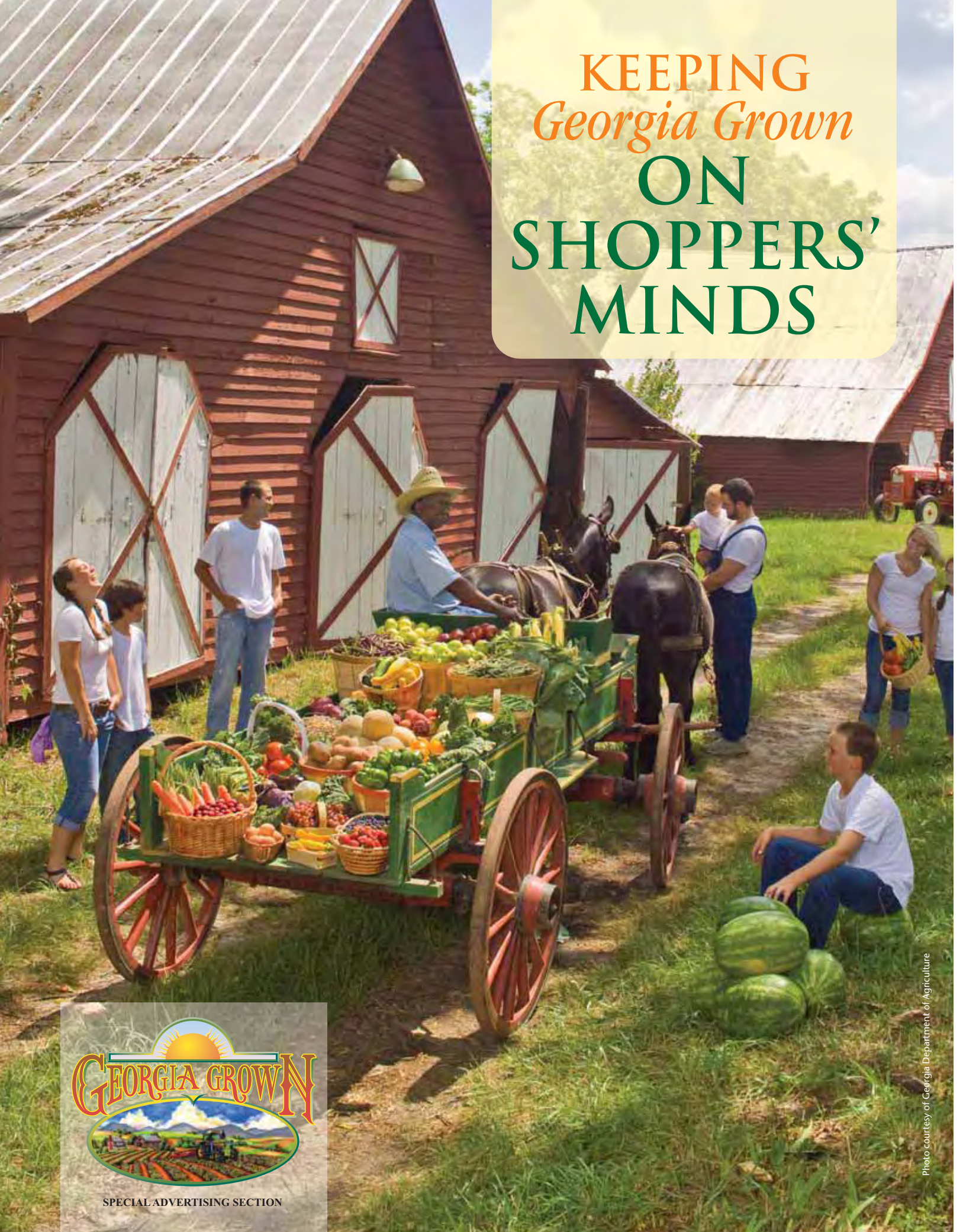
In addition to carrying a variety of New Jersey produce throughout the season, some retail chains will also host special promotions. Last year, for example, Kings Super Markets Inc., a 25-store chain based in Parsippany, NJ, held its Beyond the Peach Pie Recipe Contest in coordination with the New Jersey Peach Promotion Council.

"In addition," says Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce and floral, "We hold a King's Farmer's Market each year. It will run from the Fourth of July through Labor Day." A wide variety of Jersey grown produce is displayed in bushel baskets under a Jersey Fresh banner supplied by the NJDA. Last year, Kneeland added a new twist by asking two farmers for a family recipe to merchandize by their product. Thus, shoppers were able to pick up Mama Galantes Zucchini Patties from Maueri Farms in Oldmans Creek, NJ, and Tonetta's Tomato Mozzarella and Basil Salad from Tonetta Farm in Vineland, NJ.

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Reader Service # 42

KEEPING *Georgia Grown* ON SHOPPERS' MINDS



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KEEPING *GEORGIA GROWN* ON SHOPPERS' MINDS

Georgia's proximity to Eastern markets and its vast array of fruit and vegetables make the state perfectly poised to capitalize on the locally grown demand.

By Ken Hodge



Just an old sweet song may keep Georgia on your mind, but what's really sweet is the tantalizing array of fresh fruits and vegetables produced by dedicated growers in the Peach State. Retailers such as Harveys Supermarkets, Food Lion, Publix Super Markets Inc., The Kroger Company, and others get busy during Georgia's peak harvest seasons, promoting all kinds of sweet, locally grown items from peaches and watermelons to yellow squash, carrots, cucumbers and sweet corn.

A COORDINATED EFFORT

When shoppers see displays of Georgia Grown fruits and

vegetables and take them home, they're merely acting out the final scene in a major cooperative effort that begins with planting and culminates at the dinner table. It's an endeavor that involves the concerted contributions of many people, from the Georgia Department of Agriculture to the growers they serve and the buyers, retailers and restaurants that offer Georgia Grown produce to the public.

"We began working with the Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA) before we opened our first store in Georgia nearly 20 years ago," recalls Brenda Reid, media and community relations manager for Publix Super Markets Inc., based in Lakeland, FL. "We have a great relationship with the GDA and



enjoy supporting their campaigns whenever possible. We appreciate their efforts to organize this campaign each year. It helps us connect to our consumers in a grassroots way. Oftentimes, Publix places the Georgia Grown logo in ads, and signs are placed in the stores to promote the freshness. In fact, at the end of May, Publix began promoting Georgia blueberries.”

At Kroger Co., headquartered in Cincinnati, OH, locally grown produce plays a significant role in pleasing consumers with fresher and tastier fruits and vegetables. “Kroger purchases produce from local growers who provide consumers with the freshest, most nutritious produce available in the Southeast,” explains Glynn Jenkins, director of communications and public relations for Kroger’s Atlanta Division. “Consumers recognize that purchasing produce from local farmers has significant advantages, including helping the economy in the communities we serve and faster deliveries to our stores. Faster shipping means even fresher produce because the items are picked and packed at a more mature stage, bringing out the flavor in the product. Locally grown food also means less fossil fuel burned during preparation and transport and less energy needed to refrigerate it during transportation, which promotes sustainability as well.”

“Consumers recognize that purchasing produce from local farmers has significant advantages, including helping the economy in the communities we serve and faster delivery to our stores.”

— GLYNN JENKINS
KROGER CO.

Andrew Scott, sales and procurement manager for General Produce Inc., a wholesaler at the State Farmers’ Market, based in Forest Park, agrees, “Georgia Grown is good for the Georgia economy, for its farmers and the residents who pur-

chase these commodities from their local supermarket. Retailers in Georgia benefit from freshness of produce — cut one day and delivered the next,” he adds. “They can also work their inventories more closely, knowing they have product just a day away from their distribution centers. They can cut down on empty return miles by picking up Georgia grown back-hauls on their own trucks. There are fewer food miles traveled from field to store and faster turns with their inventory. Consumers benefit from better pricing, fresher produce and supporting Georgia’s local farmers, suppliers and our state economy.”

At Lewis Taylor Farms Inc., in Tifton, GA, Bill Brim, co-owner, agrees Georgia’s proximity to Eastern markets is an important ingredient in providing the freshness and quality that make Georgia Grown fruits and vegetables popular with consumers. “We do everything we can to work with all the chains to promote Georgia Grown product,” Brim points out. “We push it pretty hard. The Georgia Grown program has most definitely had a good impact. Georgia Grown and sustainability have come together in our state. We move an amount of product that we wouldn’t have been able to move in the past. People look for Georgia Grown. There is definitely more demand for our products, whether it’s Georgia Grown or locally grown. Consumers are more



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aware of locally grown produce in general. They feel like they get fresher product. With our transportation system, we can get our produce to the Northeast and everywhere East of the Mississippi within 24 hours.”

Providing the freshness and quality consumers love is one factor driving the growth of Georgia Grown products, according to Brim, but rising transportation costs are another. “Getting things

here from California is so expensive,” he reasons. “Georgia growers are trying to pick up the slack with things we can grow here and, with rising transportation costs, it seems to be working. It gives us new items that can be grown in Georgia and enables us to get them to retailers more quickly. They are fresher, more wholesome and more sustainable. We’re growing some specialty peppers and we’re also growing more broccoli, some different lettuces and other things to see if we can



Photo courtesy of National Watermelon Board

capture some of the local markets for these local crops.”

SUPPORTING GEORGIA GROWN

In the produce section of its Web site, Harveys displays the colorful “Georgia Grown” trademark logo. Consumers can click the “Local Grown” link on that page and read about featured local farm families who supply produce to Harveys. The page explains, “Harveys Supermarkets carry many produce items that are grown locally by Georgia farmers. By purchasing Georgia Grown produce, you are not only contributing to your local economy, but you are getting the freshest produce around. Georgia Grown produce is naturally fresher than produce that is brought in from out-of-state.”

The contributions Georgia farmers make to their local economy are the focus of this year’s annual “Local Grown” promotion, according to Michael Purvis, director of produce at J.H. Harvey Co. LLC, headquartered in Nashville, GA. “Every year, we do a big Georgia Grown promotional campaign,” Purvis points out. “We’re original born-and-bred. Our company started here in 1924 and a lot of our success, as well as the success of our vendors, depends on the partnerships we have. We’re very proud of our local partners. In the environment and economy we’re in, we wanted to promote what our local agriculture does for the economy in the state of Georgia,” Purvis continues. “Consumers like local, fresh produce and,

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being in the heart of South Georgia, we can give them that fresh produce that was picked yesterday and have it in our stores the next day. Our slogan is 'Fresh from the field to your table.'"

J.H. Harvey creates TV commercials

featuring family farmers and their products, according to produce buyer, Seab Temples. In the produce aisles of its stores, the company also displays photos of growers, their names and the year their family farm started growing the commodity on sale. "We visit their farms and learn about their products all the way from

planting the seed to getting it to our distribution center. The growers in the commercials become stars in their hometowns," Temples explains. "It ties them to the community and the public. They say, 'Hey, I know that guy and he has products right here at Harveys.' Consumers respond to these portraits of growers."

GEORGIA GROWERS WORK TO KEEP PRODUCE SAFE

Food safety is a pressing concern for fruit and vegetable growers in Georgia. Preventing outbreaks of food-borne illness is the primary goal, but meeting the requirements of various audits used by produce buyers can sometimes add unnecessarily to the effort and cost required for compliance.

Speaking of food safety audits, Charles Hall, executive director of the Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association (GFVGA) in LaGrange, says growers in the state are encouraged to take the standards seriously, but are not actually required by law to do so. "Those are things that are important from a retailer's standpoint," Hall points out. "You don't have to have third-party audits when you use the Georgia Grown logo, but most of the growers have some kind of food safety program on their farms."

Lewis Taylor Farms Inc. of Tifton, GA, is one Georgia producer that has voluntarily implemented food safety and quality practices on the farm to provide the best possible product for consumers. "We have our own food safety staff," reports Bill Brim, co-owner of the firm, whose products are marketed by Boca Raton, FL-based Rosemont Farms. "We work at quality and food safety every day. I think we're safer than organic growers. We scout all our crops twice a week, checking all our safety measures. We can trace every box back to every field."

Lewis Taylor Farms has also invested in cooling equipment to protect and preserve the freshly picked quality of produce when it comes in from the field. Brim says the farm uses slush ice to cool broccoli and uses hydrocoolers on all melons to "bring down the temperature and break that heat curve," as soon after harvest as possible.

Andrew Scott, sales and procurement manager for General Produce, Inc. of Forest Park, GA, says his firm buys produce only from growers who are certified under Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP), established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as well as Primus-audited vendors. "By buying from these quality growers and shippers, we feel assured the quality and safety of the fruits and vegetables we buy will meet

the requirements of our customers," Scott explains. "We also buy from vendors who have a strong traceability program, as we have recently purchased our GTN [Global Transportation Network] number. Here at General Produce, we have been stickering every case of produce with a lot number since 1996.

Glynn Jenkins, director of communications and public relations for Kroger Company's Atlanta Division, agrees, "Food safety for Kroger customers is first and foremost. Kroger buys from local farmers we trust that provide exceptional quality, freshness and adherence to high food safety standards. Knowing where our produce comes from and how it is grown enables us to choose safe food from growers who avoid or reduce their use of chemicals, pesticides or genetically modified seed in their operations."

Brenda Reid, media and community relations manager for Publix Super Markets, in Lakeland, FL, says, "We take food safety extremely seriously at Publix. All of our managers are certified in food safety. We ask our buyers to buy only products they would serve to their own children. We require that our suppliers provide third-party audits. Our corporate quality assurance department evaluates the audits closely. If a score does not meet our high standards, we take action immediately to assure that we provide only the safest products to our customers. We work very closely with the GDA on food safety compliance. They are a great source for the growers, as well. Together, we make a strong team and are committed to providing the safest products for customers."

Food safety inspections may be necessary in today's produce industry, but leaders are working with buyers to harmonize the audits used to certify growers. Their goal is to minimize variations in audit questions and simplify compliance without compromising safety, according to Beth Bland, director of education for the GFVGA. She says the yearlong discussions are "absolutely" making progress and the group is close to completing the process. "There have been an average of 30 to 40 people at these meetings," Bland recounts. "Farmers have gotten involved and are voicing their opinions. We



divided up the audit questions into 69 categories. At the last meeting I attended, we had about 20 left to harmonize. The goal has not been to rewrite audit questions, but to harmonize the audits. We're comparing 12 to 16 actual audits.

"It seems that water and workers are the top two food safety issues," Bland elaborates. "In the five years I've been doing this, the really big growers were the first ones to begin asking about how to meet food safety requirements. Now I'm seeing a big push from mid- to small-sized growers. More of them are asking what these procedures are and what it costs to implement them. The number of producers has definitely increased since last year."

As buyers become more adamant about food safety compliance, there's no doubt that compliance is becoming more important. The question remains: Can the process be simplified across the industry to make it easier for producers to supply multiple vendors?

"This whole thing has been customer-driven," according to Bland. "In Georgia, there is nothing mandatory for growers except the requirements of their customers."

At the retail level, Seab Temples, produce buyer at J. H. Harvey Co., in Nashville, GA, agrees that food safety is "not where it ought to be, but everybody is making strides. We just don't buy from someone off the street. They have to be an approved vendor and go through our checking process." **GA**



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“Local growers work really closely with us, especially on setting a price point, so we can offer our consumers the best price,” Temples adds. “There is generally a freight savings working with local folks and you get a fresher product. You also get a quicker turn because you don’t have to store so much of it. We also partner with some of the growers to do in-store display contests. Our main local items are peaches, Vidalias and most of the Southern vegetables — squash, beans, watermelon and Athena cantaloupes.”

A grower of sweet corn and watermelons, Bo Herndon of L.G. Herndon, Jr. Farms Inc., in Lyons, GA, says he works with a retailer that promotes his corn as locally grown, stimulating product movement. “It lets consumers know our product is getting from the farm to the grocery store just about immediately,” he explains. “They know that helps the freshness. It’s just like going to the garden and picking it like people used to do. We grow nothing but Supersweet varieties. Demand has really grown since I’ve been planting those. We’ve increased our crop about 100 acres this year.”

Retailers, in general, are fervent supporters of Georgia Grown fruits and vegetables, agrees Scott of General Produce. “Here in Georgia, retailers do a very good job of promoting and supporting the Georgia Grown program, including putting the Georgia Grown logo in their ads,” he says. “Some go so far as incorporating local farmers into their TV and newspaper ads. Supporting Georgia Grown benefits both retailers and food-service operators.”

Publix’s Reid says, “Purchasing Georgia Grown produce is a win-win for both our customers and Publix. Our suppliers pick fruits and vegetables at their season’s peak. Since it’s a shorter trip to market, we all win with freshness, quality and savings. We have an At Season’s Peak campaign that informs customers of peak growing seasons in Georgia so they can select items at their peak freshness. Berries are sweeter, corn is juicier and greens are more tender when you pick during peak seasons. Our customers appreciate knowing when the peak seasons occur.”

Reid adds shoppers look forward to buying homegrown Vidalia onions when they’re in season and Publix carries a

TOMMY IRVIN AND THE SPIRIT OF GEORGIA AGRICULTURE



If it’s true that “attitude reflects leadership,” then the uncommon spirit of down-home pride pervading Georgia agriculture almost certainly reflects the leadership of Commissioner Tommy Irvin of the Atlanta-based Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA) during more than 41 years of service to the industry.

The American Farm Bureau Federation recently bestowed its Distinguished Service Award on Mr. Irvin, elevating him to a select group of elite farm leaders including Senators Sam Nunn, Bob Dole, Mitch McConnell and others. The nomination papers for this award detailed many of Irvin’s efforts to improve Georgia agriculture, leading to changes that were felt not only in the state, but also around the nation and the world.

Among many other accomplishments, he initiated an agriculture international trade division in the GDA, an effort that has put Georgia products on menus throughout the world. His aggressive programs to eradicate and control animal diseases and plant pests helped to stabilize the economic climate and establish a quality benchmark for the state’s products.

Irvin has served as commissioner of agriculture for a record 41 years. During that time, he saw Georgia peanuts through a food safety scare, created the Georgia Grown program for promoting the state’s farm products and helped the state become the first to eradicate the Boll weevil in its cotton crop.

He has given more than 54 years to public service and plans to retire at the beginning of 2011. The tribute at the AFBF Convention in Seattle this past January featured a video about Mr. Irvin’s career. **GA**

“Purchasing Georgia Grown produce is a win-win for both our customers and Publix. Our suppliers pick fruits and vegetables at their season’s peak. Since it’s a shorter trip to market, we all win with freshness, quality and savings.”

— BRENDA REID
PUBLIX SUPER MARKETS INC.

variety of other Georgia Grown produce, including peaches, Asian pears, Muscadine grapes, blackberries, cabbage, broccoli, Napa cabbage green beans and more.

HOME COURT ADVANTAGE

Chris Grizzaffe, general manager of Produce Exchange of Atlanta Inc., another wholesale supplier located at the State Farmers’ Market, says the Georgia Grown program has benefited the produce industry. “Georgia always has good

produce,” he reasons. “We have a lot of success with Georgia produce. We’ve been dealing with growers in South Georgia for a lot of years. Our business is mainly local. We try to stick to the standard Southern vegetable line and do a lot of potatoes and onions.”

“We’ve been a lot busier lately than we were a few months ago,” Grizzaffe elaborates. “We didn’t know where the roller coaster was going. We just put on



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the seat belt and held on for the ride. I think we're looking at a bit of an upswing now. Locally grown produce is an advantage. It's closer to where you sell it. It's easier for people to go local and be right there where it's available. It's like having the home

REACHING OUT TO CHILDREN

When it comes to promoting Georgia Grown fruits and vegetables, even Imagine It! The Children's Museum of Atlanta and some public school systems in the state are getting on the wagon. The museum's 2010 *Eat a Georgia Rainbow* program is a yearlong series of Sunday programs celebrating Georgia grown fruits, vegetables and other foods to encourage children and adults to eat a healthful diet.

The program includes a story about a food item such as carrots or beets, a treasure hunt and a new dish prepared by a guest chef with the chosen food to acquaint children with it and encourage them to create dishes with seasonal fruits, vegetables or other foods. The museum partners with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration whose newsletter, "Nibbles for Health," suggests ways to get children to try nutritious foods. "We're getting a lot of participation and people are very enthusiastic about the program," says Karen Kelly, director of exhibits and education. "We have funding from a specialty crops grant through the GDA."

Georgia Organics, an Atlanta-based member supported, non-profit organization that works to integrate healthful, sustainable and locally grown food into the daily lives of all Georgians, is another partner in the museum's program and works with public schools as well to encourage children to eat fruits and vegetables. "It's all about getting kids to learn more about where food comes from and getting them to taste locally grown foods and ask for them," says Erin Croom, farm-to-school coordinator for Georgia Organics. "It's a multi-partner approach, which makes it more exciting. We're working with school systems and others, including the GDA, the Georgia Department of Education, USDA and the extension service, trying to figure out a strategy for how we can start thoughtfully incorporating more locally grown food into school cafeteria menus." **GA**



Harveys Supermarkets displays the names and photos of growers, along with the year their family farm started growing their particular commodity, on signs throughout the produce department to familiarize consumers with their local farmers.

Photo courtesy of Harveys Supermarkets

court advantage."

Many Georgia growers are trying new crops and new varieties in an effort to bring consumers more choices, higher quality and a better eating experience. Such new items are always good for business, especially if they're locally grown, according to Steve Sterling, a partner in Blackwater Produce LLC of Lake Park, GA. "Buyers like the idea of being able to mix up a bunch of different items at one place," Sterling asserts. "It's an advantage. People like the idea of a one-stop shop. Blackberries and blueberries are becoming popular and broccoli is a newer item that's definitely coming on. We are investigating it. The public likes to hear locally grown, too. The real issue is freight rates. East Coast items are closer to the buyers and it all adds together.

LOCAL VIDALIA ONIONS

More and more consumers want flavor, color and variety in the foods they eat, and many are seeking to connect with the farm

when they buy locally grown items. In response, some grocers are promoting family farms in their produce departments to help bring shoppers closer to the source of the fresh fruits and vegetables they eat, according to Brian Stanley, who is in charge of marketing at Stanley Farms, his family's onion operation out of Vidalia, GA.

It seems growing fresh Georgia produce is a lifestyle that generates interest from consumers who love visiting local farms, often to pick their own produce. "A lot of folks are starting to take an interest in family farms," Stanley reports. "Buyers want to deal directly with farms more than they have in the past. A lot of buyers come down and visit us. They take tours. They see how we get along. Stanley Farms involves our whole family. My brother, Vince, manages the processing side. Tracy is an ag engineer and keeps the machinery running on the farm and in the processing plant. I'm more on the marketing side, and our dad, R.T. Stanley, is the farmer. He's always out in

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the field making sure everything is going okay. My brothers and I are the third generation,”

Brian continues. “Dad has been in onions since 1975. He started as a sharecropper with five acres and now he grows a thousand. Quite a few retail chains in Georgia take the time to come here and do interviews with us and then promote Stanley Farms in their stores. Harveys Supermarkets is a big supporter.”

A SYMBOL OF GEORGIA

Stanley marks all bags and boxes of Vidalia onions as Georgia Grown, no matter their ultimate destination. He says he and his family have always been big supporters of Commissioner Tommy Irvin. “We ship to Canada and everywhere,” he reports. “People in other areas may not know Vidalia onions are grown in Georgia, so I just put a big G on all of our packages that says ‘Georgia Grown.’ The state has always tried to help the Vidalia industry and we just feel we should support them and our Georgia Grown products, too.”

At Bland Farms LLC, in Glennville, GA, Delbert Bland, managing member, reports his family operation focuses entirely on Vidalia onions and demand for this unusually sweet variety is continuing to grow. “We use the Georgia Grown logo,” he asserts. “I think any time you have the logo on these onions it makes a difference,

especially in Georgia. I think it’s extra-special because Vidalias are grown only in Georgia. People look to Georgia for these special onions and the Georgia name means a lot to people, even outside the state. It seems we have more demand for Vidalias every year,” Bland adds. “The sweet onion category itself has grown over the past two or three years. Vidalia sales have been growing, too, because they’re the leader out of that group.”

Bland says the Vidalia Onion Committee’s new Ogres and Onions promotional campaign is already working well for the 2010 crop that officially began shipping April 27. Consumers who buy Vidalia onions at retail will find them in bins and bags that picture the cartoon character Shrek with Vidalia onions. “It has been tremendously successful for us already,” Bland reports. “We’re very pleased with it. I think it will sell more onions. Getting children to notice Vidalias is also a good idea.”

Authentic Vidalia onions must be grown in Georgia and, thus, are synonymous with the state, according to Wendy Brannen, executive director of the Vidalia-based Vidalia Onion Committee (VOC). “I’m always an advocate of the Georgia Grown initiative because I work with Vidalia onions and promote them as specifically coming from Georgia. For our crop, we have a great sense of state pride. I don’t think we can separate Georgia from Vidalia onions. We’ve always worked in conjunc-

tion with the state and they’ve always been very supportive. Commissioner Tommy Irvin has been a longtime supporter of Vidalia onions and has worked with us for years, getting us off the ground as a fledgling industry to become a widespread national product with huge consumer recognition. We know he’s for everyone’s product here in Georgia. There is that state pride. It comes from the commissioner’s office on down.”

Many individuals, businesses and organizations are getting involved in promoting Georgia produce. Their efforts should result in stronger produce sales in the state, not only through grocery stores, but also through restaurants and school cafeterias. The GDA, holder of the trademark Georgia Grown logo, has secured grants to help promote specialty crops in the state. Federal funds are also available to provide meals for school children.

In a quintessential example of how many entities work together to promote Georgia Grown produce, Brannen recently worked with a videographer to create a TV commercial to help inform Georgia consumers about Vidalia onions. “The department has done these spots for several years,” Brannen asserts. “The state does this with all their major commodities and we hope it will help give consumers a good overall picture of the Vidalia industry and what makes us unique. It’s a good example of the industry working together and doing something better. If consumers have already heard the story of Vidalia onions, we hope this spot will tell them something they have not heard before.”

A SWEET YEAR FOR GEORGIA PEACHES

Georgia peach growers are enthusiastic about the prospects for this year’s crop and are promoting their sweet fruits aggressively after doubling their promotion budget this year. Cold winter weather was good for Georgia peaches and there should be a full crop when picking begins, according to Al Pearson, owner of Big Six Farms in Fort Valley, GA, and chairman of the Georgia Peach Commission. “We have experienced several years without a full crop,” he recalls. “We had probably 80 percent of a crop last year. This crop has survived the winter and the spring and we’re looking forward to a nice crop of fruit. Everybody’s gearing up to market it. We’re excited about a promotion campaign this year that will be centered mainly around Atlanta. It’s the easi-





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est place for us to approach. We are supporters of the Georgia Grown program and we participate in it.”

Peach growers in Georgia are a tight-knit group and both Will McGhee, sales manager for Big Six Farms, and Duke Lane III, vice president of sales at Lane Southern Orchards, also of Fort Valley, are assisting with the marketing program for Georgia peaches. “We are revamping our Georgia Peach Council Web site and doing a big billboard push for Georgia peaches on major highways,” says McGhee. The goal of this year’s billboard campaign is to encourage Atlanta area residents to ask for Georgia peaches specifically. “Research has shown many people always assume they are buying peaches from Georgia, but we want to drive them into the stores and always ask for Georgia peaches,” McGhee says.

“We’re also sponsoring the Peach Tree Road Race in Atlanta on July 4th,” McGhee reports. “The Web site will include growers’ biographies and interesting facts about peaches. We’ll also have other items of interest, such as recipes and answers to the question, ‘What’s the craziest thing you’ve ever seen in the orchard?’”

As one of the sponsors of the annual *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* Peachtree Road Race, members of the peach council will provide 55,000 fresh Georgia peaches for the runners this year — approximately one peach per entrant. “People who participate in events like these are really those who watch what they put in their bodies,” McGhee reasons. “They usually have higher incomes and care about what their kids eat, too. They are almost the perfect shopper for us. The Peachtree Road Race is one of the biggest 10-K races in the United States. It is a good fit on the Fourth of July when our best peaches are coming off the trees. We feel this race is the perfect event to sponsor.”

“We want these promotions to be consumer-driven,” Lane adds. “We want to educate consumers on why they should eat Georgia peaches and prompt them to ask for them by name. We kicked this off last year and had tremendous results. This year, we have doubled our budget to be more aggressive with it. We want to keep Georgia peaches on their minds.”

MORE GEORGIA PROMOTIONS

A number of other Georgia commodi-

“We want to educate consumers on why they should eat Georgia peaches and prompt them to ask for them by name. We kicked this off last year and had tremendous results. This year, we have doubled our budget to be more aggressive with it.”

— DUKE LANE, III
SOUTHERN ORCHARDS

ty groups are actively promoting their items this year, too. Dawn Cheplick, membership coordinator for the LaGrange-based Georgia Watermelon Association, says their sweet, colorful product is going to the ballgame this summer to attract consumer attention. “Every summer we have a new Watermelon Queen,” Cheplick explains. “She is an ambassador for Georgia watermelons. She talks about the nutritional benefits and does in-store promotions. She also explains ways to use watermelons. This year we had a brainstorm: ‘Let’s take her to an Atlanta Braves game.’ July is National Watermelon Month and Cheplick says the association chose baseball games near Independence Day on July 2 and 3. The association will hand out watermelon slices at the games and will promote them outside the stadium in the Publix Tailgating Zone. We may see as many as 3,000 attendees and we’ll hold a watermelon seed-spitting contest and announce the winners during the games. Inside the stadium, we’ll have a rotating banner ad appearing on the 500 Turner Field television screens for all 10 home games in July.”

The association will also sponsor a

Georgia Watermelon Display Contest for retail produce department managers from June 15 to July 10. The prize for First Place is 15 tickets to the August 29 Braves game and an invitation to a pre-game luncheon at the stadium. The Second-Place winner will receive 10 tickets and an invitation to the luncheon and Third-Place winners will receive two tickets and a luncheon invitation.

PECANS, BLUEBERRIES & MORE

The Georgia Pecan Commission is promoting pecans as an extremely healthy food, according to chairman Duke Lane, Jr. of Lane Southern Orchards. “Pecans have the highest level of antioxidants in the entire nut category,” he announces. “They’re also good for heart health. We need to push this information and continue to promote pecans for their health benefits.” The commission has been pushing pecans and health since 2007 when they launched Georgia Pecans Fit!, a campaign centered on the fact that pecans fit a healthy lifestyle. This year, the commission will promote its healthy message at the New York Road Runners Mind, Body, Spirit Games at Central Park in New York City. Joining with *Fitness* magazine, a major sponsor of the event, the Georgia pecans logo will appear on all signage throughout the 4-mile race and the message will be visible at healthy living demonstrations occurring around the event. About 7,000 entrants are expected to attend.

The newly formed Georgia Blueberry Commission, is also launching promotional efforts and has hired Sahlman Williams Public Relations of Tampa, FL, to develop a campaign, according to Chairman Joe Cornelius of J & B Blueberry Farms, located in Manor, GA.

At the same time, the 200-member Georgia Blueberry Growers Association is also promoting health benefits for their product, according to vice chairman Steve Mullis, CEO of L & S Mullis Farm Inc., headquartered in Alma, GA. “Most of our marketers have the Georgia Grown logo incorporated into their labels,” Mullis says. “The program is a success. Buyers are beginning to recognize it and ask for Georgia Grown. We represent the bulk of Georgia production and do a lot of things to benefit growers. We just started supplying the Southeast School Nutrition Program a few weeks ago. We attended Ag Day at the capitol and we display at PMA. We’re constantly on the road.” **GA**

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BY JON VANZILE

Randy Bohaty, produce director of B&R Stores Inc., in Lincoln, NE, doesn't worry too much about profit from his fresh herbs — it's the herb shoppers he's after.

"We've always carried fresh herbs, but as a convenience," he says. "People who buy herbs cook, so naturally, herb buyers are going to have a higher ring."

It's not that Bohaty doesn't value fresh herbs by themselves, but like many experts in the herb business, he recognizes they are "category builders." People who buy fresh herbs are the same people who typically cook more often, have a higher ring in the produce section, and choose their supermarket based, in part, on its produce section. In other words, these are the exact customers any produce

section wants to keep.

The growing numbers of these customers have pushed fresh herbs deeper and deeper into the produce section — and herb sales are expected to keep growing. This means there is still ample opportunity in the category to find an ideal product mix, price structure and merchandising approach to yield greater profit.

"With fresh herbs, the margin is relatively higher than other products," says Benny Ravet, president of Agrexco (USA) Ltd., in Jamaica, NY.

SIZING UP HERBS

Fresh herbs are one of the most versatile of all categories in the produce section, which might be surprising considering how delicate they are. Fresh herbs are sold as potted plants, bunches, in clamshells of various sizes, in plastic pouches and even in tubes. This is the sign of a category that's both immature and one that is growing rapidly — no single package has yet to monopolize the fresh herb section.

Nevertheless, in recent years there have been signs that the market is settling on clamshells as the best package option. Clamshells are easier to store and move, they display the product well, and they reduce shrink by protecting the delicate herbs. A $\frac{2}{3}$ -oz. clamshell is the most common package, but most companies offering fresh herbs have a range of sizes, from about one ounce up to four ounces.

In general, most experts feel there is still considerable growth potential in the fresh herb market. According to Chick Goodman, national sales manager at Herb Thyme Farms Inc., in Compton, CA, 80 percent of herbs are sold to only 10 percent of households. "Most of the growth is still ahead of us," Goodman points out.

This growth will be driven by a number of factors. First, fresh herbs are a widely touted health alternative to salt. As more Americans become aware of the dangers of high salt diets, salt-alterna-



Photo courtesy of Shenandoah Growers Inc.

Recipe-sized packages of herbs are the latest additions to the category, and allow consumers to purchase just the amount they need for one recipe.

tives are increasing in popularity.

Second, just as with so many exotic produce items, the last decade's explosion in the foodie culture has made more cooks aware of the benefits of cooking with fresh herbs. They are flavorful, colorful, quick and lend fresh flavor to dishes. "What oil paints are to an artist, fresh herbs are to a chef," describes Jim Krouse, president of Eureka Specialties Inc., in Rancho Santa Margarita, CA.

There is also a generational factor at work, according to Goodman. "Most people grew up using dried herbs," Goodman remarks. "People under thirty are the first generation with fresh herbs on the shelves. That is a big opportunity."

According to industry experts, the vast majority of fresh herbs are purchased for just two uses: Thanksgiving — the Super Bowl of fresh herbs — and summertime basil. In fact, most growers estimate that basil comprises at least half of all fresh herb sales, while the poultry bouquet — thyme, rosemary and sage — dominates Thanksgiving.

The key to expanding the category, however, lies in expanding the types of herbs with which consumers are comfortable. In recent months, mint has been increasing in sales — perhaps because of the growing popularity of Mojito drinks — but there is still a universe of fresh herbs waiting to be discovered, including dill, tarragon, oregano, chives, chervil, and more exotic flavors such as Kaffir lime and lemongrass. "The segment has been growing, but it's more of an education on how to cook," explains Krouse. "You should use POS material that brings attention to fresh herbs and I would cross-coupon them with other items, such as sage with pork or turkey and basil with cheese for fresh pesto."

Fortunately for herbs, it's easy to suggest menu options because they are so simple and convenient to use — a sprinkle of fresh

"The segment has been growing, but it's more of an education on how to cook. You should use POS material that brings attention to fresh herbs, and I would cross-coupon them with other items, such as sage with pork or turkey and basil with cheese for fresh pesto."

**— Jim Krouse
Eureka Specialties Inc.**

herbs at the end of cooking time is often all that's required. Many simple recipes don't require any cooking, such as a fresh tomato and basil salad. "We have an item-specific recipe on each and every package we sell," Goodman says. "That educates consumers. It gives them ideas to use next time. Many people know how to use basil, but they may not know how to use all the other herbs."

Cross-promotion in the aisles can also help increase herb sales. Putting tomatoes near basil, or baking potatoes near chives, can spur sales of these items. "Herbs are a basket-builder," emphasizes Goodman. "Retailers should cross-promote more. Try selling sage with pork and rosemary with chicken and potatoes."

KEEPING THEM FRESH

It's important to note, however, that herbs — especially bunch herbs — are among the most delicate of items in the produce section and can quickly turn black or brown in the wrong conditions or when not misted appropriately. Ideally, herbs should be stored at 55° F in cold storage. Most herbs will begin to suffer at anything below 40° F, and they will quickly wilt if exposed to room temperature for more than a few hours.

"If you're a small, gourmet retailer, there's nothing prettier than unpackaged, loose bunches," expresses Charlie Coiner, president of Rock Garden South in Miami, FL. "But they require a great deal of attention. Large retailers usually don't have the labor to maintain loose bunches, and, as much as everyone likes the farmer's market look, there is a food safety concern with people touching bunches of herbs."

Food safety concerns and herbs' finicky nature helps explain why clamshells have taken over so much of the market — although in some areas with high velocity, large bunches of popular herbs are still popular. For example, cilantro is typically sold in bunches in areas where there is a large Hispanic population, as it is an integral part of the cuisine and the velocity is fast enough to justify the greater quantities. "In the late 1990s and early 2000s, bunch herbs were dominant," says Herb Thyme's Goodman. "But clamshells have ruled since then. They've reduced shrink."

One relatively novel solution has been to sell fresh herbs in pots, making herbs the only living plants in the produce section. Potted herbs have a number of advantages over packaged or bunch herbs. They don't need to be refrigerated and their care is minimal compared to demanding bunch herbs.

This model is already popular in Europe, where bagged and potted herbs are common in grocery stores. A similar product to the European potted herb is being offered by Shenandoah Growers Inc., in Harrisonburg, VA, which also sells a variety of fresh-cut herbs and grows live herbs in advanced, automated greenhouses. "We're offering bagged and potted culinary herbs in seven varieties," says Michele Henning, vice president of sales and marketing. "So far, we've had double the demand expected." The key to selling bagged and potted herbs is to market them as culinary items, not potted plants, Henning adds. "Otherwise, they'll end up in the floral section."

Potted herbs are also offered by North Shore Greenhouses Inc., headquartered in Thermal, CA. "If I wanted to increase sales of fresh herbs, the first thing I would do is



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Reader Service #57

"Most people buy herbs because a recipe calls for it. They look at the herb and say, 'I only need two tablespoons. What do I do with the rest?' With recipe-sized, we are trying to draw more users into the franchise by offering a product at 99 cents."

**— Michele Henning
Shenadoah Growers Inc.**

to add North Shore Living Potted Herbs to my tomato display," says Suzette Overgaag, vice president and chief financial officer of North Shore Greenhouses. "The potted herbs bring the consumer closer to the garden. Easy-to-care-for and simple varieties should be displayed."

Nevertheless, there are also challenges to selling potted herbs. Herbs develop flavor based on their age. Older plants have more of the essential oils in their leaves that provide their unique flavors. As a result, consumers might be disappointed with their flavors if the plants are too young.

Another shelf-life solution new to the scene is offering herbs in modified-atmosphere packaging (MAP). Common in the fresh-cut salad segment, bags with micro-perforations, tailored to each herb's respiration rate, can extend shelf-life and ward off temperature abuse. According to Rock Garden's Coiner, "Technology has finally come to the herb category!"

Rock Garden has introduced a complete line of reclosable 1-oz. bags as well as 1/4-oz. single-serve herbs also in MAP bags. The herbs can be hung on the same peg-board hooks as clamshells. Coiner claims the bags help reduce the amount of clamshell plastic on the environment by 75 percent.

MEAL-SIZED HERBS

Another strategy to increase sales of fresh herbs has recently emerged: Recipe-sized portions. In general, most cooks who

Reader Service #45



Charlie Coiner, of Rock Garden South, shows off herbs packaged in reclosable MAP bags.

are looking for herbs are buying for a single recipe or meal. For these shoppers, $\frac{2}{3}$ of an ounce of the fresh herb is usually considerably more than necessary, which results in wasted produce and a higher price tag. In response, a few growers are tinkering with package sizes that would offer a single serving, or a recipe-sized package of herbs. The benefits to this approach are two-fold. It allows consumers to buy exactly what they need without spending extra money, and it encourages customers to try new flavors at less cost, possibly increasing sales across the category. Recipe-sized portions of Kaffir lime, for example, might encourage home cooks to experiment with Thai dishes they might not have otherwise tried.

"Most people buy herbs because a recipe calls for it," explains Shenandoah Growers' Henning, whose company is introducing a line of recipe-sized herbs. "They look at the herb and say, 'I only need two tablespoons. What do I do with the rest?' With recipe-sized, we are trying to draw more users into the franchise by offering a product at 99 cents. It greatly reduces the risk a customer is willing to take to use a product they don't know." When Shenandoah developed its recipe-sized product, it focused on herbs that are typically used in smaller quantities, such as thyme or rosemary, as well as exotic flavors.

The industry, however, isn't in wide agreement on the benefit of recipe-sized herbs. "We've done quite a bit of market research that shows that about 55 percent of consumers say the $\frac{2}{3}$ -oz. portion is about the right size," reports Goodman. "Twenty-five percent say it's too big and 15 percent say it's too small. The majority thinks it's the right size."

Growers like Goodman worry that recipe-sized containers will cannibalize the existing market for fresh herbs. In other

words, these tiny packages might drive consumers away from $\frac{2}{3}$ -oz. packages or other larger sizes with a bigger ring. "The category isn't big enough right now for the retailer to give up more shelf space," he says. "Not a lot of retailers want to take a \$2 sale and make it a 99-cent sale."

This sentiment is echoed by Coiner at Rock Garden Herbs, even though the company offers a line of single-sized herbs. "From our point of view, the jury is still out on single serving," he says. "We are testing it, but it hasn't been long enough to see if it cannibalizes the market." **pb**

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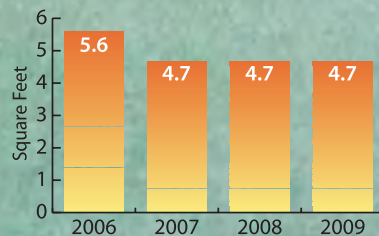
Avocados from Mexico are available year round. Mexico's unique four-blooms, rich soil and micro-climates allow for availability of quality fruit throughout the year in a variety of grades and sizes.

Altitude Meters	MONTH OF HARVEST											
	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
1100												
1200												
1300												
1400												
1500												
1600												
1700	Normal	Normal										
1800												
1900												
2000												
2100												
2200												
2300												
2400												
2500												

NOTE: Once the fruit reaches maturity it can stay on the tree for another 3 to 4 months, depending on environment temperatures. Source: APEAM Research Center 2008.

INTERESTING MERCHANDISING FACTS

- Category has grown, but display space has not kept up.



Source: U.S. Marketing Services 2010

- 97 percent of avocado volume comes from just three PLU's. The overwhelming majority of these are in large and small fruit, making it important for retailers to stock both sizes.

Hass Avocado Item Detail - Top 3 Items*			
Total U.S. - Latest 52 Weeks Ending 12/26/2009			
Product	% Share of Volume	Volume % Change vs YAGO	% ACV Selling
4225 Avocados, Hass, Large	56	+20.9	86.4
4046 Avocados, Hass, Small	37	+11.2	67.0
4770 Avocados Hass, Jumbo	4	+13.7	18.4
Total	97	+16.8	99.5

Source: Perishables Group Fresh Facts® Powered by Nielsen, 52 weeks ending 12/26/09

CONSISTENT PROMOTION MEANS INCREASED SALES

Avocado should be promoted year round on a consistent basis. APEAM (Avocado Producers and Exporting Packers Association of Michoacán) contracted with the Perishables Group to gain

insights on best practices for promotions. Highlights of the findings for developed avocado markets are as follows:

- Promote avocados consistently — 30 - 40 times per year in developed markets to provide optimal category dollars and volume.
- Run promotion discounts from 11% to 30% to optimize dollars and volume
- Occasionally feature multiple avocado items in the same promotion, including bulk and packaged avocados. This can include small along with large sized avocados at different price points
- Whenever possible combine circular promotions with in-store price reductions

Bottom line is that increased promotions equal increased profits. To maximize sales, retailers should promote Avocados from Mexico consistently and vary frequency and discounts based on market development. See the avocado sales optimization matrix below.

AVOCADO SALES OPTIMIZATION MATRIX		
	Developed Markets	Undeveloped Markets
Annual Promotion Frequency	33 to 40	8 to 15
Promotion Discount Value	11% to 30%	>20%

* Source: Perishables Group Best Practices for Promotions Report 2008

USE AVOCADOS FROM MEXICO TOOLS AND PROGRAMS

- Merchandising support/POS materials Including Secondary Displays, POS Cards, Bin wraps, recipe cards, etc. (English & Spanish)
- S.M.A.R.T. (Storing Merchandising Arranging Ripening Training) Kit which provides hands-on training to produce managers about the latest in best practices for handling and merchandising avocados
- Category management data to help retailers increase sales, General market and Hispanic consumer radio, television in select markets as well as online advertising, national print ads in popular publications, strategic online marketing, national public relations efforts and in-store advertising to help increase consumer purchase frequency and market demand for Avocados from Mexico

Insight from Mexico

An interview with Emiliano Escobedo, Marketing Director for APEAM (Michoacán, Mexico)

Q: What is your industry doing to better supply and serve the market both now and in the future?

A: Increased phytosanitary certifications by USDA in Michoacán and a decrease in phytosanitary barriers is contributing to the expansion of certified acreage and number of growers that are able to ship avocados to the US.

Avocados from Mexico continuously invests in category management and is building the category by spending the most resources nationwide to increase consumer demand. Avocados from Mexico also works with retailers to develop programs that help build their avocado sales. Merchandising support is available so they can tie into major sales and order free POS materials online.

Q: How are growers/exporters demonstrating their commitment to quality and safety?

A: To ensure maximum quality, avocado producers and packers adhere to the toughest world-class standards for food safety, including leading-edge food safety technology, timely fruit trace-back based on fruit coding and harvest data, handpicked fruit that never touches the ground and independently certified packers. Our orchards abide by strict guidelines for food safety, sanitary standards and product quality, and our growers follow high standards for imports set by export markets.

Further, APEAM is investing in weather stations that track several climatic variables allowing all growers in the growing region to trend weather patterns resulting in more efficient agricultural practices and better quality.

Q: Are exports increasing?

A: Recent data shows that the avocado category has grown 7.5% exceeding 16 other produce categories, according to Avocados from Mexico from research by the Perishables Group. Avocado demand continues to rise therefore avocado shipments from Mexico to the U.S. continue to grow. With only 55% of the total acreage in Mexico certified for export to the U.S., there's even more opportunity to grow the category.

Q: What can buyers do to better source products from your exporters?

A: Avocados from Mexico are easily available year round from APEAM U.S. certified packers in the state of Michoacán, the heart of Mexico's main avocado growing region. A list of exporters is available on our website.

Q: What is the most important thing for a buyer to know about your industry?

A: In the U.S. market, domestic per capita consumption of avocados increased an average 10 percent annually over the past 10 marketing seasons (1999/2000-2008/09), the second-fastest growth rate after blueberries (ERS, Fruit and Tree Nuts Outlook, March 2010). Mexico, being the largest producer of avocados, is positioned as the key source that will continue to support future growth in consumer demand.

Sales of avocados continue to outpace the produce category. This is in large part due to the wide expansion in avocado appeal across many behavior stages and lifestyles. If trends continue, and we see no reason for them not to, Avocados from Mexico will continue to build the category, gain market share and increase shipments to the U.S.

For more information on Avocados from Mexico please visit www.avocadosfrommexico.com or email info@avocadosfrommexico.com

TRADE AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES:

For more information on trade and business opportunities with Mexico, please contact the Agricultural Office at the Embassy of Mexico :



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Reader Service # 44



Great 2010 Season Projected For California And Baja Tomatoes

Barring any unforeseen events, this should prove to be a very good year for those involved in the Southern California and Baja tomato industry.

BY BRYANT WYNES

"We had a good winter. There was plenty of rain; the soil is healthy; the aquifer was replenished," describes Mark Munger, vice president of marketing for San Diego, CA-based Andrew & Williamson Sales Co. Inc. "All in all, we're set up for a good season."

Though Andrew & Williamson packs and distributes tomatoes exclusively from Mexico's Baja peninsula, that optimism is mirrored by growers operating solely in Southern California — growers such as Danny Uribe, sales manager at Pinos Produce Inc., in Chula Vista, CA. "Water was a big issue last year," Uribe admits. "We had to push it around to take care of a variety of crops; but it's not a problem this year."

Ed Beckman, president of the Fresno-based California Tomato Farmers' Cooperative, agrees. "Despite a few, weather-related planting delays in April, we're in good shape. We were blessed with a good snow pack this year," he says, adding that water allocations are up, taking the pressure away from using ground water. "It all means that managing this year's tomato crop will be easier." And that, in itself, is becoming a bigger job every year.

According to Munger, California/Baja tomatoes account for approximately 55 percent of U.S. tomato consumption. Beckman estimates that 60 to 65 percent of tomatoes consumed during the summer come from California, and an even greater percentage in the fall.

Despite increased consumer interest in locally grown produce, which has cut into late summer sales and distribution to the East, distribution of California/Baja produce remains strong through peak months — the second half of the year.

California/Baja growers focus predominately on vine-ripe, field-grown tomatoes, as opposed to hothouse or greenhouse crops. Growers in California tend to concentrate on traditional Beefsteak tomatoes, Romas and mature greens. Baja growers add in more of the specialty tomatoes, such as grapes or cherries.

At one point, the California/Baja tomato crop was viewed as the next, logical progression in the ever-moving, seasonal geography of the produce business. Just about the time Florida tomatoes were wrapping up in June, the first of the California/Baja crop would kick in. Picking and availability would be in full swing by late August, making September and October some of the strongest months. Now, however, due to advances in seed breeding and growing methods, the California/Baja crops are



Tomatoes-on-the-vine are among the Top Five selling tomato SKUs.

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available virtually year-round. Munger indicates that his company views the Baja peninsula as three distinct growing regions. Harvesting begins in the tip in February and wraps up in the Northern part of the area from October to January.

This year-round schedule suits Tommy Wilkins, director of produce procurement for United Supermarkets LLC, based in Lubbock, TX. "We try to have a tomato in every ad, every week," he says. "Our California and Baja tomato suppliers provide us with product nearly 52 weeks of the year. We

want consistency and quality, and are finding it with these tomatoes."

Indeed, a visit to many of the California/Baja tomato growers' Web sites will show product availability well into November for California crops, and virtually year-round when supplemented with product coming out of Baja.

EXTENDING DISTRIBUTION AND SEASON

Not only has the industry extended the seasonal availability, but distributors are

Where Did They Come From?

Tomatoes originated in South America and migrated to Central America. The Spanish are credited with spreading tomatoes throughout the Caribbean, and for bringing tomatoes to Europe. They flourished in the Mediterranean climate, which perhaps explains why the crop does well in Southern California and Baja, where they are mostly "high-bush" tomatoes, with vines reaching up to 20 feet in length. Between 12 and 20 clusters of tomatoes — or "hands" as they are called — grow on each vine. Harvesting begins at the bottom, and continues up the vine throughout the plant's cycle.

Because of potential disease issues in Baja, plants are grown in shadehouses, which protect them from insects. These enormous tents cover entire fields of tomato plants, most averaging 20 acres, but some as large as 70 acres. **pb**

working to expand the market, with product reaching retailers and foodservice companies coast to coast. "Obviously, sales are more difficult East of the Mississippi," says Andrew & Williamson's Munger, adding that his company sells directly to save some money and improve competitiveness of their products.

"As many as 38 states produce tomatoes for fresh consumption," points out Bill Wilber, president of Oceanside Pole Tomato Sales Inc., headquartered in Oceanside, CA. "Fittingly, the market gets really crowded with this category in August." Shipping costs to the East coast become an issue, too, until the weather changes. "That's when the Eastern markets open to California tomatoes again — in the fall," he adds.

Wilber points out that the growers, in partnership with the seed companies, have done a lot of work behind the scenes to develop tomatoes that will travel well. "We're testing 100 different seeds this year," he reports, "looking for the best color, weight and good solid 'walls.'" Crops and varieties continue to be healthier and stronger because of this development work, and that ultimately pays off for the industry as a whole.

One of the California/Baja crop's biggest competitors — Canada — is also a big consumer. "It's ironic," says Beckman of the California Tomato Farmers' Cooperative, "considering our members ship a lot of tomatoes

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FOOD SAFETY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Tom Deardorff, president of Deardorff Family Farms in Oxnard, CA, is quick to note the industry's commitment to safety. "Tomatoes have been at the forefront of safety for years," he points out, emphasizing that since they have been on the radar for so long, the industry has had to be more aggressive and confident that they have their "world in order."

Beckman states the California Tomato Farmer's Cooperative, whose 54 members grow about 85 percent of the state's crop by volume, was formed primarily to develop standards for the industry. "We like to think we helped raise the bar. Audit standards have been developed and are being rolled out across the United States." He adds that the Cooperative has been working with USDA on traceability issues that are stronger than those in PTI. "Initiatives in sustainability, as well as best business practices and safety standards, have been important to our members for years, and we are committed to them. Growers who wish to

to Canada each year."

Wilber agrees, noting that Oceanside also ships to Mexico and Japan. "Tomatoes shipped to Japan are mostly for foodservice," he notes. "QSR restaurants in Japan, such as McDonald's, have very demanding specifications for consistency that California growers are able to meet."

"We try to have a tomato in every ad, every week. Our California and Baja tomato suppliers provide us with product nearly 52 weeks of the year. We want consistency and quality, and are finding it with these tomatoes."

**—Tommy Wilkins
United Supermarkets LLC**



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Reader Service # 6

join and those members who want to remain a part of the co-op must adhere to their standards.”

INVOLVE RETAILERS

All of this activity has meant that consumers can expect a steady supply of tomatoes available at their local supermarkets no matter the season. Working with retail customers, like United’s Wilkins does, provides an opportunity for the industry to remain consumer-centric.

“The category continues to grow,” says Munger of Andrew & Williamson. “It’s up to 45 SKUs — and that can lead to some confusion on behalf of both retailers and consumers.” Munger reports the top five SKUs — tomatoes on-the-vine, Romas, grapes,



Photos courtesy of Deardorff Family Farms

Deardorff Family Farms has created a 5-lb. tomato box, for both Romas and rounds, which makes building displays or end caps much easier.

vine-ripe rounds and small hothouse — account for about 80 percent of sales. While it’s best to merchandise all tomatoes

together, we have to be cautious about letting variety get in the way of producing a “red, ripe, nutritious, safely grown tomato,”





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he says, adding that the end result has to be about "flavor, flavor, flavor."

Oceanside's Wilber says that the focus has to be on the specific needs of each individual retailer. "We have a variety of retail programs, and take pride in being flexible enough to match a retailer's unique customer base," he remarks, noting his company works with retailers on everything from ripeness to pack sizes.

Beckman agrees. "The plethora of SKUs is a critical issue," he asserts. "Given the large variety of tomatoes available, we would encourage retailers to simply ask 'Are my demographics covered?'" Moreover, he recognizes the tomato category has evolved over the years. "Different tomatoes have different uses," he notes. "Consumers buy

according to how they use tomatoes at home, and retailers know they can build off of these different needs."

Beckman believes that consumer research is the best way to build the category, without cannibalizing other tomato varieties. "Retailers should take care to match up category management data to different customer demographics," he advises. Rather than creating a "one-size-fits-all" merchandising program, he recommends evaluating the "tomato table" and promotional calendar vs. demographic data. "We can help retailers with programs designed to move light users to moderate users and moderate users to heavy."

Deardorff has been working with some retail customers to introduce some truly

unique packaging to consumers — a 5-lb. tomato box. Similar to the manner in which Clementines are sold, the company packs both Romas and round tomatoes in these cases, which makes building displays or end caps much easier. "We did some small scale testing at the end of the season last year," he reports. "We were pleased with the results, so much so that we are rolling out the package for the entire season this year."

In all, the California/Baja growers, packers, shippers and distributors stand poised for an exciting season. As Munger puts it, "We work hard to make sure the fields and packing are in sync with retailers' needs and their customers' shopping habits so we can offer a great product at a competitive price." **pb**



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Reader Service #20

Bartletts: The King Of California Pears

But experts say retailers should focus on variety to make register ring.

BY CHUCK GREEN

Seems the Bartlett is a peach among California pears. By far, the Bartlett is "the king," says Atomic Torosian, managing partner of Crown Jewels Marketing LLC, headquartered in Fresno, CA.

So what makes the Bartlett so delectable? Similar to bananas, but unlike most other fruits, the Bartlett changes colors when it ripens, explains Chris Zanobini, executive director of the Sacramento-based California Pear Advisory Board (CPAB). "It kind of has that allure," he adds, noting that the Bartlett is also the sweetest pear available and has the gentlest texture.

It's the pear by which all others are measured, echoes Patrick Archibeque, chief operating officer of All State Packers Inc., based in Lodi, CA. Because of its taste, even baby food companies, such as Ger-

ber and Heinz, specify the pear in their formulas, he comments.

A majority of the 215,686 tons of pears produced in California in 2009 were mostly Bartlett, according to the CPAB. This past year, California was responsible for 27 percent of U.S. pear production. However, at the same time, fewer people consumed pears in 2009, according to the USDA's Economic Research Service, which reports a 22 percent drop in pear consumption, especially canned pears. Yet, perhaps not surprisingly, the demand for Bartletts spiked 28 percent.

BARTLETTS NOT ALONE

Despite their popularity, however, Bartletts aren't the only show in town. For instance, California has experienced "dramatic" growth in the production of varieties such as Golden Bosc, Comice and various red varieties, adds Archibeque.

Maria Brous, spokesperson for Lakeland, FL-based Publix Super Markets Inc., says the Bosc is the next most popular variety behind the Bartlett because of its eating quality and customers' ability to cook with it. That's followed by the Red Pear and Green Anjou, she continues. The Green Anjou is generally available when the Bartletts are done for the season, Brous explains.

Furthermore, despite their higher sugar content, Ted Fujii, head produce buyer at Gelson's-Mayfair Market in Los Angeles, CA, prefers varieties like Taylor Gold, as well as the Bosc and Comice. He also leans more toward some smaller types, such as the Forelle and Seckel, which he calls more specialty than mainstream pears.

Whatever the pear, by and large, experts believe stores should offer various types to cater to a cornucopia of tastes. While centering its selection on Bartletts, Torosian suggests retailers feature five or six varieties and promote them in large ads, as they do seasonally with other fruits, such as melons, cantaloupes and honeydews.

Chains run ads based on as many varieties as they simultaneously can stock, adds Broc Bengard,



Pear experts suggest stocking up to five or six varieties of pears at once and promoting them in large ads.



vice president of Kelseyville, CA-based Bengard Marketing Inc. The more progressive chains like to offer the full line-up, or what sometimes is referred to as a Pear-O-Rama, when they can, he notes.

CHOICES ARE SPICE OF LIFE

Consumers today expect choices, echoes Zanobini of the CPAB, and as attitudes and desires change, the industry must adjust accordingly, down to what retailers stock. However, overall, much work remains to be done in this area, he says. While some retail chains have done an “incredible job” and

continue to improve year after year, others tend to spend an inordinate amount of time concentrating on the calendar rather than focusing on what's available, he notes.

Zanobini says that approach might largely be based on a store's general strategy and specific demographics. “Pear consumers are said to be at a little higher end of demographics,” he remarks. Further still, while acknowledging stores' ongoing battle with space, Zanobini says that, based on CPAB research on pears, the advisory board emphasizes that the more varieties available, the more sales a retailer will ring up. More education would be helpful, too, he emphasizes.

While Archibeque of All State Packers concurs that some retailers have been somewhat slow to adjust to trends, he acknowledges that part of that is “our fault, too — as an industry.” All State Packers takes it seriously and spends “considerable” marketing dollars and effort trying to convince retailers of the best way to impact their category, all of which is data supported, he adds.

No one has to persuade Gelson's of the importance of paying attention to what customers think, which Fujii notes the chain does earnestly.

SIZING UP A DISPLAY

One way to encourage shoppers to think about pears is through display size. To help generate interest, retailers would be well advised to utilize an end cap display, as large as possible, near a store's entrance, recommends Bengard.

Generally, Crown Jewel's pears, which consist mostly of Bartletts and Boscs, are packed in 40-lb. cartons, reveals Torosian. Meantime, the company's grower has expanded into the specialty pear category,

such as Stark Crimsons, Forelles, Seckels, Comice and Taylor's Gold, and is packing all these varieties this season, he notes. The company will pack them into half cartons, which are approximately 22 pounds.

Additionally, Archibeque encourages retailers to merchandise Reds and Boscs alongside Bartletts, especially in July and August since it's the beginning of the Northern Hemisphere pear season. No pears in the world are fresher and more local than California pears, he notes. The Bartletts should be the focal point.

Ultimately, though, Zanobini says, “What we want and what's being done is always two different things. You want the world; you want the biggest displays possible,” because often, produce purchases are set to basic items, based on what items are available to customers and how they're presented.

SOME PACKAGE

Once a display catches a customer's eye, economy-minded packaging can further facilitate sales. For example, All State commonly creates value packaging by selling smaller pears in the punnet-type containers, in larger volume. However, interestingly, with the exception of club store shoppers, traditional bulk consumers searching for pears seem to prefer bag-type packaging, such as 3-lb. units, Archibeque says.

Meanwhile, Zanobini notes an effort is underway to develop consumer packaging for pears, perhaps in the form of a six-pack. That's been augmented with “fairly significant” research on how to do so while ensuring the product can be safely transported, he adds. It's now up to buyers to determine whether it's a viable option. After all, the more consumer type of packaging is in play, the better the opportunity to provide a high-

Once a display catches a customer's eye, economy-minded packaging can further facilitate sales...Interestingly, with the exception of club store shoppers, traditional bulk consumers searching for pears seem to prefer bag-type packaging, such as 3-lb. units.

er quality piece of fruit.

On the other hand, Publix does not display packaged pears, Brous reports. She says the chain always has displayed pears in bulk, based on the belief it will lend the display a “market-like atmosphere.”

Ripeness is always a selling point, too, particularly with Bartletts, Crown Jewel’s Torosian believes. If pears are too hard and green upon shipment, they won’t sell, he says.

At the same time, Gelson’s Fujii points out it would be difficult to build a display consisting entirely of ripe pears. Unlike apples and citrus, which remain hard and therefore can be stacked higher, pears, if ripened, bruise more easily, he explains.

PRICE IS RIGHT

Pricing varies based on the retailer, observes All State’s Archibeque. He believes a percentage of them work off the “biggest margins and drive sales dollars in volume,” which he describes as “unfortunate margin-grabbing.” Those stores are selling at a much higher price than would be considered standard retail margin, he adds. However, not much can be done about it, he laments. “It’s a struggle for us



Large end-cap displays, located near the front entrance of the store, will encourage consumer interest and purchases.



Peter Sticco was born on December 31, 1952. Sadly he lost his battle with cancer on September 1, 2008. He was only 55 years old. Peter’s life was our industry.

Peter was an only child, and his Dad passed away when Peter was in his early 20’s. He is survived by his Mom Millie, whom has kept Peter’s spirit alive, in all of our hearts today.

Peter always took care of others before himself. His belief in God and family kept his spirit strong during his 3 1/2 years of cancer treatment. He worked in the office tirelessly, and without complaint. During this time fellow employees would assist Peter from the office to the treat-

PETER STICCO’S

ment center. He loved the business so much that it was hard to get Peter to leave the office for his treatments.

On his family farm, he learned the values of hard work and sacrifice. He also learned that we sometimes have no control over the elements that affect our industry. For example, the weather, and how it can affect both the crops in supply and the consumers’ demand for the item. When the crop is short, the demand is high. When the crop is plentiful, the demand is low. Peter understood this basic principle which drives our current global marketplace. Within the last year, we have witnessed record cold temperatures in Florida, and some parts of Mexico, an earthquake in Chile, and record rains in the Northeast. We have seen historic increases in pricing as a result of these natural disasters.

Peter left his family farm, and pursued a career in produce as a produce inspector for Bozzuto’s in Connecticut. It was here that Peter learned the characteristics that define the best quality fruit and vegetables. Peter rose quickly at Bozzuto’s. He built their produce program from its infancy, as he grew into the position of produce direc-

“While Bartletts were seasonal at one point, they’ve now evolved into a nearly year-round item, which makes things more difficult for California. It’s always nice when you have something only during certain times of the year... People look forward to seeing them in stores.”

**— Ted Fujii
Gelson’s-Mayfair Market**

to convince retailers to get margins in line. It’s their business.” While his company makes recommendations, “it’s not often we see a lot of response.”

Perhaps, but Fujii says his company bases its prices on what it pays for an item and retails it “appropriately,” according to cost.

Zanobini regards pricing and ripening as more of a merchandising tool used to provide consumers with a piece of fruit as opposed to a selling factor. “You never want to sell something that’s ripe; you want to sell something that’s ready to eat.”

In the end, marketing is the ultimate challenge for the industry, says Fujii. California is known for California Pears, especially the Bartletts, and has marketed them well, he points out. Still, burgeoning competition, including overseas markets, is helping to raise the stakes, making conditions increasingly difficult in the future, he projects.

Fujii explains that competition not only emanates from the Northwest, but from imported products as well, including inventory out of places such as Chile and Argentina, especially as far as Bartletts are con-



cerned. “While Bartletts were seasonal at one point, they’ve now evolved into a nearly year-round item, which makes things more difficult for California,” he points out. “It’s always nicer when you have something only during certain times of the year, like cherries, which are really seasonal. People look forward to seeing them in stores.” **pb**

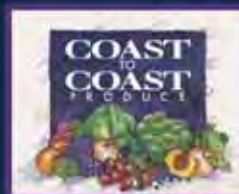
LEGACY CONTINUES

tor at Bozzuto’s. Peter spent 13 years cultivating Bozzuto’s produce program into one of the most respected wholesale produce enterprises in the Northeast. His commitment to honesty, fairness, and genuinely caring about the growers, shippers, retailers and transportation companies perpetuated Peter into his new venture: Coast to Coast Produce in 1985.

What started out as a 2 person brokerage operation in a closet office in Cheshire, CT, grew into an organization that currently consists of 20 employees in 4 regional offices: Monterey, CA; Bakersfield; Boston; and their headquarters in Cheshire, CT. Peter’s last endeavor was completed in 2002, as they became a grower of California table grapes. They now have over 500 acres to farm in Arvin, CA. The company will be celebrating their 25th anniversary this year. And owe it to Peter, from his humble beginnings, to where the company is today. Peter always stayed true to his underlining principles. In quoting John Wooden, “be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are”. We are all proud to be a part of Peter’s legacy,



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Grape Merchandising: Turn Challenges Into Sales Opportunities

While the grape industry may be fraught with challenges, smart marketing techniques and open lines of communications will help retailers and grower/shippers alike make the most of a year-long endeavor.

BY CAROL BAREUTHER, RD

Grapes are a 12-month commodity and a sweet deal to retailers' bottom lines. In 2009, dollar contribution to total produce sales ranged from a low of 4.6 percent the week of January 17th to a high of 7.3 percent the week of September 19th, according to the Perishables Group, a Chicago-based market research firm that tracks and analyzes retail sales data of fresh foods.

Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce and floral for Kings Super Markets Inc., a 25-store chain headquartered in Parsippany, NJ, says, "The grape category is huge for us year-round."

However, forces of nature and politics, as well as subtler changes such as varietal and packaging development, can sometimes make fresh grapes seem like a moving target in terms of planning for the optimal merchandising strategy. The key is to turn these challenges into opportunities.

1. THE ECONOMY

The economy has negatively impacted many consumers' spending power. "In a tough economy," says Josh Knox, produce manager at Eden Prairie, MN-based C.H. Robinson Worldwide Inc., "more people are eating at home. At the same time, they are looking for fresh and healthful solutions, and that's where grapes fit in."

Jon Zaninovich, vice president of Jasmine Vineyards Inc., headquartered in Delano, CA, agrees. "Fresh produce hasn't



Sales numbers over the past year confirm that grape sales have not been affected by the sluggish economy.

followed the trend of big ticket items. Grapes are not only an impulse buy, but also a basic buy for many. I don't really think we'd see sales affected unless grapes were priced outrageously high, for example, at over \$3 per pound or more."

Another reason for good grape sales in a down economy is the grape buyer demographic, points out Josh Leichter, vice president of sales for the East Coast and director of the grape category for The Oppenheimer Group, based in Coquitlam, British Columbia, Canada. "These shoppers are typically 20 to 40 years of age, with a higher education and an above average income." Sales

numbers over the past year back up these observations that grape sales have not been negatively affected by the economy.

Sheri Mierau, vice president of sales and marketing for Fruit Patch Sales LLC, located in Dinuba, CA, says, "Grapes are one of the leading fruit categories. There were positive dollar and volume sales increases of 2.2 percent and 3.3 percent, respectively, comparing May to December of 2009 versus 2008."

"In addition," says Veronica Kraushaar, president of Viva Global Marketing LLC, headquartered in Nogales, AZ, "grapes are consistently No. 3 in the Top Ten fruit and have such a high penetration with con-

sumers [approximately 86 percent in 2009] that we feel the category has not been specifically harmed by the economy. Having said that, I also believe families are looking at bulk packs and older folks at smaller bags for any savings."

Consumers are indeed shopping prudently. According to focus group research conducted this past winter by the Fresno, CA-based California Table Grape Commission (CTGC), Jim Howard, director of communications, reports, "Consumers are shopping more by ads and using coupons more frequently."

However, this doesn't mean that deep discounts are the way to sell more grapes. John Pandol, vice president of special projects at Pandol Bros. Inc., in Delano, CA, says, "We saw way too aggressive retails last year — true loss-leader ads. Retailers were buying and selling grapes for a loss just to get customers in the store. This made the highs and lows [of pricing] even higher and lower. This isn't something we like to see."

"Gaining market share and maintaining category growth in a recessionary economy can be as simple as planning the promotional calendar to match supply," explains Mierau.

Tom Wilson, grape division manager for The Giumarra Companies, based in Los Angeles, CA, adds, "Offer the customer a good value, that is, good quality at a reasonable retail."

2. INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

An international array of vineyards supplies grapes to the domestic market in the winter. Chile is the No. 1 exporter of grapes to the United States and Mexico is second. Gordon Robertson, vice president of sales and marketing for Sun World International LLC, headquartered in Bakersfield, CA, says, "The Chilean season has been tough for retail. There have been supply challenges stemming from the earthquake in

February, pricing has been high and there have been fewer promotions."

In spite of a U.S. Federal Marketing Order that calls for grapes to meet a certain standard as a condition for entry into the country after April 10, more Chilean shippers took a calculated risk this year, especially with red grapes, in order to market their earthquake-delayed harvests.

International supply issues in the grape industry aren't always a negative, says Oppenheimer's Leichter. "They can open up supply opportunities from other countries. For example, Brazil is relatively new and Peru is becoming a larger exporter. India and Turkey have a lot of supply. The challenge is that it's a constantly changing landscape. It's hard when retailers want to plan three, six and even nine months in advance. However, more growers are looking to contract their business. Entering into a contract with a supplier can offer retailers an opportunity for some stability rather than relying on buying on the spot."

Domestic growers rely on international markets to sell their grapes. The California fresh table grape season runs from May to December or sometimes January. Mexico is a key export market for California grape growers. Last year, the Mexican government imposed tariffs on nearly 30 California agricultural products in retaliation for a trade dispute. Grapes were slapped with the highest tariff — 45 percent. This led to only 1.7 million 19-pound boxes of California table grapes shipped to Mexico last year, compared to 5.5 million boxes in 2008. The jury is still out on whether this issue will resolve in time for this year's California season.

"If the issue is still at bay, there could be an opportunity for domestic retailers to take advantage of heavy volume and good pricing," says Jasmine Vineyard's Zaninovich. "However, there's only so much the domes-

"Educating the customer about the various grape varieties is something we, as an industry, need to do a better job. For example, in addition to shopping by color, most customers automatically look for seedless grapes. This means they will overlook high-flavor varieties such as Concords."

**— Dino Medica
Metropolitan Markets**

tic market will take. For example, Mexico will take varieties such as Red Globes that aren't as popular in the United States. The country is also a good market for a level of quality that won't sell stateside. For example, Mexicans prefer a higher colored green grape with a yellow cast. The domestic market customer wants a grape that's all green."

3. VARIETAL DEVELOPMENT GOES GANGBUSTERS

There are a number of new grape varieties that growers hope will lead to repeat sales and greater volumes sold at retail. The best selling varieties in 2009 were the Red Seedless, according to Fruit Patch's Mierau. "Flame/Ruby varieties commanded 33 percent of total grape volume sales in the United States and the Crimson/Majestic varieties commanded 15 percent. The second best seller last year was the White/Green Seedless. Perlette/Thompson varieties commanded 25 percent of total grape volume sales in the United States," she continues.



There are a number of new grape varieties that growers hope will lead to repeat sales and greater volumes sold at retail.

Research and development of new grape varieties is a slow process, says Bert Boyd, vice president of marketing development for Delano, CA-based Sunlight International Sales Inc., the McFarland, CA-based marketing arm of Jakov P. Dulcich & Sons. "Promising prospects have to be cultivated and monitored for production, longevity and acceptance. The Vintage Red, Scarlet Royal and Autumn King are among the varieties that have noted success."

The Vintage Red, Scarlet Royal and Sweet Scarlett are newer Red Seedless varieties, says Atomic Torosian, CEO of Crown Jewels Marketing LLC, in Fresno, CA. "The latter two can replace the Crimson. Crimson is harder to grow and harder to gain color. The newer varieties hold up better in cold storage and can extend the season by two to three weeks and into December."

"Newer White/Green varieties are the Princess and Autumn King," remarks C.H. Robinson's Knox. "The Autumn King is a late season variety that can bridge the gap between California and Chile, a time that Peru and Brazil has traditionally filled."

Boyd adds, "The Autumn King, Princess and Luisco are helping to increase green reception as Perlettes and Thompsons fade into the past."

"In black grapes, Summer Royal and Autumn Royal are newer," says Knox. "Summer Royal is earlier. It is large in size and eats well. This has the advantage of enticing customers to buy black grapes early and then all season long."

In addition to commercial varieties, many mid- to large-sized growers are developing proprietary varieties of grapes. Scott Boyajian, president of Sunview Marketing International, in Delano, CA, recognizes, "It's an interesting time for the grape industry. As many new varieties will come out in the next two years as has come out in the last 50 years. There's so much material in the pipeline."

"However," says Oppenheimer's Leichter, "the jury is out as to where all this varietal development is headed. For example, some varieties may perform well in one area, but in will not be as successful in a broader scope. It's important to remember the traditional varieties are still good."

Pandol Bros. Pandol raises another concern. "We have seen new varieties that are not 100 percent seedless. This does the industry a disfavor, especially for black varieties that many consumers still think of as seeded. The United States is a seedless market."

4. MARKET BY COLOR AND VARIETY

Color is how many consumers buy grapes. In 2009, Red Seedless grapes comprised 54.5 percent of dollar sales and 55.1 percent of grape category volume, while White/Green grapes represented 38.2 percent of dollar sales and 37.7 percent of volume and Black Grapes comprised 6.4 percent of both dollar sales and volume, according to the Perishables Group.

Data shows that the majority of consumer grape purchases are color-specific, says Fruit Patch's Mierau. "However, we have seen a small group of retailers promoting variety-specific grapes."

Kneeland at Kings Super Markets does both. "We'll sign grapes by color in-store," he notes. "In ads, we may also advertise them as Crimson or Thompson. Customers are familiar with Red Globes as a variety, but this is due to their size. Globes look noticeably different from other grapes."

Sunlight's Boyd says, "Most consumers buy with their eyes and then only come back for more after an acceptable taste experience. It is all about flavor first."

One possible disadvantage of variety-specific merchandising of grapes is the logistics on the supply end and on the exe-



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Data shows the majority of consumer grape purchases are color-specific.

cution end with changing signage, especially for varieties that look essentially the same. Sunview's Boyajian maintains, "There has to be something new or different in terms of flavor, size or color to call out a grape by variety."

"Another challenge in variety-specific grape merchandising is display space and merchandising resource limitations to attract shoppers' attention," says Mierau. "Yet, a possible advantage is the feature of a specialty item that the competition may not have."

Dino Medica, produce specialist at Metropolitan Markets, a 6-store chain based in Seattle, WA, says, "Educating the customer about the various grape varieties is something we, as an industry, need to do a better job. For example, in addition to shopping by color, most customers automatically look for seedless grapes. This means they will overlook high-flavor varieties such as Concords."

"Another benefit to consumers knowing variety name is that if they buy an early season variety and don't like it, they'll be more likely to buy when they see a different variety name rather than stop buying green grapes altogether for the remainder of the season," rationalizes Oppenheimer's Leichter.

C.H. Robinson's Knox adds, "Consumers who are better educated about individual grape varieties will start to look for and demand the variety they like." For the last several years, C.H. Robinson has successfully marketed by name the large, red, juicy Holiday Seedless grape, which is available in September and October, for Columbine Vineyards, headquartered in Delano, CA. The company's merchandising strategy calls

for POP signage that tells the story and attributes of the variety.

Beyond color or the name of an individual variety, Sun World's Robertson recommends merchandising by brand. "When customers have positive eating experiences with a certain brand, they will stay with that brand and all the varieties that brand encompasses." Sun World grows and markets its Scarlotta Seedless brand red grapes, Superior Seedless brand green grapes and Midnight Beauty brand black grapes.

5. THE RIGHT MIX

Customers are offered a full variety of grapes, including Champagne, Concord, Muscato and Khoyo — a Japanese high Brix Concord-like variety — at Kings Super Markets. "Grapes that are visibly different from the traditional mainstream varieties generate incremental sales," says Kneeland.

How many varieties to carry, and which ones, depends on customer demographics, says Leichter. "A mass merchandiser may, for example, stock only two to four varieties, but a store that wants to be all things to all people might stock 10 varieties or more. While the United States is generally a seedless market, Hispanic, Asian and Middle Eastern customers enjoy seeded varieties such as Red Globes."

In general, consumer research shows that category impact on grape volume and dollar sales is greatest with four to five promotable varieties. Fruit Patch's Mierau recommends, "sticking to the basics of merchandising: stock consistent good-eating grapes, focus a majority of space allocation to the top-selling items, such as red seedless and green seedless, and limit display alloca-

"It's an interesting time for the grape industry. As many new varieties will come out in the next two years as has come out in the last 50 years. There's so much material in the pipeline."

**— Josh Leichter
The Oppenheimer Group**

tion of slower selling items such as black seedless and red seeded."

Beyond varieties, Giumarra's Wilson advises, "Offer different pack styles, too. Having both clamshells and poly bags or loose product will allow the retailer to give consumers more options and increase sales. The number of different styles will have to be based on what works best for the demographics of a particular store's consumers."

"Savvy retailers", says Viva's Kraushaar, "learn to ribbon the varieties so they create an attractive display, including bags and clamshells."

Mierau adds, "Freshness is the key to an eye-catching display and frequent rotation will speak volumes to consumers about quality."

6. SELL BAGS, CLAMSHELLS AND CONSUMER BOXES

No packaging is the preferred way to merchandise grapes at Metropolitan Markets. "Our staff takes bunches out of their bags and places them in baskets on display. While bags have the advantage of maintaining a cleaner display, they don't show the product as well. And while clamshells make it easy to stack product vertically and demand less labor by produce staff, the plastic prevents the customer from enjoying the aroma of the fruit."

There is a growing trend in the use of packaging to differentiate value and there-

“Bags are still the most popular type of packaging for fresh grapes. Most bags are opened with some type of zip top. Clamshell packs represent less than 10 percent of packaging.”

**— Jim Howard
California Table
Grape Commission**

fore impacting grape merchandising at retail. Mierau reveals, “From 2004 to 2008, slider bags and clamshells have continuously increased, based on packaging trends reported by the California Table Grape Commission.”

CTGC’s Howard admits, “Bags are still the most popular type of packaging for fresh grapes. Most bags are opened with some type of zip top. Clamshell packs represent less than 10 percent of packaging.”

However, Viva’s Kraushaar, who represents the Sonora Grape Growers Association’s in Mexico, notes, “Clamshells are certainly the trend here, especially now that they just lifted the 2-lb. clam weight restriction. Clams are better for shelf life, and of course, for food safety. With the current concern and pending Food Safety legislation, we see retailer’s choosing clams more and more.”

Clamshell packaging is a way some retailers choose to distinguish a particular SKU. At Kings Super Markets, says Kneeland, “We’ve offered organic grapes in a clamshell.”

The firm foundation of a clamshell pack offers a suitable surface on which to tell the story about a particular type of grape, says Sun World’s Robertson. “We’ve offered this pack style for our Sable Seedless brand black seedless grapes.”

“Multiple colors in one package lend themselves very well to a clamshell,” says Sunlight’s Boyd.

“A tri-color pack,” notes Robertson, “can encourage trial of less popular varieties such as black grapes.”

Although there has been increased availability of bi- and tri-colored clamshell packages of grapes, Fruit Patch’s Mierau says, “Scan data indicates that dollar and volume sales for these items have declined in 2009 compared to 2008.”

One reason may be cost. Boyd points out, “Clamshells are expensive to pack and cost more per pound.”

In order for clamshell packs to enjoy more success in the future, C.H. Robinson’s

Knox believes, “We, as an industry, need to find a less labor intensive way to pack them and a less expensive packaging material.”

Beyond bags and clamshells, Crown Jewels’ Torosian thinks a 7- to 11-lb. consumer box priced at \$9 to \$10 would be an attractive pack. “It could be made out of either corrugated or plastic with a plastic top so that consumers could see the fruit. While the packaging might cost more, the grapes inside would not be packaged in bags, so this would be a cost savings. There just needs to be a big enough retailer who’s willing to take it on and try it out.”

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7. SUMMER VERSUS WINTER MERCHANDISING

Grape sales were highest from September to November and lowest from late December through mid-January in 2009, according to Perishables Group data.

Optimal merchandising strategies differ throughout the year. In the winter, Metropolitan Market's Medica says, "Chile produces good quality, big and flavorful grapes, which are sometimes of better quality than California, so they are popular to promote."

"Promotions such as A Taste of Summer in Winter," says Oppenheimer's Leichter, "can be effective in selling grapes in the winter."

Grapes are easier to sell in the winter, says Pandol Bros' Pandol. "This is because competition is less with fewer items available in the produce department."

Consumers eat grapes differently in the winter than summer, and this is a point that Kneeland at Kings Super Markets capitalizes on. "We'll merchandise grapes with cheese platters for holiday entertaining and for when customers gather indoors to watch major sporting events on television."

Viva's Kraushaar says, "Remember that the spring crop is much anticipated after the winter. There is generally more excitement out there and it is something new to promote."

"The spring offers good holiday promotion opportunities, including Memorial Day," reminds Giumarra's Wilson,

In the spring, summer and early fall, sheer availability makes domestic grapes attractive to promote. Sunview's Boyajian says, "Competitive prices allow for aggressive promotions as low as 99-cents per pound, which drives tonnage and dollar sales."

Sunlight's Boyd adds, "Grapes are typically ad leaders as well as definite traffic and profit builders during this time of year."

There's more flexibility in ad planning due to proximity of supply in the domestic season and also an obvious freshness factor. Sun World's Robertson notes, "Consumers can enjoy eating grapes within five days after harvest."

Greater supply and lower price points translate into expanded displays of grapes at Kings Super Markets. Kneeland details, "We'll promote grapes in the summer around picnic and barbecue themes."

Holidays such as the Fourth of July and Labor Day are especially ideal promotional times. Giumarra's Wilson emphasizes, "Consumers are engaging in more outdoor activities and grapes fit into this well because they can be incorporated into a variety of meals and fresh recipes."

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New Messages, Packaging And Displays Pump Dried Plum Sales

Put dried plums to work in produce for added ring.

BY BARBARA ROBISON

Retail produce departments are definitely the right location for marketing dried plums, according to major suppliers. “The dried fruit category, including dried plums, can increase up to 30 percent in volume when marketed in produce versus the traditional grocery area,” asserts Joe Tamble, vice president of sales for Sun-Maid Growers of California, headquartered in Kingsburg, CA. “Among the dried fruit items, dried plums are second in growth, following dried cranberries, which are No. 1.”

There are a number of reasons produce is the optimal location for dried fruits — dried plums in particular. “Produce tends to be a destination section, with consumers spending more time there,” states Jane Asmar, vice president of sales for National Raisin Co., based in Fowler, CA. “Dried plums are also a hedge against shrink. Merchandising is easy with no special handling required. Finally, we don’t think it is a stretch to place dried fruit next to fresh fruit. Higher retail prices and margins seem to support this.”

Lisa Goshgarian, marketing manager at Vacaville, CA-based Mariani Packing Co. Inc., agrees that the correlations consumers make between fresh and dried fruit are good. “Dried plum health benefits are plentiful and the fruit is worthy of being in a section among the freshest and healthiest products in the store,” she comments.

Although there is agreement that produce is the ideal place for dried plum displays, the sale of dried plums in both produce and grocery is often suggested by marketers. “You reach those wanting a healthy, portable snack or salad item as well as customers more familiar with buying the fruit for baking and other traditional usages,” rea-



Photo courtesy of Sun-Maid Growers Inc.

Sales of Sun-Maid One's, individually wrapped dried plums in a 7-oz. container, have been on the rise.

sons Jeff McLemore, product manager for dried fruit at Sun-Maid Growers Inc., in Yuba City, CA. “Sales can increase and the market is offering consumers a real service.”

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

California supplies about 99 percent of the United States' and 60 percent of the world's supply of dried plums, or prunes, as they're still known in many areas of the world. About a decade ago, the industry decided they needed to change the image of prunes. The fruit fits beautifully into today's healthful lifestyle and eating recommendations. It's portable, convenient and available year-round. To capture the younger, on-the-go consumers looking for these qualities in a food, the industry changed the fruit's name to dried plums. Even the Sacramento-based commodity board, which represents the industry, changed its name to the California

Dried Plum Board (CDPB). The marketers' packages often bear both names, dried plums and prunes. More traditional recipes and usage ideas are still available, but current emphasis is on the newer dried plum concepts. However, overseas, the products are still marketed as prunes.

HEALTH BENEFITS TOUTED

Research shows younger consumers don't think of purchasing prunes on their own. The CDPB began a campaign, calling the dried plum the “sensational superfruit,” touting its nutritional values. California dried plums contain unique phytochemicals, functioning as antioxidants, not found in other fruits. They are a good source of fiber, are cholesterol- and sodium-free and contain no trans-fatty acids. They also provide important vitamins and minerals. “Recent research we funded found dried

plums helped promote heart, bone and digestive health," reports Richard Peterson, executive director for the CDPB.

Women's recognition of dried plums increased with the usage of the term "super-fruit" from 40 to 53 percent during a similar period between March 2008-2009 and March 2009-2010.

"We feel the move to the dried plum name has been successful," Peterson adds. "To aid in the transition, we will continue our generic public relations program, featuring Natalie Coughlin, a gold medal Olympic Champion swimmer." Coughlin promotes a healthy lifestyle, which includes having good eating habits with nutritious foods like dried plums. She has been involved in a satellite media tour, a lifestyle event in New York as well as the development of special recipes available on the CDPB Web site.

To keep up with changing times, CDPB has been using the internet in various ways. It has focused on doing banner advertising with the Active Marketing Group, in San Diego, CA. This involves registering for athletic events where CPDB provides snack packs and \$1-off coupons for dried plums. The Board is also conducting a recipe contest on Food Buzz, a San Francisco, CA-based Web site that aggregates, organizes and curates nearly 2.3 million blog posts and 12,638 food blogs worldwide.

"I think changing the name from prunes to dried plums has helped build sales over the past years," says Mariani's Goshgarian. "Plus, having Natalie Coughlin as the industry spokesperson is helping draw the attention of a younger demographic to a great product."

"Regardless of the name, we are excited about the future of dried plums, as well as the entire dried fruit category," Asmar of National Raisin adds. "Retailers continue to show more interest in this ever-growing segment that is coming into its own with progressive blends and flavors."

"There does seem to be increased interest in dried plums by our customers," acknowledges Mike Zemla, produce director at Acme Fresh Market, an Akron, OH-based 17-unit chain. "Our sales spiked in 2009, when compared to 2008 sales." The market carries dried plums in both produce and the grocery area.

DIVERSITY OF DRIED PLUM PRODUCTS

There are a variety of new dried plum products emerging in the market place. Fruit in canisters, stand-up bags and individually wrapped items provide new product presentations and more attractive displays. Sunsweet Growers introduced a new value-added size, 12-oz. stand-up bag of dried

Organic Dried Plums Show Growth

Organic dried plums are a small part of the market in the United States, Japan and Germany. However, that segment of the business is growing, according to Richard Peterson, executive director for the Sacramento-based California Dried Plum Board. (CDPB)

National Raisin Co., headquartered in Fowler, CA, introduced the first major line of organic dried fruit, Newman's Own Organics, which has been successful in generating incremental sales. Organic dried plums are part of the product line. "Shortly after introduction, we knew we

needed to improve the quality of the dried plums, so we developed the industry's first retort bag processing," explains Jane E. Asmar, vice president of sales. "It delivers sweet, moist, fresh product with an appropriate shelf life."

Sunsweet Growers Inc., in Yuba City, CA, is channeling organic dried plums to the natural segment of their business. They've introduced a preservative-free prune, containing no potassium sorbate, called the Organic D'Noir Prune. It uses flash light technology, allowing the fruit to maintain its moisture. **pb**

plums, packed especially for families and younger customers. The company also offers a variety of other dried plum products, including dried plum bits combined with high quality dark chocolate, and individually wrapped Sunsweet Ones, which come in a 7-oz. canister or a 12-oz. value-size pack. "In the last 52 weeks, sales of the individually wrapped item have increased 8 percent," says the company's McLemore.

A Costco market on the West Coast recently displayed stacks of large cartons, which held 3-lb. 2-oz. containers of Kirkland Sunsweet Gold label dried plums. A major California chain displays a wide variety of dried fruits throughout the produce department in shelving beneath the large fresh produce displays.

SALES CLIMB WITH MERCHANDISING AND ADS

"Merchandising and advertising dried fruit, including dried plums, can increase consumption more than 100 percent," says Sun-Maid Growers' Tamble. "Attractive shipper displays are also important. Easter, late summer and fall and winter holidays are excellent times to promote the fruit, although the product is actually promotable 52 weeks of the year," he adds.

"Dried fruit is best merchandised in its entirety as a section," advises Asmar of National Raisin. "Individual components would get lost in the market if merchandised alone. Consumers are used to seeing the components together, so separating them tends to diminish sales. Our data shows that dried plums are price sensitive and are more of a planned purchase than other dried fruit. Good pricing, advertising and attractive displays are critical to overall sales improvement."

Dwayne Smallwood, produce manager for the Ocean Park, WA, unit of Okie's Thriftway, part of the 28-unit Thriftway chain, based in Portland, OR, remarks, "We carry the Mariani line of dried fruit, including dried plums. I haven't noticed a big difference in sales with the name change from prunes to dried plums, but the fruit sells well. Occasionally, our dried fruit is advertised, but the most successful promotions are in-store TPRs [temporary price reductions] with Thriftway." The plums are displayed on a 2' x 2' walk-around unit of dried fruit. The store also carries a small dried fruit display in grocery.

The industry has been tackling challenges to increasing dried plum sales with new consumer messages, especially regarding health benefits, new variations of the product, attractive display materials and other marketing techniques. Encouraging merchandising of the products in produce is a priority. "We've had a lot of success the first part of this year with our TV ads and promotional programs," reveals Sunsweet's McLemore. "We plan to continue the TV ads during the second half of the year, emphasizing the snacking aspect of dried plums."

Sun-Maid Growers plans to support and promote the entire dried fruit category, including dried plums, with FSIs (free-standing inserts) during the coming months.

"A marketing challenge can be that dried plums are not on the buyer's radar because the person is not a dried fruit eater," reasons Asmar of National Raisin. "It is often helpful to engage the buyer with information overviews, category management insights and samples. Also, dried plums are an agricultural product. They are subject to crop and price fluctuations, making them more difficult to market." **pb**

TRANSITION

WORLD CLASS FLOWERS EGG HARBOR CITY, NJ

Bill Conner has been named senior sales executive. He charismatically brings more than 25 years of floral industry experience and a wealth of retail knowledge to the WCF team. He formerly worked for The John Henry Company as national account manager. Conner works from the New Jersey corporate office and travels extensively.



Reader Service No. 320

CALSCAPE EXPO SET FOR SAN DIEGO

Plantscape Industry Alliance (PIA), Ukiah, CA, will hold CalScape Expo, the national interior plantscape conference and trade show, September 1-3, 2010, at the San Diego Sheraton Hotel & Marina in San Diego, CA. CalScape Expo's Exhibitor Showcase spotlights products used in interior plantscapes, patio, rooftop, holiday and special events, green roof and living wall and floral installations.



Reader Service No. 320

FLORAL DISTRIBUTION CONFERENCE

Wholesale Florist & Florist Supplier Association (WF&FSA), Annapolis, MD, is hosting its 2010 Floral Distribution Conference, November 3-5, at The Doral, in Miami, FL. The event will focus on networking, business opportunities and education. WF&FSA has teamed with the Floral Logistics Coalition for a rare, behind-the-scenes tour of the Miami International Airport cargo facilities immediately preceding the WF&FSA Conference.



Reader Service No. 322

TPIE DATES SET

Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association (FNGLA), Orlando, FL, announces its Tropical Plant Industry Exhibition will be held January 19 - 21, 2011. TPIE is the trade event that offers everything in foliage, floral and tropicals. The educational seminars and exhibition featuring approximately 500 booths will be held at the Broward County Convention Center, in Fort Lauderdale, FL.



Reader Service No. 324

ROSE BOWL ARRANGEMENT

Sunshine Bouquet Co., Miami, FL, introduces a captivating Rose Bowl arrangement. Designed in a beautiful color coordinated glass bowl, the arrangement features one dozen roses surrounded by assorted fillers and greens. The Rose Bowls can be accessorized with decorative reversa sheets for any theme or special occasion. Packed six per case, they are available in white, red and rainbow roses.



Reader Service No. 326

MAKE IT A BLOOMING JULEP

Hiawatha Evergreens, Shelton, WA, introduces Mini Mint Julep centerpieces for year-round enjoyment. Filled with fresh Salal, Huckleberry and Bear Grass, this elegant centerpiece featuring Western greens in a 4 1/4-inch polished silver mint julep cup is ready to be accessorized with fresh flowers. Packed 12 per case, retailers can sell them individually and promote them as customizable miniature centerpieces.



Reader Service No. 328

ANNOUNCEMENTS

IGC SHOW TO SHINE IN CHICAGO

The Independent Garden Center Show, produced by *Garden Chic* and *Nursery Retailer* magazines, Clearwater, FL, will be held August 17-19 at Navy Pier, Chicago, IL. Now in its fourth year, the IGC Show serves the sourcing, buying, information and education needs of IGC buyers and execs from all over the country. As the world's largest tradeshow for independent garden centers, the event boasts 900-plus booths and a 210,000 square-foot expo floor.



Reader Service No. 319

IFTF SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER

HPP Worldwide, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, announces the 2010 International Floriculture Trade Fair (IFTF) will be held November 3-5 at Expo Haarlemmermeer in Vijfhuizen, The Netherlands.



Reader Service No. 321

NEW YORK PRODUCE SHOW AND CONFERENCE

Eastern Produce Council, Short Hills, NJ, and *PRODUCE BUSINESS* magazine, Boca Raton, FL, will host The New York Produce Show and Conference November 9-11, 2010, in New York City. Held in Manhattan at the New York Hilton, the show will feature a keynote breakfast and approximately 212 exhibit booths. Companies offering products for floral departments are eligible to purchase booth space.



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Reader Service No. 323

SPECIALTY CUT FLOWERS PUBLISHES BUYERS' GUIDE

The Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers Inc. (ASCFG), Oberlin, OH, has released its 2010 *Buyers' Guide*. The 36-page publication features cut-flower growers from the United States and Canada. For a free copy of the *Buyers' Guide*, contact the ASCFG at (440) 774-2887, ascfg@oberlin.net or <http://www.ascfg.org/>



Reader Service No. 325

NEW PRODUCTS

PENCIL THIS IN

Micky's Minis Flora Express, Millstadt, IL, now offers Pencil Box planters filled with foliage or blooming miniature potted plants. The croc-embossed, faux leather planters are five inches tall and available in green, brown and black. Packed 24 per case, the planters are ideal for Father's Day, Administrative Professional's Day, Graduation, Teacher's Appreciation Day and Back-to-School promotions.



Reader Service No. 327

CALLING ALL BUCKEYE FANS

Blossom Bucket Inc., North Lawrence, OH, introduces the OSU Block with Football and Helmet as a part of its new, licensed Ohio State University line. Handcrafted from resin, the classic block collectible, designed by Suzi Skoglund, measures approximately 1.5 inches H x 2.75 inches L. This block is a necessity for Ohio State Buckeye fans!



Reader Service No. 329

Floral Watch is a regular feature of *Produce Business*. Please send information on new products, personnel changes, industry, corporate and personal milestones and available literature, along with a color photo, slide or transparency to: Managing Editor, *PRODUCE BUSINESS*, P.O. Box 810425, Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425, or e-mail us at info@producebusiness.com

Does Better Lighting Increase Floral Sales?

The quest for greater energy efficiency is causing some supermarkets to evaluate current lighting systems, and the take-away may be increased floral department sales.

BY HOWARD RIELL

Creating an inviting floral department involves many elements including strategic merchandising and offering an alluring product mix. With eyes on energy efficiency, savvy retailers are looking for – and finding – ways to use lighting to improve sales in their floral departments.

According to Sandy Jahnke, director of sales and marketing for Miami, FL-based Riverdale Farms, “UV lighting is both essential and detrimental to a floral department.” Essential, she says, because UV lighting provides a full-spectrum true-color light, which is necessary to show the flowers’ true colors. But it is detrimental “because UV heat and energy accelerates the release of ethylene gas and makes blooms open more quickly, thereby shortening shelf-life of your flowers.”

Lighting has become an integral part of the floral department design process, continues Jahnke. “As supermarkets continue to renovate older stores and go more upscale to provide a similar aesthetic shopping environment as shoppers experience in high-end stores, lighting re-design is a huge part of this renovation process,” she points out. Not only are elaborate lighting plans developed to further define each department throughout the store, but floral lighting trends are “moving to create an almost boutique-like space.”

To complete the boutique feel, retailers are using separate music, flooring, high-end fixtures and more that all create “a beautiful and separate space designed to draw shoppers in, make them feel relaxed and want to stay a bit and shop,” elaborates Jahnke. “This is very different from the days of overhead fluorescents and generic fixtures that made floral spaces indistinguishable from the rest of the store.”



The Hen House floral department in Lenexa, KS, is illuminated with BFL 100 watt high pressure sodium lamps with UV filters for fresh food.

What Jahnke calls “the key” to effective floral lighting is to install low UV-emitting lighting. “Some of these low-UV lights can reduce UV by more than 85 percent, thereby almost eliminating the harmful effects of UV lighting while keeping all the benefits,” she explains. “Installation of low-UV lighting will reduce shrink considerably while maintaining all the benefits of UV-lighting.”

“One mistake that I see supermarket floral people make is putting the same lighting in the floral department as they do in the aisles for toilet paper and frozen food,” says Lee Rhoades, sales and marketing manager for Baero North America, a lighting manufacturer headquartered in St. Louis, MO. “It’s bad because it doesn’t differentiate your product from something else,” Rhoades says. “If you’re trying to steal customers from the floral shop down the street, you want to set your department apart to gain customers’ attention. One very effective way to sepa-

rate floral from the rest of the store is with a different lighting design.” The best thing for floral and produce sales, says Rhoades, is high-quality High Intensity Discharge (HID) lighting. “Whether ceramic metal halide or our high-pressure sodium-based lamps, these new types of HID lighting are perfect choices for floral departments as they give superior color and sparkle to floral displays. If you have the typical flat fluorescent lighting in the rest of your store, quality HID lighting will provide the contrast and quality that will bring your department into focus and generate those impulse sales.”

Michael Schrader, director of floral for Schnuck Markets Inc., based in St. Louis, MO, says his stores “have been using high pressure sodium lights that give the warm tones to the product.” He adds, “I think in the stores where we’ve used those lights it’s improved the department.”

“While the lighting doesn’t make flowers

Photo courtesy of Baero North America

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Reader Service # 31

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last longer," Schrader notes, "it's actually more true to color as far as what you actually see. It doesn't matter if you shine it on a pepper or a banana or green leaf lettuce. Fluorescent lights give things a dull color."

Schrader admits the high-pressure sodium spots are more expensive, "but it's driving business. I know we had an LED prototype that they used in one of our departments, but I didn't like it. It just doesn't provide the same pop to our products." The high pressure sodium lights are being installed in new and remodeled stores.

Ray Pruett, the owner of 4-unit Pruett Foods in Broken Bow, OK, says his stores are using high pressure sodium track lighting "that enhances the red and green colors. We also use a different warmth of lighting per department, which kind of moves the customer from department to department," he reveals. For example, Pruett says, cooler-temperature lights are used in the deli, warmer in produce, then cooler once again in meat. Displays, fixtures and different paints complement the lighting and floor colors, "which we use to actually direct the flow of traffic." The result, he adds, has been an increase in floral sales by one-third.

ON THE SPOT

"For years in the lighting world, incandescent light is the best colored light source for floral," notes Dan Hama, national accounts manager of supermarkets for Northbrook, IL-based Con-Tech Lighting. "It's been around forever and it brings out all the true colors in the flower displays. The trade off has been an excessive amount of heat introduction. This obviously shrivels and shrinks all the displays that much faster." Hama adds, "The latest in today's accent technology is LED track heads, which achieve the same color rendering as incandescent with a fraction of the energy and heat."

The most common lighting type in any commercial floral environment is fluorescent lighting, notes Joe Rey-Barreau, AIA, architect/lighting designer and education consultant for the American Lighting Association in Lexington, KY. "This has been the norm for years, but there are many changes that are occurring in fluorescent technology that should be considered."

Those changes in fluorescent are increased efficiency and increased color-rendering quality, Rey-Barreau notes. "Older fluorescent systems used what were called T12 bulbs. These are fluorescent tubes with a diameter of 1½. These bulbs were inefficient; they often made a humming sound due to the type of ballast that operated them; and they produced a poor quality of

light." The current technology consists of either T8 or T5 bulbs, which he says are "much better" in efficiency. "They produce more light for less electricity. Same for color rendering. They make objects such as plants and flowers look much better."

TRUE COLORS

Those who want to increase floral sales need only use lamps with UV protection, says Riverdale Farms' Jahnke. "Think of it as lighting in your home. Inexpensive incandescent bulbs can have a yellow hue to them, throwing the color of things in a room. Early compact fluorescent bulbs shifted colors terribly, and overhead fluorescents in bathrooms have sent many women screaming for the hills, as they looked overly red or yellow in the mirror. These lights are not our friends, and they're not a flower's friend, either."

"True color lighting does for flowers what it does for us," points out Jahnke. "It mimics natural light better than any other lighting, and shows the full spectrum of colors to the eye. And the flowers shine. Reds are a beautiful red; blues are electric and wonderful. Flowers will shine their natural colors and be much more attractive to look at... and in turn be that much more irresistible to the shopper in your store."

The benefit of all artificial lighting systems comes when it portrays color most accurately, according to Grant Grable, LEED, AP, vice president of sales and marketing for Sunoptics Prismatic Skylights, headquartered in Sacramento, CA. He says his company's skylights let retailers use natural light to illuminate products such as flowers and produce while cutting energy usage. "What better way to show the true colors of floral arrangements than what our minds are made to utilize — the 100 percent color rendition and temperature color of what the sun puts out?" The company has supplied its prismatic skylights to 2,900 Wal-Mart stores.

Samantha Criddle, Internet marketing manager for MGV Inc. — Promolux & Econo-Frost in Shawnigan Lake, British Columbia, Canada, says floral departments regularly use spot lighting. "It depends on if it is refrigerated cases or dry cases and displays, which often use halogen, metal halide and fluorescent lamps. Refrigerated displays are lighted with fluorescent lamps."

"Lamps that are designed for illuminating floral," Criddle explains, "are lamps that are engineered to reduce UV and heat, which cause discoloration, fading and wilting. Flowers are a highly perishable item, and the cost to bring them to market is quite high. By incorporating a low-radiation bal-

"By incorporating a low-radiation balanced spectrum lamp in their floral department, florists will benefit with more naturally vibrant bouquets that sustain their freshness and appearance for longer periods. This means the cut flowers last longer and the florist has considerably less waste to discard at the end of the day."

**— Samantha Criddle
MGV Inc. — Promolux &
Econo-Frost**

anced spectrum lamp in their floral department, florists will benefit with more naturally vibrant bouquets that sustain their freshness and appearance for longer periods. This means the cut flowers last longer and the florist has considerably less waste to discard at the end of the day."

"Retailers can boost sales by using lighting that allows the true natural colors of floral to be seen by shoppers," Criddle adds. Bouquets of flowers are generally purchased for special occasions, "so retailers rely on the vibrant colors and freshness of bouquets to capture shoppers' attention." In successfully drawing the customers' attention to that display, retailers are providing their staffs with "even greater opportunity to make an impulse sale."

The daily challenges involved in selling perishables make it easy for floral retailers to neglect lighting. Retailers should consider asking lighting reps for in-store demonstrations. The in-store experience often seals the deal because retailers are wowed when they see their floral departments come alive under the correct lighting system. **pb**



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Transformational Advertising

The most recent figures from the first quarter, 2010, revealed newspaper circulation dropping only slightly south of double digits. If that had been a one-time occurrence, most would have recognized the decline as an aberration, but the quarterly results were only an accentuation of a trend that has been evolving for several years. As alternative advertising began to gather more consumer advertising dollars, the reverse has been true for traditional media.

With the advent of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, suddenly food advertisers are contemplating how best to reach consumers, often resorting to multiple venues. Evaluating the myriad alternatives includes what types of printed media are necessary and in what form to reach the multiple categories of consumers.

One supermarket operator ran a test replacing its regular six-page flyer with a single sheet printed on both sides containing the same number of items each barely large enough to read. Needless to say, the miniscule printed vehicle has not reappeared.

Regardless, retailers are experimenting with all types of alternatives endeavoring to find what may be several options at any given time. For most, the one certainty is a lot of trees will be spared, and in the majority of cases, electronic media will not only be less costly, but also provide the opportunity to easily convey a multitude of messages.

For those with strong loyalty card analytical capabilities, the opportunity is to rifle-shoot special offerings to consumers most likely to purchase a specific product. However, there may be equally just as great a percentage of customers who would purchase the item if the special offering was also given to them. The quandary becomes how to identify this potential group of consumers. The necessity is having the software capabilities to accurately sift the purchasing data predicting the correct buying alternatives.

While retailers wrestle with ways to utilize each media vehicle to reach their entire customer base, they must keep in mind that electronic media is used in varying amounts by individual population segments. Age and economic segmentation are only two aspects requiring consideration. The production side of the industry has even more possibilities to ponder.

What will be the best methodology for reaching consumers? Historically, producers have relied on retailers to deliver the message, most often defined in terms of item and price. Now the opportunity to provide the educational information at relatively low cost is available in many varying forms.

Seasonal availability, peak-of-season offerings, the variety of value characteristics depending on the item chosen and the explanation of them are only a few of the opportunities for expanding consumer interest.

Nutritional guidance, especially when it involves important new characteristics such as anti-oxidants, or the explanation surrounding organic values, are highly important to a growing cross-section of consumers.

Will promotional money be shifted away from payment to retailers for advertising or will these funds become a greater incentive for retailers to incorporate these messages within their own newly designed promotional vehicle? Perhaps it will become a combination of both.

Will promotional money be shifted away from payment to retailers for advertising or will these funds become a greater incentive for retailers to incorporate these messages within their own newly designed promotional vehicle?

Decades earlier, display materials were sent to retailers literally by the ton as store personnel had the time and need to draw attention to produce displays. As the years have passed, most stores have gradually reduced the type and amounts of how these materials are utilized. The product itself has done the talking, in conjunction with pricing to provide the impulse message to consumers.

As this change was occurring, many producers developed graphic shipping containers, which, when used to build displays, would attract consumer attention. However, the amount of such units being displayed was small in relation to the number shipped, and the additional cost often outweighed the value of the utilization.

To overcome the cost factor, some groups are experimenting with high-graphic sleeves, which will fit around several plain containers and provide an eye-catching display at a more reasonable cost while enhancing sales volume.

Although print media may be declining, the new media alternatives will not entirely

replace it in the near future. Simplistically, not all groups within the population mix are ready to adapt to the new vehicle delivery systems. However, the wave of change is rapidly developing and with it, the opportunities to provide more compelling messages to the consumer, thereby increasing the sales potential for individual products.

Transformational advertising should rank among the top priorities for all organizations within the industry to place on the cutting edge of evolving opportunities for expanding the consumer base for their products. Producers and retailers need to closely communicate how each is approaching the process in order to efficiently maximize incremental sales.

pb



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Wednesday, December 09, 2009 8:02 AM PST

Tannins & Acids Artisan Lettuce Featured On TV Show
By James McCreary, Tannins & Acids
Posted Wednesday, December 9, 2009 at 8:02 AM PST

SALINAS, CA (December 9, 2009) - Tannins & Acids' Artisan Lettuce (AL) was featured on the Shopping & Home with Lacey McClinton program. The edition of Shopping & Home includes a segment featuring Jack Austin who was interviewed at a field of Artisan Lettuce near the company's headquarters in Salinas.

Shopping & Home focuses on fresh produce (like those made) & some specialty items, combined with home-decor items. Both come straight out of the field, right to your home. The key is the entire production and shipping from Lacey McClinton. "You've heard of MTV's 'Behind the Music'?" says Lacey. "You've heard of 'Behind the Music'?" says Lacey. "You've heard of 'Behind the Music'?" says Lacey.

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Market Systems Opens Production Facility In Georgia
By Kelly Karchner, Market Systems International
Posted Wednesday, December 9, 2009 at 8:02 AM PST

Market Systems is proud to have North America's demand for top quality food and produce needs.

Prime Produce International Closes Its Doors
By Prime Produce International, L.L.C.
Posted Wednesday, December 9, 2009 at 8:02 AM PST

Prime Produce International, L.L.C. has ceased operations after six years in business.

New Mail Girl Sparks Controversy
By Beth Michael Dekker, Yahoo! Finance
Posted Wednesday, December 9, 2009 at 8:02 AM PST

New Mail recently got the inside story of how produce is delivered to customers from a young, well-to-do company girl who, however, makes young women looking down to see that the newly made-over online site looks like a Barbie doll in Israeli attire.

Giumarra

Agri Complete Plant Expansion
By Charles Blackmore, Agri Inc.
Posted Wednesday, December 9, 2009 at 8:02 AM PST

Agri has completed a 40,000 square-foot expansion to its current processing facilities.

Artisan Lettuce Oregon Cheri To Prepare The Grand Traffic At Festival
By Carol Scott, Oregon Traffic Festival
Posted Wednesday, December 9, 2009 at 8:02 AM PST

The 2010 Grand Traffic Dinner features some of the most celebrated chefs in the Pacific Northwest.

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Europe's Downward Trend In Produce Consumption

Freshfel Europe has recently released the seventh edition of its *Freshfel Consumption Monitor*. This yearly report analyzes trends in the production, trade and supply of fresh fruits and vegetables across the EU-27, as well as consumption information in Norway, Switzerland and the United States. The report is a unique and homogeneous source of information on fresh fruit and vegetable trends in Europe. It compiles data relating to production of fruit and vegetables in the EU over the past six years, as well as numbers relating to the import and export trade business with the EU and trade among EU Member States. Based on this data, Freshfel also elaborates a gross supply for the whole of the EU-27 as well as for each of the 27 Member States of the Union. Finally and most importantly, the *Monitor* also calculates the per-capita consumption for fresh fruit and vegetables.

The *Consumption Monitor* is part of the actions undertaken by Freshfel in the framework of the EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. Freshfel has been a member of this European platform since 2005, representing interests of the fruit and vegetables sector. The platform is one of the instruments at the EU level that aims to support the produce sector and provide a positive environment for the consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables.

Looking at the latest findings, stimulating consumption should remain a top priority across Europe. While slightly recovering in 2008, compared to 2007, the per-capita fresh fruit consumption within the EU-27 in 2008 remains 0.67 percent below the average of the previous five years. What's more, the fresh vegetable consumption continues to fall with a sharp 14.2 percent reduction in 2008, compared to the average of the previous five years. This data is alarming, but indicates there is still a growth potential in many markets and segments of the population.

Findings from the *Consumption Monitor* demonstrate that in 2008, total gross supply of fruit per capita stands on a yearly basis at 95.5 kg, compared to an average of 96.2 kg over the previous five years, while the total yearly vegetable gross supply per capita stands at 103.5 kg, compared to an average of 120.7 kg over the previous five years. This represents a decrease in 2008 in gross supply by 1 percent for fruits and a decrease by 13 percent for vegetables, when compared to the average of the previous five years. Considering the evolution of the EU population from 486.6 million in 2003 to 497.6 million in 2008, the per capita consumption of fresh produce consequently decreased by 0.67 percent for fresh fruit and by 14.2

percent for fresh vegetables.

Although consumption data should only be understood as a trend indication, rather than the precise amount of fresh produce really consumed by the population, the trend indicators in the *Monitor* also confirm that around 15 out of 27 EU Member States remain below the 400 grams a day of suggested fresh produce intake recommended by the World Health Organization.

According to Ramon Rey, Freshfel's president, "The report clearly demonstrates the need for on-going actions within the sector to supply quality and tasty products to consumers. It is also underlining the responsibility of public authorities to further support the sector by public health campaigns to lead consumers toward a healthier diet. The fruit and vegetables school scheme introduced in 23 Member States in 2009 is a step in the right direction and needs to be continued and even reinforced."

The fruit and vegetables sector needs to continue its efforts to improve consumption. Adapting to changing lifestyles and convenience factors, focusing on quality and taste and considering innovation are some areas to bear in mind. Everyone, both in the private and public sector, has a role to play. Eating more fruit and vegetables will undoubtedly contribute to a more healthful European population.

On a more positive note and looking at the current data, there is a margin for growth to lift all the EU member countries above the WHO recommendation. Products imported from the United States can take advantage of this potential growth. The EU market is demanding quality and American products can, in this respect, be a good complement to EU sorting. In the last years, the imported

product has taken a greater part in the EU assortment of fruit and vegetables. Exotics, including bananas, have been influencing the growth of the imports. U.S.-grown produce is ranked 17th among the EU suppliers of fresh produce, with a volume ranging between 180,000 to 220,000 tons.

In recent years, the EU has been moving policy to be more demand-oriented. The EU has a number of tools for promotion of fruits and vegetables and has also focused actions toward the youngest consumers with a program of fresh produce distribution in schools.

Much remains to be done, but optimists should always prevail in the sector to take the full advantage of the many positive and healthful properties of fresh fruits and vegetable to take advantage of the momentum to increase consumption.

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Baero North America, Inc.	99	31	314-692-2270	314-991-2640
Basciani Foods, Inc.	81	54	610-268-3044	610-268-2194
Bland Farms	GA-2	55	800-VIDALIA	912-654-3532
Blue Book Services	GA-15	7	630-668-3500	630-668-0303
Brooks Tropicals	74	45	800-327-4833	305-246-5827
Capital City Fruit Co., Inc.	44	19	515-981-5111	515-981-4564
Champ's Mushrooms	82	47	866-Champs1	604-607-0787
Coast To Coast Produce Co.	86-87	29	800-433-1403	203-271-2796
Coosemans L.A.	79	56	213-689-1551	213-689-1583
Coosemans L.A. Shipping, Inc.	79	56	213-689-1551	213-689-1583
Country Fresh Mushroom Co.	83	2	610-268-3043	610-268-0479
Crown Jewels Marketing	45	53	559-438-2335	559-438-2341
Del Monte Fresh Produce	108	24	800-950-3683	305-520-8495
Del Rey Avocado Co.	74	32	760-728-8325	760-728-9501
Dole Fresh Fruit Company	2	3	818-879-6600	818-879-6628
dProduce Man Software	26	12	888-PRODMAN	650-712-9973
Duda Farm Fresh Foods, Inc.	94	17	561-978-5714	561-978-5705
East Coast Brokers & Packers, Inc.	107	25	800-557-7751	863-869-9850
Eastern Fresh Growers, Inc.	52	43	856-447-3563	856-447-4227
Family Tree Farms	45	26	866-FLAVOR-1	559-595-7795
Fisher Capespan	74	57	800-388-3074	514-737-3676
Fresh Produce & Floral Council	80	28	714-739-0177	714-739-0226
General Produce, Inc.	GA-11	23	800-782-8833	404-361-1841
Georgia Peach Council	GA-5	46	478-956-6418	478-956-2929
Giorgio Fresh Co.	83	20	800-330-5711	610-429-3810
Hardy Farms Peanuts	GA-10	27	888-368-NUTS	478-783-0606
Highline Mushrooms	81	6	519-326-8643	519-326-7222
Intergrow Greenhouses, Inc.	42	35	585-682-0052	585-682-0195
Jasmine Vineyards, Inc.	90	58	661-792-2141	661-792-6365
L&M Companies, Inc.	GA-6	13	509-698-3881	509-698-3922
Mann Packing Company, Inc.	7	1	800-884-6266	831-422-5171
J. Marchini & Son / LeGrand	45	59	559-665-9710	559-665-9714

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Melon Source, Inc.	44	36	800-624-2123	773-254-5063
MIXTEC Group	26	21	626-440-7077	626-440-1557
MJB Sales, Inc.	83	50	610-268-0444	610-268-0837
Monterey Mushrooms	82	22	573-374-1826	831-763-2300
New Jersey Blueberry Industry Council	51	30	609-292-8853	609-984-2508
New Jersey Department of Agriculture	49	40	609-292-8853	609-292-2508
New Jersey Peach Promotion Council	53	48	973-744-6090	
New York Produce Show & Conference	39		212-426-2218	212-779-8779
Nickey Gregory Company, LLC	GA-9	33	404-366-7410	404-363-1169
North Shore Greenhouses, Inc.	75	60	866-548-4644	760-397-5807
Ocean Mist Farms	23	18	831-633-2492	831-633-4363
Pandol Brothers, Inc.	45	5	661-725-3145	661-725-4741
Pandol Brothers, Inc.	91	16	661-725-3145	661-725-4741
Pappas & Company	47	61	559-655-4277	559-655-4841
Paulk Vineyards	GA-10	9	229-468-7873	229-468-7876
Produce for Better Health Foundation	101	8	302-235-2329	302-235-5555
The Produce Marketing Association	12-13	62	302-738-7100	302-731-2409
PuraVida Farms	47	38	480-588-7012	714-686-9253
R&R Flaim Next Generation Produce, LLC	54	51	856-691-2987	856-690-0374
Red Blossom Farms, Inc.	21	34	805-981-1839	805-693-0032
River Point Farms, LLC	94	14	541-567-4781	541-289-8123
Rock Garden South	9	63	305-477-8833	305-477-3324
SAGARPA - Embassy of Mexico	76-77	44	202-728-1727	202-728-1728
Sambraio Packaging	93	41	831-724-7581	831-724-1403
Shuman Produce, Inc.	GA-7	15	912-557-4477	912-557-4478
Sun World International	17	37	661-631-4160	760-398-9613
Sunview Marketing International	47	11	661-792-3145	661-792-2297
Tennessee Dept. of Agriculture	42	10	615-837-5517	615-837-5194
Trinity Fruit Sales	46	64	559-433-3777	559-433-3790
Uesugi Farms, Inc.	41	39	408-847-9403	408-842-0274
United Fresh Produce Association	71	4	202-303-3400	202-303-3433
Vineland Co-op Produce Auction, Inc.	54	42	856-691-0721	856-794-2301
Wilkinson-Cooper Produce Inc.	94	65	561-996-6537	561-996-6588



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Blast from the Past



On July 4th, 1910, Japanese immigrant, Nobuo Higaki, at the encouragement of future business partner, Kotoharu Inouye, left Spokane, WA, and arrived in San Francisco, CA. That year, Higaki and his partner bought property and built their nursery in Redwood City, CA. Redwood Nursery would become Higaki Nursery, and later, the Bay City Flower Company.

Prior to the purchase of a Model-T Ford in 1916, depicted above, with Higaki standing proudly at the far right, flowers were transported first in baskets on their backs and then horse and buggy to the train destined for San Francisco.

During the Great Depression in the early 1930s, when few people had money to buy flowers, the family grew green beans, cucumbers, celery transplants and tomatoes. According to his memoirs, Nobuo Higaki was in great despair as the bank auctioned off both his land and the greenhouses. A family friend provided a loan and gave Higaki some gardenia plants. The loan was used to buy back the property and assets and the plants were used to grow a new crop – fresh-cut gardenias. The gardenias were so successful that Nobuo repayed all his debts, and the surplus of funds enabled the family to survive to the end of the war in 1946.

In 1942 during World War II, the family was forced by the U.S. government to vacate their home and business. Nobuo was

abruptly relocated to Bismark, ND. The oldest son, Harry Higaki, at the young age of 21, arranged for the business to be leased out, and the family temporarily relocated to Kimberly, ID.

Following the war, Harry Higaki assumed the company's leadership and business flourished. In 1950, Harry incorporated the family business and gave it its current name. Bay City Flower Company transitioned from growing and marketing cut flowers to growing potted plants including hydrangeas, mums, poinsettias, Easter lilies and foliage plants. In 1960, the nursery moved from Redwood City to its current location in Half Moon Bay.

Harry, who is now 89 years old, was always known for his commitment to quality and innovation. In 1994, he was presented with PMA's Floral Marketer of the Year award. In 1986, Harrison Higaki, Harry's son, began to share the reins of the family business, later assuming the role of company president. In 2009, Harrison Higaki received the PMA Floral Marketer of the Year award.

Today, Bay City Flower Company's products are sold in all 50 states through supermarkets, upscale garden centers, florists, wholesalers and Internet-based retailers. Fourth generation family members have now joined ranks within the past several years.

Referencing the 100th anniversary, Harrison Higaki says, "It's time to celebrate not only the end of 100 years, but also the beginning of a second century filled with hope and a bright future."

The *Blast from the Past* is a regular feature of PRODUCE BUSINESS. We welcome submissions of your old photos, labels or advertisements along with suggested captions. Please send materials to: Editor, PRODUCE BUSINESS, P.O. Box 810425, Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425, or e-mail info@producebusiness.com



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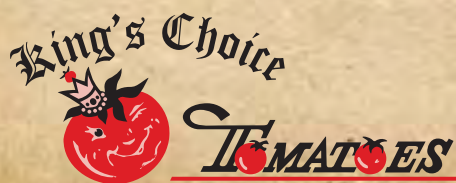
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