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WAL-MART PRICING COMPARISON: SAVANNAH • LOCAL VS. LOCAL  
SUMMER MERCHANDISING • NEW JERSEY PRODUCE • SUPERVALU • PRICES  
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**THIS MONTH'S WINNER**



**Wilson Estupinan**  
**Neighborhood Supermarkets Association**  
**Director of Produce Merchandising & Operations**  
**Glendale, NY**

As the director of produce merchandising and operations for over 30 NSA stores, Wilson Estupinan is incredibly busy. "I am accountable for buying and pricing produce, merchandising items, planning sales and advertisements, and coaching groups or individuals within the company to help them generate sales and increase their profitability and whatever else is needed," Estupinan says. Not only does he accomplish all of these tasks regularly, but he also does most of it on the road, visiting stores throughout New York's five boroughs as well as locations in Westchester, NY, Connecticut, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts.

While Estupinan has been with NSA for only three years, he began his produce career in 1994 as a produce clerk at a local supermarket, and slowly worked his way up the chain of command. "I love what I do and find such joy in it," he says. "Specifically, I love to train personnel and develop our employees. I have a passion for fresh produce, knowing about each ingredient that is called for in a recipe, where it comes from and the health benefits it provides. I also enjoy merchandising the department and finding new and unique ways to draw customers' attention to our products."

Estupinan started reading *PRODUCE BUSINESS* 12 years ago. He says, "It has been a valuable tool for me that helps me do my job better."

**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.

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**QUESTIONS FOR THE JUNE ISSUE**

- 1) Name three kinds of natural vitamins that can be found in a Dole banana. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) How many commodities does Ocean Mist Farms market? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Where is the 5th Annual AMHPAC Technical Business Convention taking place? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) What months are Jersey Fresh blueberries available? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) What three social media tools does California Giant Berry Farms use to enhance its marketing efforts? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) What are the dates for the 2012 SIAL conference? \_\_\_\_\_

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

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# ROAD TO 2012 FARM BILL MAY BE LONG

By Julie Manes  
Director Of Government Relations

**O**n April 26, the Senate Agriculture Committee voted to pass the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012. The move marked the beginning of efforts to reauthorize the 2012 Farm Bill, which is set to expire on September 30, 2012. While the logical next step is approval by the full Senate, then on to the House Agriculture Committee and consideration by the full House before landing on the President's desk, there are several scenarios that could play out that would create additional twists and turns.

The Senate Agriculture Committee's Farm Bill proposal answers the call from the fresh fruit and vegetable industry to continue to build on the investments made in the 2008 Farm Bill. The Committee's Farm Bill proposal includes the following fruit and vegetable programs:

- Funding of \$150 million annually for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program
- Annual funding at \$50 million per year for the DoD (Department of Defense) Fresh program to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to schools and service institutions
- Investment of \$70 million annually for the Specialty Crop Block Grant program
- The Specialty Crop Research Initiative was funded at \$25 million per year ramping up to \$50 million by 2017
- Increased funding of \$60 million in 2013 and up to \$65 million by 2017 for pest and disease management programs
- The Market Access Program (\$200 million per year) and Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (\$9 million per year) were fully funded
- Hunger-Free Communities Grant Program for fruit and vegetable SNAP incentives was funded at \$100 million over 5 years
- Farmers Market and Local Food Promo-

tion Program was funded at \$100 million over 5 years

- Section 32 specialty crop purchases funded at \$406 million per year in mandatory purchases

While the next step in the Senate is debate and votes by the full Senate, Majority Leader Harry Reid has so far not indicated with certainty when that will happen. Why? While the Bill passed out of committee easily in April, there are major sectors of the agriculture industry that have expressed displeasure about the portions of the Bill most relevant to their commodities, notably rice, cotton and dairy. Some members of the Senate believe that the Bill's language relating to nutrition and feeding programs does not go far enough to address the needs of underserved populations. On the other hand, there has been criticism from Farm Bill-watchers who believe that, in spite of the \$23 billion in spending cuts in the Senate version, budget considerations should weigh heavier.

United Fresh and many other allied industry groups would like to see a Farm Bill passed this year, as soon as possible. Recently, nearly half of the U.S. Senate signed a letter to Majority Leader Reid and his Republican counterpart, Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, urging swift consideration of the legislation. Reid and McConnell have yet to respond to the letter.

Meanwhile, in the House, the Agriculture Committee has wrapped up its series of hearings on the various titles of the Farm Bill and is expected to vote on its version of the legislation sometime in June. However, that body must also address the concerns raised by various commodity groups about the Senate's version of the Bill. In addition, the political terrain in the House is a bit different, and many members are hearing from constituents who are in favor of more stringent budget cuts. At

the same time, House leadership is concerned that the severe cuts to nutrition and feeding programs that some members support may lead to election year complications.

Both houses of Congress must deal with parliamentary considerations to make sure the Farm Bill gets adequate time for debate, but does not take too much time from other important legislation, such as funding for the federal government and taxes. Timing is a critical factor in the progress of the Bill, considering the dwindling number of days left in the legislative calendar and the heightened political tensions of upcoming elections.

This leaves us at the moment with a muddled picture of the outlook for the 2012 Farm Bill. This is certainly not the first time that a major piece of legislation seems to be stuck on its way to final passage, and it is still possible for the leadership in both houses of Congress to work through the various complications and get a Bill to the President before the current Farm Bill expires on September 30. Furthermore, once the elections are over and some of the partisan rhetoric cools, there is potential for the Farm Bill to be passed in the expected lame duck session. In the event the Bill does not get passed before Congress adjourns for the year, key agriculture policymakers are considering how to extend the current Farm Bill. An extension would allow certain necessary programs to continue until a full reauthorization is agreed upon.

The specialty crop industry fared well in the legislation recommended by the Senate Agriculture Committee, especially given the current budgetary and political vagaries. United Fresh is working hard to ensure that regardless of what route the Farm Bill takes, those much-needed investments in our industry are maintained.



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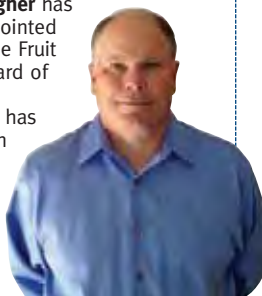
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## TRANSITIONS

### FRUIT PATCH DINUBA, CA

**Jim Gallagher** has been appointed CEO of the Fruit Patch Board of Directors. Gallagher has more than 15 years of experience in the fresh produce industry, and is currently the general manager of Organicgirl brand salads, while also serving as executive vice president of revenue. Before joining organicgirl in 2007, Jim was vice president of global sales for Chiquita Brands. Jim's career also includes stints with Willow Foods, Kraft and Procter & Gamble.



### BONIPAK PRODUCE SANTA MARIA, CA

Bonipak Produce has added **Dana Giacone** to the team as the new national accounts/business development manager. Giacone will help the family-owned business expand its customer base and seek out new business development opportunities. She began her career with the California Table Grape Commission and spent 10 years at River Ranch Fresh Foods LLC, in Salinas, CA, where she worked with retailers, wholesalers, processors and foodservice distributors.



### THE OPPENHEIMER GROUP VANCOUVER, BC, CANADA

**David Smith** became senior vice president of sales and categories earlier this year. Smith joined Oppenheimer in 1989, and over the past several decades has held roles of increasing responsibility, including, most recently, senior vice president of national sales. Smith now has strategic oversight of all of Oppenheimer's product categories, from procurement to delivery, in addition to sales.



**Doug Grant** has added leadership of the organization's marketing strategies to the scope of his responsibilities, which also include grower relations, operations, quality control, transportation, food safety, supply chain management and IT. Grant has been with Oppenheimer for 17 years, and is also the senior vice president and chief operations officer.



**James Milne** is reprising the role of director of marketing. Milne is also Oppenheimer's business development director, and leads the company's avocado and citrus categories. Milne, who joined the company in 1994, was Oppenheimer's director of marketing from 2001 to 2006. His background also includes management of the organization's apple, pear and greenhouse categories.



### NEW YORK APPLE ASSOCIATION FISHERS, NY

The New York Apple Association (NYAA) has named **Molly Golden** as director of marketing. Molly will be responsible for the design and execution of all trade merchandising and promotional activities for the market, working closely with retail partners, growers and industry shippers. As a key account manager, Molly worked closely with retailers on promotional activity, as well as large prestige accounts with product innovation to help grow their business.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### ANNOUNCEMENTS



### INTERRUPCION\* LAUNCHES NEW ORGANIC, FAIR TRADE PROGRAM

Interrupcion\* New York, NY, is excited about the launch of Taste Me Do Good\* bananas. Purchased from an associated cooperative in Ecuador, these fresh bananas are certified Organic and Fair Trade, reflecting both accountability to the planet and an active contribution to a fair commercial relationship between producer and consumer. The organization will begin doubling its purchasing volume to 16,000 cartons per week, making the new product line available to more supermarkets and customers across the country.



### MOONEY FARMS AND MORNINGSTAR TEAM UP

Mooney Farms, Chico, CA, has announced a new partnership with California tomato processor, Morningstar. The new venture, Mooney Star dry yard, will bring the former Valley Sun dry yard to a new level. The Mooney Family will continue to manage all stages of production for the Bella Sun Luci line of products, Mooney Farms Premium line.

### NATURIFE FARMS PARTNERS WITH DISNEY CHARACTERS

Naturipe Farms LLC, Estero, FL, will introduce Berry Quick Fresh Blueberry Snacks featuring Disney characters on-pack. Berry Quick Fresh Blueberry Snacks are new to the market with pre-portioned, single-serve packs, which make them perfect for on-the-go snacks and lunches. They will be launched at grocery retailers nationwide.



### COMBS PRODUCE INTRODUCES LOCALLY GROWN PRODUCT

Combs Produce will procure and deliver locally grown fresh produce based on the products available in any given region of the United States. The program will focus on regional products and provide Combs Produce customers with planning tools such as merchandising calendars and menu options to maximize local offerings on a seasonal basis.



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ANNOUNCEMENTS



**MICHIGAN JONAGOLD DISPLAY CONTEST WINNERS ANNOUNCED**

Plumb's of North Muskegon, MI, is the winner of the Dewitt-based Michigan Apple Committee's Jonagold display contest and the \$500 cash prize. Plumb's creative use of Michigan Apple signage and bins, Jonagold cartons and a prominent produce department location brought attention to the display and made it stand out from the other entries. Second place went to Plumb's of Newaygo, MI. Plumb's Valu-Rite Foods of Muskegon, MI, was third place.



**SALES OF MEDJOOL DATE BRAND UP 34 PERCENT IN 2011**

The Bard Valley Medjool Date Growers Association (BVMDGA), of Bard Valley, CA, announced that year-over-year sales volume of its Natural Delights™ Medjool Dates were up 34 percent in 2011, thanks to increased distribution and greater velocity in existing points of distribution. Natural Delights account for more than 60 percent of the U.S. Medjool date crop. The 34 percent increase in sales volume in 2011 includes more than a 50 percent increase in Natural Delights date roll sales. Distribution gains were highest in the Pacific and Northeast regions.

**SAGE FRUIT CO. TO BE EXCLUSIVE SUPPLIER TO BIGGEST LOSER**

Sage Fruit Co., Yakima, WA, has been chosen as the inaugural partner and exclusive supplier of *The Biggest Loser* co-branded apples, pears and cherries. Sage Fruit will debut *The Biggest Loser* apples in September at the start of the 2012/2013 apple season. The product launch will include a variety of *Biggest Loser* branded packaging, and materials will feature *Biggest Loser* messaging designed to educate consumers about the health benefits of apples and how they can include more fruits and vegetables in their diets.



**GIUMARRA PLANS FOR 2012 NEW ZEALAND MEYER LEMON SEASON**

This is the fifth season for Giumarra's New Zealand Meyer lemon program. In addition to shipping the fruit by vessel, Giumarra and its growers are offering air-freight for any customers looking to get an early start to the season, which should start by late June or early July. Meyer lemons are sweeter than other lemon varieties, making them great additions to fresh salads, main courses and desserts. They have a unique floral aroma that adds flavor to a variety of dishes.



**CHELAN FRESH PIONEERS NEW TECHNOLOGY USING FRUIT**

Chelan Fresh, Chelan, WA, is pioneering the use of new data bar technology called greenscans, which allow consumers to view a grower video on 16 different apples by scanning the sticker on the apple. The video connects consumers directly to Chelan's apple orchards. Consumers can now download a free app, Greenscans, to their Smartphone and begin scanning any product with a data bar to learn about the product and company, as well as a consumer alert should there be a product recall.

NEW PRODUCT

**VILLAGE FARMS HOSTED GRAND OPENING OF NEW MONAHANS GREENHOUSE**

Village Farms International hosted the grand opening of its newest greenhouse in Monahans, TX, on Thursday, May 17. The greenhouse features Village Farms proprietary Greenhouse Advanced Technology Environment System (GATES). Currently, Village Farms has completed the first 30-acre phase of the new greenhouse, which will provide local jobs for up to 400 employees on completion of its final phase.



**MAXWELL CHASE LAUNCHES NEW AUTOMATED TOMATO SLICER**

Maxwell Chase Technologies, Atlanta, GA, has announced the release of its new, patented MCT 50 Automated Tomato Slicer. Easy to load, the MCT 50 removes and collects the unwanted end pieces while placing the premium tomato slices neatly in the tray in three rows. The Tomato Slicer has built in safety features such as a safety hood to protect the operator when the machine is in operation.



NEW PRODUCT

**READY PAC LAUNCHES READY PAC SALAD SINGLES™**

Ready Pac Salad Singles™ are the latest creation from Irwindale, CA-based Ready Pac. According to the company, Ready Pac presents a simple solution with its Salad Singles™ line by offering delicious and healthy recipes that are complete, less than 200 calories and designed at a suggested retail price of \$2.99 per unit.



CORRECTION

In the April issue of *PRODUCE BUSINESS*, the pull quote on page 39 was attributed to the wrong person. Michael Lippold of Calavo Growers should have been quoted. On page 38, we inadvertently ran an old photograph of a guacamole brand that is no longer marketed. Additionally, \$8.8 million was the amount of total fresh guacamole sales for 2011 sold from the deli counter. According to estimates from Los Angeles, CA-based Yucatan Foods, total U.S. retail fresh guacamole annual sales is near \$100 million, including non-reporting retailers and club stores. *PRODUCE BUSINESS* also apologizes for overlooking Yucatan Foods in the guacamole category. Please see [www.producebusiness.com](http://www.producebusiness.com) for the corrected article.



# BEST MENTORSHIPS HAPPEN ORGANICALLY

By James Prevor  
President & Editor-in-Chief



**T**he issue of mentorship and executive development is a tricky one. There are formal programs such as the ones mentioned by Don Harris, formerly of Wild Oats and Safeway, in his column in this issue on page 100.

These often focus on transmitting specific skills, say teaching a produce clerk how to properly rotate product. There are also wonderful University-based programs.

Since its founding, I've had the pleasure to teach at Cornell University each year as part of the faculty of the United Fresh Produce Executive Development Program. This program tries to transmit higher level skills, say key skills that one might learn had one taken an MBA at a top school, but in a limited time frame.

My friends, Jay and Ruthie Pack, were visionary and generous – a pretty incredible combination! – in originating the Pack Family/PMA Career Pathways Fund, which set a standard for how one can reach out to students and introduce them to new worlds. This program ultimately generated the PMA Foundation for Industry Talent, geared toward attracting and retaining people to work in the produce trade.

Building on the legacy Jay and Ruthie established, the Eastern Produce Council and PRODUCE BUSINESS together spend a small fortune at The New York Produce Show and Conference to bring in university students and faculty to hear from star-studded industry luminaries, such as Bruce Peterson and Frieda Caplan. Not limited by a mission to have people work in the industry, we expanded the initiative and now offer the largest program to bring culinary students to any produce event -- mentoring these young people as to the possibilities produce offers for their recipe development and culinary work.

This issue of PRODUCE BUSINESS is always a highlight as 40 deserving up-and-comers are recognized before the whole industry. The 40-under-Forty program is not only designed to provide recognition for these select individuals, it is designed to provide an aspiration for every person as they undertake a career in the produce trade. In launching the program, we wanted them to know that industry, intelligence, self-discipline, a willingness to defer gratification, a willingness to engage in public service... that internalization of these character traits would, in due course, be recognized before the entire industry.

Corporate decisions to commit to mentoring can be helpful; the transmission of skills from generation to generation is important. Yet as anyone who has ever had a real mentor knows, it is a relationship that can't be willed into existence. I had a junior high school teacher

who decided I was worthy of sharing his library with and gave me a book each month. I had a high school teacher who introduced me to foreign films and political lectures. I had a college professor who thought enough of me to personally edit articles I wrote and to call colleagues to try to get me fellowships and internships.

I have a 22-year old assistant, and when I go on high-level consulting assignments, I often let him sit in, let him see a world he wouldn't see otherwise. His old boss used to make him wait in the car.

Do all these things really help the mentor? Financially that is unclear. You could make a case that such behavior might engender loyalty, but the very nature of honest mentorship requires one to encourage a mentee to seek opportunities where they exist. Of course,

better skilled workers are a win, though, once again, honest mentoring has to include helping the mentee negotiate to get what he is worth.

Of course, being mentored is a value in and of itself and, very often, people stay where they are because they want the opportunity

to work with certain people. This could be because of their skills but, also, because of their emotional and intellectual generosity. People like to work with people they think care for them and want them to succeed.

Besides, win or not in the immediate sense, maybe there is some great karmic stream, some Jungian oneness, and when one throws a little love into the world, maybe one gets a little back.

Good mentoring is actually hard work -- which is why those who grow up with parents both loving and able are so fortunate. There is someone in the world who both knows enough to teach them well and cares enough to make the effort to do so. That is why family businesses can be such awesome competitors.

Mentorship doesn't have to be announced. Indeed because the higher up one rises, the less success is about specific skills and more about traits of character, the very best mentorship is not a lecture but an example. My father, Michael Prevor, died earlier this year after a battle with pancreatic cancer. He was my greatest mentor by far, yet he never gave a lecture. He taught me the importance of hard work by working hard. He taught me the importance of learning by always learning new things. He taught me the importance of looking ahead by always thinking about the future. He taught me the importance of leadership by leading. He taught me the importance of love by loving.

In the end, people rarely follow people because they have an MBA. They follow the people whose character inspires them. In the end each individual has to dig down deep and decide what character they will carry in this world. Mentorship programs can help, but they are thin substitutes for able and loving parents.

pb

**As anyone who has ever had a real mentor knows, it is a relationship that can't be willed into existence.**



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# Evaluating And Planning Promotions In An Increasingly Complex Retail Environment

BY KELLI BECKEL, SENIOR MARKETING MANAGER, NIELSEN PERISHABLES GROUP

Promotional strategies and effectiveness have evolved over the past few years, leading to a need to better understand the new promotional landscape and plan future promotions accordingly.

Retail price promotions are often one of the largest marketing expenses incurred by suppliers. It is not uncommon for retailers to request temporary product discounts or the allocation of promotional reserve funds to support reduced shelf-prices for the promotional event. The result is that retail promotions often carry a significant cost in marketing funds for suppliers and, potentially, lost margin dollars for supermarkets.

With improved measurement and tracking, many retailers are increasingly open to promotional input from suppliers who bring promotional evaluation and planning expertise to the discussion, addressing key questions such as:

- How important are promotions to overall category performance?
- What drives "successful" promotions (i.e. discount level, frequency, promotion vehicle)?
- What are the best performing promotional strategies?
- How do promotions impact overall retailer performance relative to the competitive market?

The good news for the industry is that more tools and strategies than ever are available to answer these questions.

As the economy has improved, many consumers report they are becoming less price-focused, depending on the category and products offered. This means promotions are essential to draw in consumers to certain categories, while other categories often are purchased regardless of discount. For example, cherries are highly seasonal and responsive to supermarket promotions. Nearly two-thirds of cherry volume is sold while on promotion — the highest among the Top 10 produce categories — and the average volume lift on promotion exceeds 200 percent. However, despite the fact that cherry promotions drive a significant portion of sales, they don't necessarily require a deep price discount to be successful.

Promotional volume and discounts are



CHART COURTESY OF NIELSEN PERISHABLES GROUP FRESHFACTS

only two pieces of the puzzle for understanding and planning effective promotions in an evolving produce department. Promotional timing and type, as well as circular ad size, frequency and location, all must be factored into the equation. The orange category exemplifies how to leverage the complete process.

When examining orange promotions at a national level, promotional volume was down during 2011, while sales dollars, price and ad presence were all up. Retailers offered an average price discount of 23 percent while on promotion, with an average lift of 88 percent.

Nationally, oranges were discounted between 20 and 30 percent during 2011, which generated an average of 61 percent dollar lift over expected sales. However, the analysis found that volume lift is remarkably consistent at discounts up to 40 percent. However, lift jumps significantly starting at a 41 percent discount. Interestingly, smaller discounts (10 percent or less) drive strong volume lift, but also provide a strong lift in dollars, usually an important goal for retailers.

Zooming in on top- and bottom-performing retailers provides insight into specific promotional strategies that drive success. In an analysis of the promotional strategies of top and bottom citrus retailers in 2011, it was found that top retailers discount between everyday and promotional pricing matched the national average (23 to 24 percent), while bottom-performing retailers implemented higher promotional prices. Additionally, top citrus retailers were less reliant on price reductions alone, and instead offered multiple citrus variety options to attract customers. Mean-

time, bottom-performing citrus retailers focused 80 percent of citrus ads on oranges, rather than including multiple varieties.

Ad location was the greatest disparity between top and bottom citrus retailers. Top-performing retailers used more feature ads, and typically promoted oranges on the back page or the circular. Bottom-performing retailers used mostly sub-feature ads and chose middle pages the most. When it comes to ad type, top retailers utilized price multiple (e.g. 2-for-\$1) ads over two-and-a-half times more than bottom retailers.

Considering the national and top/bottom retailer analysis for citrus uncovers the following insights relating to promotional performance, pricing and ad strategies:

- Don't let oranges dominate the ad planner. Aggressive orange promotions reduced total citrus performance, and ads with multiple citrus varieties were more prominent in top citrus retailers. Additionally, slightly more back-page ads may be better than a few larger front-page features. When orange ads are used, price multiple events are important to mix into the ad planner.

- Smaller discounts favor greater dollar lift for oranges. Discounts lower than 40 percent produce similar volume results, and lower volume lifts produce stronger overall results.

These types of insights allow for fact-based promotional plans that articulate the most effective timing, ad frequency, depth of discount and precise pricing recommendations. Once this information is known, the recommendations can be implemented into retailer plans, and later evaluated and refined for further success.



The Nielsen Perishables Group consults with clients in the fresh food space. Based in Chicago, IL, the company specializes in consumer research, advanced analytics, marketing communications, category development, supply chain management and activity-based costing. For more information, please visit [www.perishablesgroup.com](http://www.perishablesgroup.com)



# Easier Said Than Done

BY JIM PREVOR, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, PRODUCE BUSINESS

**P**romotional strategies driven by real data? Deciding what to do not based on what your Uncle Louie or first boss told you 30 years ago but based on actual outcomes? This is not your father's produce industry anymore, and this contribution by Kelli Beckel of the Nielsen Perishables Group is an important piece.

It is important because hidden in the data routinely captured is the key to promotional success. Yet, "hidden" may well be the operative word.

The Nielsen Perishables Group is doing the Lord's work by urging people to look at the data, try and understand it and then act in accordance with what they find. There is little question that intelligent vendors will try to position themselves as the masters of this data. Still optimally using this data is easier said than done.

Part of the problem is that what actually works isn't all that matters. Wal-Mart and others have been drifting away from the EDLP, or Everyday Low Price, concept not because it has been established that building a reputation for consistently low prices is not optimal, but because it denies retailers flexibility. If a retailer needs a sales boost next week, then a low price promotion may be just the trick. This is despite the fact that many a manufacturer and many a retailer have been ruined because they trained their customers to wait for the sale to buy.

Another issue is that promotional success is defined differently depending on where one sits in the supply chain and even one's position within a company. A grape vendor may see a promotion as successful if it boosts sales of grapes at an appropriate price. The category manager at retail for grapes might go along. Yet the produce VP won't be so happy if the increase in grape sales comes at the expense of stone fruit sales.

And, if anyone is really on the ball, there are overall store ramifications that need to be assessed. A particular salad greens promotion might, at a glance, seem less successful than a particular snack fruit promotion, yet if the promotion leads con-

sumers to buy tomatoes, peppers, onions, mushrooms, apples, berries, etc., to place in the salad that are not on sale at reduced margins, that might be a bigger win for produce than the supposedly more successful promotion. If the salad promotion leads consumers to buy protein, such as eggs, meat and seafood, to put on the salad, it may be a much more effective overall store promotion than the supposedly winning snack fruit sale.

Another key issue in evaluating promotions is time. In the very short term a promotion of, say, garlic, might be a success, but if the promotion only leads to consumers stocking up and kills garlic sales for the next month, it may not be a success at all.

Great data is important, but data produced in the normal course of business can't test propositions that are normally not done. So, for example, typically many variables are tested at once: A deep discount on the product often comes along with larger more prominent positioning in the department and an advertising investment both in-store and out-of-store. Because so many variables change at once, the data can't typically tell us which components of this promotion actually led to increased sales and to what degree each component contributed. This holds open the possibility that much of the lift in sales comes from components of the promotion other than price. Realize, of course, that the lift doesn't have to be as large without a price reduction to maintain equal dollar sales and to gain enhanced dollar profitability.

One place data can be very useful, but that requires a deep dive to truly understand its ramifications, is the role that a promotion has on overall store profitability by examining the nature of the clientele it attracts to the shopping venue. See, all customers are not created equal, and not even a dollar of sales is equal among all customers. In days of yore we had no data so we defined our best customers as our biggest, but that is almost certainly not the case. A family with 10 children may buy an awful lot of stuff,

**Because so many variables change at once, the data can't typically tell us which components of this promotion actually led to increased sales and to what degree each component contributed.**

but they may be under budgetary stress and so "cherry pick" the ads, use double and triple coupon offers and shop in multiple venues to get the best deals.

In the end, that very large customer may not produce much profit for the store at all. In contrast, a bachelor, who zooms in a few times a week to pick up a high margin prepared food item for dinner and on the weekend buys a nice wine, expensive fish and pricey balsamic vinegar to make a dinner to impress for his date, that guy, who never looks at the price, may be much more profitable than a price-conscious consumer who buys much higher volume.

This holds major implications for what makes a successful promotion. It means that certain stores at least might be more successful promoting specialty product, maybe more with usage ideas and implications of status enhancement. After all, if the key goal is to attract the customer who will buy high margin items, is a deep discount promotion the tool most likely to attract that customer?

The data is there to look at these subjects, but scarcely anyone ever does.

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Email: [IDDBA@iddba.org](mailto:IDDBA@iddba.org)  
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Website: [www.floriexpo.com](http://www.floriexpo.com)

## JULY 17, 2012

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Council, La Mirada, CA  
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## July 20-22, 2012

### PMA FOODSERVICE CONFERENCE AND EXPO

Conference Venue: The Monterey Conference Center,  
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Conference Management: Produce Marketing  
Association, Newark, DE  
Phone: 302-738-7100  
Email: [solutionctr@pma.com](mailto:solutionctr@pma.com)  
Website: <http://fsc.pma.com>

## AUGUST 15-17, 2012

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Email: [sparkslaura@hotmail.com](mailto:sparkslaura@hotmail.com)  
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36th Annual Joint Tomato Conference  
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Email: [diana@floridatomatoes.org](mailto:diana@floridatomatoes.org)  
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# Wal-Mart and Payoffs in Mexico: Bribery or Extortion?

FROM JIM PREVOR'S PERISHABLE PUNDIT 04.24.2012

**T**he New York Times came out with a front-page article titled, "Vast Mexico Bribery Case Hushed Up by Wal-Mart After Top Level Struggle." The article claims are specific, pointed and explosive:

*In September 2005, a senior Wal-Mart lawyer received an alarming e-mail from a former executive at the company's largest foreign subsidiary, Wal-Mart de Mexico.*

*In the e-mail and follow-up conversations, the former executive described how Wal-Mart de Mexico had orchestrated a campaign of bribery to win market dominance. In its rush to build stores, he said, the company had paid bribes to obtain permits in virtually every corner of the country.*

*The former executive gave names, dates and bribe amounts. He knew so much, he explained, because for years he had been the lawyer in charge of obtaining construction permits for Wal-Mart de Mexico.*

*Wal-Mart dispatched investigators to Mexico City, and within days they unearthed evidence of widespread bribery. They found a paper trail of hundreds of suspect payments totaling more than \$24 million. They also found documents showing that Wal-Mart de Mexico's top executives not only knew about the payments, but had taken steps to conceal them from Wal-Mart's headquarters in Bentonville, Ark. In a confidential report to his superiors, Wal-Mart's lead investigator, a former F.B.I. special agent, summed up their initial findings this way: "There is reasonable suspicion to believe that Mexican and USA laws have been violated."*

*The lead investigator recommended that Wal-Mart expand the investigation.*

*Instead, an examination by The New York Times found, Wal-Mart's leaders shut it down.*

*Neither American nor Mexican law enforcement officials were notified. None of Wal-Mart de Mexico's leaders were disciplined. Indeed, its chief executive, Eduardo Castro-Wright, identified by the former executive as the driving force behind years of bribery, was promoted to vice chairman of Wal-Mart in 2008. Until this article, the allegations and Wal-Mart's investigation had never been publicly disclosed.*

*But The Times's examination uncovered a prolonged struggle at the highest levels of Wal-Mart, a struggle that pitted the company's much publicized commitment to the highest moral and ethical standards against its relentless pursuit of growth.*

The specific allegations are that Wal-Mart's Mexican subsidiary paid "fixers," or as they are known in Mexico, "gestores" (pronounced hes-TORE-ehs), to facilitate the granting of permits and other approvals necessary to build out Wal-Mart's real estate network.

The use of *gestores* is common, and legal, in Mexico. The article makes reference to Mexicans hiring them to wait on lengthy lines to renew driver's licenses and other such things. Put in a positive light, the job of the *gestores* is to know the system and the people and make things happen.

The allegation in this case is that the *gestores*, with Wal-Mart's knowledge, went beyond friendly facilitation and paid bribes to officials to secure the needed permits.

In addition, Wal-Mart made substantial "donations" and "contributions" directly to various governmental agencies to facilitate permits being issued.

The payment to the *gestores* is shocking news only to those who have never had to do business in cultures where bribery

**In this case, the story goes on to allege that although the Mexican subsidiary tried to keep everything from Bentonville when an unhappy former employee spoke out and the story reached Bentonville, top Wal-Mart executives did not respond with alacrity, trying to stop the behavior, did not arrange for an independent investigation, and did not report the matter to the authorities — this despite the specific recommendations of Wal-Mart's internal legal team.**

**As is often the case, the cover-up is worse than the crime and if this report is all true, Wal-Mart may pay heavily for the failure of its top executives to act to ensure that the law was followed. Some of its executives may go to jail.**



is endemic — including Mexico. The payments direct to governments are shocking only to those who have never tried to develop real estate — even in the United States.

We can start with the caveat that in the U.S., we have the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act and that this precludes the paying of bribes. Under our system of government, this is the pronounced will of the people, and Wal-Mart and everyone else is obligated to follow the rules. Payments to government officials in Mexico are illegal under Mexican law — so making such payments carries risks, regardless of cultural norms.

In this case, the story goes on to allege that although the Mexican subsidiary tried to keep everything from Bentonville when an unhappy former employee spoke out and the story reached Bentonville, top Wal-Mart executives did not respond with alacrity, trying to stop the behavior, did not arrange for an independent investigation, and did not report the matter to the authorities — this despite the specific recommendations of Wal-Mart's internal legal team.

As is often the case, the cover-up is worse than the crime and if this report is all true, Wal-Mart may pay heavily for the failure of its top executives to act to ensure that the law was followed. Some of its executives may go to jail.

Now it is possible that nobody was actually bribed. Indeed, the basic defense that Wal-Mart de Mexico's internal report came up with is that the *gestore* payments were all a scam. There are complicated allegations that the payments were made so certain employees could get a cut. Even if this is not true, it is possible that Wal-Mart dramatically overpaid these *gestores* because it assumed they would need to pay bribes, when, in actuality, they just bought their friends a cup of coffee to facilitate things.

Assuming, though, that the executives at Wal-Mart de Mexico knew what they were doing, the real policy question is whether criminalizing this kind of behavior actually makes sense.

It is important to note that these allegations — even if 100 percent true — do not imply that Wal-Mart paid bribes to persuade government officials to do illegal things. In other words, Wal-Mart didn't try to get Mexico to block other retailers from opening stores or to conduct disruptive raids on

competitors or deny competitors import permits.

The purpose of the payments was to facilitate the granting of permits to build stores and support facilities.

These payments may be illegal, and trying to hide them can result in misstating financials and raise other serious issues. Still, it would have been desirable if the *Times* had at least asked the question as to why Wal-Mart would spend millions and millions of dollars “facilitating” something that is supposedly available without such facilitation. Surely Wal-Mart as a corporation would rather not pay out these sums, and its people would rather avoid the risks inherent in bribery and cover-ups.

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The answer, of course, is that government officials have it in their power to delay or reject permit requests. Mexico does not have a reliable and quick system for overturning such actions. In effect, said or unsaid, these bureaucrats and politicians are extorting money from Wal-Mart and many others. They are saying that they will prevent Wal-Mart from doing perfectly legal activities if Wal-Mart doesn't ante up.

We experienced this first hand. Years ago, we used to export a fair amount of Mexican watermelons to Scandinavia. At the time, there was a deal whereby Scandinavia allowed the duty-free import of watermelons provided one had a certificate — called a Generalized System of Preferences or GSP certificate — which established officially that the melons were grown in Mexico.

Although, theoretically, the certificate should have been easy to get — it just attested to origin — the reality was quite different. Some growers, despite valiant efforts, could never seem to get the certificates. Other growers seemed to have blank certificates in their desk drawer.

We never knew why, but we drew logical inferences from the situation.

If we really make companies, Wal-Mart and others, follow the rules for dealing with the Lawn & Garden Club when dealing in places that have very different expectations, we are unlikely to improve those places. We may, however, make American companies forfeit the business as others, better able to accommodate cultural expectations, get the business. Is that really what we are looking to accomplish?



## 2012 NEW ENGLAND PRODUCE PERSON OF THE YEAR

PRESENTED AT THE NEW ENGLAND PRODUCE CONFERENCE ON  
APRIL 25, 2012 BY PRODUCE BUSINESS AND THE NEPC

**Honest. Honorable. Hard-working.** Well-respected and well-liked. A class act. A man who gives more than he takes — and doesn't take.

These are just a few of the ways colleagues, co-workers and competitors describe this year's 8th annual New England Produce Person of the Year. This is an honoree that you — the members of the New England Produce Council have chosen — and that PRODUCE BUSINESS is pleased to award today.

Like the first seven recipients of this award — Paul Kneeland, Jack Salamon, Domenic D'Antuono, Will Wedge, Mike Giza, Mike Maguire — this year's award-recipient showed passion for the produce industry at an early age.

When other Belmont Hill school kids were off playing at summer camp, he was working side-by-side with his father, either packing product at the end of the line, inspecting product as it hit the dock or waiting on the walk-in customers at the produce company his grandfather founded in 1938. His father, John, as well as Aunt Ann — who passed away last year at the age of 90 — provided our awardee an excellent education in customer service. It was instruction he soaked up as fast as a parched field after a heavy rain, and he made it his own.

His propensity for hard work doesn't mean our honoree is an all-work and no-play kind of guy. In fact, it was his love of skiing that led him to the University of Vermont. It's a sport, thankfully, he's never ended up head over heels for, but he has flown cross-country twice to jump out of a helicopter and ski down the powdery slopes of British Columbia.

Our awardee did trade his ski poles for schoolbooks and earned a degree in business management with a minor in political science. At 4am on the morning after his graduation day, he was on the terminal market at the New England Produce Center ready for work.

There was never a question whether our award-recipient would follow in the footsteps of his family's business. Although, according to a retail colleague who has known him for over 35 years, "He could have excelled in any field. He's that smart and hard-working."

This didn't mean he landed his current title of president and CEO right out of college. In fact, he didn't even have a title at first. He started literally in the field. Yet, it was from this bottom-rung position that he looked up and saw a tremendous potential to expand.

His forward-thinking business acumen led to the pivotal acquisition of a fresh-cut processor in the year 2000, and this launched the company into the lucrative organic salad business. This move and the more recent opening of a new state-of-the-art processing facility have enabled his company to grow from a small regional New England business to a major East Coast company that was named Ahold Vendor of the Year in 2011.

You don't get to this level without proving your mettle along the

way. One retail customer tells a story about our honoree at a time when spinach was in short supply. He says, "He called me daily with updates.... I'll tell you, for the owner of a company to get that involved with the product line and reach out to us says a lot. He certainly has his finger on the pulse and will go the extra mile to serve his customers."

Another New England retailer relates the time his stores ran out of product and how our awardee responded. "He ran right over with product in the back of his car. He's the kind of guy who can't do enough for anyone. A lot of people either walk the walk or talk the talk — he does both."

A colleague and fellow member of the New England Produce Council offers a spot-on way to describe our honoree: "He's known as an owner who still gets out in the field. He doesn't sit in his office and let other people do his work."

Yet another colleague adds, "There's a running joke that there's a desk for us at his company when we retire. He's got a diverse crew — wholesalers, retailers, sales people — all people he's had a relationship with in the industry. He surrounds himself with good people."

One quality today's award-recipient is consistently recognized for is giving back. A heart-to-heart talk about eight years ago with his father and brothers, John and Kevin, created a two-fold mission: to distribute healthy food to the Northeast market and support charities that promoted children's health.

Thus was born Olivia's Organics, named for his daughter, who was the first girl born to the family in three generations, and then the Olivia's Organics Charitable Foundation. The Greater Boston Food Bank, the Chelsea Boys & Girls Club, Produce for Kids and the Make-A-Wish Foundation are just a few of the organizations that have benefited from the foundation's proceeds.

This isn't just a feel-good storefront for the company, but something our honoree believes in deeply. As wife Kim says, "He doesn't tell his children how to live; he lives it, and lets them watch him do it."

Finally, as children Mark (10), Olivia (9) and John (7) will tell you, our honoree has even more endearing qualities. He's a great soccer coach and the best bedtime reader of the book, *Where the Wild Things Are*.

He's also a husband and father who enjoys nothing better than spending time with his family. In fact, he may be the only man in the room today with a tan, having just arrived back for this Expo from a family vacation in Costa Rica.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in congratulating the 2012 New England Produce Person of the Year: Mark DeMichaelis, president/CEO of State Garden/Olivia's Organics.



# CPS CENTER for PRODUCE SAFETY

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Center for Produce Safety (CPS) is focused exclusively on providing the produce industry and government with open access to the actionable information needed to continually enhance the safety of produce. Established by public and private partnership at the University of California, Davis, initial funding for CPS was provided by the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the University of California Produce Marketing Association and Taylor Farms.

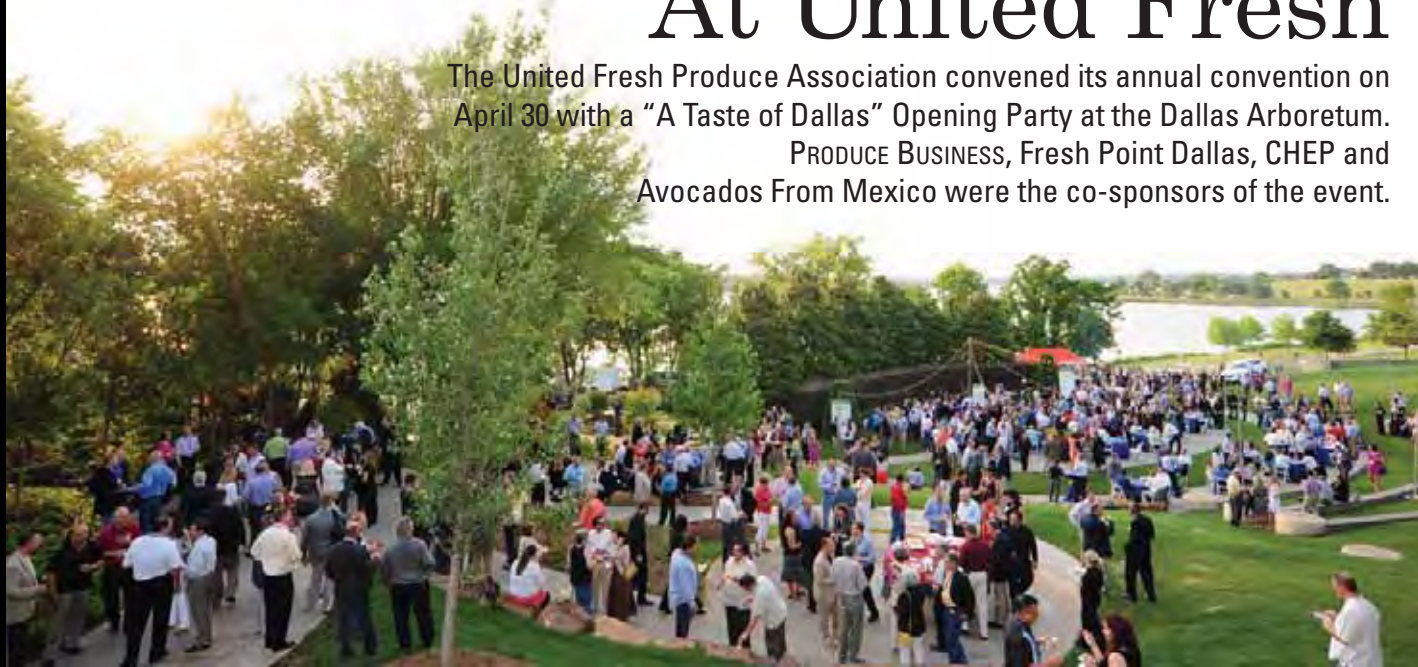
UC DAVIS



# Fresh Air Fun

## At United Fresh

The United Fresh Produce Association convened its annual convention on April 30 with a "A Taste of Dallas" Opening Party at the Dallas Arboretum. PRODUCE BUSINESS, Fresh Point Dallas, CHEP and Avocados From Mexico were the co-sponsors of the event.



Jan Garrett and Chris Christian, California Strawberry Commission



Mackey Payton Almy, daughter of Dan'l Mackey Almy, DMA Solutions Inc.



Kelly Pritchett, Molly McGrath and Mackenzie Michel, DMA Solutions Inc.



Lori and Carl Grether, Tom Grether Farms



Bruce Cox and Phil Pettine, Kwik Lok Corp.



Eduardo Ambros, Erica Zanotti and Andrea Gregori, Zanatek Inc.



Kimberly Bedwell, California Grape and Tree Fruit League; Rich Dachman, Sysco; Barry Bedwell, California Grape and Tree Fruit League; Lorelei DiSogra, United Fresh Produce Association





Ivan Tarriba, Farmer's Best International; Hector Cortes and Froylan Gracia, MexBest; Flavio Alzveta, GlobalGAP



Bob and Betty Morrissey, National Watermelon Association; Craig Kelly, CHEP; Reggie Brown, Florida Tomato Committee; Wade Odum, CHEP



Steve Jewell, Maxco Supply Inc., Cindy Jewell, California Giant; Stephanie Hilton, Hilton Marketing; Mark Hilton, Harris Teeter



Ross Vernier, Topco; Katy Blowers and Megan Chedwick, Church Bros.



Mandi Klemin and Jose Rossignoli, Colorful Harvest LLC



Eileen Chase, NSF-Davis Fresh; Deirdre Holcroft, Holcroft Postharvest



David Masser, Keystone Potato; Steffanie Smith, River Point Farms; Molly Connors, Basin Gold



Howard Roeder, HerbThyme Farms Inc.; Christina Hahn and Andrew Siegel, Fresh Connect



Ken Whitacre, Jim Prevor and Jonathan Zakim, PRODUCE BUSINESS/Perishable Pundit



Michael and Lisa Leach, Hardie's Fruit & Vegetable Co.; Gracie Pack, DMA Solutions Inc.; Wyatt Meiggs, Foodsource; Tom Leach, Cost-Plus Inc.



Crystal Ball, Bret Smith, Laura and Steve Burnham, Safeway Inc.



Jeff Oberman, Miriam Wolf, Angela Tiwari and John Toner, United Fresh Produce Association



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but the insight isn't.*

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*Merriam Webster* — a person who gives opinions in an authoritative manner usually through the mass media.

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**David Allen, 35**  
**Fruit Buyer**  
**Goodness Greeness**  
**Chicago, IL**



In Allen's five years with the company, he has used his vast knowledge of product, procurement and

handling to streamline the organic fruit category. His skill and attention to the sensitivities around this category helped to dramatically grow both the company's business and the industry as a whole. He has expanded the company's fruit category by 200 percent during his time there, and has built strong relationships with farms, vendors and retailers. He has successfully managed retail chain accounts including Trader Joes, Roundy's and Jewel Osco, helping to expand their organic business.

He is credited with particular skill in forecasting the needs of the organic fruit industry. He is responsible for researching economic trends, population growth and developing shopping patterns of various categories, and creating a plan of procurement. He is known for his interest in helping

producers achieve successful farming practice and developing a win-win relationship. Allen is involved in the work of his local parish, and a dedicated father and husband.

He has been greatly inspired by his boss, Bob Scaman, the owner of Goodness Greeness. "When I came to Goodness I had acquired a high level of skill as a regional buyer in the conventional fruit category," he explains. "But Bob opened my eyes to the big picture, promoting out-of-the-box thinking. He taught me to appreciate the vast possibilities and to think on a global scale as I develop a supply chain. I learned to think long term as our growers often invest years before we can sell their produce. Bob also reinforced in me the need for impeccable customer service, absolute integrity in all negotiations and to always relate to my farmers with the awareness that each one of them has a story and a family. Not only is Bob my boss, mentor and friend, he has taught me so many things. He saw a talent in me, and I hope that one day I can start passing on the knowledge and experience that he has taught me to others."

His future goal is to continue

expanding success at Goodness Greeness. "I want to maintain and grow positive relationships with my vendors, suppliers, customers, and my family, both at Goodness Greeness and at home," he says.

In addition to Bob Scaman, he lists Maureen Royal of Bridges Produce in Washington as a mentor. "Our working relationship shows what a good understanding between vendor/supplier and customer can accomplish," he says. "It is mutually beneficial for both. We've helped each other grow our respective businesses together. This kind of working relationship allows you to anticipate and support one another's needs."

**Marci Allen, 36**  
**DMA Solutions Inc.**  
**Sr. Account Manager**  
**Irving, TX**



Allen is a talented marketer and a valuable, dedicated part of the DMA team. She has been a significant contributor to

the success of DMA's small but growing company. A part of the DMA team for almost seven years,

she was one of DMA's first hires. She has been in the unique position of helping to shape and grow a marketing company from the ground up. She works with many companies in the industry to advise them on annual marketing plans, compose the messaging that represents their company, develop company and product branding, and assist in new program and product development. "It's always an honor to have a company entrust me with their business, and I can speak for my whole team when I say we never take that relationship lightly," she says.

Allen is a demonstrated multi-tasker in her personal life. Her husband travels frequently, so she has become adept at working full-time while still artfully managing her home and caring for two girls. She is actively involved with her church, where she has served as the Women's Ministry Director for the last 2½ years and has led numerous women's and youth groups. She coaches a 1st and 2nd grade team in their Upwards Soccer League and volunteers for several other ministry opportunities throughout the year.

The challenges she faces as a produce marketer usually also end

**"The experience of dealing with customers face-to-face has influenced many of my current decisions. We look to drive additional sales through many new and exciting plans."**

— Robert Backer,  
Ahold USA

up becoming part of her inspiration. "The dynamic nature of our industry and the forward thrust of government policies and consumer trends provide an exciting landscape to position my clients' products and services," she says. "Successful marketing necessitates outside-the-box thinking, so the biggest challenge is the constant push for new and unique ideas. Our clients care about the food they are producing, and it's their passion that I find inspiring."

Her future goals revolve around her clients. "I don't know a better goal to have than to continue being seen as a valuable member of my clients' teams," she says. "I hope to always be a reliable source of inspiration and creativity to which my clients entrust their brand. I want to continue being a force in the growth of DMA Solutions as we help more and more produce companies communicate their messages to the masses."

She lists Dan'l Mackey Almy, owner of DMA, Larry Crowley of Del Monte Fresh Produce in Dallas, TX, and Cindy Seel, former Executive Director of PMA's Foundation for Industry Talent, as mentors. "Dan'l is a constant voice in the back of my mind, making me think differently and push harder for more relevant and forward-thinking marketing solutions that best meet the needs of each individual client," she explains. "When I was given the responsibility of managing Del Monte's National Gift Basket Program, Larry was always encouraging and guiding me in his quiet, reassuring way. And lastly, Cindy has shaped the marketer and businessperson that I am today. I had the pleasure of working alongside Cindy for several years as the foundation

was taking shape and its initial programs were being defined and developed. My day-to-day involvement with her as we transitioned strategic plans into tactical actions impacted the way that I approach so many opportunities and challenges that my clients bring to DMA."

**Robert Backer, 35**  
**Vegetable Category Manager**  
**Ahold USA**  
**Carlisle, PA**



Backer began his produce career with Giant Landover in 1992, holding merchandising positions such as produce manager and produce specialist. In 2006, he left the company and worked at A&P as a buyer. He returned to Ahold headquarters in the fall of 2010 as a merchandiser and has since been promoted to category manager.

He is inspired by his interaction in the stores as well as the corporate office. "The experience of dealing with customers face-to-face has influenced many of my current decisions," he says. "We look to drive additional sales through many new and exciting plans."

His future goals include increasing company standards through improved relationships with the vendor community.

He names David Lessard, director of produce for Ahold, and Jim Guido, previous director of produce procurement for A&P as mentors. "David's leadership has developed my overall education in the business side of produce," he says. "Jim's tutelage increased my knowledge of vendor selection and deal management with the vendor community."

**Jaco Burger, 39**  
**Co-owner, Market Demand Fruits Director, Western Cape Citrus Producers Forum (WCCPF)**  
**Cape Town Area, South Africa**



Burger was named to the position of director of the WCCPF in 2012. As the newest appointment to

the CPF, he brings experience in quality management, shipping and import/export logistics. He also is a co-owner of Market Demand Fruits, a company he established in 2006 after holding increasingly responsible positions with various South African companies. Known throughout the industry for his knowledge and work ethic, Burger's peers say he adds value to the industry and cite his knowledge and understanding of the industry, cooperative spirit, honesty and integrity as characteristics that make him a driving force in the future of South African citrus.

His work with Capespan, Goede Hoop and Del Monte exposed him to various business perspectives and the role large companies play for South Africa in the rest of the world. Market Demand was established on a model of representing smaller fruit growers who are unable to coordinate exportation of their products individually. "There is a place in South Africa for small growers. They are small pockets of big promise for South Africa, and when done right, this will grow," he says.

Burger sees citrus, and in particular, the U.S. program established by the WCCPF, as a model. "It is an outstanding example of collaboration to bring the best of our products to the most important market in the world. We have done this over the last 12 years — established a program where none from South Africa to the U.S. before existed."

Market Demand takes the role of securing the future at home very seriously. Along with his partners, Jaco has established a father and son workday, where producers brought their sons to work to learn about the company and the industry. "We need to take steps now to ensure continued growth and success, and secure this industry and the country for the next generation," he says.

Burger believes "The next big step for South Africa is to work more closely together to compete in the international market. The citrus industry is helping us do that and helps us help our own by giving back to South Africa."

While known as a bulldog of business with a laser-like, no-compromise focus, a view of right and wrong and not much middle-

ground, Burger has a remarkable sense of humor. He likes to laugh and to make other people laugh. "I think laughter makes you younger," he says. That and his deep and abiding faith guide him, his life and what he envisions for the future. "When one keeps his feet and his knees firmly planted on the ground, one will not go wrong."

**Zan Chow, 35**  
**Procurement Manager**  
**Fresh Direct Produce Ltd.**  
**Vancouver, B.C., Canada**



Chow was part of the pioneering team that launched Fresh Direct Produce in 2003 into a crowded field of well established and well financed competitors. Chow led the initiative in growing the supplier base and expanding the line of products Fresh Direct offered. He helped facilitate the growth of the company by sourcing new chains of supply and constantly increasing produce line offerings. On top of building the supply sources, he helped support the sales team in capturing new business from independent stores, regional chains, and national chains by sourcing key produce items. Today, he manages the domestic North American purchases. His team also handles the related logistics to appropriately supply Fresh Direct's two Western Canada warehouses located in Vancouver and Calgary.

Chow is a key member of the senior executive management team that formulates the annual strategic plans and is responsible for its execution. As such, he has been a key contributor to Fresh Direct Produce Ltd.'s business success that includes being selected as Canada's 50 Best Managed Companies in 2011, winning the Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award in 2008 (Pacific Region, Emerging Category), Ethno Business Award for the BC Food industry in 2010, and the Cisco Business Incubation Challenge in 2008.

As a committed team player with a strong community-minded focus, Chow has helped the company raise over \$120,000 for BC Children's Hospital Foundation,



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along with donating over 7,000 pounds a month of fresh fruits and vegetables to Quest Food Exchange. He serves as an active and passionate member of the BC Produce Marketing Association, a panelist for Pacific Agriculture Show in 2012, a participant in the CPMA Passion for Produce Mentorship program in 2011, and in the BC Food Processors Associations Mentorship program in 2012.

His previous employers and challenges he has faced inspire Chow. "When I joined Van-Whole Produce Ltd., I became part of a well-run team," he says. "I then leaped at the opportunity to help build a new produce supplier from the ground up. One of the major challenges was to help grow the infant Fresh Direct Produce in such a lower margin mature marketplace teaming with well-financed and well-established competitors. The continuing challenge is to help Fresh Direct Produce find new ways to differentiate itself from competitors that are carefully watching and eager to imitate its new methods and innovations."

In the future, he seeks to become more actively involved in serving and shaping the future of the produce industry. "This means serving on committees or as director for either the BCPMA, CPMA and PMA in order to be in a position to help others in the industry succeed," he relates. I would like to create a foundation in collaboration with Simon Fraser University alumni to provide higher levels of education for immigrants with farming backgrounds."

He names Davis Yung, president of Fresh Direct, Albert Lum, director of sales at Fresh Direct, and Jason Du, ex-president and co-founder of Van-Whole Produce, as mentors. "Davis is a true visionary leader within the industry," he says. "He helped me develop skills in negotiating, value sourcing, relationship building, and general management. He also showed me how to understand, read and resolve complicated business issues related to buying and other areas of the business. Albert has trained me to fully appreciate the customer side of the business and to see how my buying

impacts this side of the business. Jason still gives me input on how he ran a very successful company for over 20 years, being able to adapt and transform the company as it grows each year and faces new challenges."

**Brian Cooper, 37**  
**Operations Manager**  
**Sysco**  
**Houston, TX**



Cooper has shown dedication and commitment to the industry by working his way up through various positions.

Recruited from Bank of America into the new Sysco buying office for produce in Pompano Beach, FL, Cooper wasted no time in diving right in. He has held the positions of accounting associate, accounting manager and operations manager. Most recently, he has taken on the challenge of being the produce representative on the company's conversion to SAP. He also acts as the company's SharePoint administrator, business analyst, accounting manager (payables), and business process coordinator (systems and protocols).

He excels in promoting systems to further timely information flow. Within the company, he has created a collaborative SharePoint site for all members of the produce team to share ideas, Best Practices and strategies for selling more produce. Additionally, the site also captures top produce news stories from several sources to create a one-stop shop for all industry news.

He is most inspired and challenged by the people in the industry. "Produce people are amongst the most creative and hardworking people in any industry," he says. "I feel a sense of duty to our team to provide them with whatever tools and information that they require to bring the best quality product at a competitive price to our end-users."

In the future, he hopes to provide the produce teams across Sysco's enterprise with better visibility to all aspects of the supply chain as it relates to produce. He credits Sysco's Rich Dachman as exemplifying a true leader and

mentor. "Rich really loves the produce industry and his passion for produce inspires me, as well as those around him," he says. "He has challenged me professionally to be better at what I do, and has inspired me to want to be a leader following his example."

**David Fausset, 37**  
**Sales/Category Manager**  
**Mission Produce**  
**Oxnard, CA**



Fausset is known for his dedication and passion for the produce industry, specifically avocados. Joining Mission

12½ years ago as a sales rep, he has worked his way up to being a top category manager. During this time, the avocado category has grown from \$538 million to \$1.34 billion dollars as a commodity, and Mission has tripled in size. He is recognized in his company as hard working and honest.

In his role as retail sales manager, he managed a team focused on retail sales and promotion, and worked with marketing to focus on a promotional calendar to push the avocado category at the optimum time periods. As sales and category manager for avocados, he manages a team of seven people who are responsible for the company's domestic sales. He also works closely with sourcing, replenishment, transportation and other departments.

In 2011, he was selected to be an alternate on the Hass Avocado Board (HAB) and is currently serving on the marketing committee as well as on the Global Inventory Committee. During the beginning of his career, he served on the Higgs Foundation, which focused on helping children in lower-income communities, including those of farm workers in Ventura County. He has volunteered with various T-Ball and little league teams in his community, including his son's T-Ball team.

He has been inspired by the changes he has seen in the industry. "At Mission, we revolutionized ripening and distribution of avocados nationwide with next-day delivery, which has doubled,

tripled and quadrupled sales," he reports. "The industry has increased from just over 600 million pounds of avocados consumed in 1999 to an anticipated 1.4 billion pounds to be consumed in 2012, with higher price values."

His future goals in the industry are to continue to develop his sales team and concentrate on bringing top sales people into management roles. "Additionally, I look to transition into an executive role at Mission," he states. "I would also like to serve on other industry boards such as PMA and United, as well as other avocado boards including the California Avocado Commission, and other avocado import associations to continue the pursuit of increasing the consumption of avocados, and produce in general."

He names three highly respected mentors: Jan DeLyser of the California Avocado Commission, Chris Puentes of Interfresh in Orange, CA, and Ross Wileman, vice president of sales and marketing at Mission. "Jan DeLyser has been a driver for the avocado category by consistently providing leadership with effective marketing campaigns," he says. "Chris took me under his wing early in my career and I have always respected his sense of business and how the industry works. Ross has shown me what it takes to be an effective leader by demanding results, while maintaining a fun spirit. His work hard/play hard mantra is based around providing a quality product, delivering consistency and giving the best service possible to our customers. Those three things continue to drive my passion to do my best in helping our company reach and exceed our goals."

**Randy Giumarra, 39**  
**Vice President**  
**Sales and Marketing**  
**Giumarra Vineyards Corp.**  
**Edison, CA**



Giumarra has been working for Giumarra Vineyards and The Giumarra Companies for 14 years. With him as the head salesman, the company



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began an import berry program from Chile in conjunction with Vital Berry Marketing Chile to service the North American market. The relationship developed into a joint venture between the two companies, which is now one of the major players in the mixed berry category. In 2004, the family decided that he needed to focus on grapes year-round, which included sales and marketing of grapes from the Giumarra family ranches in California, and fruit from grower-partners in Peru, Chile and Mexico. He is also very involved with the various divisions of the Giumarra Companies with regards to customer relations, management and program development.

Giumarra has been on the Board of the California Grape and Tree Fruit League, where he has served on the Government Relations and Marketing Committees and is just entering the Executive Committee. He is also currently serving on the PMA's Fresh Summit Committee.

Family is the most important part of his life. He is married with three children, and together, they enjoy playing all types of sports. The family attends St. Francis Church; the children attend St. Francis School and the family tries to support all of the activities of the St. Francis community.

Giumarra has been motivated and challenged by the hard work and dedication of current and previous generations of the Giumarra family and other multi-generation family farming companies. "I am also motivated by the vast potential to educate the world about healthy eating and living," he says. "While I am encouraged by the fact that the general populace seems to be more interested in eating healthy, there is a huge amount of folks that still need better access to and more education about fresh fruits and vegetables."

His future goal is to continue to grow and improve the family business so that someday his children have the option of keeping it going. "I also feel strongly about cultivating long standing relationships with grower-partners, customers and industry friends and working in a collaborative effort to increase produce consumption," he states. "I look forward to continuing my work

through the PMA and the California Grape and Tree Fruit League to help develop a program for agriculture to maintain a sustainable work force, while at the same time creating rights for farm employees who have worked in this country for years."

He names John Giumarra Jr., vice president of Giumarra Vineyards, and Barry Bedwell, president of the California Grape and Tree Fruit League in Fresno, CA, as mentors. "If you ever want a great education in the produce industry all you have to do is sit in John's office for a few days," he says. "I have learned from how he treats other human beings, whether they are business associates, customers, or farm employees; they are all treated with the same respect. Barry is an incredible ambassador for the produce industry. He probably doesn't even realize it, but he has helped me develop in so many ways, mainly by teaching me how to candidly and articulately communicate our message on behalf of our family business and the ag community as a whole."

**Luke Gowdy, 38**  
**Operations Manager**  
**C.H. Robinson Worldwide Inc.**  
**Eden Prairie, MN**



Gowdy has more than 12 years of experience in the area of logistics. As the transportation operations manager of the

Monterey, CA, branch of C.H. Robinson, Gowdy helps companies with transportation services, logistics management and produce sourcing. When he joined C.H. Robinson in 2007, he became part of the team responsible for the development, management and growth of the unique partnership between C.H. Robinson and the Western Growers Association, a transportation program specifically designed to address shipper concerns regarding the availability, service, quality, and cost of refrigerated transportation.

This program has been highly successful, with over 170,000 loads handled and more than 300 shippers currently using its services. The program is licensed by

Western Growers to virtually all of the regional shipper trade associations throughout the United States, including associations such as The California Grape & Tree Fruit League, Idaho Grower Shipper Association, Texas Produce Association, National Onion Association, and a handful of other fresh produce and nursery associations.

In his capacity as operations manager, he is responsible for directing 37 employees who consult with shippers regarding transportation and logistics solutions, negotiate rate and capacity agreements with carriers, dispatch loads, monitor shipments in transit and resolve operating problems. He is also responsible for management of the relationship with two of the Western Growers licensees — the California Grape and Tree Fruit League and the Idaho Growers & Shippers Association. During his management tenure, the use of the transportation program by shipper members of both associations has experienced record growth every year.

Gowdy is involved in the community as a baseball coach and serves as a Sunday school teacher at his community church. He has participated as a speaker at various industry events including the COOL Cargoes Conference, America's Trade Conference, IGSA Annual Convention and CGTFL Annual Convention.

He is motivated by the satisfaction of being involved in a new and successful business. "We are supporting the shipping community by lowering supply chain costs and increasing access to transportation capacity, and all the while improving service and driving value into the transportation operation," he says. "I am especially proud of our success because it has occurred in the context of the highly competitive and complex fresh produce industry. That environment demands creativity, flexibility and a lot of patience, not to mention a sense of humor."

His future plans focus on continuing to provide the highest level of service. "Reductions in transportation and logistics costs and improvements in service can have a significant impact on shipper profits, product delivery quality, and consumer satisfaction. My plan is to deliver those benefits

**"In my role as a senior buyer and director, I have experienced the need for developing and retaining diverse talent in our industry. These experiences have led me to support important initiatives, such as PMA FIT, both in my corporate organization and produce industry."**

— Mikel Hancock, Sam's Club

to the industry for years to come."

He points to individuals with whom he has worked as his mentors. "I respect them a great deal for their commitment, work ethic, and relentless drive as examples of how I can continue to contribute to this great industry," he says. "Just to name a few, I would include my manager Gary York, Jim Lemke, vice president of sourcing at C.H. Robinson, Laurie Stern, president of Stern Consulting, Matt McInerney, executive Vice President of WGA, Travis Blacker, president of the IGSA, and Dave Smith, former president of the IGSA. However, there are many more I could mention. What they all have in common is that I have seen a quality of character in their work that is indicative of what I want to display to others, and ultimately contribute to the fresh produce industry."

**John P. Groat, 34**  
**Vice President of Operations**  
**Kegel's Produce**  
**Lancaster, PA**



Groat is defined by his loyalty and hard work, having remained with one company since college graduation 17

years ago. Groat began as a part-time employee in high school, continuing to work summers while attending college, selecting orders and making deliveries. In the past 10 years, he has assisted in the expansion of this family-owned and -operated company.



When he started with Kegel's Produce, the company had 35 employees. Today, the company has 132 employees and a fleet of 40 trucks, delivering produce in four states.

Much of this success is credited to Groft's implementation and development of internal pricing parameters, which helped to proactively analyze profit margins and make smarter purchasing and pricing decisions. He has also taken on a lead role in the sales and marketing sector, developing creative initiatives and incentives for customers, including weekly Hot Lists, a new website and online ordering. He initiated and led the reorganization of the sales and customer service department. He handles all day-to-day activity and deals with the largest clients in everything from sales to compliance.

He is a member of Lancaster's Young Professionals Association, a graduate of the PMA Produce Academy, IFPA-trained and HACCP-Certified. He also represents his alma mater, Millersville, in Students In Free Enterprise (SIFE) Regional Competition. Over the years, Groft has overseen the company's public relations, in conjunction with Sue and Kenny Myers, helping volunteer and coordinate events for the American Cancer Society, Race Against Racism, and the local Food bank and mission.

In the future, he would like to expand Kegel's produce reach, eventually covering most of the Mid-Atlantic, as well as develop its fresh-cut division, which currently offers more than 300 selections.

"The challenges we face today are so much more than 10, or even five years ago," he says. "Fuel costs, contract negotiations and operational efficiencies are part of the every day challenges associated with the industry, challenging profits and often diminishing margins. The fresh-cut division is the key to our company's growth. In today's fast-paced world we need to be reassured that our food is safe, fresh and also efficient. Our fresh-cut products encompass all of these qualities."

He attributes his success to Sue and Kenny Myers, owners of Kegel's, for believing in and mentoring him through the

years. "I have also learned a great deal through negotiation and industry partnerships, taking both good and bad situations and applying them to everyday business tactics," he says.

**Mikel Hancock, 35**  
**Director of Produce**  
**Sam's Club**  
**Bentonville, AR**



Hancock is known for his attention to detail, his passion for quality and his eye for impactful merchandising. He is appropriately analytical in his decision process and adapts well to change. As a relatively new buyer, he progressed rapidly and demonstrated seasoned judgment and strong leadership skill sets. He took on added responsibility early in his career for further development of Wal-Mart Global Procurement, which led to his promotion and current position. Hancock has excelled in every position and made significant contributions to Sam's overall produce growth.

In his early 20s he was promoted to a buyer/category manager position and then moved to a procurement manager for Wal-Mart global produce sourcing, where he was responsible for directly importing large amounts of fruit for all domestic and international Wal-Mart businesses. As senior buyer for Sam's Club, he was responsible for Sam's Produce P&L Management, item development, assistant buyer development and leading a cross-functional team of buyers and replenishment managers.

In his current position, he is responsible for produce strategy and initiatives, produce and floral P&L management, buyer development, and fresh divisional associate development program. He directs one of the largest produce programs in the country, operating from 18 distribution centers that service over 680 Sam's Club locations.

He is a PMA Foundation for Industry Talent committee member. "In my role as a senior buyer and director, I have experienced the need for developing and retaining diverse talent in our

industry," he states. "These experiences have led me to support important initiatives, such as PMA FIT, both in my corporate organization and produce industry."

In his community, he is active in leading church-affiliated small group gatherings in homes involving financial and spiritual development. He has been inspired and challenged on a daily basis by several current and past Wal-Mart executives. "Their guidance has been instrumental in understanding the customer experience, sourcing strategy, merchandising strategy, people development, self development and the ability to think beyond the parameters to which we normally confine ourselves."

In the future, he hopes to increase awareness and excitement for the end consumer, while developing the next generation of workers within the produce industry. His mentors include Michael Cochran of Wal-Mart Stores, Russell Mounce with Sam's Club, Bob DiPiazza of Sun Pacific in Los Angeles, CA, and Wayne McKnight of McKnight Insights & Solutions in Toronto, CA. "Michael has taught me to pay attention to the details and dig into the data of the business," he says. "He is a shining example of how to work cross-functional teams to achieve the task at hand. Russ always put the consumer first with every conversation. He is a constant example of how to treat others with respect. Bob taught me how relationships of respect and admiration are the key to building successful business and plans together. Wayne assisted in the development of thinking more strategic in nature."

**Elena Hernandez, 29**  
**Marketing and Communications**  
**Specialist**  
**Mann Packing Company Inc.**  
**Salinas, CA**



In the past four years, Hernandez has taken on several key marketing communication roles of importance to Mann Packing Company, including managing consumer promotions that involve on-pack coupon offers, partner collaboration

and online couponing. She has also managed collateral development for consumers and retail and food-service customers, as well as media outreach for consumer and trade publications. She has been responsible for advertising management for trade publications and packaging and label graphic design. She implements Mann's retail sales website and directs its intern program and social media support including blogger outreach. She is known for excelling in embracing new marketing tools and understanding how to apply them to connect with both customers and consumers, driving sales and profits.

While attending California State University, Chico, she obtained summer internships with Sakata Seeds America, Earthbound Farm and Driscoll's. "I was fortunate to have three dynamic internships that really helped expose me to multiple levels in the produce industry," she states. "These internships reaffirmed that the produce industry was where I wanted to be upon graduation."

She is active in the community with the American Heart Association Go Red for Women Campaign and the American Cancer Society Relay for Life. She is a member of California Women for Agriculture, Monterey County Young Farmers and Ranchers, Society of Agricultural Managers, and Community Action Volunteers in Education. She is also currently spearheading and chairing the Turkey Trot 5k Fun Run in San Benito County, benefiting the local Community Pantry to be held on Thanksgiving morning.

The amazing people she has met while working in the produce industry inspire her daily. "These individuals show such passion and commitment to fresh fruits and vegetables, and it drives me to work hard to promote health and nutrition," she says. "I have enjoyed watching the progress of United Fresh's Salad Bar in Every School program. I am passionate about nutrition education and helping educate future generations. As part of the Mann team, we have used our consumer media outreach to let shoppers know there are healthy, convenient options available."

In the future, Hernandez wants

to contribute to Mann's growth and continued leadership within the produce industry. "I strive to become a pivotal member of the Mann team, promoting our brand of fresh products," she explains. "I would also like to mentor future generations entering the produce industry. I want new leaders to know the scope of this industry, and how they, too, can take pride in the work we do."

She names Lorri Koster, CEO of Mann Packing, and Nathalie Fontanilla, senior manager of new products and packaging for Earthbound Farms, as mentors. "Lorri has been my mentor for the past four years," she says. "I am fortunate to be able to work on a daily basis with someone as influential in the produce industry as her. She has taught me by example how to be a strategic marketing professional, as well as how to balance work/life successfully. Lorri's passion for the produce industry is contagious! She inspires me with her perseverance and dedication, not only for Mann, but also for the entire produce community. Because of Lorri, I enjoy coming to work every day, and feel pride in the work we do! Nathalie was my boss when I interned at Earthbound Farms. She taught me a lot about the produce industry, but most importantly, she challenged me to work hard, and to set the bar high."

**Mac Keely, 38**  
**Director of Salad Business**  
**Management and New**  
**Product Development**  
**Organicgirl**  
**Salinas, CA**



Keely began his career as an assistant farm manager with Sierra Hills Packing/Chinchiolo Fruit in Stockton. Working with

Steve Chinchiolo, he created an internal fruit pest management and control program, planted what is believed to be the first organic cherries in the area, and harvested what some remember as the first Pink Lady apples in the area. Today, he focuses his time and attention on creating a true consumer-oriented premium brand, Organicgirl, and a salad business

**"There has to be a mutual understanding between all parties to make things successful, whether it be farmers, production, truckers or retail. With every entity having a different point of view, the challenge has been to bring everyone together for the common goal, getting quality produce to the customer at a good price."**

— Patrick Morris, Rouses Supermarkets

that is healthy and functional. He has carried responsibilities in product management, product development, supply chain development, marketing, finance, purchasing, and R&D. He is known as a good leader and partner for his employees.

His challenges are not limited to the business world, and in his personal life he juggles a two- and four-year old, and never-ending home remodeling projects. He has remained involved in the community and professional organizations as past president of the Monterey County Young Farmers and Ranchers, Leadership Farm Bureau, and Cal Poly AGR Alumni Council.

He is most inspired and challenged by the responsibility our industry has to the consumer. He explains, "I believe that consumers want to eat healthy, want to enjoy their food, want to provide healthy choices for their children and want to cook for their families. We have the responsibility to support those wants by providing healthy products, which taste great, are easy to use, provide a fair value and leave the consumer with the overall sense that they are doing right by their families when choosing our products."

In the future, he wants to continue to build a principled company that creates great products and delivers meaningful benefits to consumers. "I enjoy working on all of the business aspects of brand building," he says. "As I continue to develop as a business leader, I want to channel my

passion for the company's accomplishment into creating avenues for its employees to also meet their personal and professional goals, and have fun at work."

He credits mentors Steve Chinchiolo of Sierra Hills Packing, his former employer, Don Barnett, founder of NewStar Fresh Foods, Jim Gallagher, formerly at NewStar and currently CEO of Fruit Patch, and Mark Drever, president of Organicgirl and NewStar. "Steve gave me my start in the industry and showed me that the vision of high-quality produce begins with a passion for growing," he says. "Don showed me that the uncommon path can be far more rewarding than the safe choices, and that great leadership begins with an unwavering commitment to treating people fairly and honorably. Jim taught me that successful selling is accomplished when the supplier and the customer have common respect and strong avenues of communication. Mark has taught me that we need to continue setting the bar higher for ourselves and marvel at what can be achieved."

**Chris Keetch, 37**  
**Category Manager**  
**Ahold USA**  
**Carlisle, PA**



Produce has been Keetch's career since 1994, when he was hired as a produce clerk at Albertsons in Boise, ID. He felt

an affinity with the industry and earned a degree in Business Management to assist his goal of rising through the ranks. He spent 14 years at store level as a clerk, assistant manager and manager, developing a full understanding of merchandising, pricing and assortment, along with importance of anticipating customer needs and expectations. In September, 2010, he became a merchandiser at Ahold USA's Carlisle, PA, headquarters.

In his current role of fruit category manager, he handles all of the fruit commodity categories and covers a large, diverse area from New England to Virginia. He is responsible for developing plans to profitably drive sales in an ever-

changing retail landscape and continually looks for new packaging on fruit items that will attract customers. He has developed programs to drive sales with focus on local relevance and demand, and works with local farmers and suppliers to cover the needs of those specific areas and the various regional product needs of the customer. He is considered by his colleagues as working diligently every day to drive innovation and sales.

Giving back to the communities in which he lives and works is important to him both professionally and personally. He works with team and vendor partners to support initiatives through various company-supported charitable programs such as Produce For Kids and Our Family Foundation. Away from the office, he focuses on his family and supporting his alma mater (Boise State), local schools, the arts and various programs that assist less fortunate members of the community.

One of his favorite things about produce is the dynamic nature of the industry. "It changes by the day, the hour and the minute," he says. "There is never a dull moment. Our customers are much more educated and demanding than they were even a couple of years ago. They want to know more about what they are serving to their friends and families. Our stores operate across a broad geographical area, and learning the different markets has been both challenging and inspirational."

In the future, he wants to continue to build on his knowledge and further develop his current role. "With most of my work experience in the Pacific Northwest, I still have much to learn about my current markets," he says. "The acquaintances and partnerships I have made along with the support of the great team of people I work with will provide a base to continue that growth."

He credits Larry Smidt, Kit Shields and Kent Frazee as influential mentors during his time at Supervalu/Albertsons. "Their combination of experience and practical knowledge helped me decide the career path I wanted to take," he states. At Ahold USA, Dan McCullough, vice president of produce and floral, and Dave Lessard, director of produce, have



mentored and motivated him. "Not only were they extremely supportive as I relocated, but their approach to the business and the manner in which they lead the team creates an environment of success," he says. "I strive to follow that lead with the associates I work with on a daily basis."

**Damon Marano, 31**  
**Vice President of**  
**Business Development**  
**Marano Produce /**  
**Anthony Marano Company**  
**Chicago, IL**



A third generation produce expert, Marano has been immersed in the world of fresh produce since birth, following his

grandparents and father into the industry in the 70-year-old family business. It is said that he intersects "old school tradition" with modern culture, and is known for his enthusiasm, insights and deep commitment to the product. Like his predecessors, he started on the floor of his family business as an order puller and has worked his way through the company in each position.

In sales, he was sought after by customers due to his vast product knowledge and high integrity. As a purchasing agent, he has been instrumental in building volume and scope across all categories, especially lettuce and berries. As the head of the lettuce department, he helped sales increase to almost 25 million per year. Two years ago, he turned his focus to automating Marano's repack facility. Additionally, he is responsible for maintaining a few of the company's largest customers and is an apprentice in Marano's second largest department — berry and grape.

He is a devoted father and husband and is inspired by a simple creed that works in the industry. "Treat people right and they will come back," he states. "This philosophy works with employees, vendors and customers. If those around you work with the same principles and have the same long-term outlook, it becomes very simple to make things work in everyone's favor.

This simplicity makes everything move in a productive direction and that only inspires me to do more."

He hopes to add more value-added items to the business. "My visionary father understood that when we touch a package we have to add some sort of value to it," he explains. "In today's modern world, it has become easy for people to pick up a phone or send an e-mail and think that because they made a sale they did something. I want to advance my father's vision of adding value in everything we do, whether it is distribution, warehousing or repacking."

**Nicole C. Mason, 33**  
**Marketing Communications**  
**Manager**  
**Veritable Vegetable**  
**San Francisco, CA**



Mason has been interested in transforming agriculture from a young age and has harnessed her talents to make a difference in the

world. She started working at Veritable Vegetable three and a half years ago in the sales department, managing a broad range of accounts, including retailers, large institutions, schools and foodservice customers. Because of her leadership skills and her ability to think strategically, she was promoted to marketing communications manager after one and a half years. In just over a year, she has built Veritable's first-ever marketing communications department, working with executive level management, staff and consultants.

She launched several new in-house programs, including a staff suggestion program, an annual All Staff meeting, a brown bag lunch series, and a formalized donations program. Externally, she is strengthening the company's brand by positioning the company as the best in the nation for what it does, and by targeting specific conferences and speaking engagements for Veritable to speak about Best Practices and its cutting-edge business model.

In the future, she would like to continue working to improve accessibility to fresh produce for disadvantaged communities. "Because of my work in produce,

and more specifically in distribution, I understand the challenges of distributing produce into these communities," she says. "I plan on increasing my own capacity to understand the way produce is grown and distributed in order to positively impact these communities in the future. I feel blessed to have found something that I am so inspired by at such a young age."

Her mentors at Veritable include CEO Mary Jane Evans, Bu Nygrens, purchasing manager and co-owner, and Karen Salinger, sales manager and co-owner. "When these three women began Veritable Vegetable with a beat-up pickup truck in 1974, no one would have thought it would be the \$43 million company it has become 37 years later," she explains. "I feel fortunate to work with three strong women who focus on making real change, having a positive impact on the industry, and keeping sustainability at the heart of their decisions. The company they've built is unlike any other, and I can honestly say that the world is a better place because Veritable Vegetable is in it."

She also credits Bob Scaman of Goodness Greeness in Chicago as an influence. "I deeply appreciate Bob's knowledge of produce, and how through his hard work and vision he was able to shift the produce landscape in the Midwest," she says. "Prior to Goodness Greeness, I'm not sure that organic was part of the produce lexicon; I'm pretty sure Bob helped get it there."

**David Masser, 36**  
**President & COO**  
**Sterman Masser Inc.**  
**Sacramento, PA**



An eighth-generation potato grower, Masser has transformed Sterman Masser Inc. into one of the premier potato shippers in the country. He is credited with never losing sight of his grandfather's core values of integrity, strong work ethic, flexibility, initiative and commitment. His commitment to live and breathe the core values of the business has propelled the company to unprecedented success. Under his

leadership, the company has historically doubled its sales every five years for the past 15 years.

Masser began his tenure at the family business as a young teenager on the farm, learning every aspect of the business by doing each job presented to him. He continued his education by earning his Commercial Driver's License and assisting in the delivery of products to multiple produce warehouses forging relationships as he went. After attaining his BS from Penn State in agricultural systems management and working as a test engineer for New Holland North America, he returned to the family business in 1999. Since returning, he has moved from plant manager to director of sales and now to president and COO of the company.

Masser is also committed to the challenge of implementing ways to create and continuously enhance sustainable business practices, including the use of solar innovation, sustainable farming practices and improving logistics efficiencies of his fleet of over 20 trucks. He has been instrumental in the sustainability of Keystone Potato Products, a potato processing sister company built to effectively utilize all off-grade products from his company. "One of my goals was to have 100 percent utilization of the entire potato crop we grow and market, effectively increasing the returns to our growers and our own farms, while continuing to provide value to our retail and foodservice partners," he explains. "Keystone uses methane gas from a neighboring landfill to power the boilers for the dehydration and fresh-cut processes."

His professional achievements including being chairman of the board of Fresh Solutions Network, owner of Fresh Solution Farms, vice president of the Pennsylvania Co-Operative Potato Growers, and on the United Fresh Cut Processor Board. He is a member of the United States Potato Board, National Potato Council, and the Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association.

In addition to developing a company-wide recycling program, he has taken the initiative to develop a community recycling program that will benefit local charitable causes. He is an active

member in Trinity Lutheran Church where he donates his time and resources to teaching an adult Sunday school class. He also initiated Sterman Masser Inc.'s "SMI's Hot Potato 5K Run/Family Fun Walk" to benefit charitable causes in his community.

He credits his father, Keith, and his mother, Helen, as mentors. "My father is the smartest, hardest working person I know," he says. "He was instrumental in teaching me the company's core values, how to run a successful business, and how to maintain and develop key employees. My mother was the first female to chair the United States Potato Board and is our company's corporate dietician. I also credit my employees, who motivate and inspire me with their drive and willingness to take on more responsibility to facilitate the rapid growth of the company."

Other mentors include the members of the Fresh Solutions Network and Fresh Solution Farms, specifically the Connors family, Jason Walther and Todd Michael. "They have taught me partnership values, strategic planning and critical thinking," he says.

**Aaron Miller, 31**  
Sales Manager  
Booth Ranches LLC  
Orange Cove, CA



Miller is known for his unquestioned integrity, strong character and an unparalleled commitment to his company and

the industry. In his eight years of industry experience, he has progressed from a sales assistant to a top-performing salesman and key decision-maker at the company. He is credited as being an analytical thinker who epitomizes the qualities of a key salesperson, balancing the ability to service his customer base without compromising value to the grower.

Miller's commitment to hard work is evidenced by how he obtained his Bachelors degree while working in the industry. He looks to advance even further in the future. "I want to continue to build my customer list and develop strong relationships that will last a

lifetime," he says. "I hope to move up the ladder to vice president of sales and marketing sometime in the future. There are a lot of good people in this industry and I feel that this is the career that I was meant to have."

He is inspired by the challenge of the business. "Every year, the industry provides us with new and exciting challenges," he states. "My ultimate goal is to provide the maximum return for our grower/owners, all while providing a good value and great eating experience to the consumer."

He is a member of PMA's FIT and assists with local philanthropic programs at Booth Ranches. He is actively involved in his church's fund raising activities, including its annual harvest festival and promotes the industry with this event, providing produce for the festival.

He is a dedicated family man with a wife and two young sons and is involved in his son's school activities, including barbeques and carnivals. He notes having had several excellent mentors during his career including Rod Swenson of Custom Produce Sales in Parlier, CA, and Neil Galone and Dave Smith of Booth Ranches.

**Mishalin Modena, 37**  
Senior Marketing and  
Events Manager  
Green Giant Fresh and  
Growers Express  
Salinas, CA



Modena has been with Green Giant Fresh and Growers Express for four years, during which time she has managed

national campaigns successfully. One of her most notable achievements was the first ever on-pack promotion with a social media game called Farmville. She played an integral role in the company's early development of its item traceability program, which has since been launched as one of the first item-level mobile marketing campaigns on produce. Recently, she crafted a strategic advertising campaign to promote the awareness of Box Tops for Education, which is now featured on produce

**"Being a small part of the food supply chain is humbling when you really stop to think about it. This challenges me to continue learning as much as I possibly can about the industry to help make a difference not only for myself, but also for my company, and ultimately, for the consumer."**

— Robert Teraskiewicz,  
Four Seasons Produce

for the first time ever. Additional key accomplishments include launching the Green Giant online communities, such as the Green Giant Facebook page, Twitter accounts and blogs. Her promotional campaigns grew Green Giant Facebook followers to 65,000 in less than eight months.

She currently sits on the communications board for LGMA. She has also participated on boards for Produce for Better Health and Healthy Eating Lifestyle Principals (HELP). She enjoys dedicating her free time to family, friends and yoga to keep a good balance.

She has been inspired by the people she has met within the industry. "Everyone has been like family to me, which is unlike any other industry I have worked in," she says. "The people I have met have had a positive impact on my life and that makes me want to work harder at what I do to make a difference. The industry offers plenty of challenges that are inspiring to take on and figure out."

She looks to continuing to take on challenges in the future. "I want to create innovative campaigns, promotions and services within our industry that challenge the limits of produce marketing," she shares.

She names Woody Johnson, Gary Andreasian and Jamie Strachan as three of four mentors she has had. "Their experience, knowledge and longstanding contributions to the produce industry inspire me," she says. "They have provided me with the

opportunity and guidance to grow my knowledge and leadership skills in produce. They have been inspirational and have always motivated me to try new ideas and concepts. Deanne Cagnacci is another important mentor for me. She is a great example of a woman in produce who balances her life between family, kids and work with the most positive attitude all the time."

**Patrick Morris, 36**  
Produce Buyer  
Rouses Supermarkets  
Thibodaux, LA



Morris has been a buyer for over 10 years, and has built solid relationships with suppliers. His professionalism

and character are unquestioned and he has succeeded in creating trust within the vendor community for his employer. He is responsible for buying all fresh produce categories for Rouses' 38 locations and coordinating the logistics and distribution of all produce into the stores.

During his career at Rouses, he has held a number of positions, including produce manager and produce merchandiser before being promoted to produce buyer, where he has successfully been able to reduce costs, forge long-term supplier relationships, and bring new and innovative ideas to the department. He oversees two warehouses and a host of buyers. He is also responsible for helping to coordinate local produce suppliers and sets out the merchandising plan for each week, as well as working hand-in-hand with the director on all special projects and programs.

He was named part of the inaugural class of the Southeast Produce Council's STEP-UPP program. He was also the winner of the 2012 Tip Murphy Scholarship given to one individual in the produce and floral industry. He is a member of the 2012 Emerging Leaders program sponsored by the PMA. In his community, Morris coaches Biddy Basketball and volunteers to help with community activities



through his church. His is also active in the local chamber of commerce.

His biggest challenge and inspiration is constant change and keeping ahead of the curve. "I work constantly to stay abreast of the next hot trends in the industry," he says. "There has to be a mutual understanding between all parties to make things successful, whether it be farmers, production, truckers or retail. With every entity having a different point of view, the challenge has been to bring everyone together for the common goal, getting quality produce to the customer at a good price."

His future long-range goal is to oversee the produce operation for a company or to work for an industry group as a leader. "I hope to continue learning the industry and bring fresh ideas through volunteering and being a member of other groups with industry peers," he says. "I also want to continue teaching and coaching others so they may develop the same passion I have."

He has had two principal mentors in the industry and a host of others from whom he has learned. Currently, Joe Watson, produce director for Rouses Supermarkets, has helped him focus on the need for attention to details. "Joe has given me knowledge of how to work with local farmers and be successful," he says. "By being fair and honest, you can gain a great deal. He has encouraged me to participate and get involved in the industry and allowed me to bring new ideas to the table."

Another key mentor for Morris is Jeff Patterson, currently with L&M Companies of Raleigh, NC. "Jeff was the person who first introduced me to the produce industry at BJ's," he says. "He taught me many philosophies I still employ today. I learned a lot about the merchandising and handling of produce from Jeff. But the most important thing I take from my time with Jeff is that the produce industry is and will always be about relationships. Developing strong, trusting relationships with suppliers, farmers and other industry professionals will always be a key to success."

**Susan Murdock, 39**  
**Director of Marketing and**  
**Public Relations**  
**World Class Flowers**  
**Egg Harbor City, NJ**



Murdock has been on a quest for new ways to reach floral consumers through the development and execution of

exciting marketing plans. Her keen perspective has enabled her to create product and merchandising strategies, and develop and produce video concepts and websites with a focus on educating the floral community including buyers, retailers and consumers. Known affectionately as a "Technology Chick," she has a strong passion for details, evident not only in her work, but also in her vision to meet the challenges of merging the constantly changing face of technology with the floral business.

Over the years, she has progressed through the company and excelled at creating and executing marketing plans and new methods of communication for customers. One notable recent enterprise in this area is the creation, production and implementation of floral training videos and the website that showcases them. This has been a great success for the company and has become an invaluable tool for customers. The enterprise even led to the creation of a Pathmark commercial for its front-end promotion monitor.

She places a priority on giving back to her community. Her most recent volunteer roles include youth group leader, Sunday school teacher, Police Athletic League dance teacher, food pantry volunteer, cheerleading coach and choreographer for a production of *The Music Man*. "I believe in taking roles that inspire and help kids," she says. "I was involved in lots of programs as a child and I credit many of my successes to those volunteers."

As the industry is always moving forward, she is inspired and challenged by the continual new and exciting possibilities. "I am constantly being asked to work outside of my comfort zone," she

explains. "The educational portion of the 2011 IFE show was certainly an exercise in growth. Since I was co-presenting one of the educational sessions with Robert DeBellis, an individual known for his speaking ability, I knew that my role as the Technology Chick had to not only be informative, but entertaining as well."

While she is not sure what the future holds, she is positive that hers is in the floral industry. "Each day represents a new opportunity and a new way to do business," she says. "I'd say my biggest goal for the future is to further develop avenues of communication with the public. Technology is right on the cusp. With the prevalence of Facebook, Twitter and QR codes, our customers are thirsting for communication and are ready to buy from the companies who are willing to give them the most. I want to be part of that revolution."

She looks up to many individuals in the floral industry. "Locally, I credit Glenn Cleveland, operations manager for World Class Flowers, as a big influence," she says. "By his example and guidance, I learned how to see the whole picture and to view problems as opportunities for growth and change. His ability to see what people can do and to influence them to do their best is very inspiring. Globally, I credit many of the floral/produce buyers that I've worked with as influences. Susan Glenn from Acme Markets, Donna Almeda (formerly of Pathmark and Price Chopper), and Kevin Prill from A&P have all played a part in how I see and understand the varied sides of the industry."

**Thomas J Murphy, 26**  
**Vice President**  
**Baldor Specialty Foods Inc.**  
**Bronx, NY**



Murphy was raised in the food industry. From his grandparents who owned the iconic Balducci's retail store, to his father,

Kevin Murphy, the founder and CEO of Baldor Specialty Foods, he has lived and breathed the food business since he was a child. Beginning when he was a teenager, Murphy has worked in

almost every department at Baldor, learning about products and logistics from the ground up. He currently works alongside his father and other top key members of the Baldor management team steering the company in innovative directions.

He has led Baldor into several off-site initiatives that have expanded the company into the retail side of the produce business. He managed the U.S. Open Off-Premise site for Baldor, coordinating all the produce supplies for every concession at the National Tennis Center. He also manages the retail produce store at Eataly, the Italian specialty super-store in Manhattan, where he is responsible for staffing, product merchandising and sales.

Currently, one of his primary initiatives is working more closely with local farmers to create partnerships to ensure Baldor primary status of the first harvest of certain crops and provide farmers guaranteed sales at contracted prices, regardless of market conditions.

Murphy is a member of City Harvest's Food Work Group and is currently working on a Baldor partnership with Edible Schoolyards NYC.

His inspiration primarily comes from his family tree. "First my great grandfather, then my grandfather, and then father," he says. "Each started their businesses in a humble way and grew it. Each of them acted on a drive to provide a good living for their family, to pursue their belief that a love of wholesome, good food was shared by many."

His biggest challenge has been to live up to this legacy. "It's not just to live up to it, but to continue to take risks as they did to keep the businesses growing and relevant in today's food-centric culture," he says.

In the future, he would like to see more European-grown specialty produce readily available and in peak condition. "Air shipping is the only way this can happen, as many of these items are highly perishable," he says. "By positioning them correctly, and marketing them to the right people, we can create a demand and interest for these high-end products. I also intend to be part of making our area of the Bronx (the Hunts Point peninsula) become

widely recognized as the food center of New York. It would be wonderful to see better retail food stores open in this part of the city.”

His father, Kevin Murphy and his grandfather Andy Balducci, are his greatest mentors. “Also, my second cousin, Charlie Balducci, who is in his 70s now has influenced me,” he says. “He has been in the produce industry all his life. He owned his own store for years in Glen Oaks, worked in his father’s Frank Balducci’s store as a child and has worked for us at Baldor for the past 15 years. Charlie has been walking the Hunts Point market since the 1940s and still goes there twice a week. He was visiting local farms and befriending farmers on Long Island 15 years ago, before anyone was really touting local produce.”

**Wade Odum, 37**  
**Regional Account Manager**  
**CHEP USA**  
**Orlando, FL**



Odum’s perseverance and professionalism has made an impact on the produce industry in his first year in

the sector. As a new CHP hire, he inherited his territory at a -12 percent deficit. In six months, he turned the territory into a +2 percent status and closed over \$1.1 million in new business.

Working from Dallas, TX, Odum is in charge of business located in 13 states across the country. He deals with a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. He is responsible for providing quality CHP pallets to the major growers in the produce industry. He negotiates contracts, organizes pricing and performs customer relations and account management. He is a resource of knowledge for customers regarding what is going on in the produce market at any given time.

He promotes Recovery Centers of America for Drugs and Alcohol and is involved with charities for The Children of St. Jude cancer research, Big Brothers and Big Sisters. He has been active with the Life Church of Memphis and especially its Keeping Our Neighborhoods Clean program.

His inspiration comes from growing up as a farm kid from a small town in Kansas. “Farming and agriculture have always been a part of how I was brought up,” he says. “My father instilled in me the value of a good work ethic. Because of my upbringing, not only do I work hard, but I also know how hard people in the agriculture industry work as well.”

He is also inspired by one of his earliest bosses. “When I was kid, I worked for Gordon Goering, owner of thousands of acres for dry land wheat and milo crops,” he explains. “He taught me how to plant, how to spray fertilizer, how to till, how to fix a tractor, how to outrun a tornado, and most of all, how to work hard and be responsible for your actions.”

His future aspiration is to “lead a team of sales people in this industry infused with the same passion for the business as I have,” he says.

He names Tony Mosco, his manager at CHP, and Billy Parrish, his counterpart in CHP USA, as mentors. “Tony has been instrumental in my growing and developing thus far in the company,” he says. “He has over 10 years of industry experience and has shown me the ropes of the business. Billy covers thousands of accounts across the entire U.S. He has trained me on our company’s internal systems, as well as explained many of the various nuances that occur in this business. I could not have been as successful as I have become without the help of this man.”

**Greg Ogiba, 28**  
**General Manager**  
**AMC Direct Inc. Canada**  
**Toronto, Ontario, Canada**



With a degree in International Business and a minor in Spanish, Ogiba started in the industry in 2005 as a business devel-

opment coordinator with AMC Direct in the company’s New Jersey office. He furthered his knowledge about the industry when he was assigned to work in branch offices of AMC in the United Kingdom and Spain. His talents were immediately recog-

nized and he was assigned by AMC to work in Canada within Loblaw Companies Ltd. as the category manager lead responsible for sourcing and procurement for the citrus category.

Presently, he is responsible for a team of 30 employees. He is the youngest GM in the company, and his natural and effective leadership abilities represent a new generation of emerging young talent. Since taking over as GM 18 months ago, he and his team have grown the business in Western Canada three-fold and significantly expanded grape imports across Canada. He is in the process of installing new equipment in Toronto, which will bring a new pack style into the market.

Ogiba has been accepted into Queen’s University’s MBA program for the winter of 2012 where he will continue to develop and refine his knowledge and skills. As a member of the Make-a-Wish Foundation since 2006, he has contributed his knowledge and skills to numerous projects and has played an inspirational role in the lives of others when delivering motivational speeches and presentations to schools and other community organizations. For the past two years he has been a member and mentor on the CPMA education committee responsible for creating the Passion for Produce program. He is very active, competing in cycling and running events.

He is inspired by the prominence of agriculture in many countries. “I’ve been fortunate to be able to spend time in incredible countries such as China, Israel, Morocco, South Africa and Spain,” he says. “It’s really inspirational to see how much pride and effort goes into agriculture, which is such a significant part of the economies of those countries.”

In the future, he aspires to help bring great tasting new varieties of citrus and grapes to market, which benefit farmers. “There is a lot more work to be done to make produce a bigger share of the shopping cart for families, particularly for children,” he says. “I also want to continue helping the Passion for Produce program evolve. We want to attract and retain the best talent in order to keep pushing the limits of the industry with progressive thinking

and new technologies. Someday, I’d love to be part of the CPMA Board of Directors, where I can contribute to the direction of the produce industry in Canada.”

The two people he most admires in the produce industry are Ben Ward, CEO of AMC North America in Los Angeles, CA, and Alvaro Munoz, CEO of AMC Group in Murcia, Spain. “Ben and Alvaro are extremely dynamic individuals who possess not only the vision to help elevate the industry, but also the skills necessary to execute,” he says. “I admire their progressive thinking and their willingness to take risks in order to advance the industry. I sincerely appreciate the support and encouragement they’ve given me over the years.”

**John Pattullo, 39**  
**General Manager**  
**Boutonnet Farms**  
**Castroville, CA**



Pattullo is recognized as an emerging leader in the Ocean Mist Farms organization and the produce industry. Known

for his hands-on farming experience, along with a pragmatic understanding of the produce industry, he is an effective General Manager and leader of Boutonnet Farms. During his career he has demonstrated himself as a true steward of the land and his practical approach in the application of precious resources.

He assumed the position of General Manager at Boutonnet Farms in 2006, previously working as a ranch manager. Since he took on the role of General Manager, the company has added over 400 acres, for a total of 2,400 acres. He has lead the company’s 40-plus employees successfully during a time of significant costs and increased regulation. He also implemented an employee safety incentive program that drastically reduced work-related injuries.

He is a member of the Monterey County Farm Bureau Board, The United Vegetable Growers Cooperative, and the Land Use Committee for the Growers Shippers Association. He makes an effort to be involved in and provide input toward supporting



agriculture, specifically California vegetable production. He is a graduate of Ocean Mist Farm's first Leadership Development Program. He is an avid competitor in cycling events, is very active in the church community and coaches his children's sports activities.

He is passionate about being outdoors and growing vegetables. "I gain a great sense of accomplishment when we work hard as a group to get a crop to harvest and we see the end result placed in the box and sent off to market," he states. "The most recent challenges that face us in the vegetable farming industry are excessive government regulations and a labor shortage. These two issues will be very critical for the produce industry as a whole in California and elsewhere in the years to come."

His future goals include continuing in production agriculture in one aspect or another. "My enjoyment and job satisfaction come from being outdoors with the crops and the people who make production ag happen," he says. "I really like the coordination and fast-paced changes that take place in the field."

Some of his mentors in the produce industry include Troy and Ed Boutonnet of Ocean Mist. "They have taught me how to always pay close attention to the details and to never look for shortcuts that compromise quality. I also have learned a great deal of how to farm with less from Paul Scheid of Laguna Mist Farms in Castroville, CA. I worked for Paul when I started my career with Boutonnet Farms right out of Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and he continues to share intelligent insights with me."

**Nolan T. Quinn, 38**  
**Category Director**  
**The Oppenheimer Group**  
**Coquitlam, B.C., Canada**



Quinn is known as a charismatic leader who works very hard to build business through inclusiveness and innovation. His career at Oppenheimer spans a decade and a half. He became the company's first berry category director in 2010, and now over-

sees all aspects of Oppenheimer's berry business, from global sourcing to exporting to marketing. Since he began focusing on the berry category, the company has grown berry volume 90 percent in three years. He sought out and developed new domestic blueberry deals. Through a strong partnership with Ocean Spray, he developed the Ocean Spray blueberry label for both imported and domestic crops. Under his direction, Oppenheimer has introduced new blackberry and strawberry deals from Mexico and grown its Chilean blueberry program to become one of the top 15 largest importers from the ground up since 2009.

His current position is the latest in a series of roles he had held since joining Oppenheimer as a marketing assistant in 1995. His experience includes quality control, brand management and sales. He also led Oppenheimer's service to Wal-Mart for many years. His direct responsibility for the company's berry marketing initiatives began when he became the company's point person for the fast-paced Ocean Spray cranberry deal in 2005.

Quinn avidly participates in sporting events that support such causes as melanoma and breast cancer research. He enjoys volunteering as a coach for his children's youth basketball and soccer teams. And, he was a winning contestant on the reality TV show *Pros Vs. Joes*.

The people of the produce industry inspire him. "I don't think I'd find another industry that I enjoy as much as produce with such an eclectic mix of individuals," he says. "I'm challenged by the complexity of growing and marketing fresh produce — the perishability, unpredictability, and ever-changing consumer preferences. I particularly enjoy the challenge and opportunity in the berry category, the largest in dollar sales for retailers' produce section."

In the future, he would love to find better methods and means to help consumers get healthy, great tasting produce. "Tomorrow's produce industry will not be the same as today's, and I look forward to helping make positive change and staying ahead of consumer trends," he says.

His mentors include John

Anderson, chairman, president and CEO of Oppenheimer, and Jim Hohman, vice president of sales at Sierra Produce in Swedesboro, NJ. "John has been a mentor through his strong leadership and passion for the business," he says. "He helped me learn to take risks and tackle problems. He once told me 'the bigger the problem the faster you run to it' and I've used that advice to handle problems quickly before they can get worse. Jim was my sales manager at Oppenheimer as I transitioned from marketing to sales. Jim's great work ethic and aggressive sales approach helped me develop into a successful salesperson. He guided me through difficult situations as a rookie salesman, and instilled confidence in me to grow with major customers."

**Jorge L. Quintero, Jr., 31**  
**Sales/Managing Member**  
**Grower Alliance LLC**  
**Rio Rico, AZ**



Quintero has been instrumental in building his company into a key grower/shipper in Nogales, AZ. Along

with his partners, he has helped expand the company into diverse lines of product. Their success is evidenced by the company's purchase of a 37,000-square-foot warehouse last year, which also provides for continued future expansion. Over the past five years, Quintero and his partners have grown the business each year in terms of packages received, as well as gross sales.

Quintero was introduced to the industry at a young age as he accompanied his father, Jorge Quintero Sr., in inspecting produce. After college, he worked at SunFed first as a sales assistant and then as a full-time salesman. After four years at SunFed, an opportunity to pursue his dream company presented itself. Partnering with Luis Caballero and two growers (one from Sonora and one from Sinaloa) he made the leap and formed Grower Alliance. The first year was such a success that he was able to bring on twice as many packages for the second year and bring in his father as

another partner in the company. The company now represents 14 growers and handles close to 3 million packages per year.

Quintero tries to be involved in the community as much as possible, donating to various organizations such as little league baseball, cheerleading, high school sports, girl scouts, boys and girls club, and traveling team sports. He is also involved with My Church in Sahuarita, AZ, and Centro Familiar Cristiano in Nogales, AZ.

He has been challenged the past few years with the seeming demand in decline due to the economy. "We have seen demand decreasing not only due to consumers' overall demand decline, but also because of the lack of more aggressive pricing at retail," says Quintero. "More special value or reduced prices would stimulate demand. The absence of this has caused a decline in markets and made for a tougher experience in selling produce, especially at the wholesale level."

In the future, Quintero hopes to distribute a steady supply line of main items year-round. "We also hope to distribute some value added product in our own label directly to retail."

His main produce industry mentor has been his father, Jorge. "Ever since I can remember he has been involved in the produce industry, and in a way, paved a road that I have been able to walk," he says. "My father worked in Salinas, CA, from the mid 80s through the late 90s before he moved to Nogales, AZ. I remember him taking me around to all the coolers he used to visit when he would inspect produce and would teach me what the product was supposed to be like."

At SunFed, Quintero encountered a group of mentors in president Danny Mandel, Jerry Havel (now with Fresh Farms), David "Kimo" Kennedy (now with Eagle Eye Produce), Rod Everette (now with Malena Produce), Warren Mizokami (retired), and Steve Kenfield (now with HMC). "I learned a lot from observing and working with my fellow salesmen there," he says. "This group of salesmen taught me most of what I know and how to develop relationships with customers."

**Melissa A. Reeves, 39**  
**Market News Reporter**  
**USDA Fruit and**  
**Vegetable Market News**  
**Phoenix, AZ**



Reeves is considered a critical part of our industry, and is held in high esteem by buyers and suppliers in the Texas regions

she serves. She has worked in many capacities within the industry, including market reporting, sales, marketing, food safety and policy. Her varied industry experience has given her an enhanced perspective that she utilizes every day in her current position. In the four years she has worked in the Phoenix Shipping Point Market News Office, she has focused intently on expanding market coverage of Mexican imports crossing into Texas.

Last summer, she was selected from a pool of applicants to participate in Project Action Teams, a leadership-training program spon-

sored by the USDA Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS). She worked with a five-member team virtually through e-mail and teleconference to develop and present a feasible plan for sharing market surveillance information among AMS programs. She took on a leadership role by acting as liaison with senior management, and by coordinating communication among group members.

In her personal life, she is a full-time single mom to her six-year-old daughter. She is an avid hiker and has been very active in a Single Parents' group in Phoenix, serving as organizer for the past two years. The group also focuses on teaching their children the value of giving back to the community through fundraising for childhood diseases such as cystic fibrosis and a holiday toy drive.

She considers the most fascinating thing about the produce industry as the dynamic nature of the markets. "Each deal I cover has its own set of factors that I use to analyze and call a market trend," she reports. "I love the challenge

of using the price information I gather, together with all the extenuating factors, to determine the market for each item I cover."

In the future, she wants to continue to be a part of the changing face of the industry as it meets new challenges and evolves to be even greater. "I would like to continue to interact with and gain experience in other facets of the industry," she says. "I hope to participate in the United Fresh Produce Industry Leadership Class and become more involved in the policy aspect of the produce industry."

She notes having been very fortunate to have many people in the industry acting as mentors, but due to the impartiality required by USDA she is unable to name specific industry names. "I can say that I truly enjoy the contacts I speak to on a daily basis at Market News," she says. "It is a joy to interact with a group that is so passionate about what they do, and who value and appreciate the work I do."

She does name two people

within Market News who have been mentors: Kevin Morris, Officer in Charge at the Los Angeles Terminal Market, and Barbara Maxwell, Branch Chief for Supply Reports in Washington, D.C. "Kevin first trained me on market reporting and not only did he help me understand the factors affecting the markets, but he also helped me navigate my transition into government from the private sector," she says. "Barbara shares my excitement about market reporting. Barbara has many years of experience in this area, and I think of her as a valuable source of insight."

**Natalie Reitman-White, 34**  
**Director of Sustainability**  
**And Trade Advocacy**  
**Organically Grown Company**  
**Eugene, OR**



Several years ago, Reitman-White conceived the idea of challenging growers, handlers, distributors and



## PETER STICCO'S

planting, growing, picking and packing vegetables which were sold to local and wholesale markets.

Later on in his life he took a job for Bozzuttos in Cheshire, CT starting as produce inspector. There he learned what defines the best quality fruit and vegetables. He then worked his way up to the position of produce director, his success stemming from hard work and a "can do" attitude. In 1985 with the blessing of his employer, Peter started Coast to Coast Produce. Starting with a small office in Cheshire, CT he grew the business. Coast To Coast will celebrate its 27th anniversary in May and now includes satellite offices in Monterey, CA, Bakersfield, CA and Beverly, MA.

Very sadly in 2005 Peter was diagnosed with liver cancer. Some men when given this kind of news would think about slowing down. Not Peter. He rolled up his sleeves as he had always done when faced with adversity and fought his illness with his positive attitude and his faith in God, all the while continuing to grow his business to include 500 acres of premium grapes being grown in Arvin, CA.

We are here today to pay tribute to Peter Sticco, the founder of Coast to Coast Produce, my employer. Peter had produce in his veins at a young age. As a teenager Peter worked on his father's farm in CT,



processors in the organic food industry to commit to a public, collaborative process of adopting more sustainable business practices. This resulted in the formation of the Food Trade Sustainability Leadership Association (FTSLA). She served as the organization's first Executive Director, in addition to her responsibilities of leading Organically Grown's sustainability efforts. Over 50 companies are now members of FTSLA. Members are required to publish annual sustainability reports that include detailed reporting on initiatives and metrics. This exercise, coupled with the public dissemination of this information, is an effective motivator for participating companies to drive continuous improvement in their sustainability initiatives.

Upon joining Organically Grown in 2005, she established a robust sustainability program that has, over the past eight years, trained over 270 employees in sustainability practices and developed five long-range goals that provide a focus for the company's sustain-

ability efforts. She put in place an annual planning cycle that uses cross-functional employee teams to identify specific projects that will help the company progress toward long-term goals. She integrated sustainability performance objectives into each department in the company and developed over a dozen key metrics that are reviewed by the management team for measuring sustainability performance on a monthly basis. She has also worked with partners up and down the supply chain on sustainability innovation.

She is a sustainability practice forum facilitator with the Organic Trade Association and is a Climate Change Task Force member. She serves on the Board of Directors of the Willamette Food and Farm Coalition and the Willamette Valley Sustainable Foods Alliance.

She is inspired by the challenge of making sustainability everyone's task. "While the majority of our employees and trade partners share our sustainability vision, it is often difficult to carve out the time to pursue such initiatives," she

says. "My approach has not been to silo our sustainability effort as one person or department's responsibility, but to integrate it into our overall business goals, annual planning and budgeting, and day-to-day operations."

In the future she will work to expand the supply, distribution and market for these responsibly produced products. She remarks, "The questions I aspire to tackle include: In the field, how can we help farmers improve their resource stewardship? How can we improve the resource use in the packaging shed and in distribution? How can we ensure social responsibility across the supply chain? And, how do we better educate the end consumer about the health benefits of produce and about where their food comes from?"

She credits many of the veteran organic farmers she has met over the years as mentors. "These are some of our company's longtime partners and grower-owners," she states. "They have a passion for the land and for the produce, with hard-earned knowl-

edge about what it takes to grow quality food. On top of that, many of them are longtime advocates for stewardship and conservation. They worked hard over several decades at becoming proficient in organic methods and developing a consumer market for their products, and have been very successful business people."

**Christian Sarraino, 25**  
**Vice President of Sourcing**  
**and Procurement**  
**Fresh Taste Produce**  
**(Canadian Division)**  
**Toronto, Ontario, Canada**



The youngest buyer and sales manager in the Ontario Food Terminal, Sarraino is known for his passion for the

produce industry and his ability to get along with everyone he works with, be it a supplier, employee, customer, family member or competitor. Asked to

## LEGACY CONTINUES

He loved the produce industry so much that he had to be dragged out of his office to go to his many surgeries and chemotherapy treatments. During Peter's battle with cancer I never heard him complain once about how he felt, although I know he did not feel well at all. He would always come to work the day after treatment no matter how sick he felt and tough out a good days work. He truly was an inspiration to me. There was no quit in this man. He was blessed at being tough as nails but all the while having a heart of gold.

Peter once told me in regards to the produce business "work for a little for a long time". He felt that if you worked for a little, you could build a long lasting and trusting relationship with your growers, shippers, transportation companies and retailers. In my 8 years of working with Coast to Coast Produce I have found his philosophy works.

Years after Peter lost his battle with cancer on Labor Day, 2008, I still have the great experience of present and past suppliers who remember Peter with profound respect. He was a good guy in the truest



sense of the word. He cared about people and treated everyone like family. I am thankful and proud to be a part of the Coast to Coast family. We miss ya Pete.

— Sean Murdock  
April 25, 2012



### CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS

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demonstrate some creativity when first brought into the company, he did not take long to make his mark. After taking over the cantaloupe, honeydew and mango categories, Fresh Taste logged increased sales in each of these lines. Without hesitation, he introduced Fresh Taste to pineapples and avocados with phenomenal results. His professional accomplishments include increasing personal sales by approximately 300 percent from 2009 to 2012, and he has had increased buying responsibility from one commodity line in 2009 to over 20 items in 2012.

He is actively involved in employee recruitment and training, and develops and implements new packages and marketing labels for products and has introduced different practices into the work place that allow flow of product to be more efficient. He also is currently in the process of directing a video of Fresh Taste Produce LTD.

In the community he has been a supporter of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Emergency Shelter for Abused Women, the Italian Chamber of Commerce of Ontario (ICCO) and the Vasto Social Club Annual Golf Tournament.

He finds it inspiring to know that he is in an industry that feeds the country. "Though our hours are a bit more stressful than some other occupations, it is refreshing to know that our hard work allows society to function," he says. "It is challenging for growers, shippers and wholesalers to all work together to allow our customers to enjoy their eating experience, but certainly worthwhile."

In the future, he is looking to maintain longstanding relationships from previous generations with growers, shippers and customers and use innovative technology to help the industry function more universally and uniformly. "We are constantly searching for new technologies to streamline processes to help us in this industry," he says. "With changing innovations we need to learn to adapt, and move forward. I constantly search for new ways and ideas to market products. I would like to continue allowing our consumers to have the best eating experience."

His principal mentors are Agostino and Salvatore Sarraino of Fresh Taste. "I was born into a family of produce tycoons," he says. "I am fourth generation in the industry. My grandfather, Agostino, was the pioneer of offshore importing, and my father, Salvatore, joined him at a very young age. I am honored to be able to work with them. I started at the bottom of the company at a young age, and slowly worked my way to be where I am today. This allowed me to see the industry from different angles, helping build my knowledge overall."

**Dug Schwalls, 35**  
**Director of Sales**  
**Southern Valley**  
**Norman Park, GA**



After graduating from the University of Georgia with an ag degree, Schwalls joined his family's farming operation in South Georgia.

Since then, he has risen to the role of sales manager and has overseen the company's rapid expansion to being one of the premier labels over the past few years. He played a key role in growing annual sales by over 600 percent in his nine years with the company.

Southern Valley has recently expanded its operations into Mexico to supplement its winter production, and into Tennessee for its summer production. His passion for the business and relentless pursuit for the success of the farm has spearheaded the company's recent success.

He is a member of the Southeast Produce Council and currently serves on the SEPC RAMP project committee, a program to help provide food to poverty-stricken families in Martin County, KY, and provide citizens with the tools to start small businesses and create economic growth. In his community, he has served as a summer camp counselor for eight years and a student mentor, helping to motivate troubled urban kids.

He is inspired by the overall amount of young talent in the industry. "This talent has the produce industry poised for continued growth and success for years to come," he says. "My

inspiration and challenges in this industry go hand-in-hand; I'm inspired by the success that our company has and continues to have, and I'm challenged by the failures that we have had and are sure to have again. It is the motivation from success and hard work throughout our company that prepares us for the challenges that lie ahead. Perfection in this industry is unattainable, but the pursuit and desire of that perfection is not."

In the future, Schwalls will strive to make Southern Valley the premier grower/shipper of eastern vegetables across the nation. "I also want Southern Valley to be known as a company of high morals, unparalleled service and great friendship," he says.

He lists his cousin, Kent Hamilton, president of Southern Valley, and his brother, Jon Schwalls, director of operations for Southern Valley, as mentors. "Kent taught me a great deal about hard work and determination, not through words, but by the way he goes about his business everyday with vigor and tenacity," he says. "My brother Jon taught me about dedication and how to be a true leader and team player."

**Jesse William Silva, 31**  
**Marketer/Produce Sales**  
**SunWest Fruit Company Inc.**  
**Parlier, CA**



As a leader in developing technological advancements for SunWest Fruit Company, Silva has developed many spreadsheets and other tools that the company uses daily.

These tools organize and track both daily and historical commodity data. He is also instrumental in creating the projection tools used daily to evaluate estimated volumes available to sell to its industry partners. These tools have provided SunWest the ability to become more efficient and effective at what they do.

Hired originally in a sales support role, he quickly grew into the role of marketing and working on the sales desk directly. Silva has been a leader in developing and maintaining valued partnerships

for SunWest over his 7½-year role in sales and marketing. Due to his USDA background, he is seen as a leader in decisions made on quality and is frequently asked to determine the attributes of many products the company grows, packs and ships. His input is regarded by many in the company as helping to raise the quality standards of what they do.

While attending California State University, Fresno, he was actively involved in Alpha Gamma Rho Fraternity (AGR), an agricultural based fraternity, of which he was chapter president. In 2003, he obtained his Bachelor Degree in Agricultural Business. Away from the business he enjoys many outdoor activities, especially golf and working out. He also enjoys sharing his Christian faith with others and takes an active role in attending church with his family every Sunday.

Re-married in November, 2010, his time is focused on raising four kids and being together with his children and family. "One of my greatest joys has been to bring my children in on a Saturday work day and let them be around what I do," he says.

His personal desire is to make a difference in what he does. "I want to make an impact in others' lives and I want to offer the same level of respect as I desire myself," he says. "I am very thankful and humbled to have been given the opportunity to work here at SunWest Fruit and for the Britz Family for over nine years. When I'm done, I want to be defined by who I was as a person more than what I did."

Dean Thonesen, Doug Sankey, and John Senn are the mentors he acknowledges for giving him the knowledge to be where he is today. "From the day the tree is planted to the last pallet of fruit that goes on the truck, Dean has managed it all so efficiently for SunWest," he says. "Doug is one of the greatest guys and well known for that in this industry. His dedication to being honest, sticking to his values when adversity comes, and always giving 110 percent effort every day are the biggest reasons why I admire him. We all look to John to advise us when it comes to critical decisions here in our office."



**Stacy Spivey, 34**  
**East Coast Sales Manager**  
**HarvestMark**  
**Redwood City, CA**



Based in Vidalia, GA, Spivey joined the HarvestMark team a little over two years ago, taking on the role of Southeast

Regional Sales Manager and recently becoming East Coast Sales Manager. He has been involved in and excelled in nearly every facet of the produce industry. He began his career as a grower relations director for Oconee River Produce and has also worked for Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association as a consultant. Before coming to HarvestMark, he served as Sales/Food Safety Director for Southern Valley.

Throughout his career, he has worked closely with many grower/shippers to develop “easy to use” workflows to become PTI-compliant and capture supply chain insights never before possible. His ability to understand producer’s operational hardships and presenting them to HarvestMark’s development team has aided in the growth of the company. In early 2006, he and his father established Spivey Blueberry Farms. He works hand-in-hand with his father to oversee the operation from growing to sales and marketing.

He supports his home state associations by being a member of the Georgia Blueberry Grower’s Association, Georgia Watermelon Association, and Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association. Aside from the produce world, he enjoys coaching his three kids and their peers in all their recreational teams.

He is passionate about the produce industry and is excited to be a part of some of the new directions in which the industry is headed. “Being a grower myself gives me firsthand experience with the hurdles that are encountered as a grower/shipper,” he says. “Having formed relationships with producers all over North and South America, I see the potential for new technologies to make farming operations more efficient and profitable.”

In the future, Spivey wants to continue to seek and help implement the most innovative programs the industry has to offer. “My most recent challenge is to improve grower/retailer relations and supply chain efficiency from Central and South America into the U.S. market,” he explains. “It is my belief that communication and operational proficiency are vital in both domestic and import programs. I would also like to continue expanding my personal farming opportunities.”

While he has had the pleasure of working with many talented and well-respected people, two of the most inspirational people in his career are Jon Schwalls, director of operations at Southern Valley Fruit and Vegetable in Norman Park, GA, and Dr. Elliot Grant, founder of HarvestMark. “Jon helped develop my ability to focus on multiple tasks and follow through,” he says. “His can-do attitude is contagious and plays a big part in the culture and growth of Southern Valley. Elliot helped me realize that technology should play an important role in the produce industry. His idea has been proven to be beneficial by improving industry-leading companies’ supply chains. These people have contributed greatly to my continued growth and success within the produce industry.”

**Tony Stachurski, 32**  
**General Manager**  
**Hardie’s Fruit and Vegetable**  
**Dallas, TX**



Hired eight years ago at Hardie’s originally as a buyer, Stachurski gained ground level experience buying nearly every commodity

and category the company sells today. He has worked side-by-side with the executive management team through all acquisitions into new markets in Texas. He has spent numerous years working with supplier partners and negotiating contract positions, as well as working with large clients for contract renewals and freight negotiations and still managing retail accounts purchases and sales. His strong background in transportation allowed him to help build and maintain Hardies’

third-party transportation network and contract long-term freight rates for customers.

In September of 2011, Hardie’s was awarded the DECA business and he helped develop new operational procedures, collaborating with two partners to help launch a successful program with DECA to service 36 commissaries in five states.

Two years ago, Hardie’s made an entrance in the Houston market and Stachurski was part of a key management team facilitating that transition. In September of 2011, he moved to Houston to take over the DC as the General Manager of the fourth largest market in the country. The location has seen an increase in sales month over month since the beginning 2012, and has been awarded significant pieces of contract business.

He gains his inspiration from being involved with all levels of the industry. “Working directly with the growers and farmers who are typically family farmers and seeing the passion and care that goes into the produce they grow really motivates me,” he says. “I love working with our customers and seeing them in the kitchen preparing the product to serve to a guest or stacking a shelf at a retail level, just waiting on the next sale. There are many moving pieces in our industry and you have to appreciate and respect all the parts to ensure the results you desire are achieved.”

He names the constant demand for low-cost solutions in a rising cost environment as a significant challenge. “External factors continue to drive our operating costs higher and higher year over year and we will need to continue to be an industry of change and innovation to sustain with low-cost demands in a recovering economy.”

In the future, he looks forward to working closely with industry professionals on a range of issues and continuing to be an integral part of the Hardie’s management team. “I am very excited to not only be working with Hardie’s, but also to be connected to so many Best in Class distributors in the Pro-Act organization,” he says. “We have a truly value-driven supply chain that is cutting-edge and I can’t wait to be part of what the future holds for us.”

He recognizes Mark Austin and

Greg Rowe, division presidents of Hardie’s North/Houston and Hardie’s South, Gary Wiener, vice president of operations, and Robert Killian at Fresh Point in Dallas as mentors. “Mark and Greg both coached me in all aspects of the produce business, but most importantly instilled the values of managing people as the No. 1 asset,” he says. “Gary taught me the ins-and-outs of the operational side of distribution. Robert brought me to this dance and worked with me day-in and day-out teaching me to be a buyer. There is not a day that goes by in this industry that I don’t meet someone or experience something that teaches me a new aspect of the business.”

**Kellen Stailey, 29**  
**Senior Manager of Sales**  
**And Marketing**  
**Sunshine Bouquet Company**  
**Miami, FL**



For the past seven years, Stailey has held various positions at Sunshine Bouquet, allowing her to develop into a detail-oriented

manager who is very competent at juggling multiple assignments and meeting short deadlines. Starting as a product development manager, she progressed to a senior manager role in both product development and marketing, and eventually expanded her sales skills to become a key account manager. Currently, in her role as senior manager of sales and marketing, she has excelled with a distinctive leadership voice and style, hiring, developing, and supporting highly capable professionals and challenging them to achieve their goals and the goals of the company.

Her team exceeded a lofty double-digit sales increase goal in 2011 — a difficult feat under the current financial pressure. They also launched a new website and an internal social media network to increase communication within the company and build staff morale. By working with key retail partners, they developed several support programs to raise donations for charitable non-profits.

Having moved to New Jersey 20 months ago, she immediately

starting giving back to the community, working several mornings each month preparing breakfast and packing lunches for Jersey City's homeless and needy at the Van Vorst Episcopal Church Soup Kitchen. She is an avid runner and has completed multiple half-marathons as well as the Miami Marathon. In March 2011, she ran the NYC Half Marathon for the Children of Peru Foundation, raising over \$1,000 in support of medical missions in Lima, Peru.

In November, 2011, she was awarded the Tip Murphy Scholarship for Leadership Excellence, which recognizes strong leaders in the produce industry. In February, 2012, she was accepted into PMA Foundation's Emerging Leaders Program in partnership with Thunderbird School of Global Management.

She admires the highly committed mentality that permeates the company, yet recognizes that the non-stop pattern of living, breathing, and promoting flowers is sometimes challenging to turn off. "Our farms' workers harvest flowers every day of the week, 365 days a year," she says. "This commitment to consistency and quality comes with a high cost, yet without this 24/7 ethic, we would be unable to achieve excellence in our industry. Creating a quality work/life balance is something I strive for every day."

Her future goals focus on leadership and mentoring. "I want to provide the same knowledge to my team that I gained through the people with whom I have had the privilege to work," she says. "To be successful, you need to be part of a strong team. Without our team, I would not be where I am at today."

She names Josh Stailey, former principal with The Pursuit Group and Director of Communications for the United Way, as her principal mentor. "My Uncle Josh's professional success was achieved through his dedication to improve sales for a wide range of companies and businesses throughout the U.S. and abroad," she says. "He died unexpectedly this past September, but before our time together was interrupted he taught me to embrace challenge, seek out opportunity, lead with boundless energy and live with a generous spirit."

Dan Ehrenstein, vice president of sales and marketing for Sunshine, and John Simko, Sunshine's CEO, are two other significant contributors. "Dan taught me the importance of attention to detail and how to manage high-stress situations," she says. "He mentored me on how to multi-task many different projects and roles within a mass-market, multiple-category company. John's executive leadership and strategic vision are unparalleled in the industry."

**Name: Kyle Stone, 35**  
**Admin/Food Safety/IT**  
**Ben B. Schwartz and Sons Inc.**  
**Detroit, MI**



Stone is said to epitomize the type of young employee produce companies need these days to compete and prosper. His professional approach and attention to detail are noted as invaluable to his company, as well as his understanding of the importance of food safety and ever-changing technology. Under Stone's leadership on the issue, Ben B. Schwartz and Sons takes food safety and traceability very seriously. He has ensured the company is HACCP-compliant and makes choices each day to meet the demands of this responsibility, while looking as far into the future as possible to stay ahead of changes. Charged with being the food safety and traceability point-person in the company, he executes these commitments utilizing all resources available and ongoing education to keep improving systems. He is responsible for the proper condition and operation of the entire operation, including eight coolers, the warehouse and trucks.

As a leader in the company's technology department, he strives to ensure that equipment works for the user and not the other way around. His success in integrating technology results in a product/system becoming a value-added tool. He works diligently to stay ahead of the curve in order to find new efficiencies.

In his current position, he maintains a fleet of tractors, refrigerated trailers and straight trucks, which includes ensuring adherence with a

multitude of government regulations. He also handles all banking, insurance and expenses, coordinates international imports, organizes participation in food shows, oversees forklift and pallet jack maintenance, purchasing and training, manages computer and phone systems, maintains and improves the company website, communicates with union employees, conducts online bids for new business, and utilizes his Spanish-speaking skills with vendors and customers as necessary.

The most inspiring aspect of the industry for him has been looking at what other companies' leaders have done. "So many companies have taken something and run," he explains. "I'm inspired by the success they've had by believing in their products and staying steadfast in their pursuit of excellence in quality and as industry leaders."

He focuses on trying to give back to the industry and his community. "It has been a pleasure for me to volunteer on the 2012 PMA Fresh Summit Committee," he says. "Finding free time to work as a volunteer is not easy, especially balancing it between my time with my wife, five-year-old, and two-year-old. However, it is the external contact and growth that allows me to bring something more to the table when we are all together."

He is a graduate of the PMA Emerging Leaders Program at Thunderbird School of Global Management. He contributes regularly to several different charities.

Like many in the produce business, he gained much experience at an early age through exposure, as his father, Nate, has been in the industry for 35 years. He names his father, along with Chris Billmeyer, of Ben B. Schwartz and Sons, as his mentors in the produce industry. "These two men have distinctly different styles and skill sets, and both are very successful produce industry veterans," he says. "Between the two of them, I have learned how to conduct business in a proper fashion. I have learned how to get out of my own way. I have learned how to expect more from myself than I thought was possible. I will continue to learn from these two gentlemen as well as all with whom I come into contact or read

about, for they have also taught me that ground-breaking ideas can come from anywhere."

**Robert Teraskiewicz, 28**  
**Buyer**  
**Four Seasons Produce**  
**Ephrata, PA**



Teraskiewicz started his dream career in marketing at DDB, part of The Omnicom Group, in New York.

However, after three years he realized it was not what he wanted for the rest of his life and began to explore other options. His exploration led him to the produce industry and a position with Four Seasons. He started at Four Seasons as project coordinator and was responsible for reviewing internal processes in the warehouse, packing department, buying/sales, logistics and marketing departments in order to help streamline and develop better processes where necessary. One successful example was the "paper trail" project, which tracked paper flow amongst the different departments. After his recommendations were made, the company eliminated unnecessary steps resulting in gained efficiency and saving paper.

After six months, he was accepted to a buying position and given the responsibility of potatoes and onions. Soon after, he took on value-added buying. Two-and-a-half years later, he moved to the Western vegetable buyer position while still handling potatoes and onions. He continued to grow the potatoes and onions category by not only focusing on selling more to retail customers but also by recognizing the opportunity to sell more to untapped categories for the company like foodservice wholesalers, repackers and chain stores. By building relationships with key suppliers and with smart and aggressive buying, he increased case movement in all the aforementioned categories. He also recognized another opportunity to increase case movement by delivering loads directly to customers.

What inspires him about the produce industry is that it is an industry with a sense of responsi-



bility for something greater than the individual. "Being a small part of the food supply chain is humbling when you really stop to think about it," he says. "This challenges me to continue learning as much as I possibly can about the industry to help make a difference not only for myself, but also for my company, and ultimately, for the consumer."

His short-term future objective is to continue to learn as much as possible about procurement and the industry. "I want to learn more to help my company, customers, and, in turn, my career," he says. "By acquiring as much knowledge as possible, my long term goal is to be in a managerial position for Four Seasons to help the company continue to be a leader in the industry."

His mentor in the produce industry is his boss, Jason Hollinger, director of procurement. "I aspire to manage like him for many reasons," he states. "His managerial style allows me the opportunity to be the best buyer I can possible be. He gives enough freedom to explore and do what I think is in the best interest of the company, yet his thoroughness makes me remember to always have sound reasoning when making decisions. When problems arise or when situations have to be resolved, he will couple his knowledge with the opinions of others to make the best informed decisions."

**Pete Thomsen, 32**  
**Assistant Produce Buyer**  
**Fareway Stores Inc.**  
**Boone, IA**



Thomsen is a quintessential example of a person rising through the ranks in produce retailing. He started working at

Fareway in 1996 in high school, bagging groceries and stocking shelves. Over the years, his knowledge of products, merchandising, ad writing, and most importantly, customer service, grew exponentially as he progressed through various positions at the store level. His dedication to Fareway and adhering to its values resulted in

his promotion to the corporate office as a buyer in 2009.

Currently, he spends part of his time with some dry grocery categories, and at least 50 percent of his time assisting head produce buyer, Chris Boothe. He is in charge of the apple and potato categories specifically, along with some specialty categories and organics. Besides the purchasing, he has the additional responsibility of putting together corporate ads with Boothe.

Fareway has recently opened its 100th store and was named fourth in *Consumer Reports* latest issue rating 52 supermarkets across the country. The company's perishables score was one of the highest on the entire survey, something attributable to the produce team, including Thomsen.

The thing he loves about the purchasing side of the produce business is that every day is different and presents new challenges. "We wear many hats, some of which include purchasing, marketing/advertising, merchandising, transportation/logistics, food safety, and just being there for our stores when problems and questions arise," he says. "No two days are the same and the days go by way too fast; those are great challenges to have."

In the future, he wants Fareway's produce departments to be talked about in the same regard as its full service meat departments. "Those departments have been highly acclaimed in this part of the country since we opened 74 years ago," he says. "We always buy with quality in mind first, followed by price, and we feel we can deliver both to our customers while providing a knowledgeable staff and a clean, sharp looking store."

His mentor is Chris Boothe, who has been a produce buyer for Fareway Stores for the past 16 years, and has roughly 25 years of experience in the produce industry. "Chris has been excellent at taking the time to train me over the past several years, and also in listening to my input and experiences coming from our produce departments in our retail stores," he says. "He's great at showing me not just the 'how' in his daily tasks, but also the 'why.' Probably the most important thing he has taught me is the value of the rela-

tionships Fareway has developed with companies we have done business with for many decades."

**Kari Valdés, 32**  
**Director of Food Safety**  
**And Quality**  
**Taylor Farms Retail Inc.**  
**Salinas, CA**



When Valdés moved from Minnesota to California in 2002 to work in the produce industry, she had no idea of

the challenges and adventures she was about to encounter. Since then, she has held major positions as food safety director and manager for several companies. Her initial interest in the industry was sparked by the support and structure of the Salinas Valley and its generations of growers. "Though I'm from Minnesota, I really felt a sense of family in the industry here," she says. "As a newcomer to the industry and area, I became an active member of the Young Farmers and Ranchers, which is where I quickly learned that the more connections I made, the more I was able to learn and contribute back to the industry."

As a member of the Board of Trustees at Hartnell College, she is an advocate for agriculture and has become part of the original subcommittee to develop a two-day food safety course at Hartnell. The course has since blossomed into a well-respected professional summit with presenters such as USDA, FDA and university professors.

For over eight years she has enjoyed volunteering to aid in educational outreach to students of all ages by touring and having Q&A sessions with students. Taylor Farms supports her in this effort, and opens its doors to numerous tours for students to provide a hands-on approach to seeing how produce gets from farm to fork. She has served on the IFPA/United Fresh Technical board since 2004. She was an active member of the initial guidance and creation of the LGMA food safety document. She is a recipient of the Frieda Rapoport Caplan Family Business Scholarship Award.

In the future, she hopes to instill

her love of produce in her children. "As a young mother it is important to me to raise my children with the same immersion in agriculture as I have been able to embrace," she relates. "This is important for their benefit, and I would be proud if my children followed in the footsteps of our family."

She credits many in the industry as being mentors, but specifically names Dr. Barry Eisenberg with United Fresh in Salinas, CA, Francisco (Chato) Valdés of Taylor Farms and Jim Brennan, president of NewLeaf Food Safety Solutions. "Barry has encouraged me to be involved at every level of the industry," she says. "He guided me in paths that fit my knowledge base and provided support to develop my skills. Barry brings the fun out in food safety and has been a great teacher of direction and education. Chato is my best friend and husband and an expert in the field of food safety and growing operations. You can imagine the exciting food safety conversations at our dinner table! I first met Jim on the board of the IFPA. His knowledge in food safety and chemistry and his ability to present the information in a clear and informative way to create understanding and learning are amazing."

**Daniel Vena, 32**  
**Salesman/Buyer**  
**John Vena Inc.**  
**Philadelphia, PA**



The fourth-generation family member to have joined the business, Vena has learned the wholesale business from the ground up. He

started working when he was only 12 years old, and over the next 18 years worked every job from unloading trucks and delivering orders to purchasing truckloads of product and paying invoices. His combination of experience and youth are enabling him to move his family's wholesale produce business into the future. He has played an integral role in John Vena Inc., becoming the first company on the Philadelphia Regional Produce Market to pass both USDA and Primus third-party audits.

He is the first family member

to have had formal business education, earning a BS in Business from the University of Richmond. He currently does a little bit of everything, but mostly focuses his attention on buying and selling hothouse cucumbers, peppers and tomatoes, arugula and watercress, figs, baby vegetables, avocados, micro greens and edible flowers. He also oversees the company's major foodservice and retail sales, as well as working on administrative tasks and logistics. He was a member of Class 16 of United Fresh's Industry Leadership Program.

He notes food safety as having been and continuing to be a major challenge for the produce business. "From the largest growers to the smallest shippers, how products are produced, packed and handled throughout the supply chain is a major concern for the entire industry," he says. "A lapse at any level could have long lasting repercussions on what consumers are willing to purchase. However, as daunting as this

seems, it is all worthwhile."

In the future, Vena wants to continue to bring new and interesting products to both foodservice and retail businesses. "At John Vena, we focus on specialty products, and my goal is to bring these products to mainstream America," he says. "It is one thing to see fiddlehead ferns on the Food Network, but much more exciting to see them on the menu at a local restaurant. Being able to bring consumers safe and interesting fruits and vegetables will promote experimentation and increased consumption."

He will also be working with other young produce professionals in educating the public. "With our move to the very impressive new Philadelphia market, I am excited about the community and consumer educational opportunities," he explains. "Together with a group of young produce professionals from the Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market, we plan to set up programs to bring in children and adults from the

Philadelphia area and teach them how fruits and vegetables can help them lead a happier and healthier life."

Family is very important to him and he loves spending time with his wife and daughter. He names his father, John Vena, as his mentor when it comes to the produce industry. "Not only has he

taught me all the old sayings like, 'Your first loss is your best loss,' but he has demonstrated to me what it means to be an innovator," he explains. "His forward-thinking, respect for the past, and most of all, his passion for the people, the products, and the produce business in general are a huge part of what inspires me each day." **pb**

## 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](http://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, 2013 (born after March 1, 1973).



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# In Savannah, Kroger Beats Wal-Mart In Produce Pricing

Have Kroger and other chains cracked the code on Wal-Mart pricing or is this a one-hit-wonder?

BY JIM PREVOR, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



**A**fter ten years of studying Wal-Mart's produce pricing and the impact it has on the pricing policies of other chains in cities where Wal-Mart operates, the *PRODUCE BUSINESS Wal-Mart Pricing Report* has rolled into Savannah, GA, and something that has never happened before has now happened.



**Pick of the Season Produce**

**Tomatoes on the Vine**  
188 <sup>lb</sup>  
With Card

**Juice Oranges**  
299 <sup>lb</sup>  
With Card

**Strawberries**  
16 oz.  
How about strawberry shortcake for dessert tonight?  
2\$5 <sup>for</sup>  
With Card

**Apples**  
Gala or Red Delicious Apples  
Any way you slice it, you'll find a great selection on sale this week!  
128 <sup>lb</sup>  
With Card

**Jumbo Cantaloupe**  
2\$4 <sup>for</sup>  
With Card



A large scale, mainstream supermarket chain, namely The Kroger Co., beat out Wal-Mart, coming in 2 percent lower than Wal-Mart on produce pricing... well, *sort of*. We add that “sort of” caveat because if you merely add up the “listed” prices on our market basket, then Wal-Mart would have still been slightly cheaper, but in order for Kroger to show up cheaper, you have to use the Kroger cardholder prices.

Now, normally, this would be against our policy. We typically use only prices available to the general public, and in the case of two other stores that had less than a handful of items discounted with their

loyalty cards — Food Lion and Piggly Wiggly — we held to our policy of reporting only non-card prices.

We sometimes publish special loyalty card prices but only as a separate chart and for background information. In the case of Kroger, however, we were confronted with a new situation. Although loyalty card prices normally are available only to loyalty card holders – and indeed in many stores cashiers passing on loyalty

card prices to those who don't have loyalty cards is a firing offense — there are exceptions.

Typically, requiring people to do at least some registration is important to chains as only with registration does the data generated become valuable. However, sometimes other concerns trump the chain's desire to use discount prices to get people to register. Often stores in areas with a great deal of tourism, for example,

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# México



## Avocados from Mexico are the #1 Selling Avocados in the U.S.

Avocados from Mexico are grown year-round in Michoacan, Mexico, the place where avocados originated and the only place in the world where trees bloom naturally four times a year. This results in avocados that are unsurpassed in quality, consistent in flavor and available year-round in a variety of grades and sizes. Conditions are so ideal that Avoca-

dos from Mexico have become the #1 avocado grower in the world, producing and selling an average of 2.6 billion pounds of avocados per year.

During the 2011/2012 season, Mexico shipped over 20% more fruit into the U.S. than it had the previous year, accounting for more than 60% of the average market share.

## Avocado Sales are on the Rise

According to results from the 2012 Fresh Trends Survey, avocados are the #1 item consumers reported buying now that they did not buy previously. In fact, the likelihood of an avocado purchase climbed 11 percentage points from 2011 — the second largest jump in any commodity in the survey besides pineapple. In addition, according to data from Nielsen Perishables Group, avocado sales are up 8% and are ranked as the 4th

fastest-growing fruit in the produce department!

Total Hass Avocado Dollar Sales per Year	
2011	\$594,803,908
2010	\$552,072,577
2009	\$511,861,415

Source: Avocados from Mexico with information from Nielsen Perishables Group, 52 weeks ending 12/31/11

## Providing the Category Volume to Grow on

As the category and volume continue to grow, Avocados from Mexico is making sure retail opportunities do as well by creating new ways to build demand, increase brand awareness and expand usage ideas at break-

fast and beyond. The result? Strong sales year-round. Fully integrated marketing efforts from Avocados from Mexico target both General Market and Hispanic Consumers and include:

- Television advertising in select markets
- Radio spots in select markets
- Online advertising
- National print ads
- Consumer promotions
- Public Relations
- Social Media
- In-store merchandising
- Experiential marketing & sampling





## Leading Through Innovation

Avocados from Mexico leads the industry with innovative ways to support retailers, including:

- **Extending Usage.** From breakfast on, Avocados from Mexico is promoting creative ideas that motivate purchasing for meals, snacks and entertaining. Stay tuned for the latest initiative...baking with avocados!
- **Targeting General Market and Hispanic Consumers.** These audiences have unique needs and preferences. Avocados from Mexico tunes into them with research and testing, then creates integrated programs and measures program success.
- **Unmatched Marketing Support.** Avocados from Mexico commits more marketing funds than any other avocado association in the U.S.

## Helping Retailers Promote and Profit

A variety of resources are available to help retailers increase consumer purchase frequency and market demand for Avocados from Mexico.

- **Merchandising Materials** can be set up throughout the store to encourage impulse sales and are available year-round. POS materials include secondary displays, POS cards, bin wrap, posters and more.
- **The S.M.A.R.T. Kit (Storing Merchandising Arranging Ripening Training)** lets the Business Development Managers train your team on the latest in best practices for handling and merchandising avocados.
- **Category management data** helps retailers develop successful selling strategies and increase sales.

## INSIGHT FROM MEXICO

*An interview with Eduardo Serena, Marketing Director for APEAM (Michoacan, Mexico)*

**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.

**Q:** Are exports from Mexico increasing?

**A:** Yes! Avocados from Mexico shipments continue to increase and are projected to once again be the market share leader for the 2012/2013 season. We expect to see a rise in volume shipped as a result of an increase of local avocado production in Mexico. To help support the growing volume being shipped to the U.S., retailers can expect to see new marketing strategies that expand usage. For example, this fall and winter, we will be driving sales by providing aggressive marketing support and promoting new usage ideas like guacamole at Halloween and baking with avocados.

**Q:** How does the Latino population in the United States impact avocado exports from Mexico?

**A:** Avocados are a food staple in Latino households, so as the Latino population in the U.S. continues to grow, avocado demand will likely also continue to rise. Latinos are quickly becoming the mainstream. In fact, according to the 2010 U.S. Census, Latinos are expected to become the majority in California and Texas within the next decade. And research shows that Latinos prefer Avocados from Mexico!

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

**A:** Avocados from Mexico are available year round from APEAM U.S. certified packers in the state of Michoacan, the heart of Mexico's main avocado growing region. A list of exporters is available at: [www.avocadosfrommexico.com/trade](http://www.avocadosfrommexico.com/trade)

**Q:** What is your industry doing to better serve retailers?

**A:** Avocados from Mexico is continually driving retail sales through aggressive marketing programs that ensure brand momentum and category growth. We commit more funds to marketing support than any other avocado organization in the U.S. and will deliver more than 1 billion consumer impressions throughout our 2012/2013 program. Outreach efforts include television, radio, online marketing, national print advertising, public relations, promotions, and social media programs that target both General Market and Hispanic consumers. Avocados from Mexico also invests in category management research and analysis to be able to provide retailers with the latest, most relevant insights on ways to drive retail sales and profits. We also offer retailers training on handling and merchandising avocados and offer a variety of free merchandising tools to use in store.

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

**A:** Despite overall volume decreasing by 15% in 2011 for the total category, sales of avocados increased by 8%! In fact, according to data from Nielsen Perishables Group, Avocado sales in the U.S. have increased by more than 40 million dollars each year for the past three years! Avocado sales are on the rise and as consumer demand continues to increase, Mexico is positioned to provide the category with the volume to grow on.

For more information on Avocados from Mexico please visit [www.avocadosfrommexico.com](http://www.avocadosfrommexico.com) or email [info@avocadosfrommexico.com](mailto: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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## Wal-Mart Supercenter vs 5 Chains Price Comparison — Savannah, Georgia Prices Available To The General Public

Produce Item	How Sold	WalMart Supercenter	Food Lion	% Over Wal-Mart	Fresh Market	% Over Wal-Mart	Kroger	% Over Wal-Mart	Piggly Wiggly
Apples - Granny Smith	Lb	1.67	1.79	7.19%	2.49	49.10%	1.79	7.19%	1.89
Apples - other variety	Lb	1.67	1.79	7.19%	2.49	49.10%	1.28	-23.35%	1.99
Apples - Red Delicious	Lb	1.67	1.79	7.19%	1.99	19.16%	1.39	-16.77%	1.99
Asparagus	Lb	2.48	2.09	-15.73%	3.99	60.89%	2.99	20.56%	3.99
Bananas - Yellow	Lb	0.53	0.54	1.89%	0.69	30.19%	0.69	30.19%	0.69
Beans - Green	Lb	1.96	3.99	103.57%	0.98	-50.00%	1.99	1.53%	1.00
Blueberries	6 oz Package	2.98	2.50	-16.11%	3.33	11.74%	2.50	-16.11%	2.99
Broccoli - whole	Each	2.38	1.93	-18.91%	1.98	-16.81%	1.99	-16.39%	2.00
Broccoli Crowns	Lb	1.98	2.08	5.05%	2.49	25.76%	1.99	0.51%	1.99
Cabbage - Green	Lb	0.64	0.51	-20.31%	5.99	835.94%	0.49	-23.44%	0.69
Cantaloupe - Whole	Each	2.00	1.50	-25.00%	3.99	99.50%	2.00	0.00%	3.99
Carrots - baby	lb Package	1.78	1.87	5.06%	1.69	-5.06%	1.99	11.80%	1.99
Carrots - Regular	1 Lb Bag	0.78	0.92	17.95%	1.50	92.31%	0.89	14.10%	1.00
Cauliflower	Each	2.58	2.71	5.04%	3.99	54.65%	2.50	-3.10%	2.00
Celery	Each	1.28	1.45	13.28%	1.99	55.47%	1.45	13.28%	1.79
Corn - Yellow	Each	0.44	0.46	4.55%	0.69	56.82%	0.55	25.00%	0.66
Cucumbers - Regular	Each	0.68	0.72	5.88%	0.99	45.59%	0.59	-13.24%	0.50
Dressing - Other	Bottle 11oz	3.78	3.02	-20.11%	4.12	8.99%	3.20	-15.34%	3.38
Grapefruit - Red	Each	0.70	0.65	-7.14%	1.50	114.29%	0.59	-15.71%	1.39
Grapes - Green Seedless	Lb	2.98	2.09	-29.87%	3.99	33.89%	2.99	0.34%	2.99
Grapes - Red Seedless	Lb	2.98	1.77	-40.60%	3.99	33.89%	2.99	0.34%	2.99
Green Onions	Bunch	0.56	0.59	5.36%	1.99	255.36%	0.59	5.36%	0.79
Jar Fruit - Del Monte	20 oz Jar	2.98	3.66	22.82%	7.49	151.34%	3.49	17.11%	3.99
Lettuce - Iceberg Bulk	Each	0.60	1.24	106.67%	1.79	198.33%	1.25	108.33%	1.79
Lettuce - Romaine Bulk	Each	1.78	1.58	-11.24%	2.00	12.36%	1.99	11.80%	3.99
Limes - Bulk	Each	0.35	0.20	-42.86%	0.50	42.86%	0.33	-5.71%	0.50
Mangos	Each	0.78	1.05	34.62%	1.00	28.21%	1.00	28.21%	1.00
Mushrooms - White	Pkg Wgt: 8 oz	1.78	1.87	5.06%	2.99	67.98%	1.99	11.80%	1.99
Onions - Sweet	Lb	0.98	0.99	1.02%	2.49	154.08%	1.00	2.04%	0.99
Onions - White	LB	1.24	1.30	4.84%	2.49	100.81%	1.25	0.81%	1.49
Onions - Yellow Bag	3 Lb	2.26	2.37	4.87%	2.99	32.30%	2.29	1.33%	1.88
Oranges - Navel	Each	0.54	0.72	33.33%	0.74	37.04%	0.69	27.78%	0.99
Oranges - Navel	4 lb Bag	4.48	3.65	-18.53%	4.99	11.38%	3.00	-33.04%	3.00
Pears - Bartlett	Lb	1.67	1.23	-26.35%	1.98	18.56%	1.89	13.17%	1.99
Peppers - Green Bell	Each	0.74	0.72	-2.70%	0.99	33.78%	0.59	-20.27%	0.99
Peppers - Red	Each	1.68	1.50	-10.71%	2.50	48.81%	1.25	-25.60%	3.99
Pineapple	Each	2.98	3.19	7.05%	3.98	33.56%	2.50	-16.11%	3.99
Potatoes - Russet	Bag 5 Lb	3.47	3.12	-10.09%	5.99	72.62%	3.69	6.34%	2.99
Potatoes - Russet Bulk	Lb	0.88	0.79	-10.23%	1.29	46.59%	0.99	12.50%	1.00
Salad - Caesar	15 oz Bag	3.38	10.47	209.76%	7.47	121.01%	3.29	-2.66%	11.07
Salad - Spring	11 oz Bag	4.48	5.92	32.14%	4.11	-8.26%	3.49	-22.10%	8.12
Squash - Zucchini	Lb	2.18	1.05	-51.83%	1.99	-8.72%	1.99	-8.72%	1.00
Strawberries	Pkg 1 Lb	1.98	2.00	1.01%	3.99	101.52%	2.50	26.26%	2.99
Sweet Potatoes	Lb	0.88	0.79	-10.23%	1.49	69.32%	0.99	12.50%	0.99
Tomatoes - On the Vine	Lb	2.28	1.99	-12.72%	2.99	31.14%	1.88	-17.54%	1.99
Tomatoes - Plum/Roma	Lb	1.38	1.51	9.42%	1.99	44.20%	1.49	7.97%	1.59
Tomatoes - Regular Large	Lb	1.74	1.83	5.17%	2.49	43.10%	1.79	2.87%	1.99
MARKET BASKET		85.99	91.50	6.41%	129.57	50.68%	84.04	-2.27%	108.99

**RED is adjusted price**

particularly tourism that involves visitors from areas where a given chain does not have stores, find that the tourists resist registering for a card in an area where they don't live. The tourists also resist paying inflated prices.

So what is done in these types of situations is often that the cashiers are

given cards that they scan for each customer who doesn't have a card. Such is the situation in the Savannah Kroger we visited. Each time we would check out, we would be asked if we had a loyalty card and when we responded no, the cashier would scan a house card. Since the same behavior of the cashiers was not practiced

at Food Lion and Piggly Wiggly, and since Kroger honored the prices of many more items with its loyalty card, we made the call that this procedure constituted offering loyalty card prices to the general public; thus, in this case, Kroger's loyalty card prices become the actual prices available to the general public. This means



% Over Wal-Mart	Publix	% Over Wal-Mart
13.17%	1.99	19.16%
19.16%	1.49	-10.78%
19.16%	1.49	-10.78%
60.89%	3.99	60.89%
30.19%	0.69	30.19%
-48.98%	1.29	-34.18%
0.34%	3.99	33.89%
-15.97%	2.69	13.03%
0.51%	3.29	66.16%
7.81%	0.69	7.81%
99.50%	2.50	25.00%
11.80%	1.99	11.80%
28.21%	0.99	26.92%
-22.48%	2.69	4.26%
39.84%	1.69	32.03%
50.00%	0.17	-61.36%
-26.47%	0.75	10.29%
-10.58%	3.38	-10.58%
98.57%	1.49	112.86%
0.34%	3.99	33.89%
0.34%	2.99	0.34%
41.07%	0.60	7.14%
33.89%	3.49	17.11%
198.33%	1.49	148.33%
124.16%	1.89	6.18%
42.86%	0.66	88.57%
28.21%	0.10	-87.18%
11.80%	1.35	-24.16%
1.02%	1.29	31.63%
20.16%	1.99	60.48%
-16.81%	2.99	32.30%
83.33%	0.99	83.33%
-33.04%	4.99	11.38%
19.16%	0.99	-40.72%
33.78%	0.75	1.35%
137.50%	3.99	137.50%
33.89%	4.99	67.45%
-13.83%	3.99	14.99%
13.64%	1.49	69.32%
227.51%	4.04	19.53%
81.25%	5.50	22.77%
-54.13%	1.29	-40.83%
51.01%	2.50	26.26%
12.50%	0.99	12.50%
-12.72%	3.99	75.00%
15.22%	1.89	36.96%
14.37%	2.49	43.10%
26.75%	104.95	22.05%

time that Wal-Mart has been beat in prices. The first 20 iterations of the PRODUCE BUSINESS Wal-Mart Pricing Study had Wal-Mart winning almost everywhere with its supercenter concept, losing only to more specialized concepts, such as an A&P's Food Basics in Detroit and a Fiesta Mart in Houston, plus a quirky loss to Wal-Mart's own Neighborhood Market in Dallas due to some in-store specials at a time when official Wal-Mart policy, since

abandoned, was that Neighborhood Markets and supercenters had to maintain identical prices.

Now, however, we have a hat trick. Wal-Mart didn't win in Savannah, losing to Kroger; it was beat out by Sprouts in the last iteration of the PRODUCE BUSINESS Wal-Mart Pricing Study, which was done in Dallas, and Wal-Mart was beat out at the previous iteration by Food Basics in New Jersey. Indeed, Wal-Mart has not won

Kroger takes Savannah in the PRODUCE BUSINESS Wal-Mart Pricing Report.

### Is Wal-Mart Losing Its Low-Price Image?

Although Kroger is the first major chain to beat Wal-Mart prices with a mainstream concept, this is not the first

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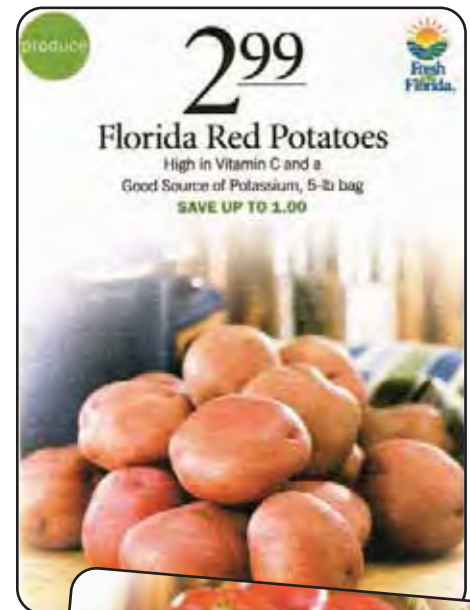
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## How They Stack Up Against Wal-Mart Supercenter

Region	Store	% over		Store	% over		
		Wal-Mart			Wal-Mart		
Connecticut-5/02	Super Stop & Shop . . . . .	.23%		Shaws . . . . .	.34%	Big Y . . . . .	.36%
Salt Lake City-10/02	Harmon's . . . . .	.2%		Smith's . . . . .	.6%	Albertson's . . . . .	.12%
South Florida-2/03	Super Target . . . . .	.22%		Publix . . . . .	.31%	Winn-Dixie . . . . .	.52%
Dallas, Texas-10/03	Albertsons . . . . .	.23%		Brookshires . . . . .	.7%	Kroger . . . . .	.19%
	<b>Neighborhood Market</b> . . . . .	<b>-1.2%</b>		Tom Thumb . . . . .	.27%		
Portland, OR-3/04	Albertsons . . . . .	.30%		Fred Meyer . . . . .	.22%	Haggen . . . . .	.27%
	Safeway . . . . .	.37%					
Phoenix, AZ-8/04	Albetsons . . . . .	.22%		Bashas' . . . . .	.25%	Fry's . . . . .	.15%
	Safeway . . . . .	.17%					
Palm Springs-10/04	Albertsons . . . . .	.19%		Jensen's . . . . .	.60%	Ralphs . . . . .	.16%
	Vons . . . . .	.20%					
Detroit, MI-1/05	<b>A&amp;P Food Basic</b> . . . . .	<b>-17%</b>		Farmer Jack . . . . .	.24%	Kroger . . . . .	.28%
	Meijer . . . . .	.3%					
St. Louis, MO-5/05	Dierbergs . . . . .	.22%		Schnucks . . . . .	.14%		
Houston, TX-9/05	HEB . . . . .	.15%		Kroger . . . . .	.30%	<b>Fiesta Mart</b> . . . . .	<b>-0.3%</b>
Atlanta, GA-11/05	Harry's . . . . .	.18%		Ingles . . . . .	.16%	Kroger . . . . .	.25%
	Publix . . . . .	.13%		Target . . . . .	.3%		
Denver, CO-5/06	Albertsons . . . . .	.16%		King Sooper . . . . .	.21%	Safeway . . . . .	.25%
Portland, OR-10/06	Albertsons . . . . .	.32%		Fred Meyer . . . . .	.21%	QFC . . . . .	.54%
	Safeway . . . . .	.30%					
Toronto Canada-7/07	A&P . . . . .	.35%		Brunos . . . . .	.28%	Loblaws . . . . .	.13%
	Sobeys . . . . .	.45%					
Kansas City, KS-10/07	Dillions . . . . .	.20%		Hen House . . . . .	.15%	Hy Vee . . . . .	.18%
	Price Chopper . . . . .	.13%					
Los Angeles-4/08	Fresh & Easy . . . . .	.15%		Stater Bros . . . . .	.8%	Ralphs . . . . .	.25%
	Vons . . . . .	.14%					
Orlando, FL-10/08	Publix . . . . .	.32%		Super Target . . . . .	.22%	Whole Foods . . . . .	.38%
	Winn Dixie . . . . .	.28%					
Phoenix, AZ 4/09	Wal-Mart Markewtside . . . . .	.23%		Wal-Mart Neighborhood . . . . .	.7%	Bahas . . . . .	.30%
	Fresh & Easy . . . . .	.32%		Fry's . . . . .	.27%	Safeway . . . . .	.37%
Raleigh, NC 9/09	Food Lion . . . . .	.24%		Fresh Market . . . . .	.31%	Harris Teeter . . . . .	.35%
	Kroger . . . . .	.21%		Super Target . . . . .	.11%		
Philadelphia 4/10	Acme . . . . .	.17%		Genuardi's . . . . .	.22%	Giant . . . . .	.26%
	Super Fresh . . . . .	.21%		Wegmans . . . . .	.5%		
New Jersey 10/10	<b>FoodBasics</b> . . . . .	<b>-1%</b>		Pathmark . . . . .	.15%	ShopRite . . . . .	.8%
Dallas 10/11	Albertson's . . . . .	.25%		Central Market . . . . .	.19%	Kroger . . . . .	.21%
	<b>Sprouts</b> . . . . .	<b>-7%</b>		Super Target . . . . .	.10%	Tom Thumb . . . . .	.51%
Savannah 6/12	Food Lion . . . . .	.7%		Fresh Market . . . . .	.51%	<b>Kroger</b> . . . . .	<b>-2%</b>
	Piggly Wiggly . . . . .	.27%		Publix . . . . .	.22%		



# Publix®

the produce pricing war in the last three markets the PRODUCE BUSINESS Wal-Mart Pricing Study has visited.

To be fair, the losses were mostly quite small: 2 percent in Savannah, 1 percent in New Jersey and 7 percent in Dallas, and given the vagaries of the market baskets used, one shouldn't make too much of small differences. What is clear, however, is that Wal-Mart is no longer obviously and clearly the low price leader and, more specifically, that Wal-Mart executives are not requiring store-level managers to reduce prices to address local competitive situations and thus retain Wal-Mart's low price image.



 <p><b>Bulk Vidalia Sweet Onions</b> Without MVP Card Regular Retail</p>	 <p><b>Broccoli Crowns</b> Without MVP Card \$2.08 Lb.</p>	 <p><b>Baby Carrots</b> Without MVP Card \$1.87 Each</p>
<p><b>89¢<sub>lb.</sub></b></p>	 <p><b>Lemons</b> Without MVP Card 56¢ Each</p>	 <p><b>Limes</b> Without MVP Card 32¢ Each</p>



Since reputations for price competitiveness have to be built up market by market against specific competitive situations, this willingness to be undersold will erode Wal-Mart's brand equity in each market. After all, if you can't count on Wal-Mart to be the least expensive – what can you count on Wal-Mart to be?

Of course, Wal-Mart is still priced quite competitively. In Savannah, although Food Lion is nipping at its heels at just 7 percent over Wal-Mart's prices, Publix and Piggly Wiggly are steering clear of any price battle, with Publix coming in 22 percent and Piggly Wiggly at 27 percent over Wal-Mart's prices. Fresh Market,

coming in at 51 percent over Wal-Mart, is just proving that one can sell the same products and yet be in a totally different business.

One challenge in doing this type of study is that not all stores sell products the same way. Traditionally, we have to make adjustments because one store may sell things by the "each" while another sells by the pound. In Savannah, we had to make adjustments because Wal-Mart sells things such as a 15-ounce bag of Caesar salad mix, while Food Lion, for example, was selling only a 5-ounce size on the day of our visit. We adjust pricing so as to represent an equal number of ounces. This is fair, but also means that the product

represented on the chart – a 15-ounce bag of Caesar salad mix sold at Food Lion for \$10.47 doesn't actually exist. The product available is a 5-ounce bag being sold for 3.49.

In many cases, it is on products where these adjustments have occurred that the big differences in prices exist. In other words, even Fresh Market might be unwilling to sell a parity product such as Del Monte jarred fruit for 151.34 percent over Wal-Mart if consumers could easily compare such prices. But it is willing to charge this much higher price on a per ounce basis because it sells a smaller size and so the product is not deemed directly comparable. So Wal-Mart sells a 20-ounce jar of Del Monte jarred fruit for \$2.98, while Fresh Market sells a 16-ounce jar of its private label product for \$5.99. On a per ounce basis that is a 151.34% premium, but consumers might still find it difficult to compare both products.

**Margin-Enhancers Versus Competitive Weapons**

We would say that one area where conventional retailers are remiss is failing to recognize the damage that being out of





line on parity products can do to their pricing image. If Food Lion is higher priced on peaches than Wal-Mart, well that doesn't tell a consumer a lot. Maybe its peaches are larger, sweeter, safer, more local, more sustainable – who knows? But when Food Lion lets Wal-Mart sell 20-ounce jars of Del Monte jarred fruit for \$2.98, while Food Lion prices the exact same product/size and thus easily comparable product for \$3.66, it is

allowing Wal-Mart to imprint a low cost value proposition into the brain of every consumer. It is hard to see why Food Lion executives would let something such as this happen, yet we find all across the country such parity products are viewed as margin-enhancers rather than competitive weapons.

The big question coming out of Savannah is whether Kroger underselling Wal-Mart is a crack in the dam or just a

One lb. Container  
**Fresh California Strawberries**  
**2 for \$4**

**2 for \$3**  
 14 oz. Bag  
**Dole Coleslaw**  
 With Pig Card

**2 for \$4**  
 Steam & Eat  
**Bunch Broccoli**

**2 for \$1**  
 Crisp  
**Slicing Cucumbers**



quirk. We knew Wal-Mart's low price leadership was eroding due to competition with Aldi, Save-a-Lot and other deep discounters, but, for the most part conventional supermarkets have most effectively competed with Wal-Mart by getting out of its way. Think of Safeway's Lifestyle stores representing a move to a more upscale clientele.

The question is whether Kroger and other chains have cracked the code and learned how to make a living and price competitively with Wal-Mart or, put another way, is what we saw in Savannah a one-hit-wonder or is this going to be a national hit parade?

Check out future editions of the PRODUCE BUSINESS Wal-Mart Pricing Report to find out. **pb**

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Fresh produce at Shaws welcomes consumers, while a 155,000-square-foot facility holds product at W. Newell & Co.'s main distribution center in Urbana, IL.

# W. Newell & Co. Paves The Way For Supervalu's Success

Seventy-five years ago, Supervalu parent company, Winston & Newell, brought produce distribution to the forefront of supermarket retailers. **BY OSCAR KATOV**

**“H**ow does it feel to operate a business that spans four time zones, responds to the needs of over 4,000 stores from coast to coast, and is fiercely committed to on-time delivery of fresh products to its grocer customers?”

This question prompted a smile from Steve Irland, Supervalu corporate vice president of produce, and his confident reply, “It’s simply an every day challenge that we learned how to deal with through the years.”

Seventy-five years ago, in 1937, confidence was a rare commodity when Winston & Newell, Supervalu’s parent company, brought the skills of produce distribution to grocers. The economic wreckage of the Great Depression, just a few years earlier, was still evident in the nation with an unemployment rate exceeding 15 percent, and new enterprises in virtually all industries were not frequent occurrences. The assurance of confidence



PHOTO COURTESY OF W. NEWELL & CO.

offered to grocers by Winston & Newell was in the wholesaler’s announcement that it would begin handling high volumes in perishables, including potatoes, onions, oranges and apples.

Today, W. Newell & Co. — created in 2005 and taking its name from the original

Winston & Newell — continues to operate from the small city of Urbana, in mid-Illinois, also home to the University of Illinois. The heart of the organization is a 155,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art distribution center, where staff also maintains contact with its buying offices in Lakeland, FL, and



## THERE'S MORE TO A PRODUCE SALE THAN SIMPLY ANNOUNCING IT

Organizing a company-wide produce sale is not a routine matter. Last year, two key questions required resolution before startup of a major effort at Supervalu. “How will we pay for it? Will the sale be supported for a sustained period — hopefully to get maximum visibility from the continuing flow of shoppers?”

“The company’s strategy was designed to stimulate sales with a new, sustained initiative called *Fresh Produce, Fresh Ideas* introduced last September in the large banner stores,” reports Michael Siemienas, Supervalu spokesperson.

“Our goal was to show that our produce was more competitively priced in the marketplace instead of going out with a high/low mentality. So, starting with our Jewel banner, we lowered prices up to 20 percent on the top 200 items. All of these prices were pre-funded so

that they would be sustainable, and we finished in January with our Albertsons California banner, covering all 1,100 of our traditional retail stores. In our fourth quarter earnings report, we were able to state that our sales volume increased by 300 basis points since initiation of the new Fresh program. This positive result showed that we made the right decision, and that our customers responded.”

“A key element in maintaining the sustainability of the program was in its pre-funding — simply finding costs in other corporate programs that could be reduced or eliminated, which would allow us to support the 20 percent produce sales reductions for a pre-determined time. Pre-funding is the assurance that the necessary dollars will be available to support a program, instead of lowering prices and hoping that volume quickly picks up.” **pb**

Fresno, CA, which also is linked with 13 other distribution centers strategically positioned across the continent, from Virginia and Pennsylvania in the East, to Oregon and California in the West, and is also the center for development of merchandising strategies across the system.

The exceptional capacity of the Urbana DC is evident in its lineup of 2,212 active SKUs — 1,390 of which is fresh produce, including 32 SKUs of peppers; 21 SKUs of tomatoes; 32 SKUs of mushrooms; 29 SKUs of potatoes; 10 SKUs of grapes; 5 SKUs of apples; and 56 SKUs of “natural”

juices and drinks.

The facility also offers 18 high-pressure banana-ripening rooms, with each room holding two containers of bananas, with two temperature zones for each room. Adding to the dimensions of service, the facility houses five temperature rooms, available for typical SKUs ranging from broccoli, lettuce, greens to potatoes, onions and tomatoes.

But there’s more to Newell than the sophisticated operation of DCs and a delivery system of produce-only refrigerated trucks. It’s an outreach-marketing program that offers retailers strategic planning, ad



PHOTO COURTESY OF CUB FOODS

planning, forecasting, retail merchandising, retail training, crop condition updates, and collaboration on sales growth initiatives — building blocks for the company’s own successful sales programs.

A trigger that sets the action in motion to get products flowing is a weekly two- to three-hour conference call that connects the buying offices with key merchandising staff at Newell and at stores. An executive at Cub Foods describes the value of the call. “A big item is an update on the different growing areas, particularly when we have weather conditions,” he says. “When our buyer says, ‘Let’s stay in this area because the other area has weather conditions,’ the buyer has actually seen what has happened. The buyers live there; they work there; they’re in the fields; it’s just vital. It’s a competitive edge for Supervalu and Cub — to have this information fed to us in real time so that we can make better decisions than by talking to some broker. Our person has no reason to tell me something looks good if it doesn’t.”

For Dan Bates, Newell’s director of merchandising, long-term loyalty over the years with both suppliers and customers is a testimonial to the continuing strength of the company and the demonstrated value of its distribution system in providing quality, fresh produce to America’s families.

“For 75 years, we have watched Newell’s continuing development of standards of performance that also add significantly to good business practices by all suppliers,” says Kent Romrell, senior vice president of sales for the Potandon Company, a supplier of potatoes and onions, headquartered in Idaho Falls, ID. **pb**



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALBERTSON'S

# The Grocer And The Farmer Working Together — A Happy Match For Locally Grown

A conversation with Dave Brand, Business Development Manager, Produce and Floral at Cub Foods, and Oscar Katov, contributing editor for PRODUCE BUSINESS.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CUB FOODS

**PRODUCE BUSINESS:** Your Supervalu CEO, Craig Herkert, has said, “Hyper-local will be our point of differentiation.” What does hyper-local mean related to produce?

**Dave Brand:** It means locally relevant, emphasizing locally grown products. We’ve always been big in trying to support our local farmers and growers because these people are shopping in our stores. These people live in our communities. They’re friends, neighbors, and it’s just the right thing to do in supporting them. But, that’s not the only reason. The food miles are much shorter and we get fresher products, which is important in offering our customers the best quality that we possibly can. We have a long history of partnering with local growers. I probably have 70 growers working with us. For example, we have a very robust apple — the Honeycrisp — developed from a seed variety created at the University of Minnesota in conjunction with local orchards.

**PB: How do you develop a product?**

**DB:** Here’s an example: I’ll discuss a particular kind of pumpkin with our growers that I would like to see, and if the product ultimately doesn’t meet our desires — such as the stems not being big enough — we’ll pick another seed to plant. We’re constantly going through this process. About three years ago, I put a sweet onion in — called Mini Me — a spin-off of the Vidalia seed variety, and now I have a grower for that. And this year, I have actually been trying to get hold of a melon that I used to eat when I was young called a Black Diamond. It’s a smaller watermelon, almost black in color — a deep, deep green. But the meat in it is almost blood red — the sugar burst is extremely high. It’s a difficult watermelon to grow in Minnesota, because it’s a late melon season here and you’re always betting whether the frost is going to hit you first or if you’ll have time to harvest them. It’s such a good melon that finally I got a grower associated with C.H. Robinson to grow it for us.

**PB: What’s the most important attribute that you look for in a product from your local growers?**

**DB:** It’s the taste attribute that I’m always looking for. That’s what we’re going to hang our hat on. We want something that’s going to eat well. We have to keep our customer in mind — always!

**PB: Is it a message that you keep in front of your growers?**

**DB:** Absolutely. We have a local Apple-Fest in October, where growers can meet consumers. A number of growers came out to do demos in our stores, handing out samples of their apples, talking about why do, and it was really neat for our customers to actually interact with the growers, to ask them any apple question they ever wanted to know. That’s something we’re going to continue to do and expand to

all of our stores.

**PB: It sounds like a learning lesson all around.**

**DB:** One of the big things we found was sampling. It’s huge, because a lot of people are set on the produce they eat, and they are a little hesitant to try something new. But, when you have samples out there, they love it, and they start buying.

**PB: It’s interesting to consider that it’s only in the last three or four years that the information about locally harvested has become important in getting that message out to consumers.**

**DB:** It helps the local economy, it takes down the transportation costs and you’re getting a fresher product that holds up on the shelf longer. Our relationship with local growers and farmers goes back to the time when Cub Foods was formed as a company. Now, we’re putting a bigger focus on it, to recognize the value of the relationship, such as putting pictures of our farmers in with the displays of the product.

**PB: It looks like fresh outshines every other attribute for the customer.**

**DB:** Let me tell you about the best tomato that I ever tasted from a farmer just about an hour from where we’re standing. When you let the tomatoes ripen on the vine, the stems are bright green, and you can ship the next day. You’re not going to get any fresher than that — versus picking it somewhere in Mexico and taking four days for it to get here. It comes to us direct from the grower. For us, the definition of locally grown is receiving the product within eight hours or less to get here from when it was picked. An example of a really fast turn-around is a grower in St. Cloud, who is out very early in the morning, picking corn — that’s 4 am — while his wife is on the phone, taking orders from our stores, and the corn is in the stores later that day.

**PB: How much produce in your stores is locally grown?**

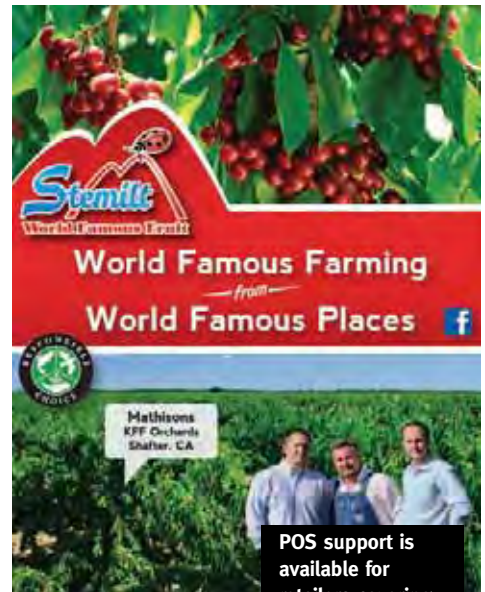
**DB:** Of course, it will vary depending upon location and time of the year. In California, you could reach up to 80 percent of the stores with locally grown. When you get into the Midwest, you could reach 30 to 40 percent during the peak season. As you get into later summer, or later fall, a lot more Midwest harvesting is going on and that changes constantly, depending upon location. When I get into local apples, it could be 60 percent, but, for the total department, it could be 30 to 40 percent. I have been with the company a long time, knowing our customers and our local farmers, and that’s a great relationship to have. When you get into the differentiation as to why people shop at Cub compared to one of the other traditionals, or one of the other big box stores, I like to think that we give our customers something unique and different that tastes great.

**pb**





PHOTO ABOVE COURTESY OF SUNFLOWER FARMERS MARKET  
PHOTO AT RIGHT COURTESY OF STEMILT GROWERS LLC



POS support is available for retailers covering both locally grown items and those grown in the right locale.

# Local Versus Locale

Buying local is a noble objective, but sometimes there are certain locales where it's just right to grow specific types of produce. **BY JULIE COOK RAMIREZ**

As the country's economy took a spin, people began looking for ways to help bolster the economy as best they could. For some consumers, that meant shifting their focus to buying products as close to home as possible. In many instances, when it came to produce, the rallying cry became, "Buy Local," as consumers recognized that choosing locally grown produce not only helped support the local economy, it also had the potential to reduce their own personal carbon footprint as the fruits and veggies they were eating hadn't been trucked cross-country.

Suddenly, farmer's markets were popping up with increasing frequency across the United States. Even large supermarket chains began featuring locally grown items in an attempt to woo each community's growing number of locavores into their stores. "Consumers have gotten the message that it's a good thing to ask retailers or even restaurants to feature products that are found locally," says Robert Verloop, executive vice president of marketing for Naturipe Farms LLC, in Estero, FL. "A lot of it has to do with the emotional connection with the production and the impact it has on the local economy."

While the local movement appears to be on

the rise, many questions remain with regard to the trend. What exactly is the definition of "local" when it comes to produce? Does locally grown produce always deliver on the perceived promise of cheaper, fresher and tastier? What about food safety? What happens when the seasons change and locally grown options are no longer available? Would retailers be better off stressing the importance of "locale" — that is, the appropriate place for specific types of produce to be grown? How do they strike an appropriate balance between the two?

Local is a big deal in New Jersey, where residents of the Garden State are barraged with farmer's markets all summer long, according to Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce and floral for Kings Supermarkets, headquartered in Parsippany, NJ. Yet the question still remains of how exactly consumers — and retailers — define local. Is it limited to produce grown within a certain distance or within the confines of the same state? Or does local have a wider connotation — an entire region, for example?

"From an image standpoint, New Jersey is really local," says Kneeland. "From more of a macro outlook, the way we define local is New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania, so it's all the surrounding states that people can get to rela-

tively easily and understand their proximity."

When New Jersey hits its peak of freshness, Kings creates a farmer's market within the produce department. It generally consists of a 16 x 8-ft. display created with field bins and bushel baskets. Whenever possible, Kings stores will set up such displays outside the store, creating a situation in which consumers "are confronted with a farmer's market even before they walk into the store," says Kneeland. However, the intense New Jersey summer heat makes it necessary to limit outside displays to specific items, he adds.

While consumer definitions of local tend to differ, supermarket chains generally have specific designations for what constitutes local. Dan Bates, director of merchandising for produce at Eden Prairie, MN-based Supervalu chain of stores, "Supervalu has a presence from coast to coast, and each of our banner stores might define local somewhat differently than another. There is no government standard for what is local produce, and one might imagine how our Shaw's banner in the New England area would differ from our Southern California stores. So as a company, there is no defined approach. In the vast majority of cases we would use the 250-mile radius of the warehouse as a rule, or some-

# “Show me any chain store that’s closed down or taken produce out of their deal because they just can’t compete with the farmer’s markets. Likewise, if local was truly the wave of the future for fresh vegetables, the Salinas valley should be dying — and I don’t see that.”

— John Pandol, Pandol Bros.

times it is product from the states that border your state. In the end, it really comes down to supporting the smaller family farms in your area and procuring the best products available for the consumer.”

For Lakeland, FL-based Publix Super Markets Inc., the definition of local differs still. “Buying local means purchasing the highest quality produce items from the five states in which we do business — Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama, and Tennessee,” according to Maria Brous, director of media and community relations.

## Perception Is Reality

The buy local trend may appear to be a relatively new phenomenon, but it’s actually “been around for a bazillion years,” says Roger Pepperl, marketing director for Stemilt Growers LLC, in Wenatchee, WA. Pepperl, who spent many years working as a retailer, says produce managers have always promoted locally grown product. It’s just marketed more heavily now.

Doug Kling, senior vice president of sales and marketing at Village Farms LP, based in Eatontown, NJ, asserts, “Local is a buzzword, like organic, and we try to avoid buzzwords. We stay true to our mission. Foremost to Village Farms is that the product is safe, ecologically friendly and that we don’t abuse the environment. Flavor is important, too. That’s what customers want.”

While many consumers view locally grown produce as coming from independent farmers striving to feed their families, Pepperl stresses that local is relative. “It doesn’t matter where you grow your product; you are always local to somebody,” he says. “If you think about a big strawberry producer in Watsonville, they may be local in Watsonville, but on the East Coast, they are viewed as a gigantic farming outfit that produces hundreds of thousands — even millions — of boxes of fruit.”

Unbeknownst to many well intentioned consumers, the produce they are buying at their local farmer’s market has been trucked

in for the event, according to Rick Antle, president and CEO of Salinas, CA-based Tanimura & Antle Inc. “A lot of the product that you see at farmer’s markets is coming from a wholesale warehouse, rather than being grown by a specific farmer,” he laments. “You see a box from Santa Maria, a box from Santa Barbara, another box from Fresno. It’s a dead giveaway.”

Such actions have led some in the industry to compare farmer’s markets to a “mobile swap meet” and its vendors to a bunch of “circus carnies,” shares John Pandol, director of special projects at Pandol Bros., located in Delano, CA. Never one to shy away from controversy, Pandol is highly critical of the local movement, which he claims to be spearheaded by “economic xenophobes” who were disappointed that country-of-origin labeling failed to help boost interest in American produce, while reducing the demand for foreign produce. *[Editor’s Note: For more on Pandol’s opinion on COOL, please see our Voice of the Industry column on page 108.]*

What’s more, he says, the local movement is actually much smaller than it appears, citing discrepancies in the number of people who say they buy local versus the number who actually do. If all the people who claim to be buying primarily locally grown produce were actually doing so, he says, we would be seeing a much greater impact on produce sales at retail. And that’s certainly not the case. “Show me any chain store that’s closed down or taken produce out of their deal because they just can’t compete with the farmer’s markets,” says Pandol. “Likewise, if local was truly the wave of the future for fresh vegetables, the Salinas valley should be dying — and I don’t see that.”

Pandol balks at the argument that “everything came from close” back in olden times. He points to the Silk Road in the

days of Genghis Khan and frankincense and myrrh being transported long distances in Jesus’ time. According to Pandol, agriculture has “migrated to be concentrated in the places with the best seasons.” For that reason, he says, 90 percent of the nation’s leafy greens are grown in about six counties and 90 percent of carrots are grown in about four counties.

Pandol explains it makes far more sense to grow produce in the areas where it is known to thrive than to attempt to grow it in a less-than-optimal environment or to simply do without. “I really don’t get the argument that we should live somewhere where everything can be produced within a certain geographic area,” he asserts. “I like the fact that my olive oil comes from Italy, my wine from France, my cheese from Wisconsin, my soy sauce from Japan, my rice from India and my lamb chops from New Zealand. I like that world. Why would I want to restrict myself only to things within a certain number of miles?”

## Growing Where The Growing Is Good

This concept, that certain areas are more hospitable to the production of certain products, is known as “locale.” When it comes to produce, it’s particularly easy to see how locale comes into play, as the vast disparities in weather inside the United States alone makes it easy to understand why certain states have become known for particular types of produce. In part, that’s why some states have become synonymous with certain kinds of produce — Washington apples, California avocados, Florida oranges, and Idaho potatoes, for example. “The state of Washington is truly the best place to grow apples in the



PHOTO COURTESY OF NIDA

Retailers are helping consumers buy local with plenty of signage and eye-catching displays.



entire United States,” says Stemilt’s Pepperl. “That’s why we grow 65 percent of the apples here — because of the ideal weather.”

Village Farms’ Kling admits, “Certain varieties just grow better in certain places. It depends on the variety and the type of crop you want. But it’s also crucial to consider safety factors. What’s the water supply? What is the soil like?”

San Diego, CA-based Andrew & Williamson Fresh Produce has made a conscious decision to grow 100 percent of its tomatoes in Mexico because that country provides the ideal climate in which tomatoes should grow. “It’s vital to understand where the products we grow, grow best,” says Mark Munger, vice president of marketing. “When you look at where we have chosen to grow our tomatoes — mostly in Baja — it really mirrors the type of Central or South American climate where a tomato was first discovered and where it grows natively.”

Likewise, Homestead, FL-based Brooks Tropicals LLC grows its particular brand of avocados, known as SlimCados, in the subtropical climate of Southern Florida. According to marketing director, Mary Ostlund, the specific growing requirements of the fruit eliminate the opportunity for the vast majority of North Americans to buy locally grown avocados. “Tropical fruits and vegetables need the heat and the humidity of the tropics to grow,” she says. “North America simply doesn’t have the climate to grow for the tropical cuisines that many consumers now demand.”

Many in the produce industry point to the wine industry as an ideal example of this concept in action. In the United States, Napa Valley wines are by and large considered some of the best-tasting domestic offerings. Few connoisseurs would sacrifice their palates by opting for a locally produced wine simply because it came from a vineyard much closer to home. Yet, the buy local movement strives to convince consumers of produce that locally grown means fresher, cheaper, tastier and even safer. According to Antle of Tanimura & Antle, that’s not necessarily so, as the quality of locally grown produce often pales in comparison to that which has been grown in a particular locale. “The quality doesn’t last on the shelf,” he maintains. “The infrastructure doesn’t exist in most of these local areas to get the shelf-life needed by quickly removing the heat and putting it in the proper type of packaging.”

Indeed, one of the downsides of the local movement is that consumers often find themselves making a trade-off. They may feel good

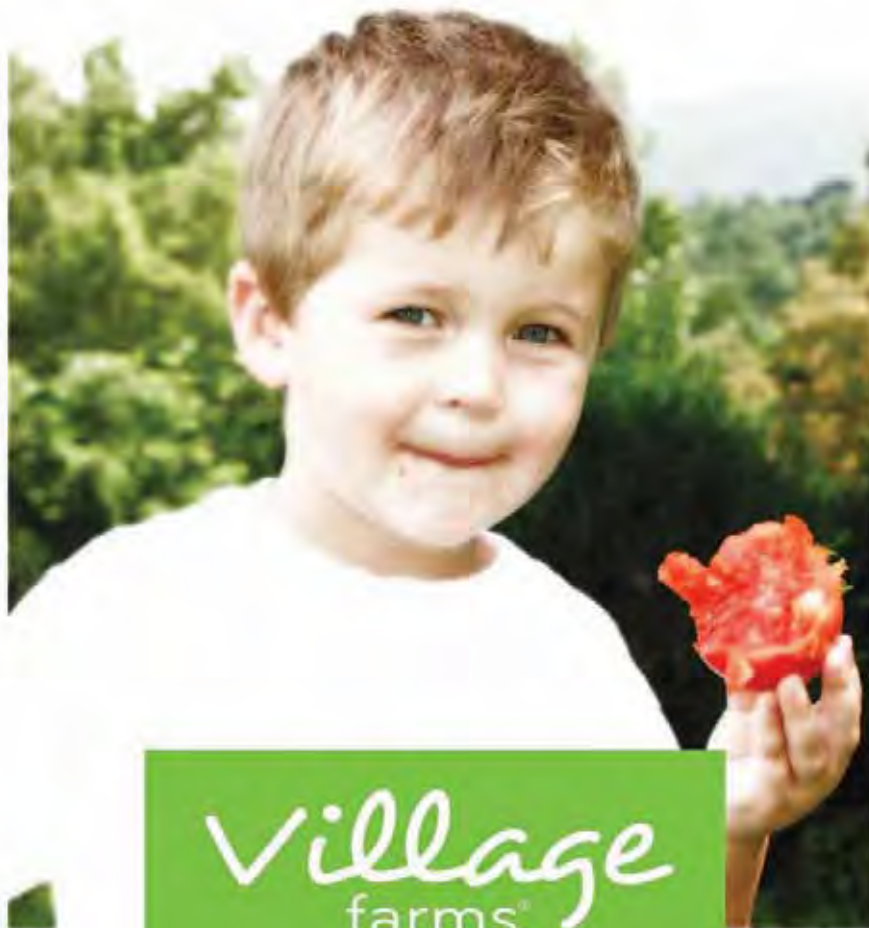
about their purchase because they believe they are helping the local economy, while cutting back on the size of their carbon footprint, but the product they are taking home may not be as high in quality as that which had been trucked in from another growing region.

Supervalu’s Bates contends, “Customers do not necessarily expect a lower cost on homegrown product; they expect that the local product is fresher and tastier than product grown elsewhere.” And while naysayers may imagine retailers heading to

the backyard farm next door, that couldn’t be further from the truth. “Safety is always top of mind at Supervalu. We insist that our local shippers meet a certain level of Good Agricultural Practices, as well as run clean and safe packing facilities. This may, at times, eliminate a grower from our supplier mix, but we believe that safety is one area that cannot be compromised. We go to great lengths to inspect our suppliers, and we are continually working to ensure that we never compromise our customers’ trust in us.”

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When it comes to trucking that produce cross-country, that's where many people assume locally grown produce has the edge. Stemilt's Pepperl points out that higher yields and lower production costs combine to counter the cost of shipping produce. "They assume locally grown produce has a better carbon footprint, but in many cases, it doesn't," he says. "If we can get 60 bins an acre versus 30 bins an acre, who really has the better footprint?"

What's more, Pepperl says, produce grown in the "right places" often has a better sustainability story simply because growers don't have to rely on as many pesticides and other chemicals in order for the crops to thrive. "We are

**"Safety is always top of mind at Supervalu. We insist that our local shippers meet a certain level of Good Agricultural Practices, as well as run clean and safe packing facilities."**

— Dan Bates, Supervalu.

going to have less sprays and less predator insects and diseases here because we are in an arid environment," he explains, referring to the well-known Washington apple-growing area.

In some instances, the perception that specific states are the ideal location for growing certain kinds of produce is merely the result of a well-executed marketing campaign, according to Naturipe's Verloop. "When it comes to something like California avocados or Idaho potatoes, those may not necessarily be the only areas where that product grows, but those states have the best commissions and boards to help establish and create the awareness of a product and associate it with that state in particular," he explains.

### Striking The Right Balance


For some locations, the availability of produce from both near and far creates a situation where local and locale-driven produce end up going head-to-head. That creates a dilemma for the retailer, who must satisfy the demand for locally grown, while also featuring the renowned produce his consumers have come to expect. "From a tree



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# “They assume locally grown produce has a better carbon footprint, but in many cases, it doesn’t. If we can get 60 bins an acre versus 30 bins an acre, who really has the better footprint?”

— Roger Pepperl, Stemilt Growers LLC

fruit standpoint — peaches, plums, nectarines — nobody does it better than California, in regards to flavor,” says Kings’ Kneeland. “That’s not to say that New Jersey doesn’t have great-tasting product, but the supply out of New Jersey is not as consistent. So when we display tree fruit, California has a larger display than New Jersey.”

While the local movement certainly has its share of fervent devotees, many people who have jumped on the bandwagon are willing to accept locale-driven produce as long as there’s a clear line of sight drawn between the produce and its origins, according to Jan DeLyser, vice president of marketing for the Irvine-based California Avocado Commission (CAC). When the Commission was working to come up with a new tagline, it held a series of focus groups, asking people what the phrase, “Handgrown in California” meant to

them. Much to the Commission’s delight, consumers responded, “It resonates local. It communicates care and artisan craftsmanship.” That proved beneficial for the organization, which realized that calling its product “local” was off-limits. “We wanted to come up with a tagline that would communicate the care and craftsmanship and tell the story of the grower who’s producing the fruit and in a sense, provide that sense of locale,” explains DeLyser. “If you offer the story of the product and there’s an experiential reference point for the consumer, it doesn’t become local for them, but it becomes approachable; it becomes something they are willing to do.”

That ability to tell a story, to educate the consumer about a product’s origins goes a long way toward building that sense of affinity and overcoming the belief that it comes from too far away. Whenever possible,

Pepperl asserts retailers should try to share information on who grew the food its customers are buying. “Bringing in the family that owns your business, the locale that they grow in, why they grow there and exploding that in front of the consumers can be very compelling,” he maintains.

At Publix, the “At Season’s Peak” program relies largely on signage to help consumers understand when particular produce is at its “freshest, juiciest and best quality.” In addition, the southeastern chain uses signage to educate consumers about where each type of produce was grown. Such signage is particularly helpful, says Pepperl, when it comes to tech-savvy Generations X and Y, who are accustomed to being bombarded by an abundance of information. Unfortunately, he says, clean store policies often get in the way. “Style guides have cleaned up a lot of stores of the over-messaging that was going on,” says Pepperl. “The problem is we went from over-messaging to no messaging. If you dial in the science, too, you can talk about the climate, the soils, the water — all the things that make your product better. People get soils and waters — at least they think they do — and that’s what it is — perception.” **pb**

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PHOTO COURTESY OF KINGS FOOD MARKET

**Kings Food Markets runs a farmer's market for 12 weeks in the summer, featuring locally grown produce.**

# New Jersey Lives Up To Its 'Garden State' Nickname

A plethora of local produce floods produce markets from late spring to fall. **CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**

**D**rive the New Jersey turnpike from Philadelphia to New York and you might wonder why this Mid-Atlantic state is nicknamed the Garden State. For today, this 46th largest state ranks 11th in population density and boasts booming pharmaceutical, financial and chemical development industries. Yet, it was founding father Ben Franklin who first compared New Jersey to an immense barrel, filled with good things and open at both ends, with Pennsylvanians grabbing from one end and New Yorkers from the other. This description was echoed during Philadelphia's Centennial Exhibition in 1876, and the Garden State nickname finally stuck in 1954 when the state's legislature voted to put it on license plates. Today, while much of the farmland is located in the southern portion of the state, off the main turnpike drag, agriculture continues to be a robust and substantial industry. In fact, New Jersey's food and agriculture complex constitutes a nearly \$100 billion-a-year sector of the state's economy.

According to Dean Holmquist, director of produce and floral for Iselin, NJ-based Allegiance Retail Services, the retailer-owned co-op

that operates Foodtown, D'Agostino's and other banners, asserts, "There's a good supply of fresh produce out of New Jersey from April to October. In the spring, there's asparagus and greens like arugula, kale, parsley, escarole and romaine. Then in the summer there's all the vegetables plus the big three: corn, blueberries and tomatoes. Farmers come back in the fall with a second harvest of greens, as well as hard squash and pumpkins."

### Many Factors Make Agriculture Thrive In New Jersey

Farms founded on fertile soils in a temperate climate are what established New Jersey's agricultural industry. Today, it is the proximity to an enormous population base and the freshness, quality and lower freight costs that come from this nearness that enable agriculture to thrive. According to the USDA's ERS' *New Jersey Fact Sheet*, last updated on April 13, 2012, New Jersey's 10,327 farms occupied 15.6 percent of the land area of the state and generated cash receipts totaling \$1.12 billion in 2008, with cash receipts for fruits and vegetables amounting to \$374 million.

Small family farms, rather than large farming corporations, are the rule in New Jersey. Al Murray, assistant secretary of agriculture for the New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA), in Trenton, NJ, says, "Farms in the state range from 1 to over 2,000 acres, yet the average size is 71 acres."

These farms have deep roots. Thomas Sheppard, president of Eastern Fresh Growers Inc., and owner of 1,500-acre Sheppard Farms, in Cedarville, NJ, says, "The first Sheppard arrived in Cumberland County in 1683 and began vegetable farming. We're on our 12th generation now. Land grants were one reason why people first settled here, but it's also an area well suited to agriculture. The acidic and sandy soil is good for growing; there's an abundant supply of water, and the Delaware Bay has a moderating influence on the temperature both hot and cold," he explains.

According to Joseph 'JM' Procacci, CEO of Procacci Bros Sales Corp., headquartered in Philadelphia, PA, climate is what has made the Jersey tomato famous. "The nighttime ambient temperatures in the summer don't drop below 60 degrees, and then it warms up during the

## LOCALLY GROWN AND JERSEY FRESH WORK AS ONE AT BJ'S WHOLESALE CLUB



**Dominic Viglione, BJ's produce buyer, NJ Ag Secretary Doug Fisher and Doug Johnson of C.H. Robinson inspect Jersey Fresh cucumbers for sale at the Hamilton Township BJ's Club.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF NJDA

**B**J's Wholesale Club announced in April that its new locally grown produce program, Farm to Club, will roll out this spring and summer in all 195 of the Westborough, MA-headquartered company's outlets in its 15-state footprint. Yet, this marks the third season of the big box chain's commitment to sell Jersey Fresh items after a pilot farmer's market at its Manahawkin, NJ, store was well received by customers, and the second season that the retailer has offered state-grown produce at its 20 New Jersey stores. The success of the program is clear. According to a July 19, 2011-issued press release by the Trenton, NJ-based New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA), BJ's had sold 50 percent more zucchini, yellow squash, green peppers, corn and cucumbers than the year prior, with BJ's Farm to Club produce sales up 70 percent and overall produce sales up 12 percent since the program's launch.

BJ's is just one retailer in the state that works with C.H. Robinson Worldwide Inc., the Eden Prairie, MN-based fourth-largest produce buyer in the U.S., to source its New Jersey produce. Back in 2010, senior management at C.H. Robinson tasked its New Jersey office with developing a model to work with

local farmers to develop relationships and access local products to include in the C.H. Robinson distribution chain. New Jersey was selected largely due to the success of the Jersey Fresh advertising and promotion program.

Scott Fein, a member of the regional/local sales team for C.H. Robinson's Paulsboro, NJ-based buying office, explains, "The New Jersey Department of Agriculture marketing staff put us in touch with the state's Farm Bureau, Jersey Fresh partners and Vineland Growers Association to source growers. Then we built a custom program based on our retailers' needs. For example, we called 10 farmers to get enough volume of 20 different items to support a retailer's in-store program and promotional needs," he continues. "In addition, we built a New Jersey corn crop by getting commitments from four to five growers who collectively farm 150 acres to provide a certain quantity. We've also built new programs. For example, we now have farmers on 25 acres growing a crop of broccoli for both BJ's and Wal-Mart stores in New Jersey. We handle the transportation logistics to get product efficiently to the retail customer's warehouse so they can sell it at a competitive price. It's a win-win for everyone." **pb**

day. This, plus sufficient rain and sun, allows the tomatoes to mature and develop their characteristic gel and flavor. In other words, they've never been refrigerated."

On the other hand, Bob Von Rohr, director of marketing and customer relations for Sunny Valley International Inc., the sales agent for the Glassboro, NJ-based Jersey Fruit Cooperative Association Inc., contends, "We get enough chill hours during the winter to produce a really good crop of peaches and blueberries."

New Jersey farmers supply three major market areas, reveals NJDA's Murray. "The first is the New Jersey, New York and Philadelphia market with over 25 million people," he says. "Second is the Boston and New England market, and third is Eastern Canada. We like to say New Jersey produce arrives in hours and California's in days. That's a huge advantage for us, especially in terms of freight costs."

### Fresh Produce Galore

More than 100 different fruits, vegetables and fresh herbs are grown in New Jersey in a market window that bridges production in southern states such as Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas and New England. Of these, the state ranks as one of the nation's Top Ten producers of blueberries, cranberries, peaches, tomatoes, bell peppers, cucumbers, snap beans, spinach and squash.

As for sourcing, Jay Schneider, produce business development manager for Acme Markets Inc., a 116-store chain based in Malvern, PA, owned by Eden Prairie, MN-based SuperValu, shares, "Sometimes, small local growers are recommended to us. Most of the times, our local suppliers are from the nearby community and can deliver to a particular set of stores. I will work with the farmers on product selection and specs that fit our customers' needs. On a larger scale, I work with our local field buyer who can help cover the needs for the rest of our network of stores."

Even small farmers have an easy entry to the market via the Vineland Produce Auction. Located on 30 acres, the facility offers 130 square feet of cross-dock loading provided at no cost to member farmers, brokers and distributors to facilitate sales, as well as an ice-making facility and enough hydro-, vacuum- and forced air-cooling capacity to chill 200,000 packages in 24 hours. An electronic auction clock replaced a live auctioneer in 2002. Today, each sale takes approximately 20 seconds per lot with minimum lot sizes of 25 packages. The auction is open six days a week from April





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**MAINSTREAM VEGETABLES:** Bob Consalo, a sales associate at William Consalo & Sons Farms Inc., in Vineland, NJ, says, “We specialize in everything that’s grown in the state. That makes us a one-stop-shop for wholesalers and supermarket produce buyers.”

Eastern Fresh Grower’s Sheppard notes, “We’ve developed a good market niche for bell peppers, cucumbers and squash. Many retailers want trailer-load quantities of all three. This season, we’ll pack medium and large peppers

in a 6- to 8-count bag and try to do the same with small cucumbers. Club stores want this type of pack, as well as conventional retailers such as Wegmans.”

Lettuces cultivated for bagged salad companies like Ready Pac and Dole are big opportunities, too, adds Sheppard. “Since the bagged salad industry has always gone the extra mile for food safety, selling to them gave us a leg up by getting food safety certified early. Now, my nephew spends nearly half his time focused on food safety, manufacturing prac-



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tices, HACCP requirements and third-party certification to assure we stay current.”

Asparagus is another important crop in the spring. Mild weather this year prompted an early harvest starting in late-March. NJDA’s Murray adds, “FOBs at \$58 per crate allowed farmers to begin to recoup their costs for fuel, fertilizer and field prep.”

New Jersey’s asparagus industry boomed with some 30,000 acres in production back in the 1960s. A plant disease cut production, which then moved out west. Today, thanks to a hybrid variety cultivated by researchers at Rutgers University, some 2,000 acres in the state are dedicated to this crop. Five to six years ago, Sheppard Farms started packing a microwavable-in-the-bag fresh asparagus product.

The Fresh Wave LLC, in Vineland, NJ, is experimenting with a variety pack of fresh greens, according to director of sales, Tom Consalo. “Instead of a 24-bunch of Swiss chard, we’re packing six of each of a variety of cooking greens. Retailers seem to like this.”

**BLUEBERRIES:** New Jersey is one of the top producers of Highbush variety blueberries, which are known for their intense flavor and size, and represents 20 to 25 percent of all blueberries produced in the state.

Art Galleta, co-owner and president of Atlantic Blueberry Co. Inc., a 1,320-acre blueberry farm in Hammonton, NJ, says, “Blueberries traditionally begin harvest around June 10 to 14th and we’re into substantial volumes by June 20th. The last two weeks of June and first week of July are our biggest times. Retailers love to feature Jersey blueberries for the Fourth of July.”

“The Duke variety is the big horse,” details Tim Wetherbee, sales manager at Diamond





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**“The [Jersey Fresh] program took off right from the start.**

The main reasons retailers jumped on board was because summer produce sales traditionally dropped, as customers headed to the many farmer’s markets throughout the state. Jersey Fresh gave us the ability to let customers know we had fresh New Jersey produce in store. We continue to use POS materials supplied by the New Jersey Department of Agriculture such as logo price cards, banners and stickers, as well as aprons for our produce managers.”

— Dean Holmquist, Allegiance Retail Services

## TOP 10 FRUITS & VEGETABLES BY DOLLARS

Item	Dollars (million)
1. Bell Peppers	\$103.7
2. Blueberries	\$94.7
3. Tomatoes	\$60.9
4. Sweet Corn	\$59.5
5. Cabbage	\$52.5
6. Cucumbers	\$49.6
7. Peaches	\$36.6
8. Summer Squash	\$30.6
9. Lettuce	\$27.8
10. Cranberries	\$26.3

Source: USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, New Jersey Field Office, Trenton, NJ. 2011

Blueberry Inc., in Hammonton, NJ. “They ramp up quickly, which is what we need to build volume for the holiday. Blue Crop comes right behind, followed by Elliot, which will take us into the first part of August. We pack any way a retailer wants from a dry pint up to a 2½-pounder for club stores.”

Blueberry acreage is increasing in the state, with some peach ground having been converted to berry production.

**TOMATOES:** Vine-ripe, Cherry, Grape, Roma and Heirloom are tomato varieties grown in New Jersey by Procacci Bros. Rick Feighery, organic specialist, reports, “We’ll start harvest by the end of June with the biggest volumes from July through Labor Day.” This spring, Procacci will introduce its proprietary Golden Grape tomato, which offers a shelf-life that surpasses the traditional red Grape tomato.

Last October, the forward-thinking technologically advanced company opened its new 2-megawatt solar-powered farm on 10 acres of uncultivable land at its Cedarville operation. Some 11,000 solar photovoltaic

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## RETAILERS EXCEL AT PROMOTING NJ PRODUCE



Acme makes a big deal of locally grown New Jersey produce in the the summer.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ACME STORES

Foodtown also hosts seasonal weekend farmer's markets in the parking lot of its stores. Holmquist adds, "Customers will tell us that they haven't shopped our stores before, but they saw the farmer's market as they drove by and decided to stop."

New Jersey fruits and vegetables are featured annually as part of a locally grown display contest at Acme Supermarkets. Jay Schneider, produce business development manager for Acme Markets Inc., a 116-store chain based in Malvern, PA, owned by Eden Prairie, MN-based SuperValu believes, "It gets the stores excited to display local produce. Displays will be set up — depending on timing of products — around the first week of July through Labor Day. The displays range from eight to 16 feet and include eight to 10 items. Last year, in some stores, we had appearances from the NJ peach queen and NJ Department of Agriculture Secretary Doug Fisher as well as our blueberry supplier. We surrounded this with radio remotes in select stores."

Kings Food Markets, a 25-store chain in Parsippany, NJ, also features a farmer's market, as well as CSA each season. Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce, floral and seafood, says, "We'll run the farmer's markets for a 12-week period in June, July and August because this is the peak of the season. This year, we plan to expand the CSA to more stores and additionally into a four-week period in October. CSA members pay \$25 per week and get a recyclable King's bag that they can fill with the number of a particular produce item listed on the display sign. We also have the same items priced for non-CSA customers who want to shop the local produce as a farmer's market."

Jersey Fresh produce is promoted together in a large front-page feature ad twice per season at Foodtown stores. Dean Holmquist, director of produce and floral for Iselin, NJ-based Allegiance Retail Services, the retailer-owned co-op that operates Foodtown, D'Agostino's and other banners, details, "One will be in late June and the other in early August. We'll put a photo of the farmer in the circular that we took earlier in the season during a farm tour. It helps make that connection at store-level."

King's will launch a new local program that features New Jersey produce this summer. It's called Local 24/7. "Local product will be available in Kings and Balducci's stores 24 hours after it's harvested 7 days a week," Kneeland describes. "We are working with a network of local growers that will be coordinated by a regional company called Red Tomato. Customers will be able to enjoy farm freshness every day in our stores."

pb

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## TOP 10 FRUITS & VEGETABLES BY POUNDS

Item	Pounds (million)
1. Blueberries	62.0
2. Peaches	60.0
3. Cranberries	51.0
4. Tomatoes	31.5
5. Bell Peppers	30.4
6. Sweet Corn	15.8
7. Cucumbers	15.5
8. Other Herbs	15.0
9. Summer Squash	12.7
10. Lettuce	11.7

Source: USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, New Jersey Field Office, Trenton, NJ. 2011

panels run the operation's 200,000-square-foot refrigerated packing house, its 11 packing and re-packing lines and field irrigation system. This is one of the largest solar energy systems in the state, and one of the largest renewable energy investments of any tomato grower on the East Coast.

**PEACHES AND NECTARINES:** July, August and into mid-September are ripe times for yellow and white flesh peaches and nectarines in New Jersey. Sunny Valley handled over 27 million pounds of these fruits during this time frame, accounting for approximately two-thirds of the state's crop, according to Sunny Valley's Von Rohr.

**“Every year the NJDA will visit us and get our feedback on expectations for the upcoming year... plus feedback to give to the growers on current customers' needs and changing trends. In addition, they will provide us with weekly reports that are valuable to assist us on timing and availability.”**

— Jay Schneider, Acme Markets Inc.

“Because most New Jersey peach and nectarine orchards are close to major markets, the fruit is picked well-mature when color, flavor, and sugar are high,” he points out. “New Jersey [peaches and nectarines], depending on many factors, are picked when they are ripe with 10 to 18 percent sugar.”

All tree fruit is hydro-cooled in harvest bins within one or two hours of picking. Bins are then transported to a state-of-the-art facility and packing line that incorporates computer-controlled optical size- and color-sorting as

well as PLU labeling of individual fruit. Von Rohr adds, “We pack peaches in bulk, clamshells, bags, club packs and totes to meet customers' needs.”

**ORGANIC FRUITS & VEGETABLES:** New Jersey boasted 67 certified organic operators and 1,680 certified organic crop acres in 2008, according to the USDA's ERS *New Jersey Fact Sheet*.

“Sunny Valley markets organic blueberries for Big Buck Farms, which produces approximately 80,000 cases from its 60 acres each

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season,” reports Von Rohr. “What is driving this is demand by retailers such as Whole Foods, Wegmans and Trader Joes.”

Jersey Legacy Farms, an offshoot of Sheppard Farms, will offer organic romaine, red and green leaf lettuce, yellow and green summer squash, vine-ripe and Grape tomatoes, bell peppers, cucumber and eggplant this season grown on over 100 acres of organic land. The produce is marketed through Eastern Fresh Growers. “We have a good niche with chains like Wakefern, Whole

Foods and Wegmans, but it would be easy to outgrow the market,” says Sheppard.

**ETHNIC CROPS:** New Jersey is one of the most ethnically heterogeneous states, with 17.5 percent of the state’s population of foreign descent, and this fact is reflected in the produce industry. Jalapeno peppers, Bok Choy and African vegetables, such as jute leaves and Malabar spinach, are all grown in New Jersey and often sold at a premium. “In addition,” says the NJDA’s Murray, “we are in the early stages of recruiting farmers to grow

for the Asian market and sell through the new Philadelphia terminal market.”

### Marketing Support: Jersey Fresh

New Jersey was among the first states, if not the original, to introduce a branded advertising, promotional and quality grading program for its fruit and vegetable products. Jersey Fresh celebrates its 30th anniversary next year. “The program took off right from the start,” says Foodtown’s Holmquist. “The main reasons retailers jumped on board was because summer produce sales traditionally dropped, as customers headed to the many farmer’s markets throughout the state. Jersey Fresh gave us the ability to let customers know we had fresh New Jersey produce in store. We continue to use POS materials supplied by the New Jersey Department of Agriculture such as logo price cards, banners and stickers, as well as aprons for our produce managers.”

Murray adds, “Each season we run a TV, print and billboard campaign reminding customers to buy Jersey Fresh produce.”

“What’s more, every year the NJDA will visit us and get our feedback on expectations for the upcoming year... plus feedback to give to the growers on current customers’ needs and changing trends,” says Acme’s Schneider. “In addition, they will provide us with weekly reports that are valuable to assist us on timing and availability.”

Farmers assist retailers in this marketing initiative, too. For example, Fresh Wave’s Consalo says, “We put a high-gloss label on our products, such as Swiss chard, that includes the Jersey Fresh logo as well as a recipe.”

Sunny Valley’s Von Rohr notes, “We use the Jersey Fresh logo on all of our packaging to help support the chain’s POS efforts. Additionally, many times retailers will want a farmer to make in-store visits during a special promotion. That can be a challenge, as summer is our peak season, but we’ll often get a retired farmer or the state’s Peach Queen to attend instead, talk about the product and maybe hand out samples.”

Also popular in-store is signage that includes photos of farmers next to displays of the farm’s fresh produce, remarks Procacci’s Feighery. “Our farming director has had his picture used on retail ads and in-store signage. In addition, we invite retail buyers out on farm tours. It’s really eye-opening to many to see our operation, not only because they didn’t know this kind of farmland existed so close to urban areas, but also to see exactly what goes into putting a box of tomatoes on the shelf.” **pb**



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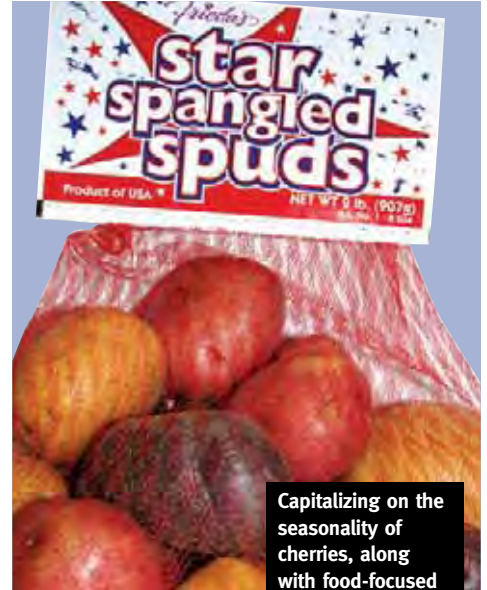


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Capitalizing on the seasonality of cherries, along with food-focused holidays will bring extra ring to the produce department.

# Holidays Heat Up Summer Merchandising

Customers clamor for the first of the domestic season's fruits and vegetables, and retailers can heat up produce department sales by quickly getting into the warm weather spirit. **BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**

Summer is the season for picnics, outdoor parties and barbecues, and customers are ready to celebrate the season. That's exactly what Jeff Fairchild, director of produce at New Seasons Market, a 10-store chain based in Portland, OR, helps them do. "We start with a full spread of California summer fruit the third week of May to whet customers' appetites," he shares. "Then, we follow this up with samples and specials. The set change used to be slow, but doing it more aggressively gets customers fired up about the first of the season and gives produce managers rallying points to get into summer mode."

What are the Top 10 sellers to focus on in the summer? The answer is berries, which contributed 7.8 percent of produce department dollar sales during Q3 of 2011, according to West Dundee, IL-based Nielsen Perishables Group data, followed by packaged salads (6.5 percent), tomatoes (5.7 percent), grapes (5.5 percent), bananas (5.5 percent), potatoes (5.4 percent), stone fruit (5.3 percent), apples (4.8 percent), melons (4.3 percent) and value-added fruit (4.1 percent).

It pays to promote these categories around holiday themes that hook customers in through creative displays, ads and promotions.

## MEMORIAL DAY: May 28

"Memorial Day is a time to remember all who have served our country," says Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Melissa's/World Variety Produce Inc., in Vernon, CA, "and it's also the start of grilling season for much of the country."

This means cabbage for coleslaw as well as potatoes, sweet onions and corn on the grill. Tim Greene, director of marketing for the Hollar & Greene Produce Co. Inc., headquartered in Boone, NC, says, "We've got organic and conventional cabbage coming out of Florida and Georgia at the end of May. Bins are a big deal, too. We offer 24-in. deep bins that are easy for shoppers to reach into."

Greene adds, "We also have organic and conventional potatoes coming out of Florida and North Carolina at this time. Late spring is when retailers traditionally switch from storage to fresh crop potatoes. They're a little more expensive, but still promotable. New red-

skinned potatoes are especially popular for potato salad."

Fresh corn starts the summer season early, with product coming out of Florida through May, and Georgia beginning harvest in early June, according to Jason Stemm, spokesperson for the Maitland, FL-headquartered Fresh Supersweet Corn Council (FSCC). "Fresh corn is an iconic American vegetable perfect for Memorial Day promotions," he says. "Many retailers will build big bulk displays. They'll also promote corn at an attractive price point, such as 5 ears for \$2, to bring foot traffic into the store. In addition, we offer POS such as grilled corn recipes on 3x5-inch tear pads."

The color of blueberries are a natural fit with Memorial Day. Matt Curry, president and owner of Curry & Co., located in Brooks, OR, suggests, "Give your customers ideas for red, white and blue dessert options. Flag cakes and cupcakes with white frosting, blueberries and red strawberries or cherries make for delicious and great-looking deserts. Offer customers options on blueberry package sizes. You can carry a two-tier program with 6- and 18-oz. packages, offering customers the choice of a

large bulk package for a summer event or a smaller package for basic home use. Our blueberry season starts with California in April but the summer is our peak period with heavy volumes from Oregon and the Pacific Northwest," he adds. "We have promotable volumes all summer long."

#### FATHER'S DAY: June 17

Father's Day is a big barbecue occasion, and what goes better with a big steak for dad than mushrooms and onions? Joe Caldwell, vice president of Watsonville, CA-based Monterey Mushrooms Inc., says, "Our thick-sliced white or steak-mate mushrooms are big sellers for Father's Day. Throughout the summer, there's interest in large white mushrooms for kabobs and Portobellos for the grill."

Mushroom sales can dip in the summer, which makes promotion important. Caldwell adds, "Price point isn't a strong trigger for mushroom sales. A discount of 15 to 20 percent can sell just as much as a price reduction of 40 to 50 percent. Even more effective is to advertise one type of mushroom in a feature and another line-priced. For example, try a combination of white and brown or whole and sliced, or white and Shitake or Oyster."

Sweet onions complement favorite barbecue items whether it is burgers, steaks or chicken. Curry advises, "Capitalize on the value of both the Vidalia and Walla Walla sweet onion brands in ads, in-store promos and social media, since they have strong name recognition. Look to the respective commissions for materials and promotions as well. The Vidalia Onion Committee is once again running its popular Country Music promotion and the Walla Walla Onion commission always has great recipe cards."

#### INDEPENDENCE DAY: July 4

Fourth of July is the biggest watermelon holiday of the year. In addition, in honor of July's designation as National Watermelon Month, the Orlando, FL-headquartered National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB) hosts an annual watermelon display contest for retailers in the United States and Canada. The creation of an attention-getting display that promotes watermelon of any kind — whole, fresh-cut or mini, seeded or seedless — is eligible for prizes, including an all-expense paid trip to the NWPB's annual convention in February, 2013, in San Antonio, TX, for the Grand Prize winner.

Gordon Hunt, the NWPB's director of marketing and communications, points out, "Bins are an easy way to build a big display of

whole watermelons. Give shoppers more reasons to buy with recipe cards. This also eliminates the 'what-do-I-do-with-all-of-it' obstacle to sales of 10- to 15-pounders. Plus, recipes drive the purchase of other ingredients and create a bigger ring for the department and store. In addition, you can sell two sizes of watermelon — large and mini — by promoting the use of the large watermelon as a punch bowl and smaller ones as serving containers. Include photos of this at the display to give customers the idea." Additionally, suggests Hunt, "We ask retailers to let customers know where the watermelon was grown. Nearly every state in the nation grows watermelon and this makes a nice locally grown tie-in."

#### NATIONAL RAINIER CHERRY DAY: July 11

Cherries are one of those few truly seasonal fruits with a domestic season that spans only a few months from May to early September. Small harvests of the sweeter red blush yellow-colored Rainier cherries begin harvest in California in May, but the domestic volume kicks up a notch when the Pacific Northwest

begins harvest in July.

Loren Queen, marketing and communications manager for Domex Superfresh Growers LLC, in Yakima, WA, suggests, "Create a National Rainier Cherry Day promotion with a large display and front page ad with 25 to 30 percent discount for Rainiers. July 11th is a Wednesday this year, which makes it a good opportunity to tie into newspapers' Wednesday food page and bring into focus a cherry variety that isn't very familiar with consumers. Educate with sampling in-store as well."

July is also a great time to build a big display of cherries, as it's the No. 1 dollar generator per square foot in the produce department at this time. One way to do this is to display several SKUs, says Roger Pepperl, marketing director for Stemilt Growers LLC, in Wenatchee, WA. "Offer dark sweet cherries and Rainiers in bags; include an organic and then maybe a 3- to 4-lb. clamshell on an 8- to 10-ft. table and you'll hit a home run in sales. You can display cherries next to berries, but not grapes because grapes will cannibalize cherry sales."

For the second season, Columbia Marketing

## MACEY'S BUILDS THE WORLD'S LARGEST WATERMELON DISPLAY

**W**hat fruit do you choose in the run up to the Fourth of July holiday when you want to host a big promotion for a store grand-opening? Heidi Thomas, produce manager at the newest Macey's Supermarket in Lehi, UT, one of 11 chains under the Salt Lake City, UT-headquartered



PHOTO COURTESY ASSOCIATED FOOD STORES

Associated Food Store's banner, chose watermelon. "We got the idea to build the World's Largest Watermelon display because of seasonality," she says.

It took three staff members an entire day to hand-stack in festive red and white corrugated bins some 130,000 pounds, or 8,100 individual watermelon, delivered in three truckloads from Kirschman Farms, in Bakersfield, CA, with the help of wholesaler, North County Fruit Sales. The bins were fork-lifted into place to create a massive display outside under the supermarket's front awning. Of these, 140 bins contained seedless picnic-sized watermelons, while the rest held seeded versions of the same sized seeded melons. In-store activities on the grand opening day included a watermelon seed-spitting contest, taste samples, recipe handouts and a visit with the 2011 National Watermelon Queen, who offered information and posed for pictures.

The National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB), headquartered in Orlando, FL, not only certified this was the World's Largest Watermelon Display, but also named the display its Grand Prize Winner in the NWPB's annual retail display contest. The display, which opened on June 29, didn't even last until Fourth of July. This rapid sell-through was driven by a hot price of 9-cents per pound. Thomas says, "We sold out in four days and had to procure an additional 40 bins to get us through the remainder of our event."

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Side Note





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International Corp. (CMI), in Wenatchee, WA, will run its Summer Memories Facebook promotion where consumers are encouraged to take a photo of a bag or clamshell of CMI red or Rainier cherries while participating in their favorite summer activity. The contest, which will run the length of cherry season, will be judged by CMI's Facebook fans. Prizes will be announced to shoppers via a QR code on cherry bags and shippers. Bob Mast, CMI's vice president of marketing, says, "The shipper holds two to three cases of cherries. It's best

used as an end-cap spillover to draw attention to the cherry display. It also works well as a secondary display at the check-out during high traffic times between 4 and 6 pm."

#### SUMMER BOUNTY: August

"Local" is the buzzword for summer. Karen Caplan, president of Frieda's Inc., in Los Alamitos, CA, remarks, "We've seen local trump organic for a few years, but I think interest in locally grown produce, farmer's markets and CSAs (community supported

agriculture) will be even bigger this year. Retailers should keep in mind that even though Generation Y or Millennials are a demographic that loves food and embraces local products, they need help when it comes to cooking. Quick and easy recipes in ads, on a website such as Facebook, or an in-store

Side Note

## SUMMER'S BOUNTY SHOWCASED AT NEW SEASON'S MARKET

Jeff Fairchild, director of produce at New Season's Market, a 12-store chain based in Portland, OR, is leveraging customer interest for locally grown produce by moving full steam ahead with a concerted strategy to offer homegrown fruits and vegetables to his customers. "We'll be taking field trips to visit our growers throughout the summer, notably, prior to the first picking of a particular item," Fairchild shares. "This will allow us to put together a good training package for our stores, which will include a picture of the farmer, POS materials and a video shot on the farm. We'll follow up with aggressive social media to let our over-30,000 Twitter followers and nearly 18,000 Facebook fans know when a particular item becomes available. Finally, we'll support this item in-store on the day it arrives with signage support such as big banners as well as demos and one-day specials and case discounts."

New Season's Market locally grown summer program kicks off the third week of May with California summer fruit. Next up is one of the chain's signature items, locally grown strawberries only available for a three-week window beginning the first of June. "Sales of strawberries triple in these three weeks," reveals Fairchild.

For the Fourth of July holiday, Fairchild plans to showcase and sell Pacific Northwest apricots, peaches and nectarines with a backfill of berries and cherries. A month later in August, local melons will take the promotional spotlight. "We have a small group of local growers with a number of unusual melon varieties such as Charantais, Piel de Sapo and Muskmelons," says Fairchild. "Carrying these melons in-store gives us a chance to compete with the farmer's markets."

The locally grown promotion finishes up on Labor Day with tomatoes and corn-on-the-cob.

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## LOCALLY GROWN SHINES DURING THE SUMMER AT SUNFLOWER FARMER'S MARKETS

Customers at Sunflower Farmers Markets are clamoring for locally grown produce, says Mike Krage, the Phoenix, AZ-based senior director of fresh foods' sales and merchandising for the 41-store chain spread out over eight states. "There are several reasons why our customers want local produce. These include sustainability, support of the local community, flavor and the perception of a fresher product. But what they really enjoy when they come to shop is the thrill of the hunt, or in other words, searching out what has just arrived in a particular week."

Procuring fresh produce from a number of farmers across several states takes time, energy and homework. Krage and his team source potential suppliers from lists provided by state departments of agriculture as well as leads from produce managers, merchandisers and associates

in a particular store's area. Then comes farm visits, checking for food safety certifications and getting the farmer's story for in-store merchandising and promotions. Sometimes a visit will also include a request for the farmer to grow a particular crop exclusively for the chain and to supply a specific window.

"We call 'local' for a particular store what is grown in that state," says Krage. "We then define local on signage in one of three ways. First, by state. Secondly, by calling out a particular area like California's Imperial Valley, and third by the name of a specific farm. We find the more information provided, the more customers like it."

The local produce is displayed either in the front of the store on weekends, or via large displays in the produce department marked by point-of-sale. The local fruits and vegetables are then promoted in



PHOTO COURTESY OF SUNFLOWER FARMERS MARKET

weekly circular ads, which have shown the benefit of pulling new customers into the stores. Each of Sunflower Farmers Market stores has an in-house event coordinator who lines up farmers to attend the chain's in-store seasonal farmer's markets. "Late spring, summer and early fall is the biggest time for locally grown," says Krage. "We'll carry a minimum of 20 local fruits and vegetables in season in some states and up to 50 to 60 in our California stores. It's our point of differentiation as a retailer."

pb

farmer's market promotion where it's easy to engage the consumer are ways to provide this information."

Maureen Torrey Marshall, vice president of Elba, NY-based Torrey Farms Inc., says, "Summer is an important time for us because

of the image of fresh and local. We can reach 40 percent of the U.S. population overnight. This means pick, pack and ship and have product on

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store shelves within 24 hours of harvest. Retailers have featured our farm in-store and in their flyers. Beginning the second week in July and for the next 10 weeks, we do a good chunk of our business. That's when cucumbers, zucchini, yellow squash, red and green cabbage and green beans, to name a few, are all being harvested."

Similarly, and on the opposite coast, Damon Barkdull, in sales and business development at Uesugi Farms Inc., headquartered in Gilroy, CA, says, "Summer is the best time for us to promote our products, which are white corn, Bell peppers — green, red and yellow — and fresh chili peppers. This will be our third season offering the Ghost chili in a clamshell. The demand for the Ghost chili (also called Bhut Jolokia) has grown every year."

Retailers will sometimes use colorful or graphic bins or merchandise their produce in a farmer's market type fashion, Barkdull adds. "The great thing about merchandising peppers is the difference in color. The red, green and yellow Bell peppers attract consumers with the color spectrum. The same could be said about fresh Chili peppers. Merchandising red Fresnos, next to green

Anaheims, next to yellow Caribes attract the eyes of the average consumer, who normally wouldn't stop for Chili peppers. Point of purchase and signage for these items, which could include recipe cards, is important, too, as not every consumer is familiar with Bell and Chili peppers."

As for fruits, Family Tree Farms Marketing LLC, in Reedley, CA, offers a 2-lb. farmer's market-style fiberboard basket with handles for its small fruit such as apricots, flat peaches and plumcots. Dovey Plain, marketing coordinator, says, "Plumcot availability spikes at the end of July into September. Some retailers only carry one or two, but we love it when other retailers lay out a variety — black, red and mottled. Our flagship variety, the Family Tree Plumogranate, which has a deep mahogany interior, intensely sweet flavor and is rich in antioxidants, is available in July."

California table grapes traditionally peak in supply in August. Karen Brux, vice president of marketing communications for the Fresno-based California Table Grape Commission, says, "In order to increase sales of grapes at retail, they need to be attractively displayed and promoted. For the maximum volume lift, we

recommend that retailers combine multiple variety ads on multiple pages. In-store price reductions are helpful, too."

### LABOR DAY: September 3

Labor Day is the last grilling and outdoor picnic hurrah of the season for many across the nation. Melissa's Schueller remarks, "It's a great time to promote corn, peppers, potatoes, onions and eggplant for the grill, as well as seasonal fruits. California pomegranates are beginning, and domestic dragon fruit and quince are now available."

Fall fruits are also beginning harvest. CMI's Mast says, "New crop Galas are a big item as well as early Bartletts. Many retailers will combine these items, plus summer produce like corn, watermelon, and tomatoes in a big Labor Day ad with five to eight items in a barbecue or picnic theme."

Labor Day coincides with back-to-school promotions in many parts of the country, as well. To cater to this need, Domex offers 2-lb. Superfresh Kids bagged apples in 113 to 138 sizes and pears in 120 and 130 sizes. Queen says, "When retailers display both of these items at once, sales of both increase 7 percent." **pb**



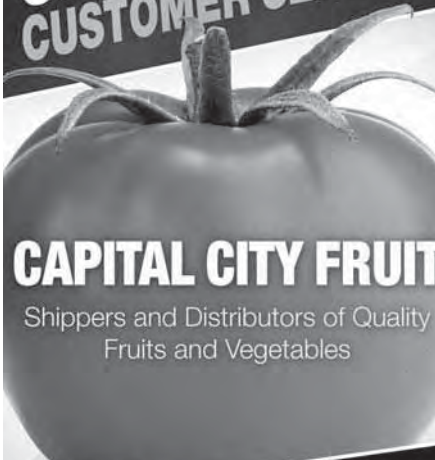
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# Georgia Grown Produce

## — Raising The Bar On Locally Grown

Georgia produce season is in full swing.

BY BARBARA ROBISON



“Georgia, Georgia, I’ve got Georgia on my mind.” That old refrain is so appropriate now that the state of Georgia’s fresh produce season is here. Whether it’s Vidalia onions, peaches, green beans, squash, pecans, greens or blueberries, Georgia will be producing and shipping high quality produce during the summer and fall months ahead.

“Agriculture touches every person’s life, every single day and it is our vision that the updated Georgia Grown imagery will soon become omnipresent wherever Georgia products are marketed,” states Commissioner Gary W. Black, of the Atlanta-based Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA). “Our great state offers so many Georgia Grown products, from apples to peaches, peanuts to pecans, tomatoes to Vidalia onions, and so many others. We are proud to tout their Georgia roots.”

Fruit and vegetable production is almost a billion dollar industry at the farm gate in Georgia, with over 170,000 acres in production. This makes it the state’s No. 2 agricultural cash crop, according to the La Grange-based Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association (GFVGA).

### The “Specialness” Of Georgia Produce

What makes Georgia produce so special? “Great soil, great weather (most of the time) and great southern people,” declares Jack Spruill, marketing division director for the GDA.

Answers often depend on the commodity being grown. Duke Lane III, president of the Byron-based Georgia Peach Council, and vice president of Lane Packing LLC, in Fort Valley, says, “The peach’s outstanding flavor comes from a combination of just the right

soil and growing conditions, coupled with those hot Georgia nights. That’s what makes a Georgia peach special.”

“The fact that retailers and foodservice operators in Georgia and neighboring states can get Georgia produce into their stores or on their menus in 24 to 48 hours from harvest is one reason it’s special,” contends Charles Hall, executive director of the GFVGA. “The produce is extremely fresh and Georgia produce has a strong reputation for high quality and excellent flavor.”

L & M Companies Inc., based in Raleigh, NC, has been growing produce in Georgia for over 10 years. “The locations we have in Moultrie provide our customers with some of the most diverse local grown opportunities in our year-round offerings,” states Greg Cardamone, general manager.

Bill Brim, owner and president of Tifton, GA-based Lewis Taylor Farms Inc., gives a lot of credit for the wide variety of quality vegetables and melons he ships to “cool mornings, warm days and cool nights.”

“All my customers know it’s Georgia-grown,” exclaims Taylor Neighbors, president and CEO of Magnolia Packing Inc., a produce wholesaler of green beans and peppers, located in Americus, GA.

Georgia is known for its variety of excellent greens, and Sid Roberson, vice president of Wendell Roberson Farms in Tifton, GA, remarks that the promotions, especially of the nutritional values in Georgia produce, have helped in the sale of the greens his firm markets.

Vidalia onions are grown in a particular area of Southeast Georgia with a selective climate and soil, according to Wendy Brannen, executive director of the Vidalia-based Vidalia Onion Committee (VOC). “That provides our onions a special flavor profile in addition to just sweetness, which led us to being pioneers of the sweet onions marketed today,” she adds.

“Vidalia onions are only available for a little more than four months throughout the year,” adds John Shuman, president of



# A Message From Commissioner Gary Black

**It's summertime in Georgia,** and that means farmers are in the midst of the busiest time of year. As producers are harvesting many of our state's top commodities, it is fitting that our state's Georgia Grown campaign is also beginning anew.

All of us at the Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA) are very excited about the launch of a revitalized Georgia Grown program this year. Touted as an economic development and marketing program, Georgia Grown will continue to bolster our state's No. 1 industry. Whether you are a consumer looking to take your family out for a day of pick-your-own strawberries or a small artisan looking to grow your business, whether you are a niche farmer wanting to find a new place to sell products or a corporation looking to increase trade opportunities and add jobs — Georgia Grown is the channel you can use to find what you need.

Anyone interested in having a listing on the Georgia Grown searchable database can post business information for free. Additionally, Georgia Grown memberships offer specific benefits to help your business grow and reach the next level of success. These benefits include professionally designed Georgia Grown marketing tools and templates, economic development help for businesses looking to become regional or even international suppliers, and more.

Spinning off of the new Georgia Grown campaign, the GDA has a renovated and expanded test kitchen, designed as an educational tool to promote the use of Georgia Grown products; as a media outlet to test and promote consumer recipes and to aid in food preparation training for farm-to-school efforts; and will be a collaborative tool to promote a healthier Georgia through nutritional education.

On the topic of farm-to-school, our latest collaboration with the Georgia Department of Education came to fruition this spring with our inaugural "Feed My School" program. Bleckley, Colquitt and Hall counties were each represented by an elementary school in their district and students learned more about nutrition and our state's commodities. Support for the program has been tremendous so far. Georgia



Commissioner  
Gary Black

has many untapped resources and it is the GDA's hope, by initiating a statewide discussion about farm-to-school opportunities, that we can foster new relationships and increase students' knowledge about where their food comes from. This will ultimately incorporate more seasonal Georgia Grown products into schools while decreasing the distance those products travel from the farm to the cafeteria.

In a partnership with the Georgia Restaurant Association, we have had the honor to work with some of Georgia's most esteemed culinary chefs and will continue to do more with them in the remainder of 2012. Georgia's restaurant industry is second only to agribusiness in the number of jobs provided, which is why this partnership, which brings together Georgia-grown products with outstanding local culinary talent, is so important. The Georgia Grown Executive Chef program participants include Holly Chute, Executive Chef, Georgia Governor's Mansion; Michael Deihl, CEC CCA AAC, Executive Chef, East Lake Golf Club; Kevin Gillespie, Executive Chef, Woodfire Grill Atlanta; and Hilary White, Executive Chef, The Hil, A Restaurant at Serenbe.

As part of our ongoing outreach, we are expanding our Area Market Coordinators and have a new Agritourism Director overseeing agritourism outreach and development efforts in Georgia. Our social media outlets continue to grow and expand. You can see our new and improved website, [www.agr.georgia.gov](http://www.agr.georgia.gov), for daily updates on agriculture news, find our latest press releases and learn what's happening now in agriculture. Go and "like" the new Georgia Grown Facebook page or any of our Twitter accounts to join the conversation while you check out our photos, videos and agriculture updates.

In the coming months, Georgia Grown will continue to bring fresh, exciting things to our state, and I look forward to sharing our news with producers, retailers and consumers. In the meantime, I once again encourage you to visit [www.GeorgiaGrown.com](http://www.GeorgiaGrown.com) and have a look around. Get to know the program and review membership packages to see if one of them is right for your business.

Shuman Produce Inc., Reidsville, GA. "Limited availability from a particular locale adds to the exclusivity of Vidalias and contributes to their fame."

Whatever the reasons for making Georgia Grown produce special, it is acknowledged that the high regard placed on it is beneficial to growers, shippers, packers, food retailers, foodservice, and especially consumers. As a food retailer, Tony Smith, produce merchandising manager at the Nashville, GA-based chain J.H. Harvey Co., points out that it is important to his customers now more than ever to provide good supplies of Georgia-grown produce during the season. "We want to satisfy our customers and support local growers. When we do, it's also good for our business," he states.

## Georgia Produce Gets Retail And Foodservice Support

Produce retailers and foodservice operators alike enjoy the Georgia-grown produce season. "As the crops in Florida finish in the late spring and early summer, the Georgia crops come into harvest," says Maria Brous, director of media and community relations at Lakeland, FL-based Publix Supermarkets Inc. "During that period we heavily promote Georgia-grown products and do the same in all our stores. We use the Georgia Grown logo in our ads. Vidalia onions, watermelon, sweet corn, greens, peaches, pecans, beans and squash are among the most promotable items during the Georgia season."

"Customers love that we feature locally grown produce," acknowledges Randy Owens, produce manager for Kroger Co.'s Alpharetta Store # 390. "As soon as the Vidalia onions come in, we feature them. We also emphasize Georgia-grown squash, zucchini and cucumbers. Among our displays we work with peach farmers and have programs and pictures in our stores," he continues.

J.H. Harvey Co. goes all out in promoting Georgia-grown produce. The Georgia logo is used in ads and in-store POS materials and signs. "We begin around the first of April and move through the season," details the company's Smith. "We have big danglers and other large materials. Promotions include Vidalia onions, peaches, watermelons, various vegetables, and in the fall, we like to feature Muscadine grapes and the many greens available. We put farmers' names and pictures on signs, and some signs include nutrition information as well. The customers really like knowing we are offering local

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## Georgia's Produce Membership

Georgia is fortunate to have a number of organizations that support the Georgia fruit and vegetable industry and work closely with each other. The sharing involves support for research, education, current industry data, improved technology and promotion. "There's a sense of state pride, and we all want to see other commodities do well. We have fun and enjoy working together on special programs," states Wendy Brannen, executive director of the Vidalia-based Vidalia Onion Committee (VOC).

The major organization involved in supporting the produce industry is the Georgia Department of Agriculture. Under Commissioner Black, it has taken a leading role in promoting Georgia-grown produce commodities. "The new Georgia Grown campaign is one of the things we are most excited about at the Department of Agriculture. We'd like to see every single Georgian who is directly involved with agriculture become part of this program, making our state's No. 1 industry that much stronger," the Commissioner announced.

The GDA launched a Georgia Grown program about 12 years ago. At first, it was a bit confusing as to its purpose. Was it a certification mark? Was it part of a regulatory function? Who could, or should, use the logo? The logo had become dated and nearly impossible to reproduce legibly on packages. Therefore, under the direction of Ag Commissioner Gary Black, the GDA officially relaunched the program in January, 2012. A "soft launch" started with the introduction of a new Georgia Grown logo at the Produce Marketing Association Fresh Summit in October 2011. A new website, [www.georgiagrown.com](http://www.georgiagrown.com), went live January 9, 2012.

The Department made the decision to revamp the Georgia Grown campaign as a

marketing campaign — not a certification or something in a regulatory capacity. "We are seeking, and acquiring rapidly, members for the NEW Georgia Grown program," states Jack Spruill, marketing division director for the GDA.

"It includes annual paid memberships that provide rights for use of the logo by a member. The different levels of membership offer a variety of values and rewards; all proceeds from the membership fees are maintained within the program. The goal is for Georgia Grown to become the primary marketing focal point for all the great agricultural products and agricultural businesses in our state. The current rules for membership are purposely very loose. The GDA is 100 percent focused on this program's success and committed to its viability and future."

The revitalized Georgia Grown program is very much in its "infant" stage, getting as many produce growers, packers and processors registered as Georgia Grown members, so they can begin using the new logo as soon as possible. The next stage, which has already begun, is to bring the logo to the attention of consumers and ask them to look for Georgia Grown products and support local producers. Key retailers are working with the GDA to create consumer awareness and the desire for products bearing the Georgia Grown logo. "We launched an Executive Chef program in February, and will be working with restaurants in the future to increase opportunities for them to showcase Georgia Grown items on their menus," says Spruill. "We will also aid them with point-of-sale materials. Additionally, we are working out the details of Georgia Grown displays and marketing materials for retailers."

Some firms, such as Reidsville, GA-based Shuman Produce, are already using the new Georgia Grown label on boxes and packaging. Sarah

produce, and the GAP certification is important to us."

Foodservice operators also find customers appreciate that they are incorporating Georgia-grown produce into their menus. Chef Gerry Klaskala from the well-known Atlanta area Aria restaurant says, "We use Georgia-grown produce almost all year long. Right now, we are using mustard greens and, for an unusual twist, stinging nettles in a pasta dish. The strawberries have been great, and we love Georgia peaches," he adds. "We do like the growers to be GAP-certified and practice sustainable agriculture, using as few chemicals as possible. We have developed close relationships with the

growers over the years and appreciate being able to call on them for the special things we need for our menus."

### Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association: An Industry Asset

The GFVGA's mission is to provide a united voice to represent the diverse state-produced variety of fruit and vegetables. The Association provides programs and services to the membership designed to increase production efficiencies, provide educational opportunities, promote new markets, monitor legislation, encourage applied research and improve communications among GFVGA members and industry suppliers. It works



Seebran, marketing director of Glennville, GA's Bland Farms, states, "We are excited about the new Georgia Grown plans that kick off this year and about participating in future initiatives. It is very important during the Vidalia season that our customers know the onions are from Georgia."

Greg Cardamone, general manager, of Raleigh, NC-based L & M Companies, notes, "Our firm has several retailers with Georgia stores, and they enjoy the freshness and increased sales of Georgia Grown items. We have helped our customers increase their sales, especially in broccoli, sweet potatoes and melons."

Farmer's market programs have increased across the country, and Georgia is no exception. The GDA owns and operates nine farmers markets located throughout the state. The markets have changed over time to better function in the areas where they serve. Most state markets are still involved in retail sales and have the presence of farmers; some have become primarily "terminal markets," with large wholesale suppliers using them as a base of operation; and others function as a packing shed location. Other local farmer's markets, run by communities, private entities, church groups, etc., are much more plentiful. "We gladly serve as an advisory source for these markets, but do not currently have a structured program to directly assist them," reports Spruill of GDA.

The GDA has no direct programs promoting Georgia produce to neighboring states at this point in time. However, the 12 commodity commissions are very active promoters throughout Georgia and other states, and the GDA serves as the administrator of these commissions. Commissioner Black is an *ex-officio* member of all commodity commissions.

closely with the GDA and its programs, especially the Georgia Grown initiative.

Food safety is a major component of the GFVGA's programs, especially the Good Agricultural Practices GAP certification. It is not required that farmers obtain GAP certification, but GFVGA strongly recommends it, and acts as a consultant for the industry. The association recently sponsored a three-day seminar on obtaining GAP certification, attended by many Georgia farmers. GAP was established to verify that fruits and vegetables are produced, packed, handled and stored in the safest manner possible to minimize risks of microbial food safety hazards. "We work

with the Georgia growers to get their GAP programs in place and operating," notes GFVGA's Hall. "Most all of the commercial growers are having third-party audits conducted by certified auditors."

The GAP program includes audits, which may be performed by the United States Department of Agriculture. There is also a Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) for those doing international marketing. "Our major receivers want us to be GAP-certified, so it's very important for us. We are working on a

global GAP certification and hope to have it this year," states Dickey of Dickey Farms.

Another aspect of the GFVGA's extensive programs is coordinating participation in publicity events, such as the recent Atlanta Food and Wine Festival. Under a block grant from GDA, five commodity groups participated in the food and wine event in April. The Vidalia Onion Committee, the Georgia Peach Council, the Georgia Watermelon Association, the Georgia Blueberry Commission, and the Georgia Pecan Commission joined forces



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to promote the Georgia-produced products.

GFVGA will also coordinate another cooperative publicity program, involving the same five commodity groups. It will be an editorial placement by Family Features Company, based in Mission, KS, with a recipe page available online to newspaper and magazine food editors.

**Agricultural Commodity Commission For Vegetables**

Under a marketing order about four years ago, an Agricultural Commodity Commission for Vegetables was reauthorized to conduct education and research only. The marketing order provides for \$10,000 to \$20,000 to be spent on research and education of beans, bell peppers, cabbage, cucumbers, sweet corn, tomatoes, greens and squash. The research is to enhance Georgia's vegetable production and packaging practices, while the education will inform growers on the latest techniques for Georgia vegetables and assist growers with industry and government issues. The chairman of the Commission's Board is Bo Herndon, of L. G. Herndon Jr. Farms, in Lyons, GA. The GFVGA works

**“As the crops in Florida finish in the late spring and early summer, the Georgia crops come into harvest. During that period we heavily promote Georgia-grown products and do the same in all our stores.**

**We use the Georgia Grown logo in our ads.”**

— Maria Brous, Publix Super Markets Inc.

closely with the Commission. With GDA and the Georgia Farm Bureau, it co-hosts the educational meetings held throughout the state.

**Vidalia Onion Committee Assists Growers**

“We cannot discuss produce in Georgia without mentioning the Vidalia onion,”

states Spruill of GDA. “The Vidalia is a special part of our state's agricultural production we refer to it as the original sweet onion.” The production value of Georgia's 2010 Vidalia onion crop was approximately \$9 million. The onions are shipped across the United States and most of Canada. Shipping runs from mid-April to early fall.

The Vidalia Onion Committee is a federal marketing order authorizing production research, marketing research and development, and marketing promotion programs. “We are really excited about this year's Vidalia Onion promotions, especially the collaboration this summer with Universal Music Group Nashville through MG on a social media promotion,” says the Committee's Brannen.

To coincide with the Vidalia onion harvest, consumers can access multiple music-themed offers through Vidalia onion social media sites. This includes coupons to purchase Vidalias by the pound or in bags, which feature updated versions of favorite Southern recipes. Consumers can also select one of the 100,000 songs in the Universal Music catalog to download for free from the

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# Newer Produce Items Gaining Volume

Georgia has seen increases in many locally grown produce items, but some have gained a great deal of recognition over the past few years. Certainly, one of the fastest growing commodities is the Georgia blueberry. Since the late 90s, Georgia blueberry acreage has grown from 7,000 to at least 14,500, some believing there may be as much as 20,000 acres of working blueberry farms. The blueberries from Georgia have become extremely popular because the state has the right growing conditions for the two main varieties, Rabbit Eye and Highbush, providing the longest growing season. The Rabbit Eye has a season lasting from late May to the end of July and the Highbush season runs from late April through May. Georgia is being recognized nationally as an up-and-coming producer of top quality blueberries,

now ranking No. 3 in U.S. state production, according to Charles Hall, executive director of the LaGrange-based Georgia Fruit and Vegetables Growers Association.

A Georgia Blueberry Commission is currently in operation with 350 members. Its goal is to assist this newer produce industry as it grows in volume and increases distribution. "As a commission, we have been working for the past two years with At The Table, a public relations firm that specializes in food, specifically produce commodities," shares Joe Cornelius, chairman of the Commission and president at J & B Blueberry Farm Inc., in Manor, GA. "We've launched a Sweet Georgia Blues campaign with a logo and a web site. Plus, we are working with the well-known chef Rebecca Lang, a Southern Living cookbook author, and Denise Sawyer, a

popular food blogger.

The nutritional values of blueberries have become increasingly important in marketing programs. While many know the blueberry's health benefits, the Commission is relying on the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council to focus on spreading that message. The Commission's focus will be on what's special about Georgia blueberries.

Another commodity that is seeing growth in Georgia production is the blackberry. Nutritional values are instrumental in expanding interest in this berry. Production is growing, but the hot weather in Georgia is making it more difficult to maintain berry quality, according to Cornelius.

Broccoli is another commodity that has shown increased volume in the state, and industry interest in its growth is evident.

Vidalia onion Facebook fan page. They will be eligible to enter a consumer sweepstakes to win a grand prize trip to a music video shoot.


Some of country music's biggest stars will be featured on the different Vidalia onion marketing materials, including Vince Gill, Josh Turner, Easton Corbin, whose debut album was certified Gold, and Lee Ann Womack, a multi-Grammy award winner.

"Details of the offers will be on the Vidalia packaging and on our retail display bins," Brannen adds. "We will have radio spots available for in-store broadcasting.

Shuman Produce will be including a celebrity chef promotion for its Vidalia onions this year. The celebrity chefs, Erik Holdo and Fat Man Kevin Jenkins, are the stars of a popular Atlanta culinary radio show.

## The Georgia Peach Council Supports Georgia Grown

Georgia peaches have been recognized as outstanding for their flavor and juiciness for decades. They are marketed throughout the country and in Canada, as well. This year's crop looks good, according to the experts. The mild winter has been beneficial for the fruit, with the harvest beginning a little early.



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Al Pearson, one of the owner partners at Fort Valley, GA's Pearson Farm, expects to have a good crop of flavorful peaches for his customers, despite the unusually warm winter. "Our harvest will be running a bit later this year," he reports.

Offering Georgia peaches during the season from mid-May through early August, Robert Dickey, owner and president of Dickey Farms Inc., based in Musella, GA, is predicting an excellent crop this year. "We've been receiving very positive calls and a strong demand for the best-tasting peaches available. Knowing the peaches are from Georgia really drives the interest."

The Georgia Peach Council works closely with the other Georgia agricultural organizations on the Georgia Grown programs. "A Perishables Group study revealed that consumers, whether in the Midwest, Northeast, or South, prefer Georgia peaches over peaches grown in other regions," reports Council president, Duke Lane III. "This has encouraged us to urge retail partners to put Georgia up in lights and let the brand do its work. We have Sweet Georgia Peach logo tags available to identify the fruit."

"The Ag Commissioner is pushing us to come up with creative ways for peach farmers to use the Georgia Grown logo," adds Will McGehee, director of marketing for the Peach Council and sales manager of Pearson Farm & the Genuine Georgia Group in Fort Valley, GA. All the peach growers should have the logo on their cartons by next year, and the logo will appear on the bottom of ads in addition to the tags. We are also proud that 100 percent of our members are GAP-certified."

The Peach Council has partnered with Genanox, a Southern cookbook author, to develop peach recipes, as well how to can and freeze peaches. The recipes will incorporate Southern cooking in a healthy light.

### The Georgia Pecan Commission Promotes Nutrition

Georgia leads the nation in pecan production, with wide distribution domestically, and international business growing. The season begins in October and runs into December. There are three common varieties, all available from Georgia. "The bloom looks good and we are excited about what the upcoming crop looks like," comments Duke Lane, who is also chairman of the Atlanta-based Georgia Pecan Commission. "We have had strong distribution in the past, and local demand has been excellent. The growth of the international business looks promising."

The Georgia Pecan Commission is heavily involved in the GAP program, recognizing the importance of food safety. It urges its members to become certified, both domestically and globally as the international business continues to grow. "Our mission is to benefit all the growers in the industry," says Lane. "We fund and support research and education to determine the best economic things to do. One of our big areas of interest is nutrition and the study of the beneficial antioxidants present in pecans. We are calling it the antioxi-nut."

The Commission supports the Georgia Grown campaign. Pecans will be included in a program being planned for the new airport concourse in Atlanta. Plans call for a running film that will show items, such as

pecans, grown in Georgia. How the products are grown and corresponding information will be seen by passengers using the concourse, thus introducing thousands to Georgia Grown.

Individual pecan growers conduct their own advertising and sales promotion programs as well. "We are trying to get into the local school lunch programs with our nutrition message, but it is difficult, especially with cost restrictions," recognizes Lane, Jr.

### Georgia Watermelon Association Plans Big Promotions

Watermelon is the fourth most important fruit and vegetable crop in Georgia when it comes to volume. "Folks are certainly aware of our state's pride in producing watermelon," says Spruill of GDA.

"All our melons are pre-cooled as fast as possible to extend their shelf-life," shares Brim of Lewis Taylor Farms. "We actually pre-cool our vegetables, too, but feel it is especially important for the melons. It helps maintain the high quality standards we have for our watermelons. We also were one of the first to receive global food safety certification."

James Gibbs Patrick Jr., a member of Patrick Farms Partnership, a grower of watermelon and vegetables in Omega, GA, asserts, "We take pride in our Georgia products and are proud to support the Georgia Grown program. Food safety, nutritional values and quality are all things our Georgia industry can promote."

The LaGrange-based Georgia Watermelon Association operates under the umbrella of the GFVGA. The Association has several promotions planned for the current season. "We are getting ready for what we call a sorority blit' promotion," reports Dawn Cheplick, the Association's member services and communication coordinator. "It will be a trial program, using one university as the hub and working with eight to 10 food stores in the area for two hours during a weekend. Sorority girls are selected and trained to represent the Association. They will be sampling and talking about watermelons, some new things to do with them and the nutritional values."

A large promotion is also planned for a NASCAR event in June. Another promotion occurs on July 4th with the Atlanta Braves. Watermelon samples will be given out prior to the game, and The Georgia Watermelon Queen and other state watermelon queens will be present.

pb



# Table Grapes: Nine Top Challenges And Opportunities

With a near year-round supply from a variety of countries, and plenty of options to please any palate, grapes are a sure thing for produce ring. **BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**



PHOTO COURTESY OF LEE'S MARKETPLACE

Lee's Marketplace, in Logan, UT, built the world's largest grape display, which used 37,630 pounds of grapes. The store sold out in three days.

Consumers love grapes. They're convenient, easy-to-eat and always available. These are just a few reasons why this sweet juicy fruit is such a strong seller in the produce department, contributing 5.2 percent of produce department dollar sales for the 52 weeks ending February 24, 2012, according to the Nielsen Perishables Group, a West Dundee, IL-based fresh food consulting firm.

Jeff Fairchild, director of produce at New Seasons Market, a 12-store chain, in Portland, OR, remarks, "Grapes are an excellent impulse item, a good dollar ring and a great margin generator. That's why we display them front-and-center."

Yet, grapes don't surface and sell on retail shelves by magic. Challenges include global sourcing, color- versus variety-merchandising techniques, finding organic options in the winter, choosing the right pack, and optimal pricing and promotional strategies — just to name a few. In these challenges are also profitable opportunities.

## 1. Global Sourcing: Blips And Bursts In Supply

Ten years ago, retailers accepted not having

grapes on the shelf year-round. But Tim Dayka, managing partner of Dayka & Hackett LLC, in Reedley, CA, says that's no longer the case. "There's not one retailer who would accept less than 100 percent fill rates 52 weeks a year," he asserts.

Grapes are year-round consistent sellers. Total grape dollars sold in the first quarter of 2011 represented 23.3 percent, according to Nielsen Perishables Group data, followed by 23.6 percent in the second quarter, 27.5 percent the third and 25.6 percent in the fourth.

Domestic grapes begin harvest in southern California's Coachella Valley in May. The bulk of the state's crop then follows out of the San Joaquin Valley by July.

Karen Brux, vice president of marketing communications for the Fresno-based California Table Grape Commission (CTGC), reports, "Ninety-nine percent of U.S. consumers prefer to purchase fresh grapes from California over imports. Our challenge is to remind consumers of how much they love California grapes and give them more reasons to buy. This season, we will be communicating health, usage and heritage messages through our trade and consumer promotions to build

demand among consumers."

Late seasonal varietal development, coupled with cold storage capabilities, has extended California's table grape season into January. This represents a narrowed window of opportunity for import countries such as Brazil. Dayka reveals, "Brazil's fruit is available from November into mid-December, and the country has felt the squeeze from California. U.S. retailers have a significant interest in carrying domestic fruit as long as the quality is good. Plus, late season California varieties are much better than imports at this time in terms of appearance and flavor."

California, as well as imports from Brazil, Peru and Chile, converged this past winter to provide an ample supply of grapes for Christmas and New Year's promotions. "The big challenge for retailers," notes Dayka, "is deciding the best time to transition to imports. This also offers a tremendous opportunity for retailers to distinguish themselves by carrying grapes from a particular region or fruit with unique characteristics."

Peruvian grapes enter the U.S. in late November through February, while Chile's imports begin mid-January and run as late as



mid-May. The Peruvians have invested significant capital in their table grape industry, according to Dayka. “Growing conditions are good, acceptance is excellent, and arrivals come in a good window,” he commends.

Chile is South America’s chief exporter of grapes to the United States. Of the 2.6 million tons of grapes exported from Chile during the 2010-2011 season, 850,000 tons were imported into the United States, according to data supplied by the Chilean Fresh Fruit Association (CFFA). However, Chile’s grape exports to the U.S. fell by some 20 percent this past season. Tom Tjerandsen, the Sonoma, CA-based CFFA spokesman, explains why: “This was caused by three factors. First, 3 million boxes were lost due to a freeze. Secondly, the decline of the U.S. dollar made it less attractive for Chile to send grapes to the United States, and third, new markets are opening up in Pacific Rim countries such as China, as well as Eastern Europe and the Middle East.”

John Harley, vice president of sales and marketing at Bakersfield, CA-based Anthony Vineyards Inc., acknowledges this last factor presents a challenge for U.S. retailers, “The weakness of our dollar, combined with increased demand by countries with emerging middle classes such as Korea, Vietnam, India and China, is encouraging Chile to divert some of their grapes to these markets. The result is a higher FOB in the winter.”

The Mexico (Sonora) grape season is slated to begin in early May. Steve Yubeta, vice president of sales for Farmer’s Best International LLC, headquartered in Rio Rico, AZ, says, “One of the key things we tell our retail customers is that Sonora equals fresh. After a long winter of Southern Hemisphere fruit, the first new crop

their customers will receive is in May. One of the other things retailers tell us is that some customers miss the larger fruit sizes that are hard to find during the winter and that the Sonora season can deliver.”

## 2. Merchandise By Color Or Variety?

Grapes are sold by both color and variety at Kings Super Markets, a 25-store chain headquartered in Parsippany, NJ. “We sell a lot more red than white or black grapes,” says Paul Kneeland, director of produce and floral. “We’ll also call out unusual varieties like Muscat grapes. Flavor sells.”

Some retailers merchandise grapes by their color and distinguish those that are seedless. Dayka & Hackett’s Dayka shares, “Others identify all varieties in order to highlight unique characteristics to their customers and to distinguish them for the right ring at the check-out.”

However, New Season’s Fairchild contends marketing grapes by variety is a losing battle. “There’s not enough visual difference between, say, two or three different red varieties, for consumers to notice. We spent a lot of time and effort to try and promote by variety, but in the end, it was color that customers most recognized,” he discloses.

As for color, Megan Schulz, West Coast business development manager for the Giumarra Brothers Fruit Co. Inc., headquartered in Los Angeles, CA, says, “Red and green seedless are the most popular varieties.” Red grapes accounted for 57 percent of category dollar sales during the 52 weeks ending February 25, 2012, while green and black grapes represented 36.1 percent and 5.5 percent, respectively, during this same time period, according to Nielsen Perishables

Group data.

Nick Dulcich, owner and president of Delano, CA-based Sunlight International Sales Inc., asserts, “Red grapes sell best, but the new green varieties that offer size and great flavor are hot on the heels of the red varieties. Retailers will see increased late season green opportunities, and the Thompson Seedless variety will soon be in the backseat, or possibly the rearview mirror, in the coming few years as the new green varieties will dominate.”

Black grapes are a far third behind reds and greens in sales. Some in the industry feel this is due to consumers’ inaccurate perception that black grapes contain seeds. “Beyond this,” notes John Pandol, director of special projects for Pandol Bros. Inc., located in Delano, CA, “I think because visually, black grapes are slow movers, they stay on the shelf longer, and the customer ends up having a disappointing experience and this feeds on itself. Regular culling and rotation of the display is essential for black and all grapes.”

Seedless grapes accounted for 80 percent of category dollar sales during the 52 weeks ending February 25, 2012, with seeded representing only 3.4 percent, according to data supplied by the Nielsen Perishables Group. “Seeded Red Globes sell best for the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays,” says Jon Zaninovich, vice president of Jasmine Vineyards Inc., in Delano, CA. “Asian customers enjoy Red Globes, too.”

As for merchandising by individual variety, Sunlight’s Dulcich points out, “Consumers have different tastes, therefore a variety of grapes at retail are necessary. One could even argue for different varieties of the same color. Retailers carry numerous varieties of apples,



**“There’s not enough visual difference between, say, two or three different red varieties, for consumers to notice. We spent a lot of time and effort to try and promote by variety, but in the end it was color that customers most recognized.”**

— Jeff Fairchild, *New Season’s Market*

pears, or plums — many the same color, or appearance — why not two varieties of green or red grapes? There is a huge advantage to merchandising multiple varieties of size and flavor.”

The advantage of promoting individually named varieties of grapes is the chance to gain an exclusive or recognition for offering that variety,” says Dave Parker, director of marketing for Traver, CA-based Scattaglia Growers & Shippers (SGS). “The challenge is assuring a consistent supply of this variety.”

Gordon Robertson, senior vice president of sales and marketing for Sun World International LLC, in Bakersfield, CA, says, “Proprietary varieties lie at the heart of what we do. Scarlotta Seedless, Superior Seedless and

Midnight Beauty brand grapes are varieties that we support in-store with POS materials. Greater variety allows retailers to differentiate and improve margins in the category rather than merchandising grapes like a commodity.”

There is a trend in the industry to sell a public variety of grape by a specific name, warns Pandol. “In this case, a retailer thinks they are getting a unique variety, but instead, it’s only a unique trademark. It’s the latest merchandising technique.”

### 3. Winter Opportunity For Organics

Organically grown grapes accounted for only 2.3 percent of category sales during the 52 weeks ending February 25, 2012, according to data from the Nielsen Perishables Group. One

reason for such a small slice of the category lies on the growing end. Sunlight’s Dulcich explains, “FOBs for organic have drawn much closer to conventional, thus creating a loss of incentive to the grower. However, the organic retailer has certainly kept this subcategory alive.”

Another reason is due to low consumer demand in general. Zaninovich notes, “Organic grapes represent a small but steady segment of the market that seems to be most popular in California and on the East Coast. If we have three truckloads going to a retailer, maybe one to two pallets are organic.”

Organic grape sales took a dip in 2009 and 2010 due to the economy, according to Anthony Vineyard’s Harley. “Sales rebounded the next year, and I think this is due to retailers’ realization that there are two different customers out there. The challenge is that organic grapes are only available about 26 weeks a year.” This supply of organic grapes comes mainly from California and Mexico. The USDA requires importing countries such as Chile to fumigate their grapes with methyl bromide on entry, thus rendering them non-certifiable as organic.



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Kings' Kneeland says, "There is a huge opportunity for growers to provide organic grapes in the winter."

#### 4. Packaging: What To Choose?

Random weight plastic bags are the most popular type of packaging for grapes, according to New Season's Fairchild, who explains, "Clamshells are attractive, but my customers don't like excessive packaging, so there's a pushback on clams. It remains to be seen where the new gusseted pouch bags will go."

Similarly, at Kings Super Markets, Kneeland discloses, "We tried moving our organic grapes into clamshells, but customers still gravitated to bags. I believe they like to be able to rinse grapes in the bag. Plus, a 2-lb. clam can cost as much as \$7, and customers prefer to see a per pound price."

While conventional bags still dominate sales, Dulcich points out, "New ultra clear stand-up packaging or pouch bags have made an impact in some markets where retailers want to showcase the fruit. The pouch bag definitely decreases shrink and attracts the customer to the display area."

Thirty-five to 40 percent of Dayka & Hackett's grape business is in fixed weight packs such as sealed bags with handles and clamshells. "Disadvantages of clamshells include cost; however, advantages are improved shelf-life of the grapes due to less bruising and the ability to market grapes in new alternative formats such as club, discount and convenience stores," explains Dayka. "These new markets will contribute to an overall increase in grape sales."

Multi-color packs offer consumers an

opportunity to try multiple varieties, and can be a good way to introduce consumers to black grapes, says Giumarra's Schulz. "Research shows that black grapes sell more when

**"We tried moving our organic grapes into clamshells, but customers still gravitated to bags. Plus, a 2-lb. clam can cost as much as \$7, and customers prefer to see a per-pound price."**

— Paul Kneeland, Kings Super Markets

merchandised with red and green seedless."

Giumarra's Schulz adds, "For any type of packaging, labeling 'real estate' should be considered to maximize opportunities to connect with the consumer and incorporate eye-catching graphics and product information, recipes and nutrition facts."

#### 5. The Challenge Of Shrink

"Practicing good rotation is how we keep our grape displays fresh," says Fairchild.

The CTGC's Brux agrees, detailing, "Grapes should be rotated by moving older product to the top and center of the display. A clean, well-maintained display, free of sticky bags and debris, will have quicker movement and lower shrink."

Sunlight's Dulcich reminds retailers to refrigerate. "A fresh-looking bunch of grapes with green stems that is kept cool will sell many times faster than a rough-looking product."

Retailers tempted to merchandise grapes on dry tables should keep these guidelines by the CTGC in mind: Bagged grapes will show

deterioration in 24 hours in non-refrigerated displays and 48 hours on refrigerated displays. Clamshell-packed grapes will stay in fresh condition up to 48 hours when non-refrigerated and up to 72 hours on a refrigerated display.

"On display, reduce the risk of shrink by stacking bags no more than two to three high to prevent crush damage to the grapes on the bottom," suggests Sun World's Robertson.

#### 6. Display: The Goldilocks Approach

The optimal-sized grape display shouldn't be too large. Pandol Bros.' Pandol would rather see less space and better frequency of ordering to keep product fresh and moving. "In fact," he adds, "some retailers are getting bolder and pulling grapes off and carrying them, at best, 46 weeks a year when the product isn't coming out of cold storage. Fears of not getting that space back are unfounded. Look how fast retailers make room for cherries."

Profitable displays also shouldn't be too small. Scattaglia's Parker reports, "A study by

the Perishables Group for the California Table Grape Commission that studied the average space allocation of fruits in the fall found that grapes ranked second to last in terms of space, yet generated more dollars than fruits given more display space. For example, the study showed that apples received, on average, 102 square feet of display and generated \$37 per square foot, while grapes were given an average of 27 square feet and generated \$96 per square foot. This shows it pays to give grapes adequate display space."

What is a "just right" display size? CTGC research shows that space allocation for grapes of more than 25 feet can generate up to 63 percent more dollars per store per year than sets under 18 feet.

#### 7. Assortment: Get It Right

"Mixing grape colors, sizes and varieties," says the CTGC's Brux, "adds a dramatic look, and provides consumers convenience while selecting grapes."

According to Dulcich, retailers traditionally



carry no more than four types of grapes: red, green, black seedless and red seeded. “Various types of packaging based on clientele or an organic offering will increase the actual SKUs in the category,” he says. “Retailers constantly are probing their customers’ shopping decisions and trying new types of packaging. During the height of the summer season — August and September — there are many varieties to choose from, while in the fall that number drops quickly.”

“The No. 1 thing to consider when determining an item assortment at a retail store is to understand the customer,” remarks Gina Garven, manager of sourcing business analytics and vendor-managed inventory for C.H. Robinson Worldwide Inc., in Eden Prairie, MN. “There are two consumer groups retailers should focus on that drive consistent grape consumption: families with children and those over the age of 60. These consumer groups are driven by easy snacking options that can be eaten on the go and items that hold significant health benefits. When it comes to families with children,” she continues, “retailers should focus on promoting a smaller sized grape during the summer and around the



back-to-school timeframe, as this item is a nice snacking option for kids and a great item to throw in their lunch box.”

Garven adds, “As for consumers over the age of 60, retailers should focus marketing and education around the health benefits of grapes, as well as offer taste-testing on new and varied

varieties throughout the year. This consumer group has the time and interest to understand what they are eating and the benefits grapes offer. There is a noteworthy association between the increase of median age on the sales of grapes, primarily on the red and black varieties, as these are associated with the most health benefits.”

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**“There are two consumer groups retailers should focus on that drive consistent grape consumption: families with children and those over the age of 60. These consumer groups are driven by easy snacking options that can be eaten on the go and items that hold significant health benefits.”**

— Gina Garven, C.H. Robinson Worldwide Inc.

**8. Make Sure Pricing And Promotions Are Profitable**

Grapes are price-promoted every three to four weeks at New Season’s Market, according to Fairchild.

Pandol Bros.’ Pandol says, “We’ve seen grape sales as a percent of department sales slow down. That’s because retailers have been stuck on a 99-cent ad. We need to move away from this.”

The optimal promotional price to maximize volume lift is 51 percent below the every day non-promoted price, according to 2010 research provided by the CTGC. Research has also shown that promoting five or more varieties of grapes at retail can result in a 70 percent volume lift. Brux adds, “For the maximum volume lift, we recommend that retailers combine multiple variety ads on multiple pages. In-store price reductions are helpful, too.”

Successful promotions need not be solely focused on price. Last August and September, Dayka & Hackett collaborated with Disney On Ice and the Jewel-Osco stores in Chicago in a three-week promotion that encouraged kids to eat more grapes. Consumers who bought bags of Disney-branded grapes received a coupon for a BOGO kid’s ticket to Disney on Ice’s *Mickey and Minnie’s Magical Journey*. In-store signage included Disney-themed coupon displays. The cross-promotion resulted in over 1,000 redemptions, which were double expectations.

On August 24, 2011, Lee’s Marketplace in Logan, UT, a member of Salt Lake City, UT-headquartered Associated Food Stores (AFS), built the world’s largest Welch’s grape display in partnership with C.H. Robinson. The display featured 37,630 pounds of grapes, or 1,981 19-lb. cases, based on the year the store was founded. Seventy percent of the display contained red grapes, two pallets were black grapes and the rest were green grapes. The

cases of bagged grapes were built into a waterfall display in-store in the front of the produce department. Fifteen associates worked five hours to build the massive display. Grapes were aggressively priced at 59-cents per pound and the store sold out in three days. What’s more, compared to the same three days the year prior, sales were up 42 percent, and the department was up 107 percent. Students returning to nearby Utah State University and their parents provided much of the store’s foot traffic.

Leigh Vaughn, AFS senior produce operations specialist, says, “We didn’t make money. However, our primary objective was to create excitement, to build customer loyalty and to attract new customers, and we were definitely successful.”

**9. Summer & Winter Selling Strategies**

There are seasonal nuances to selling grapes. “In the summer,” says Kings Kneeland, “retails are lower, promotional price for 2-lb. bags are around \$3, and we build a bigger grape display and move it out front with the stonefruit and berries to make a big summer statement. Weather influences grape sales, too. When it’s winter, sales are not as robust. Retails are higher and the promotional price is higher, at or around \$5 for two pounds. Accordingly, the display size is smaller and we move grapes back in the wall case.”

Summertime is the ripe time for frequent promotions to move volume. “In the fall and winter,” says Sun World’s Robertson, “look at supply and demand to plan promotions, and when possible, promote four times per month to optimize return to the category.”

Locally grown or domestic is a strong theme for summer promotions, while winter promotions should emphasize the culinary use of grapes. “For example,” Dayka & Hackett’s Dayka says, “Christmas fruit salad and grapes and cheese platters are all popular ways to promote grapes for the winter holidays.” **pb**



# Prunes Or Dried Plums: A Healthy Snack By Any Name

Regardless of the name used, when dried plums are merchandised in produce, retailers are enjoying boosted sales. **BY BOB JOHNSON**



Prunes, or dried plums, are experiencing a resurgence in popularity thanks to smart marketing and merchandising efforts.

**P**runes continue to appeal to an older demographic, while their identical twin, the dried plum, is carving out a niche among younger consumers looking for healthy but convenient snacks. The combination of these two groups is driving the category to new heights, and producer groups are making it easier than ever to entice consumers with attractive packages and displays, as well as creative suggestions for new ways to use dried plums.

Retailers who are taking advantage of the growing opportunities for dried plums in produce are enjoying double-digit growth in sales, with the added benefit of bringing a shelf-stable product to the department. The key to this nutritious opportunity is to put the prunes, or dried plums, in the produce department with the rest of the fruit. “Most produce shoppers actively seek out nutritious foods,” says Joe Tamble, vice president of sales at Sun-Maid Growers of California, in Kingsburg, CA. “Dried plums are an excellent source of fiber and are fruits, just like bananas, apples and oranges.”

## Fruit Thrives In Produce

The sales and profit boost from displaying the dried plums in produce make it a healthy move. “They move a lot better in produce,” reports Greg Calistro, executive director of

produce and floral at Save Mart Supermarkets, in Modesto, CA. “You’ll sell 30 percent more if you have them in produce.” That 30 percent figure is a pretty good rule of thumb on the sales boost from moving the prunes or dried plums to the produce department.

“The total dried fruit category, including dried plums, is most profitable when sold in the produce section,” adds Tamble. “Syndicated data shows that dollar velocity for dried fruit is 30 percent higher in the produce section compared to center-store. Merchandising dried fruit in produce is ‘low-hanging fruit’ to maximize profitability.”

This move to produce is fairly new, and there are still a significant number of stores that merchandise most or all of their prunes in grocery, rather than produce. Lee Reynolds, produce director at Haggen Inc., a 28-unit chain based in Bellingham, WA, asserts, “That’s a grocery item; it’s always been a grocery item. But our categories are split much differently than a lot of other stores.”

The emergence of the entire dried fruit category has been uneven, and there are many stores that have not yet enjoyed significantly increased dried plum sales in either grocery or produce. “We do very little of either prunes or dried plums in produce,” reports Stan Ahl, produce director at Piggly Wiggly Carolina Co.,

headquartered in Charleston, SC. “We tried them in produce, but they were slow. They have a huge section in grocery, but they don’t do all that well there either.”

There has been a general increase in the appeal of dried plums and other dried fruit because of their nutritional value, and the produce department is a destination spot for consumers looking to eat healthy. According to Tamble, “Many consumers are becoming more aware of how the foods they eat affect their overall health. What an opportunity for dried fruit manufacturers and retailers to work together to continue to get the word out regarding healthy options: dried fruit items equal nutritious food.”

There is a considerable amount of new research showing that dried plums, in particular, promote good health. Donn Zea, executive director of the Sacramento-based California Dried Plum Board, reports, “The most recent health-related news concerns bone health. Dried plums are compared to dairy, calcium, exercise and weight-lifting in promoting bone health. A University of Florida study concludes eating dried plums can actually reduce bone loss, and restore bone mass.” Bone health is particularly important for the demographic group that major dried plum producers have targeted as the key to sales growth — women

## “Dried fruit sales are critical to produce department profits because they make up for a lot of the shrink in other categories.”

— Joe Tamble, Sun-Maid Growers of California

between the ages of 25 and 54.

Dried plum producers are seizing the opportunity for growth by creating innovative packages and eye-catching retail displays. “Sun-Maid dried fruit shipper displays are already filled when they are delivered to retailers, so they provide an easy way for retailers to drive impulse purchases and increase market basket size,” points out the company’s Tamble. “Over 20 percent of total dried fruit category dollars are generated from displays. Feature ads also work very well for selling dried plums in the produce department.”

One grower has developed displays tailored to specific events that are considered prime-time opportunities for dried plum sales. Jeff McLemore, marketing director for dried fruit at Sun-Maid Growers Inc., headquartered in Yuba City, CA, shares, “We’ve had a lot of success in recent years generating incremental lifts from secondary displays during key times of the year such as Back to School, Holiday and New Years. Based on the recent success, there have just been more opportunities for our business to grow, and retailers have certainly seen the value in the advertising.”

One advantage of dried plums for consumers and retailers alike is that they are one of the few shelf-stable foods in the produce department. “The long shelf-life creates minimal to no shrink,” McLemore says.

For retailers, dried plums can help to balance the produce department’s vulnerability to shrink. “Dried fruit sales are critical to produce department profits because they make up for a lot of the shrink in other categories,” explains Sun-Maid’s Tamble. “The shelf-life for most dried fruits is 12 to 18 months. Sun-Maid raisins and dried fruits are easy to stock on the shelf and are also offered in attractive shipper displays that are ideal for appealing to the produce shopper.”

### More Than Just A Snack

Dried plums or prunes have traditionally been eaten by themselves as a healthy snack, which accounts for 90 percent of sales. But prunes have also been successfully merchandised for a long time as a baking ingredient. “During times of the year when baking is popular, such as Thanksgiving, Christmas or Easter, we will run promotions,” notes Save Mart’s Calistro. “We sell three times more than normal, but some people are buying them as snacks because they are on sale.”

Recent increased sales can be attributed, in part, to promoting dried plums as ingredients in a wider range of dishes. “Our retail sales are trending up,” reports Zea of the California Dried Plum Board. “That is due to more enticing packaging and promoting other ways you can enjoy dried plums, like in salads or with yogurt.”

Sunsweet has developed a new product specifically tailored to promoting dried plums as an ingredient. McLemore contends, “The key is to continue to educate consumers through advertising and creating new usage. One way we are doing that is with our newest item, Plum Amazins, diced dried plums. Currently, only 10 percent of consumption comes from ingredient use; the other 90 percent comes from snacking. Plum Amazins offer consumers an innovative way to add dried plums to their favorite dishes such as salads, cereal, yogurt or oatmeal. In addition, Plum Amazins are helping people discover new recipes as well.”

The California Dried Plum Board has enlisted promotional help from Olympic swimmer, Natalie Coughlin. The board’s promotional campaign includes some of Coughlin’s recipes, such as sautéed kale with dried plums and coconut. “Our real focus is still the whole dried fruit,” adds Zea. “We’re encouraging people to eat them as snacks. You can open up a small package, pick out a dried plum, and then zip the package closed.”

pb

## A Prune By Any Other Name

A few years back, the group formerly known as the California Prune Board changed its name to the California Dried Plum Board, and changed the name it uses to promote dried plums. The new name was intended to help bring a new group of consumers to the product, and it worked. The result is that the preferred name for this healthy food depends on who you ask. “A wide range of consumers make both of these names relevant,” notes Joe Tamble, vice president of sales at Sun-Maid Growers of California, in Kingsburg, CA. “Most packages continue to use both names to appeal to all consumers. Calling them ‘prunes’ continues to appeal to the older demographic who are more familiar with this name. The term ‘dried plums’ is more accepted by the key target audience of women ages 25 to 54-years-old.”

Sunsweet has also noticed the same demographic breakdown in what they are called. “Based on feedback we received, this varies by demographics. The younger consumers prefer dried plums, while the core consumers prefer prunes,” confirms Jeff McLemore, marketing director for dried fruit at Sun-Maid Growers Inc., headquartered in Yuba City, CA.

Even when they are advertised and promoted as dried plums, most older consumers still call them prunes. “Most people call them prunes,” according to Greg Calistro, executive director of produce and floral at Save Mart Supermarkets, in Modesto, CA. “Even if we advertise them as dried plums, you’ll never hear people use that term. It could have to do with our customer base; we tend to have an older group of consumers in many of our stores.”

In other areas of the world, they are still called prunes. According to Donn Zea, executive director of the Sacramento-based California Dried Plum Board, “It depends on where you’re buying them. In the United States, our promotional efforts refer to them as dried plums, but some traditionalists still call them prunes. Internationally, in China, Japan, India and Russia they still call them prunes.”

Eventually, it seems likely they will be known predominantly, in the United States at least, as dried plums. “When you change a brand, it’s a high hurdle to get over,” Zea points out. “People have called them prunes for a long time. Dried plums reminds people where they come from. Young people see them as a nutritious dietary alternative like other fruits.”

Packaging usually includes both names and there are no signs of any backlash from marketing the product as dried plums. McLemore adds, “We haven’t seen any negative response to marketing them as dried plums. In fact, since we started advertising four or five years ago, the category has grown substantially. We feel like advertising is key to our success and educating consumers about the full benefits of dried plums.”

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# MENTORSHIP



**W**e have all had people throughout our careers that have shown an interest in helping us to develop our skills so that we could become successful. While the outcome may have been the same without the interest these people showed on our behalf, it goes without saying that having someone recognize your potential and help you to reach that potential is an invaluable gift.

In a larger sense, it is the responsibility of the previous generation to enlighten the next generation with their experience, insight and passion. It is more than a responsibility; it is the duty of those who have gone before to prepare those who will follow to meet the challenges of the industry. If this is not done, a wealth of knowledge and intelligence will be lost to the following generation and they will have to learn all of this by experience the hard way.

During my years in retail, I had the opportunity to observe a strong mentorship program in action. In fact, my career was molded and guided by a strong mentorship program and I enjoyed the fruits of all the experience and knowledge that was bestowed upon me by the experienced produce people who went before me.

This type of education by mentorship has worked very successfully in produce throughout the years. It was created to imitate the apprenticeship system that existed in the meat department, where experienced managers taught the apprentice the skills he needed not only to prepare the product, but also how to display and sell it. In produce, we adopted a similar system. Each trainee was shown the proper way to accomplish certain tasks. This trainee continued to perform the task under the watchful eye of his mentor until he could execute it without any supervision. During this time, the mentor also noticed areas of strength within the candidate, as well as areas that needed to be improved. This process continuously developed well-trained produce personnel who could not only perform all the tasks, but by emulating their mentor, could also operate the department efficiently and profitably. Most importantly, he was ready to train the next generation of produce clerks.

In the brave new world we are now facing in produce at retail, mentorship of new produce personnel has fallen into disuse in many operations. It may be due to the intense scrutiny on produce departments for labor hours and the cost that they represent. In many cases, training is one of the first things cut when looking at costs and efficiencies. It is assumed that the clerk would be able to learn these tasks by trial-and-error and that expensive training programs or training aids

were simply an area of expense that needed to be cut.

The operations that adopted this philosophy clearly missed the point that mentorship was the most cost-effective way to train produce personnel. By encouraging and nurturing experienced produce personnel and managers in the skills of mentorship, produce operations gain, in the short term, capable clerks who can allow for a better presentation and better care of the product. In the long run, it would begin to generate a supply of experienced, well-trained and motivated produce personnel to move up in the organization and drive the operation of the produce department to the next level.

While this sounds easy to do, it is not, given the pressure on today's produce managers and store managers to control labor cost and to get more done with less. It will require conscious and focused effort from the entire operation to rekindle the fire that made mentorship so valuable. It will also require the identification of key personnel in the stores, whether a manager or a clerk, who have the potential to be good mentors. With enough effort, the mentorship training solution can once again be the force behind developing produce personnel.

This type of training not only develops qualified and well-trained personnel, but also helps in the morale and motivation of all employees. By emulating their mentor, they can advance as far as their drive and passion will take them. From buyers to merchandisers and directors to administrative personnel, everyone can benefit from mentorship and the improvement that it brings to the operation. This type of training provides a framework for a cohesive team to form

within the operation, and allows for the development of a common direction and focus.

The program that I experienced is identical to what has previously been described. It was successful and continued to turn out excellent produce personnel because the value of mentorship was instilled in everyone that went through the program and was an internal part in the success and growth of the produce operation. The longer you were in the program, the more you desired to become a mentor and to help develop the younger employees in the company.

In many organizations, mentorship has been out of favor for quite a while. However, with its track record of success over many decades, it is certainly possible that it can be revived where it does not exist. As with any good program it is never too late to start, but given the increasing nature of the challenges to cost in the departments and the additional demands to do more with less, it will be a daunting task. However, it will be well worth the effort, as a well-executed mentorship program will pay dividends far in excess of any costs associated with implementing such a program, which will pass on invaluable knowledge from generation to generation. **pb**

**In the brave new world we are now facing in produce at retail, mentorship of new produce personnel has fallen into disuse in many operations. It may be due to the intense scrutiny on produce departments for labor hours and the cost that they represent.**

**By Don Harris**

Don Harris is a 38-year veteran of the produce industry, with most of that time spent in retail. He has worked in every aspect of the industry, from "field-to-fork" in both the conventional and organic arenas. Harris is presently consulting on all subjects of retail, category development and sales strategies, among others. Comments can be directed to [editor@producebusiness.com](mailto:editor@producebusiness.com)



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# TIME TO GET OUT OF THE “LABYRINTH” OF DECLINING FRESH PRODUCE CONSUMPTION IN EUROPE



The results from Freshfel Europe’s recent Consumption Monitor show a worrying downward trend of consumption patterns nearly all across Europe in the past decade. Suffice it to say that from the year 2000 to 2010, European consumption of fresh produce has decreased by around 100 grams (g), the equivalent to a full portion per day, per capita. Findings show that in 2010, the

total net supply of fruit per capita stands at 235 g/day, while the vegetable total net supply per capita stands at 223 g/day. The per-capita fresh fruit consumption within the EU-27 declined drastically in 2010 by 7.8 percent, which means a decrease of 9.4 percent in comparison to the average consumption of the previous five years. Fresh vegetable consumption declined also by 7.4 percent compared to 2009, remaining clearly below the average of the past five years by 10.3 percent.

The declining, or at the best, in some countries, stagnating consumption, is also having its impact on fresh produce’s trade patterns in Europe. Imports of fruit originating in third countries (those that are not part of the European Union) remain stable in 2010, reaching a total of 11.2 millions tons, resulting in a 0.1 percent decrease as compared to 2009. However, on a longer perspective, the 2010 import level is 1.3 percent below the average import volume of the previous five years, which stands at 11.3 million tons. After bananas (41.2 percent), citrus fruit remains the highest imported category (19.7 percent), followed by dates, figs and tropical fruit (13 percent).

When looking at imports of fresh vegetables originating in third countries, the total volume amounted to 1.8 million tons, resulting in a decrease of 2.2 percent, compared to 2009. However, this means an increase of 7.2 percent, compared to the average of the five previous years, which stands at 1.7 millions tons. In 2010, tomatoes represented 27.9 percent of imports, while onions, shallots, garlic and leeks represented 22.3 percent.

As the European fresh produce association, Freshfel has taken the lead for the sector at the European level to engage in a proactive attitude to halt this negative consumption trend and to promote imports as well as exports to and from Europe at broad. One of the major activities of Freshfel in 2012 is spreading the message that it is only through a multidimensional approach and avoiding oversimplification that all relevant stakeholders will be able to reverse the current situation.

The recurring issue of high price is, on the one hand, a clear misperception of the reality, as fresh fruit and vegetables is one of the cheapest food categories available, with a specialized supply

chain that is often overlooked or undervalued by consumers. Prices for the recommended “5-a-day” are actually ranging between 1 and 2 Euros (equivalent to between \$1.30 and \$2.60), depending on the categories chosen.

On the other hand, fresh produce is also under pressure due to various factors. There is an increasing competition for consumers’ “stomach share,” with the growing categories of ready-to-eat/convenience products and more out-of-home consumption, while there is an apparent lack of penetration of fresh produce in the foodservice sector. In addition, the sector is weakened by its fragmentation and limited marketing budget, posing a disadvantage to major agri-food businesses. Under such circumstances, the lack of a unified and homogenous message to consumers, as is currently the case through the various “5-a-day” messages in Europe, is even more obstructive for fresh produce’s consumption.

Finally, the sector seems to be struggling to valorize the image of its products, highlighting the pleasure and enjoyments of consuming fresh produce, while other agri-food businesses keep (mis)using it for marketing products with none or little actual content (as shown by the “Where is the fruit?” study by Freshfel). Added to this, simplified messages by NGOs on food safety place the whole sector in the spotlight of the media, with only limited possibilities to rectify these accusations once they reach out.

On the bright side, several surveys confirm that consumers are ready to increase their fresh produce intake. As science, public authorities and health professionals have been claiming for a long time now, a diet rich in fruits and vegetables comes along with multiple benefits with regard to nutrition and health, the environment, social costs and even cultural assets. There is support of health institutions such as the World Health Organization (WHO), but this is also being integrated in new policy-making by the EU institutions, a clear example of this being the EU School Fruit Scheme. Further opportunities are in innovation and research, as well as within the environmental debate, where the production of fruit and vegetables is well placed, compared to other food categories.

The sector needs to size these opportunities and profile fresh produce’s image to consumers and decision-makers. A collective communication taking “fresh produce” as a category is needed. At Freshfel Europe, this approach is certainly supported, witnessed by the launch of the ENJOY FRESH website ([www.enjoyfresh.eu](http://www.enjoyfresh.eu)), a positive step that has been welcome by many as filling a gap. These first steps will still have to be reinforced by building a network platform around ENJOY FRESH, incorporating both public and private stakeholders who would like to join forces and expertise to finally reverse this decline in consumption, which has marked the last decade, leading hopefully to a flourishing European fresh produce market.

**pb**

**By Sebastian Kruse**

Policy Advisor - Supply Chain and Communication, Freshfel Europe, based in Brussels, Belgium





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# TIME TO “COOL” OFF



**I** call for the immediate abolishment of Country of Origin Labeling (COOL). In the interim, there should be full suspension of any COOL enforcement activity as a budget-saving measure.

Call me outside mainstream thinking of the produce industry, but I've never understood why Country of Origin Labeling was on our agenda. Yeah, I understand the “support-your-local-business,” Buy Amer-

ican populist appeal of the idea, but come on, this is America. This country is full of good Americans who wave the flag while they drive their foreign-made cars filled with gasoline refined from imported oil, wear imported clothes and buy all matter of foreign-made goods from retailers that are sometimes foreign-owned. My shopping cart piles up with olive oil from Italy, coffee from Kenya, canned tuna from the Philippines, cashews from Brazil and lamb chops from Australia. Americans SAY they read labels, the same way Americans SAY they like to support American products, and then BUY whatever. Produce is no exception. Why would it be?

COOL was first implemented in seafood about eight years ago, meat about six years and produce about four years. I really can't see any benefit I have derived as a grower. My feedback from retailers is negative.

So it was not without a bit of a smirk that I received the news that the USA was in trouble because of COOL. For those of you who don't read beyond the produce department, there's trouble brewing over at the meat counter. Some countries that export beef and pork to the USA have filed protest with the World Trade Organization over certain aspects of COOL. The WTO ruled in November that, indeed, certain aspects of COOL violate the USA's treaty obligations.

Great. COOL under fire. We'll finally get rid of this turkey. Or so I thought.

In my inbox was USDA Agricultural Marketing Service press release 098-12 dated April 5, 2012. In this release, we learn that COOL regulations remain in force during the WTO appeal, that “Mandatory COOL requirements help consumers make informed purchasing decisions about the food they buy;” that in 2011, “The USDA and its state cooperators conducted more than 5,000 initial and follow up reviews of retailers;” and that “The USDA strongly supports the U.S.

Trade Representative's appeal in the WTO to defend its existing COOL regulations.”

“Help consumers make informed purchasing decisions”? I took a look at a pack of frozen hamburger patties, which have frequently been in the news lately. The 100 percent beef patties processed at a plant in central California had the following COOL label: “Contains meat from United States, Canada, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand.” First, I am not sure if the meat in my burgers is from one of the above countries, a blend of all of the above countries or a blend from some countries but not others. And if I did know the origin(s) of the beef, exactly what am I supposed to do with that information? I'm in the food business and I could not give you an argument in favor or one country versus another. Do I phone a friend? Michael Moore or

Michael Pollan or some other guru? So if I don't know about given product of a country, am I making a judgment about the country itself? Are we country-labeling so the economic xenophobes who are aroused by the sound of Lou Dobbs' voice can act on their prejudices?

5,000 store inspections? OK, it's the law. It should be enforced. I guess there are people who need to know if their shrimp comes from Thailand or the Philippines; their bananas from Colombia or Ecuador; and their lamb chops

from New Zealand or Australia. Assuming there is a small niche group of consumers, passionate or prejudiced, informed or ignorant, who do use COOL as a criterion, don't we have PTI, QR codes and plain old ask-the-produce-clerk-to-look-at-the-box? Do we really need hundreds of signs in the butcher, seafood and produce departments of tens of thousands of stores, with their attendant record-keeping requirements?

I say no. I call on Congress to comply with the WTO ruling by immediately revoking the COOL law. The government has wasted enough money it doesn't have on this project. I'm sure the fine folks at the USTR have more important issues in Geneva. And I'm sure all those state and federal sign inspectors can be redeployed to other tasks... Important, critical, useful public information, like making sure Lean Finely Textured Beef is clearly indicated on my burger patties.

For the record, at the Untied Fresh/FMI/American Meat Institute show in Dallas, I stood in a long line to receive a free hamburger made with Lean Finely Textured Beef... four times. The beef guys are hurtin'. Show a cowboy some love by buying their products in this very dark time.

**pb**

**Assuming there is a small niche group of consumers, passionate or prejudiced, informed or ignorant, who do use COOL as a criterion, don't we have PTI, QR codes, and plain old ask-the-produce-clerk-to-look-at-the-box?**

**By John Pandol**

Director of Special Projects, Pandol Bros. Inc., Delano, CA



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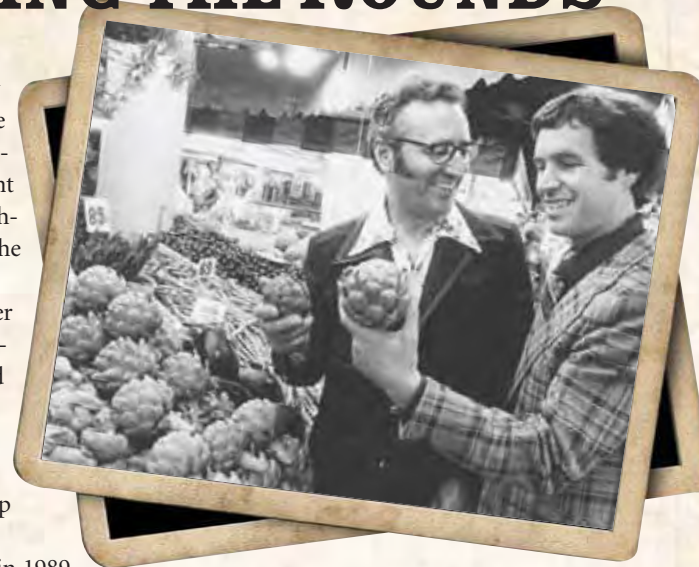
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# FATHER AND SON MAKING THE ROUNDS

Working for their company, Boggiatto Packing Co. Inc. in 1977, father and son, Eugene and Michael Boggiatto, were on a marketing trip in Los Angeles, CA. They visited the Farmers Market at Third and Fairfax to check out the artichokes. Gene was 58 and Michael was 30 at the time of this photo. Their family roots in agriculture go back to 1907 when Antonio Boggiatto, a young Northern Italian immigrant started a new life in the United States. After trying his hand at several trades in Northern California, Antonio and his wife, Gussie, found success growing artichokes in the Castroville area of Monterey County.

Antonio's son, Eugene, (left), became involved with the family business after returning from World War II in the late 1940s. After honing his skills growing artichokes for several years, Gene established the area's first roadside produce stand and began his own artichoke shipping operation from the home ranch. He marketed artichokes from other area growers and then in 1961 opened the first successful, centralized artichoke packing shed. This led to many other agricultural firsts, including: first to use corrugated cartons, rather than wood crates; first to ship artichokes by air; and first to effectively pre-cool artichokes prior to shipping.

Boggiatto Packing is no longer around but a spin off company was launched in 1989 when several families in California's Salinas Valley joined forces to found Boggiatto Produce in Salinas, CA. Broccoli, romaine, lettuce, and other vegetables were added to the traditional Boggiatto artichoke product line. Michael, (right in photo), is company president and proudly says his retired, 92-year-old father is doing reasonably well.



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](mailto:info@producebusiness.com)

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Asociacion Mexicana de Horticultura Protegida A.C.	43		<a href="http://www.amhpac.org">www.amhpac.org</a>
Baero North America, Inc.	5	314-692-2270	<a href="http://www.baerousa.com">www.baerousa.com</a>
Baero North America, Inc.	Floral 8-9	314-692-2270	<a href="http://www.baerousa.com">www.baerousa.com</a>
Blue Book Services	105	630-668-3500	<a href="http://www.producebluebook.com">www.producebluebook.com</a>
Buona Foods, Inc.	80	610-274-0712	<a href="http://www.buonafoods.com">www.buonafoods.com</a>
California Giant Berry Farms	75	831-728-1773	<a href="http://www.calgiant.com">www.calgiant.com</a>
California Sun Dry Foods	77	800-995-7753	<a href="http://www.calsundrytomatoes.com">www.calsundrytomatoes.com</a>
Canadian Produce Marketing Association	70	613-226-4187	<a href="http://www.cpm.ca">www.cpm.ca</a>
Capital City Fruit Co., Inc.	82	515-981-5111	<a href="http://www.capitalcityfruit.com">www.capitalcityfruit.com</a>
Castle Rock Vineyards	60	661-721-8717	<a href="http://www.castlerockvineyards.com">www.castlerockvineyards.com</a>
Center for Produce Safety	19		<a href="https://cps.ucdavis.edu/">https://cps.ucdavis.edu/</a>
Champ's Mushrooms	80	866-Champs1	<a href="http://www.champsmushrooms.ca">www.champsmushrooms.ca</a>
Coast To Coast Produce Co.	36-37	877-836-6295	<a href="http://www.ctcproduce.com">www.ctcproduce.com</a>
William Consalo & Sons Farms, Inc.	71	856-691-3377	<a href="http://www.consalo.com">www.consalo.com</a>
Country Fresh Mushroom Co.	80	610-268-3043	<a href="http://www.countryfreshmushrooms.com">www.countryfreshmushrooms.com</a>
Del Monte Fresh Produce	10	8800-950-3683	<a href="http://www.freshdelmonte.com">www.freshdelmonte.com</a>
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dProduce Man Software	42	888-PRODMAN	<a href="http://www.dproduceman.com">www.dproduceman.com</a>
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Farm 2 U, LLC	86	478-825-3100	
Floral Business	14	561-994-1118	<a href="http://www.floralbusinessmagazine.com">www.floralbusinessmagazine.com</a>
Fresh Produce & Floral Council	52	714-739-0177	
General Produce, Inc.	87	800-782-5833	<a href="http://www.generalproduceinc.com">www.generalproduceinc.com</a>
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Hardy Farms Peanuts	86	478-783-3044	<a href="http://www.hardyfarmspanuts.com">www.hardyfarmspanuts.com</a>
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Highline Mushrooms	81	519-326-8643	<a href="http://www.highlinemushrooms.com">www.highlinemushrooms.com</a>
Inline Plastics Corp.	49	800-826-5567	<a href="http://www.inlineplastics.com">www.inlineplastics.com</a>
Jasmine Vineyards, Inc.	93	661-792-2141	<a href="http://www.jasminevineyards.com">www.jasminevineyards.com</a>
Jersey Fresh	68	856-881-0200	<a href="http://www.sunnyint.com">www.sunnyint.com</a>

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Monterey Mushrooms	81	636-587-2771	<a href="http://www.montereymushrooms.com">www.montereymushrooms.com</a>
Mooney Farms	79	530-899-2661	<a href="http://www.moneyfarms.com">www.moneyfarms.com</a>
New England Produce Council	18	781-273-0444	<a href="http://www.newenglandproduce.com">www.newenglandproduce.com</a>
New Jersey Blueberry Industry Council	67	609-292-8853	
New Jersey Department of Agriculture	65	609-292-8853	<a href="http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture">www.state.nj.us/agriculture</a>
New Jersey Peach Promotion Council	72	973-744-6090	<a href="http://www.jerseypeaches.com">www.jerseypeaches.com</a>
Ocean Mist Farms	25	831-633-2492	<a href="http://www.oceanmist.com">www.oceanmist.com</a>
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Paulk Vineyards	89	229-468-7873	<a href="http://www.paulkvineyards.com">www.paulkvineyards.com</a>
Phillips Mushroom Farms	76	800-722-8818	<a href="http://www.phillipsmushroomfarms.com">www.phillipsmushroomfarms.com</a>
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SAGARPA - Embassy of Mexico	46-47	202-728-1727	<a href="http://www.sagarpa.gob.mx">www.sagarpa.gob.mx</a>
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Uesugi Farms, Inc.	61	408-842-1294	<a href="http://www.uesugifarms.com">www.uesugifarms.com</a>
United Fresh Produce Association	95	202-303-3400	<a href="http://www.unitedfresh.org">www.unitedfresh.org</a>
The USA Bouquet Co.	Floral 16	786-437-6502	<a href="http://www.usabq.com">www.usabq.com</a>
Village Farms	59	888-377-3213	<a href="http://www.villagefarms.com">www.villagefarms.com</a>
Vineland Co-op Produce Auction, Inc.	70	856-691-0721	<a href="http://www.vinelandproduce.com">www.vinelandproduce.com</a>
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