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## HOMESPUN SUSTAINABILITY

# Wegmans FOOD MARKETS



### INSIDE:

THE PUNDIT PAYS TRIBUTE TO JAN FLEMING  
NEPC AWARD GOES TO SAM STROCK  
AGRITRADE RECAP • CHERRIES • MANGOS  
SAVANNAH PORTS • SALAD DRESSING  
STATE DEPARTMENT OF AG CAMPAIGNS  
LETTUCE • SOUTHERN PRODUCE  
SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE CITRUS  
RIPENING FRUIT • DRIED FRUIT AND NUTS  
GUEST COLUMN BY REGGIE GRIFFIN  
IFE REVIEW  
PACKAGING PORTFOLIO

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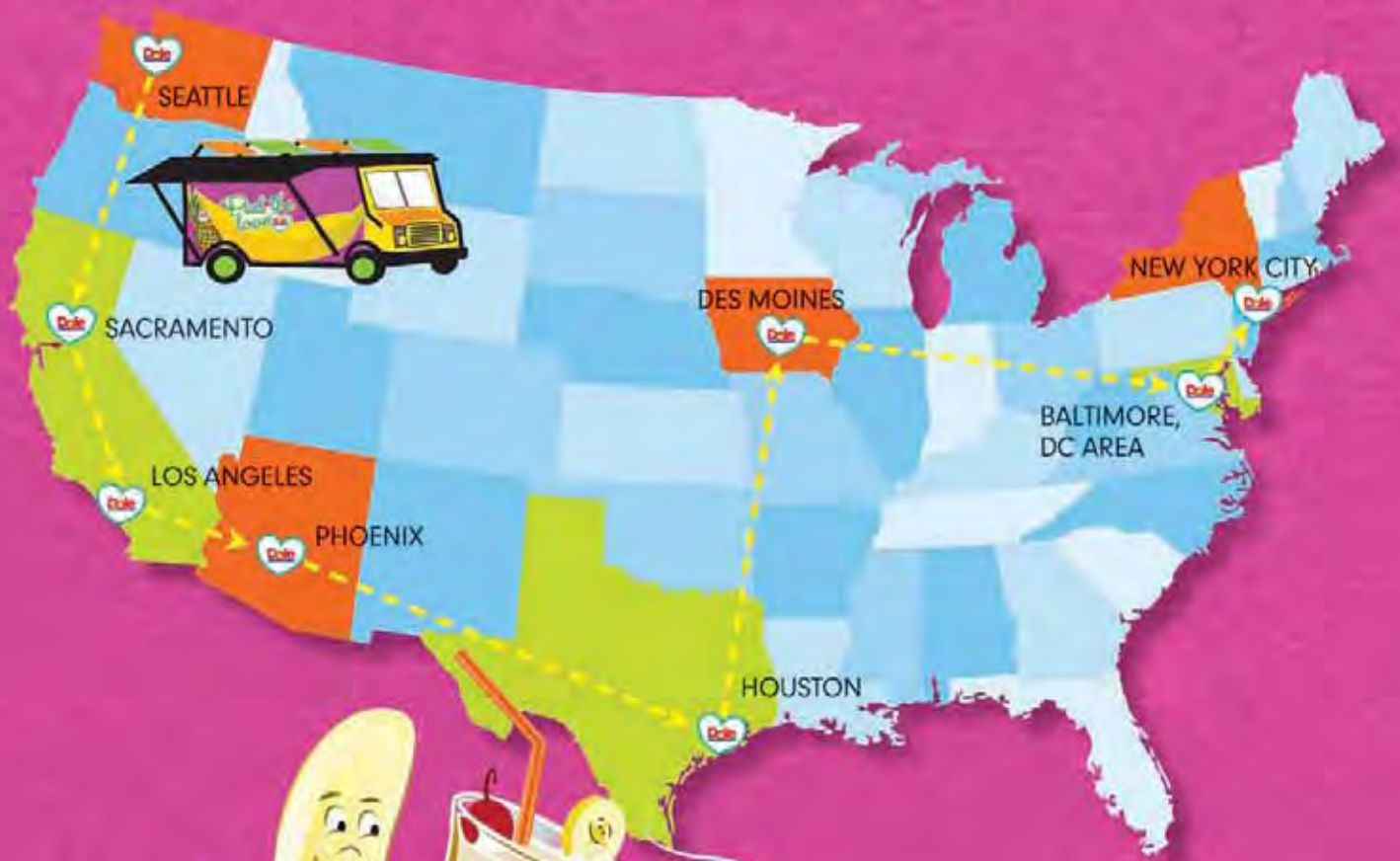
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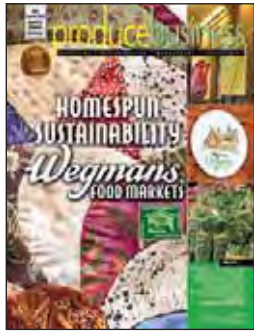
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**WHERE DO SUPPLIERS ENVISION THE LETTUCE CATEGORY IN THE YEAR 2020?**



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**THIS MONTH'S WINNER**



**Steve Highley**  
Sales  
Crown Jewels Produce Company  
Fresno, CA

Steve Highley has been working in the produce industry since the early 80s. His first taste of the industry came as an inspector for Imperial County, CA. "From there, it led me to different leads in the industry," says Highley.

His first gig working for a produce company was at Sales King International, where he worked for 13 years. Then it was on to Califresh, where he worked for three years. "Califresh is the only company in the United States that grows, packs, and ships fresh garbanzo beans," says Highley.

Today Highley is in sales at Crown Jewels Produce Company, a grower/shipper/packer in Fresno, CA. He has been working there for six-and-a-half years.

"We market vegetables, melons and grapes out of Mexico," says Highley. "Here in California, we market cherries, blueberries, melons, grapes, apples, pears, and pomegranates."

Highley has been reading *PRODUCE BUSINESS* magazine for 20-plus years. "I like reading the different stories about different companies," says Highley, "and, of course, playing the quiz." For his efforts, Highley wins a distance-calculating talking golf caddy.

**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 July 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 APRIL ISSUE**

- 1) What is the name of Dole's three-month Food Truck Tour, taking place this summer? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What are the two brand names of Hollandia's Living Butter Lettuce? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Nature's Candy brand cherries are marketed by which Wenatchee, WA-based company? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) PuraVida Farms will be located at which United Fresh booth in San Diego? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) How many new flavors of Simply Dressed refrigerated salad dressing is Marzetti offering? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) Which Tarpless ripening room company is "ripening over 100 million pounds a day...and growing!"? \_\_\_\_\_

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

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 Phone: 561-994-1118 • Fax: 561-994-1610  
 producebusiness@phoenixmedianet.com

**PRESIDENT & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**  
 James E. Prevor  
 JPrevor@phoenixmedianet.com

**PUBLISHER/EDITORIAL DIRECTOR**  
 Ken Whitacre  
 KWhitacre@phoenixmedianet.com

**SPECIAL PROJECTS EDITOR**  
 Mira Slott  
 MSlott@phoenixmedianet.com

**PRODUCTION DIRECTOR**  
 Diana Levine  
 DLevine@phoenixmedianet.com

**PRODUCTION LEADER**  
 Jackie Tucker

**PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT**  
 SUNSHINE GORMAN  
 FREDDY PULIDO

**TRADE SHOW COORDINATOR**  
 Jackie LoMonte  
 JLoMonte@phoenixmedianet.com

**EDITORIAL INTERN**  
 Madeline Mesa  
 Mmesa@phoenixmedianet.com

**CONTRIBUTING EDITORS**  
 Carol Bareuther, Nicole Brayshaw Bond  
 Bob Johnson, Bill Martin, Jodean Robbins,  
 Barbara Robison,

**ADVERTISING**  
 Eric Nieman, Associate Publisher  
 ENieman@phoenixmedianet.com

Wendy Jones  
 WJones@phoenixmedianet.com

Sandy Lee  
 SLee@phoenixmedianet.com

Bill Martin  
 Martinmedia45@peoplepc.com

Ellen Rosenthal  
 ERosenthal@phoenixmedianet.com

**FLORAL DEPARTMENT MARKETING**  
 E. Shaunn Alderman  
 SAlderman@phoenixmedianet.com

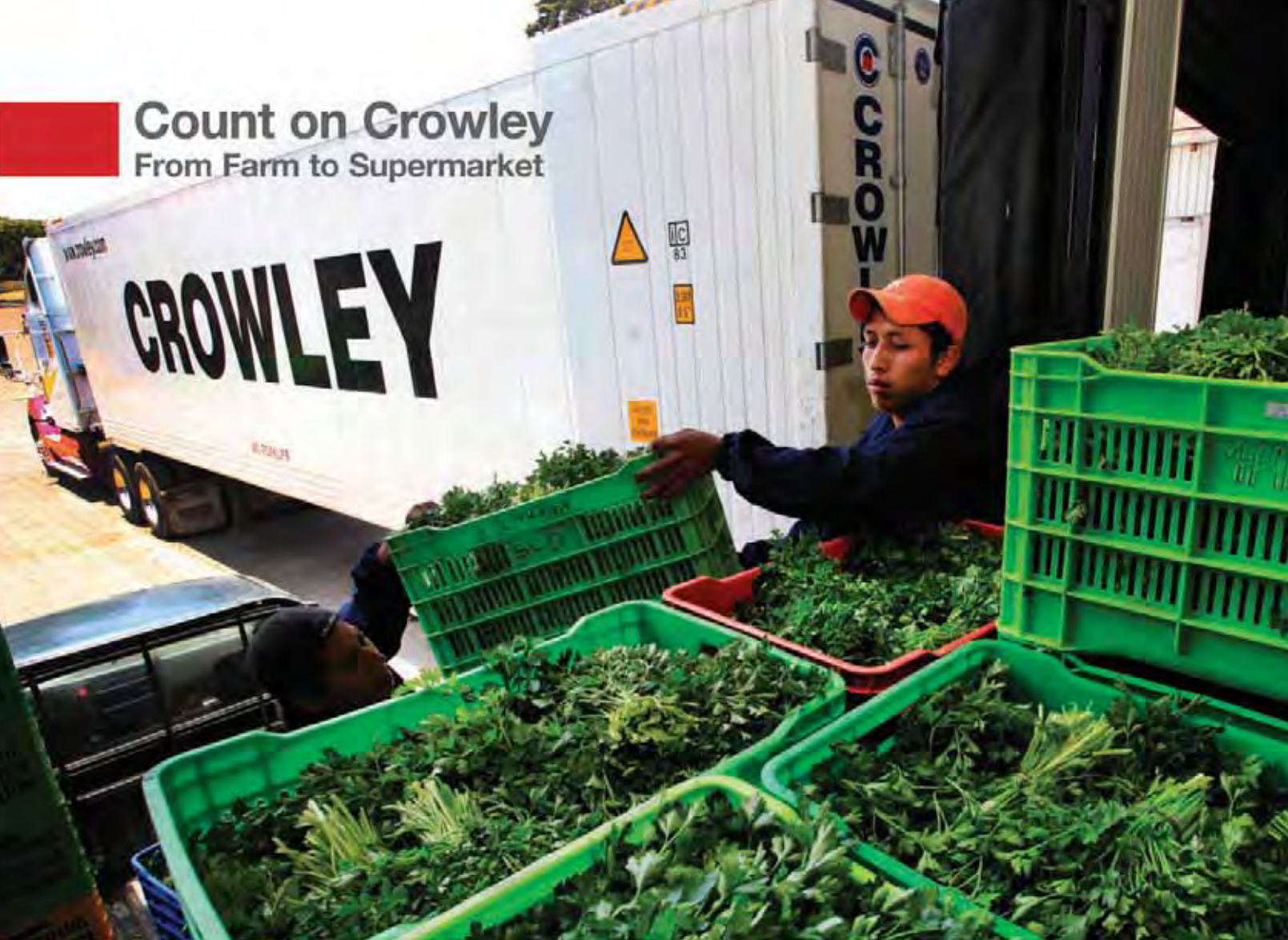
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# INDUSTRY RALLIES TO PUSH FOR FSMA COMMENT EXTENSION

By Robert Guenther,  
United Fresh Senior Vice President of Public Policy



United Fresh rallied more than 85 fresh fruit and vegetable groups to join in requesting an extension of the comment period on the proposed Produce Safety and Preventive Controls Rules under the Food Safety and Modernization Act (FSMA). In a letter to FDA Commissioner Margaret Hamburg, the signatories requested to extend the comment period beyond the May 16 deadline, noting “it would be impossible for any interested party to meaningfully comment on these two proposed rules when they represent such a substantial overhaul of the structure of food safety regulation. The sheer size of the regulations has lengthened the time necessary for analysis.”

The analysis of the proposed rules has been ongoing. United’s two member-driven working groups spent months delving into the more than 1,000-page documents, with several web-based interactive meetings, face-to-face meetings, conference calls and e-mails to shape comments that will ensure the final rules advance food safety efficiently and effectively. Our members and staff have attended FDA public hearings on the rules to share concerns, and on our recent Fresh Impact tour, we heard from producers throughout California about how the proposed rules will affect their operations.

Of major concern the industry has are the exemptions of operations based on average annual sales figures and selling direct to consumers. It’s recognized that FDA included the Tester Amendment exemptions in the proposed rules because they were required to by FSMA, but pathogens don’t discriminate based on the size of the operation, and consumers who buy from small, local operations deserve the same level of public health protection as those who buy through conventional markets.

“The FDA got a lot right in the proposed Produce Safety Rule, but there are some areas

**“IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR ANY INTERESTED PARTY TO MEANINGFULLY COMMENT ON THESE TWO PROPOSED RULES WHEN THEY REPRESENT SUCH A SUBSTANTIAL OVERHAUL OF THE STRUCTURE OF FOOD SAFETY REGULATION.”**

where we think it can be improved,” said Walter Ram, chairman of United’s Food Safety & Technology Council and vice president of Food Safety at The Giumarra Companies. “FDA is under pressure to get the final rules issued as soon as possible, but it is more important to get them done right than it is to get them done quickly.”

The extension request letter outlines several reasons why the 120-day comment period is insufficient. The proposed rules and reference documents are lengthy. In addition, FDA has utilized almost 500 scientific, economic, and industry references that stakeholders are currently analyzing to validate their association with the proposed rule. Most importantly from a produce industry perspective, these two rules traverse at many different points, adding to the challenges associated with fully analyzing these two rules and their complete bearing on our members.

To that end, the proposed Produce Safety and Preventive Controls Rules are actually two of a suite of interlocking regulations that will fundamentally alter the global fresh and fresh-cut produce industry. In addition to the two proposed rules, FDA has announced its intent “to publish the foreign supplier verification program (FSVP) proposed rule, which would help ensure the safety of foods imported into the U.S. by making importers accountable for verifying that the food they import is produced using processes and procedures that achieve the same level of

public health protection for imported food as required of domestic growers and processors.” Two further rulemakings, on Preventive Controls for Animal Feed and Accredited Third-Party Certification, are also scheduled to be released in the near future. Both of those rulemakings will also affect the fresh and fresh-cut produce industry.

Finally, FDA posed more than 100 questions to stakeholders when the rules were issued, some of which require scientific and economic analysis that could take months, if not years, to fully synthesize comments.

The signatories have requested a minimum of an additional 180-day period after the proposed rules for the Foreign Supplier Verification Program, Preventive Controls for Animal Feed and Accredited Third-Party Certification have been issued.

The letter notes, “Our industry has consistently supported strong mandatory, enforceable, commodity-specific food safety practices based on the best available science, applicable to both domestic and foreign produce. That support continues through this rulemaking process and looks forward to providing FDA with constructive and detailed comments regarding these proposed food safety rules.”

We’re optimistic that an extension to the comment period will be granted. United and industry allies will continue to analyze the implications of the proposed rules and encourage members to review them and comment as well.



*right on target*



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# PIVOT POINT FOR UNITED

By James Prevor  
President & Editor-in-Chief



**A**s the United Fresh Produce Association gathers in San Diego, CA, it can be certain of a strong event. Part of it is that San Diego is a very attractive city for conventions, and part of it is that numerous issues that are very important to core United members, such as immigration, are hot right now. Mostly though, the convention will be a success because United itself is stronger than it has been in decades.

The strength is not really financial; the association still could use a lot more money to lobby effectively, and it still lacks the really lucrative revenue source that the Produce Marketing Association has in its Fresh Summit Convention. United's leadership credits the process that United went through in negotiating with PMA over a potential merger with making it stronger. Though those talks were tempest-tossed and ill-fated, the process was both self-reflective — making United's leadership realize where it could provide service best to the trade — and liberating — in that leadership feels free to do what its members want, such as forming a new Produce Marketing & Merchandising Council, an act that would have been seen as needlessly provocative and duplicative in the not-too-distant past.

It is not now seen that way, and that is not because the leadership reassessed. It is because United's members specifically reassessed their own thoughts and feelings about produce industry associations.

After the collapse of the talks between United and PMA in July of 2012, we started hearing, numerous times, in numerous ways, the leaders of the production segment of the produce industry saying that United is their association of choice. This is something we almost never heard, spoken out loud at least, in the previous quarter century.

It is not that most of these people boycott PMA; almost all of them are members of PMA, exhibit at its expo, serve on boards and committees. It is just that, in their hearts, they think that United represents them and their interests. They go to PMA to network and learn. There is no event on earth remotely like Fresh Summit, and there is no produce association in the world as professional as PMA. It would be commercially foolish to not stay engaged.

PMA was rebuilt from an association so troubled it once pleaded with the then-much-larger and more prosperous United to allow it to merge, and when rebuffed, PMA was rebuilt with a stroke of genius. The insight was to focus on the ascendant buying organizations of the day, the large supermarket chains, and, later, the large foodservice buyers. The founders of the modern-day PMA reasoned that if they attracted these buyers, the vendors would follow. And so they have.

So PMA grew and became the dominant produce association not

only in the United States, but on the planet. In many ways, it wrote the future of the produce trade. Standardized PLU codes, the Produce for Better Health Foundation, the Center for Produce Safety — these are all products of PMA's creation.

Yet if PMA wrote the future of the trade, it did not entirely win the hearts of the industry. How could it? It was always perceived as driven by retail interests. Indeed, the very professionalism of the organization, though admirable, created a sense of distance, as if all these certified association executives were some kind of end to themselves. To the producer, it was off-putting. Yet it wasn't until the merger talks collapsed that people started to be blunt about these thoughts and feelings. It was as if a dam broke and the production sector let out pent up emotion about where its loyalties really lie.

None of this is any guarantee of long-term success. Growers can be passionate about an association, and if they don't support it financially it will be limited in its effectiveness or die out altogether. There are many producers who love United and spend all their money with PMA because they see a business opportunity in connecting with retailers.

Yet it might go another way. The great strength of PMA was built at a time when there were

strong regional chains — Stop & Shop in Boston, Dominick's in Chicago, Vons in Los Angeles, and leaders such as Harold Alston, Bob DiPiazza and Dick Spezzano were able to drive growth and accomplishment at PMA and not alienate the producers because they were perceived as part of the produce trade.

Yet today these regional chains have mostly been consolidated, and the VPs are often selected more for their facility with a spreadsheet than knowledge of produce. It is not clear that the next generation of leadership in these retail chains will feel connected enough to the industry to even want to participate in produce associations.

One frequent attendee who will be missing from United this year in San Diego is Jan Strube Fleming of the Strube Celery & Vegetable Company in Chicago. Her funeral was a mini gathering of the United family, with the current CEO, Tom Stenzel, and several past chairmen and current board and committee members in attendance. Jan had served on United's board and, with the help of Jan's husband, Tim Fleming, who had been chairman of United, and Jan's 94-year-old mother, Helen Strube, there was plenty of talk of old United meetings when people used to arrive by train. United has a brand of heritage.

The past is always prologue to the future, and Jan loved United but wouldn't have pretended to know what its future might be. But she was fond of saying that success comes before work only in the dictionary. So she would have said that those who love United ought to work hard to make it strong. She will be surely watching with interest what United's attendees choose to do in San Diego.

pb

**For many in the production sector, United is the association of choice. The challenge for United is to translate that affection into a vibrant business model.**

# A Sustainability Win!

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\*Consumer Focus Group n=149-210



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## TRANSITION

### BALOIAN FARMS FRESNO, CA

Baloian Farms, Fresno, CA, announces the promotion of Jeremy "Jay" Angulo. Angulo was promoted to sales, where he will handle foodservice and retail accounts for Baloian's expansive pepper and leaf veg product line. Angulo has been with the company for nine years and has also held roles in office administration, QC and as a field and harvest crew supervisor.



## TRANSITION

### AZZULE SYSTEMS SANTA MARIA, CA

Kerry Bridges has joined the Azzule team as director of the PrimusGFS Scheme. In her role, Bridges will develop, coordinate and direct the PrimusGFS auditing scheme, with a focus on ongoing development of coordination with the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI). Ms. Bridges, along with Bruce Knobloch (recently hired by Azzule as senior vice president of business development), will work out of a new office location in Salinas, CA.



## ANNOUNCEMENT

### DELIVERY APP PROVIDES ROUTE OPTIMIZATION

Produce Pro Software, Woodridge, IL, plans to launch the PPro Driver App at United Fresh in San Diego, CA. PPro Driver app is a real-time, delivery tool that allows for delivery optimization. The app automatically emails a signature-captured invoice with real-time delivered product quantities to the customer.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS



### FRESHWAY CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF GROWTH

Freshway Foods, Sidney, OH, celebrates its 25th anniversary with tremendous growth, positive change and a long-standing commitment to creating a clear value proposition. Freshway continues to deliver many benefits to its wide range of foodservice, retail and broadliner customers. Benefits include convenience, consistency, reduced preparation time, 100 percent usable product, labor cost reduction and a strong emphasis on food safety and quality.



### CALIFORNIA GIANT FOCUSES ON TRACEABILITY AND FOOD SAFETY

California Giant Berry Farms, Watsonville, CA, is focused on continuing its leadership in food safety. The Operations and Food Safety staff members are working to further enhance programs already in place while adding new elements to benefit everyone through the supply chain. The centerpiece is the expansion to full item level traceability utilizing the FoodLink Item solution on all domestic strawberries.

### NEW STUDY FINDS TRANSFRESH TECTROL HAS LONGER SHELF LIFE

TransFresh Corporation, Salinas, CA, announced a recently published study conducted by the University of California at Davis and the University of Florida found transporting strawberries in the sealed Trans-Fresh Tectrol pallet cover system was most effective in complementing current low temperature management practices to reduce decay and maintain fruit quality.

Percentage Incidence of Decay at 2-day Shelf Life Based on Research Data<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Comparison of Pallet Cover Systems to Maintain Strawberry Fruit Quality during Transport, HortTechnology, 8/12, pp 493 & 499



### DON STROCK DIABETES GOLF CLASSIC CELEBRATES 30 YEARS

The 30th Anniversary of the Don Strock Diabetes Golf Classic will be held on May 8th at the Miccosukee Golf & Country Club in Kendale Lakes, FL. The tournament, which benefits the Diabetes Research Institute, is a celebrity/amateur charity golf tournament hosted by former Miami Dolphin quarterback, Don Strock (right) and chaired by Bruce Fishbein (left) of The Produce Connection.



### CIRULI AND SUNNYSIDE ANNOUNCE JOINT SALES AND MARKETING VENTURE

Nogales, AZ-based Ciruli Brothers, LLC and Sunnyside Packing Company from Selma, CA have joined forces in a sales and marketing partnership. This partnership enables the companies to provide large scale distribution capabilities across the U.S. and Canada, with shipping points in California, Arizona and Texas. Picture above are Todd Hirasuna of Sunnyside Packing (left) and Chris Ciruli of Ciruli Brothers (right).



### KINGS FOOD MARKETS DEBUTS NEW STORE

Kings Food Markets introduced its premiere store in Gillette, NJ, with a Grand Opening event on March 22. The event began with Kings' signature pasta-ribbon cutting ceremony, during which Kings donated \$7,500 to the Community FoodBank of New Jersey through its "Act Against Hunger" initiative.

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

## ANNOUNCEMENTS



### ALPINE PARTNERS WITH FIVE STAR TO OPEN BLUEBERRY PACKINGHOUSE

A ribbon cutting ceremony was held March 28th at the, state-of-the-art blueberry packing facility located in Auburndale, FL. This facility is the result of a new partnership, sparked by Stacy Spivey, director of the North American berry program for Alpine Fresh, between Alpine Fresh, Inc. and Five Star Family Growers. Pictured left to right are Walter Yager of Alpine Fresh and Randy Knapp of Five Star Family Growers.



### READY PAC INTRODUCES FRESH-CUT SALAD GUIDE

Ready Pac Foods, Inc., Irwindale, CA, has expanded upon a recent consumer trend, introducing its own "What's What" guide to lettuce types. In addition to varietal information, the Fresh Cut Salad Guide is accompanied by healthy and inspiring recipes fit for the salad connoisseur -- but convenient enough for the hungry novice in a time crunch.

### LIGHTEN UP THIS SUMMER WITH COLORADO POTATOES

Colorado Potato Administrative Committee's web site, [coloradopotato.org](http://coloradopotato.org), offers consumers a convenient place to find potato dish ideas. The Monte Vista-based CPAC's web site and links show just how quickly the nation's number-two-most-grilled vegetable cooks and how Colorado russets, golds, reds and fingerlings become culinary works of art in recipes.



### STRONG SEASON FOR ORGANIC PEARS!

Awe Sum Organics, Capitola, CA, announces excellent quality pears are abundant this year due to perfect growing conditions. Its pears come from one of the best pear-producing regions in the world, the Rio Negro Valley of Argentina. Partnering with PAI, one of the largest pear growers in Argentina, Awe Sum Organics imports some of the largest volumes of these fruits into North America.

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

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 on her graduation from the United Fresh Leadership Program



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MIAMI BEACH CONVENTION CENTER  
MIAMI, FLORIDA

The International Floriculture Expo is where floral buyers, merchandisers and designers take center stage. Produced and hosted by Diversified Business Communications of Portland, ME, the Miami Beach event includes floral design competitions, networking sessions, speakers and workshops and a three-day exhibition featuring more than 200 suppliers.

**AISLE-BY-AISLE BOOTH REVIEW**

**Booth #400**  
**ASB GREENWORLD INC.**

Valdosta, GA

For more than 30 years, ASB Greenworld has been a supplier to the floral industry. We are producers of peat moss and related mixes, including potting soils, mulch and bark items. Our own peat bog is located in New Brunswick, Canada, with locations in Mt. Elgin, ON, Canada, Valdosta, Georgia and Virginia.



**Booth #406**  
**HI-RISE BALLOONS & FLORAL SUPPLIES**

Round Rock, TX

Want to increase balloon sales and reduce costs related to helium, inventory and labor? Visit Booth 406 at the IFE Show to learn how Hi-Rise can help. Also, enter to win a FREE iPad at the IFE Show!



**Booth #414**  
**VERDIRFRATTI INC.**

Miami, FL

Grower and distributor of high-quality GERBERA cut flowers, with more than 30 different colors. Our company produces in Guatemala, Central America — closer to the USA — ensuring best quality and faster delivery time directly from the farm to your door.



**Booth #417**  
**PENANG NURSERY INC.**

Apopka, FL

For more than 30 years, Penang Nursery has been a top producer of unique bamboo, bonsai, and tabletop gardens, including the popular braided Pachira tree. We pride ourselves in offering beautifully designed gardens in the latest, trend-setting containers available at an exceptional value. Come see what's new for 2013!



**Booth #427**  
**ENCORE FLORAL MARKETING**

Walker, MI

We will showcase a selection of color coordinated bouquets. Importing allows us to bring together floral products from different countries into our own unique offerings. In addition, our Miami and Dallas facilities enhance our distribution opportunities nationwide.



**Booth #609**  
**THE PINERY LLC**

Escondido, CA

We are growers of living Christmas trees and Rosemary for the holidays. Our beautifully sculpted miniature trees add freshness, fragrance and flair to any setting whether in the home, courtyard, kitchen or workplace. Stop by and experience our aromatic varieties of Rosemary, Pine and Cypress.



**Booth #617**  
**HIAWATHA CORPORATION**

Shelton, WA

The Hiawatha Corporation is a shipper/supplier of fresh Christmas greens, Western greens and moss products from the Pacific Northwest. Visit booth 617 to see a large selection of product offerings. Be the first to preview the new 2013 holiday decorative items to debut at IFE to commemorate Hiawatha's 75th Anniversary.



**Booth #630**  
**TIME DEFINITE SERVICES INC.**

Elgin, IL

Time Definite Services is an asset-based, leading service provider of end-to-end supply chain management for the floral industry. Our expertise and experience allows us to provide all of our clients and partners a comprehensive and cost effective logistical solution.



**Booth #625**  
**DECOWRAPPS**

Doral, FL

Deco Wraps is a leading supplier of distinctive packaging options for fresh flowers and potted plants. We offer prompt service, simplified logistics, and competitive pricing. We create products that are always fresh and innovative. Come visit us and see our exciting new items.



**Booth #825**  
**BOTTOMLEY EVERGREENS & FARMS**

Ennice, NC

Bottomley Evergreens will help you meet all your live Christmas decor needs including garlands, wreaths, bouquets and centerpieces. We pride ourselves in providing the highest quality and service available to our valuable customers. Be sure to see what's NEW at Bottomleys for 2013!



**Booth #834**  
**TRIUMPH PLANT CO.**

New City, NY

Triumph Plant Company specializes in unique plant products. See our Crayola — 'My First Garden' Children's seed kits and our Gardening for Dummies 'Gardening for the rest of us' planter kits. We also have real mistletoe, hanging salad gardens and air fern.



**Booth #725**  
**HOSA INTERNATIONAL**

Miami, FL

Hosa International will showcase a variety of exciting floral selections which will feature our extraordinary spray roses, lilies and roses from our 200-hectare Rainforest Alliance-certified farms in Colombia and Ecuador.



**Booth #803**  
**THE USA BOUQUET COMPANY**

Miami, FL

The USA Bouquet Company offers a wide variety of floral products. Sweet Treats and Cool Quenchers are some of our new bouquet collections to be introduced at the International Floriculture Expo. We look forward to showing you our other new designs when you visit our booth in Miami Beach.



**Booth #901**  
**BURTON + BURTON**

Bogart, GA

burton + BURTON will showcase 2014 Valentine and Spring products at this year's IFE show. Come by to see the latest designs in balloons, plush, pot covers, ribbon, and more! burton + BURTON is a family-owned and operated business, serving the floral industry since 1982.



**Booth #913B**  
**KENDALL FARMS**

Fallbrook, CA

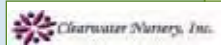
Kendall Farms is proud to be a California grower. We specialize in growing long lasting flowers such as Protea, Pin Cushion, Waxflower, Sunflowers, Leucadendron and Eucalyptus. Our flowers come fresh from our fields and are naturally longer lasting than the typical imported varieties.



**Booth #913E**  
**CLEARWATER NURSERY INC.**

Nipomo, CA

Founded in 1986, Clearwater Nursery is an 80-acre coastal California company. Our mild climate is exceptional for producing premium grade indoor blooming plants all year long. We are continuing to expand our product mix to add new plants. Come visit our booth, 913E, and explore the culture and climate that is Clearwater.



**Booth #913F**  
**B AND H FLOWERS**

Carpinteria, CA

B and H Flowers produces a variety of commercial, VeriFlora-certified flower crops for both mass retail and wholesale distribution, providing customers nationwide with sustainably grown, vibrant, and long-lasting California flowers. Sustainably grown for a beautiful world.



**Booth #932**  
**C.H. ROBINSON WORLDWIDE INC.**

Miami, FL

With over 100 years of experience in perishable products, C.H. Robinson understands that every day is a logistical race against time in the retail floral world. That's why we offer a comprehensive suite of services designed to optimize the efficiency of your floral supply chain.



**Booth #941**  
**WESTBROOK FLORAL LTD.**

Grimsby, Ontario, Canada

Westbrook Floral Ltd. is a full service wholesaler offering floral supplies, home and garden décor, botanicals and potted plants. In our 1.5 million square feet of greenhouses, we specialize in supplying North America with Mini Roses, Phalaenopsis Orchids, Kalanchoes, African Violets, Ferns, Succulents and seasonal potted plant varieties.



**Booth #1033**  
**SANDE FLOWERS**

Miami, FL

Committed to breeding, growing and distributing the highest quality Calla lilies, Sande Flowers operates production facilities and sales offices in Ecuador, Miami and The Netherlands. Look to us for novel and exciting Calla lily varieties. We are committed to the sales and marketing of Calla lilies to wholesalers and mass market customers throughout the world.



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

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MIAMI BEACH CONVENTION CENTER  
MIAMI, FLORIDA

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**AISLE-BY-AISLE BOOTH REVIEW**

**Booth #1034**  
**SUNBURST FARMS**

Miami, FL

Sunburst Farms is a cut flower importer receiving flights daily from South America and Europe. Our logistical supply chain enables us to get your flowers to you in the quickest fashion. We carry an extensive rose and bouquet line, in addition to everyday and novelty consumer bunches. Visit Booth 1034.



**Booth #1036**  
**HOMESTEAD GROWERS NIAGARA INC.**

Vineland, Ontario, Canada

See the wonder of the potted Calla Lily at booth #1036 — Homestead Growers Niagara Inc. — with an inventive and fun booth theme that will get your creative juices flowing for your own floral department! Fabulous colors and amazing quality will be showcased. Don't miss out!



**Booth #1113**  
**ALPHA BOTANICAL INC.**

Homestead, FL

You won't find a better mix of grade "A" interior foliage! With spacing guidelines 1/2 times the industry standard, our finished product is exceptional. Make Alpha Botanical your source for florist-quality foliage and exceptional customer service to see how we are capable of satisfying any discerning promotional buyer.



**Booth #1117**  
**ALDERSHOT GREENHOUSES LTD.**

Burlington, Ontario, Canada

One of North America's premier potted blooming producers — Aldershot Greenhouses' unsurpassed commitment to quality has made us a top producer of potted blooming plants in North America. Long lasting blooms for home and office, Aldershot Greenhouses' potted plants continue to perform with excellence.



**Booth #1125**  
**WORLD CLASS FLOWERS**

Egg Harbor City, NJ

INNOVATIVE... CREATIVE... MARKETABLE...

World Class Flowers reveals the POWER of COLOR and how to infuse it into your programs. Come visit us and explore!



**Booth #1135**  
**MEYERS FLOWERS**

Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada

With 15+ acres of greenhouse space and over 50 years of experience, Meyers is the premiere choice for quality potted flowers. Our floral products range from spring bedding plants to holiday crops such as Poinsettias and Easter lilies. We are very accommodating with our variety of weekly flowers and promotional programs.



**Booth #1141**  
**AERIAL BOUQUETS**

Chesterfield, MO

Aerial Bouquets has been bringing you the Best of the Best for over 25 years, with a variety of merchandise including balloons, floral accessories, plush and gift items. Let us show you how our unique store programs with category management, extensive sales support, and competitive pricing will build your business!



**Booth #1213**  
**BAYVIEW FLOWERS**

Jordan Station, Ontario, Canada

More than 40 years of experience — we specialize in potted plants, dish gardens, indoor tropical foliage along with cut greens and fresh-cut flowers. Our vases, containers and home décor items will entice your customers. Count on us for quality and innovation to keep your floral department fresh and inviting.



**Booth #1225**  
**A-ROO COMPANY**

Strongsville, OH

SOLUTIONS. For more than 40 years, A-ROO has created marketing, merchandising and packaging solutions for the floral industry. We have containers and vases, decorative packaging, display fixtures and accessories, films, sleeves and wraps, pot covers, ribbons, bows and picks. Offices in Ohio, Florida, Texas and California provide service to North, Central and South America.



**Booth #1313**  
**GALLERIA FARMS**

Miami, FL

We are one of the largest growers of chrysanthemums and specialty flowers in the world, with over 100 hectares in production. Galleria Farms is a solution and service provider of premium floral products to mass retailers and supermarkets.



**Booth #1325**  
**POTTER INC.**

Bryan, OH

Potter Inc. specializes in products to enhance floral and produce departments. Our hand-tied bows and corsage lines are proudly made in the USA. Potter Kit programs create gift-ready merchandise, quickly and easily, in today's labor-crunched market. Visit us at booth #1325 to see our new 2013/2014 upgrades.



**Booth #1409**  
**KOEN PACK USA INC.**

Miami, FL

We specialize in containers and vases, films, sleeves, wraps and pot covers. Especially known for our innovative packaging for potted plants and bouquets, we have a large inventory of sleeves, sheets, picks, bags and other accessories to enhance the look of your final product.



**Booth #1608**  
**WHITE'S NURSERY & GREENHOUSES INC.**

Chesapeake, VA

White's has been growing quality potted plants and outdoor annuals and delivering throughout the United States for more than 55 years. Customers include supermarkets, wholesalers, other growers and mass marketers. Contact us to find out what's new and exciting!



**Booth #1610**  
**TEUFEL HOLLY FARMS**

Portland, OR

Our exceptional quality and unparalleled customer service have allowed Teufel Holly Farms to be a leading supplier of the finest Pacific Northwest evergreens for over 120 years. Stop by booth 1610 at the IFE Show and see how our experience and expertise can maximize your holiday sales.



**Booth #1612**  
**MICKY'S MINIS FLORA EXPRESS**

St. Louis, MO

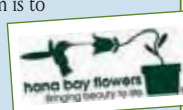
Micky's Minis specializes in growing and shipping two inch miniature potted plants. Our plant selection includes roses, violets, mums, kalanchoes, azaleas, poinsettias, assorted herbs, cactus, succulents and foliage plants. Plus we offer a great line of seasonal and holiday accessories. Stop by booth #1612 to see what's new!



**Booth #1613**  
**BAY CITY FLOWER CO.**

Half Moon Bay, CA

Family-owned Bay City Flower Company — more than 100 years of growing! We are known for producing the most diverse assortments of unique, high quality flowering plants in the country. Our aim is to keep our customers' floral displays fresh, interesting and colorful.



**Booth #1635**  
**SHATLEY FARMS LLC**

West Jefferson, NC

With farmland in production in North Carolina and Virginia, Shatley Farms is one of the largest producers of Fraser Fir Christmas Trees in the U.S. We have been a reliable supplier of top quality Christmas trees and evergreen products shipped fresh, on schedule, and to grade for over 35 years.



**Booth #1725**  
**THE ELITE BOUQUET**

Miami, FL

Located in the heart of Miami, Elite also has four other U.S. locations covering the surrounding regions of New Jersey, Chicago, Denver and Los Angeles. Elite's primary imports are roses, spray roses, gerberas and alstroemeria. See Elite for bouquets, consumer bunches, cut greens, fresh arrangements, grower bunches, fresh cut and specialty cut flowers.



**Booth #1802**  
**KERRY'S NURSERY INC.**

Homestead, FL

We create demand with the most fashion-forward products featuring the highest quality orchids, bromeliads and eye-catching pottery from around the world. Visit our booth and discover how our compelling, value-minded living arrangements can be the solution you have been looking for to grow your floral department.



**Booth #1811**  
**EVE'S GARDEN INC.**

Land O' Lakes, FL

Eve's Garden Inc. established more than 30 years ago, is a Lucky Bamboo and Bonsai tree nursery. We are a company that strives for quality and perfection in every order. We bring you unique products that are a work of art designed, produced and sold by us directly to you.



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

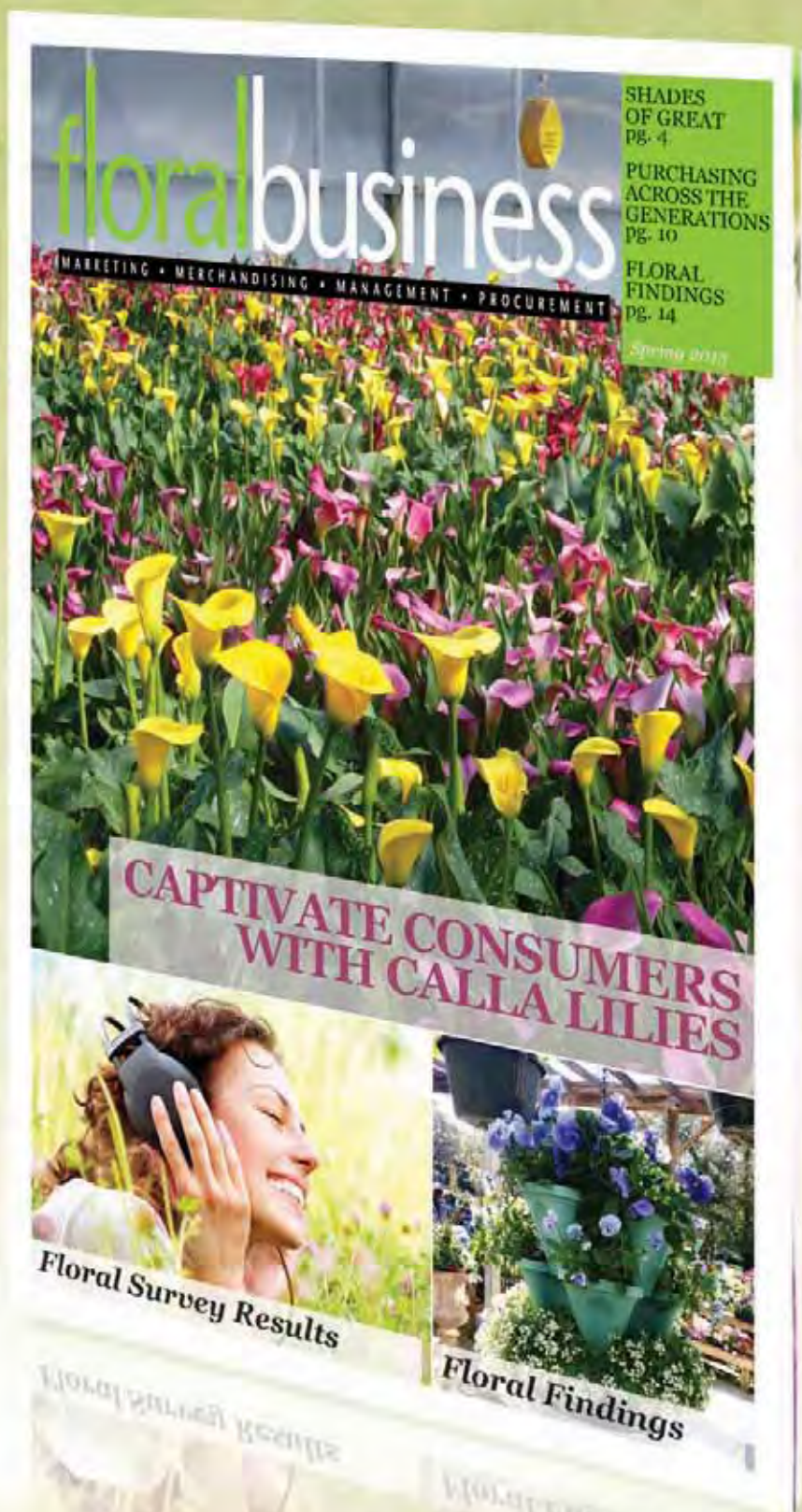


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**AISLE-BY-AISLE BOOTH REVIEW**

<p><b>Booth #1817</b> <b>THE SUN VALLEY GROUP</b> Arcata, CA Let's Talk Flowers! Tell us all about your favorite flower and see what is new at Sun Valley. Our purpose is to achieve an unwavering dedication to quality, year-round availability and unparalleled customer service in the floral industry. Join us in Creating a World of Color. See you there!</p> 	<p><b>Booth #1825</b> <b>SYNDICATE SALES</b> Kokomo, IN Syndicate Sales is a manufacturer, importer, and distributor of over 1,500 items to the floral industry. Brand names including Aquapic®, Aquafoam®, Aquaplus the Difference is Clear®, Aquahold®, Garden Collection®, Hoosier Glass®, and designer vases are known throughout the industry as representing the highest quality products second to none.</p> 	<p><b>Booth #1901</b> <b>SUNSHINE BOUQUET COMPANY</b> Miami, FL Get ready to be blown away with the latest trends and cutting-edge designs this year at Sunshine Bouquet's booth at IFE. Our stellar product line is getting a fresh look with the addition of our new premium California-enhanced bouquets, the perfect way to help increase your sales!</p> 	<p><b>Booth #1917</b> <b>FRESHBLOOMS</b> Sewell, NJ FreshBlooms is a sales and marketing company dedicated to servicing the floral needs of its mass market customers. Drawing on our parent company, Delaware Valley Floral Group's floral history of importing, sales and distribution, we are able to offer a wide range selection of flowers, botanicals and floral hard goods.</p> 
<p><b>Booths #1925, 2025</b> <b>TEMKIN INTERNATIONAL</b> Payson, UT Whether it's a coordinated program, a stylish new sleeve, or a custom floral pick, Temkin International will help you create an enticing look for your blooms. Temkin's coordinated sheets, sleeves and accessories make it easy to craft a striking display with designs made for every season, holiday and special occasion.</p> 	<p><b>Booth #2031</b> <b>AVERY IMPORTS</b> Batavia, NY Whether you are a garden center, florist, greenhouse, nursery, designer or gift store, Avery Imports offers a variety of more than 1,000 different items to choose from.</p> 	<p><b>Booth #2037</b> <b>MELLANO &amp; CO.</b> Los Angeles, CA For more than 85 years, Mellano &amp; Company has been a premier grower of cut flowers, fillers and foliage. Our crops are found in our uncommonly appealing bouquets, consumer bunches and cutting-edge floral offerings.</p> 	<p><b>Booth #2113</b> <b>FLORAL SENSE LLC</b> Miami, FL Distributing lilies since inception directly from Costa Rica has been our core business. Our company has truly flourished, growing from a small distributing company to one of the largest lily producers and distributors in the western hemisphere. We are also distributors of Gerbera daisies and tropicals as well as Hydrangeas.</p> 
<p><b>Booth #2125</b> <b>BALL HORTICULTURAL COMPANY</b> West Chicago, IL The Ball Horticultural company offers the newest innovation in vegetative material for summer cut fresh flowers and the newest breeding and selection. Through distribution companies, we offer seeds, plugs, bulbs, cuttings and tissue culture plants to the professional flower growers all over the world. We are happy to color the world!</p> 	<p><b>Booth #2125</b> <b>BURPEE HOME GARDENS</b> West Chicago, IL The most trusted name in garden bedding flowers, vegetables and herbs. Burpee has been making gardeners successful for more than 130 years. Come and see us in the Ball Horticultural Company booth, and we will show you how you can increase your live good sales with Burpee Home Gardens.</p> 	<p><b>Booth #2139</b> <b>ROYAL VAN ZANTEN</b> Valkenburg, The Netherlands Royal Van Zanten is an international 'breeding ground' for potted plants and flowers. We breed, select and produce starting material for professional growers of ornamental plants worldwide. Our focus is on the following cut flowers: Alstroemeria, Chrysanthemum, Bouvardia, Limonium and Statice flowers — all to be shown in our booth.</p> 	<p><b>Booth #2205</b> <b>BLOOMQUEST LLC</b> Englewood, NJ BloomQuest supplies roses and carnations directly from Kenya to retail partners in the United States. We have an exceptional trading relationship with Kenya and work closely with a number of specially selected farms. This enables us to offer our customers the best possible flowers in the industry.</p> 
<p><b>Booth #2225</b> <b>CHRYSLAL USA</b> Miami, FL Chrysal Americas is an international company offering a multitude of products for the complete nutrition and care of fresh-cut flowers for growers, wholesalers, florists and supermarkets in the United States, Canada and Latin America.</p> 	<p><b>Booth #2301</b> <b>GPW DIRECT CONSUMER LLC</b> St. Cloud, MN Blooming Greetings® is a revolutionary original and patented take on the gift of giving, by combining the thoughtful gesture of giving a greeting card with the gift of flowers. It assembles in seconds from a flat-pack retail package into a full bouquet vase and greeting card all wrapped into one.</p> 	<p><b>Booth #2347</b> <b>ALEXANDRA FARMS</b> Miami, FL Looking to raise your Rose Program to the next level? Want to increase your event business? Looking to add caché to your floral department? Look no further! Alexandra Farms has developed a deluxe Garden Rose program for high-end grocery stores with new varieties of gorgeous, large, and fragrant roses that last! Come see and smell them!</p> 	<p><b>Booth #2401</b> <b>MRS. BLOOMS DIRECT</b> Elmsford, NY With more than 15 years of experience importing and exporting cut flowers from premium sources worldwide, Mrs. Blooms Direct is poised to provide your company with the highest quality blooms nature has to offer. Offices in New York and Quito, Ecuador ensure you receive the highest level of service and customer satisfaction.</p> 
<p><b>Booth #2413</b> <b>DAVIS FARMS</b> Balm, FL Davis Farms — where quality is always in season. For more than 60 years, we have helped retailers help their customers celebrate the season, give thoughtful gifts and decorate their homes with live plants grown specifically for the holidays. Turn to us for decorated Norfolk Island Pines, decorated potted Holly and more.</p> 	<p><b>Booth #2417</b> <b>JOLO FARMS INC.</b> Miami, FL Jolo Farms grows flowers year-round on 400 acres of owned, operated or partnered farms in Florida, Ecuador, Colombia and Costa Rica. We supply a full line of florist grade premium consumer bunches, bouquets and novelty flowers.</p> 	<p><b>Booth #2425</b> <b>GARDENS AMERICA INC.</b> Miami, FL Gardens America is a second-generation company that began importing flowers from Jardines de los Andes in 1969. Our suppliers are located in South America, United States, Africa — with more countries coming. Our main objective is to serve our clients' needs by providing the very best quality products, services and marketing solutions.</p> 	<p>International <b>floriculture</b> EXPO <a href="http://WWW.FLORIEXP.COM">WWW.FLORIEXP.COM</a></p> 

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

# 2013 NEW ENGLAND PRODUCE PERSON OF THE YEAR

## SAM STROCK



SAM STROCK SURROUNDED BY FAMILY MEMBERS AT THE RECENT NEPC CONVENTION.

### EXCERPT FROM SPEECH GIVEN BY KEN WHITACRE,

publisher/editorial director of PRODUCE BUSINESS, at the NEPC Convention on April 3, 2013

#### One sharp gentleman. A class act. An industry icon.

These are just a few of the ways colleagues, co-workers and competitors describe this year's 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 eight recipients of this award — Paul Kneeland, Jack Salamon, Domenic D'Antuono, Will Wedge, Mike Giza, Mike Maguire, Bob McGowan and Mark DeMichaelis — this year's award recipient showed a passion for produce at an early age. In fact, as one industry veteran aptly noted, "You could say this award is nearly a century in the making!"

The professional fate of our awardee was sealed before he was even born. He was named for his grandfather, who in 1897 started buying and selling fruits and vegetables off the back of a horse-drawn wagon.

It shouldn't be surprising with roots this deep that our honoree's company owns the oldest active PACA license in the country. One of our recipient's first business lessons came from this turn-of-the-century era. His uncle taught him to "hire well so he didn't have to fire often."

He illustrated his point by telling his nephew the story of a day when a worker whose job it was to deliver the produce got sick. His uncle filled in, set out on the route and noticed that the horse kept stopping at all the neighborhood watering holes instead of the stores awaiting the delivery. It seems the worker was literally "off the wagon" and hoisting a few while on the job. Needless to say, the man was canned.

Our awardee didn't set out to work in the produce business. In fact, his family encouraged him not to. His elder relatives believed that the industry's future was dismal with the advent of frozen and canned produce. So, our honoree headed to the University of Maine and set his sights on a degree in accounting.

He admits his grades weren't the best during his earlier years. However,

a bum knee from a baseball injury that didn't let him hobble too far from the dorm... combined with a couple of hard-partying room-mates... actually proved to be a blessing. It honed our recipient's keen skill of concentration – so much so that his grades skyrocketed, and he finished Phi Beta Kappa to boot.

Unfortunately, academic success didn't translate into a positive bottom line when our honoree started doing the books back home at the family business. The company was in the midst of a decade-long money-losing streak – just as his elders had predicted.

It was at this time that our awardee turned on his faculty of focus. He switched from the books to sales and started studying the markets with the keen interest of a kid in a candy shop. A year later, the light bulb flashed on: He discovered how to predict future markets. In other words, when he saw the proper time, he increased his supply and hit the hot market with his magic secret and gave the company its rebirth.

After that, every day at work for our honoree was like a day at the races. That was a half century ago.

Today, it's the fourth and fifth generation at the helm of this historic wholesale house. Our honoree still comes into work each day. With the wisdom of the ages and the ability to stick his head outside of the day-to-day business, it's his job to think, analyze and share his forecast for the future.

Interestingly, he records his thoughts and has his grandson transcribe them and email them out as daily memos. It's a far cry from the days when telephones were the latest in technology and anyone who telephoned his company simply told the operator 'Boston, Long Distance 1' and would get our honoree or a family member – not the mayor.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in congratulating the 2013 New England Produce Person of the Year – **Sam Strock**, President of S. Strock & Co., Inc.

# Substituting Mushrooms For Meat Aids in Control Of Body Weight And Treating Obesity

ARTICLE EXTRACTED FROM ABSTRACT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF RESEARCH CONDUCTED AT  
JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY'S BLOOMBERG SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH – PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:  
LAWRENCE J. CHESKIN, MD, FACP, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, HEALTH, BEHAVIOR & SOCIETY

**T**he American diet, and increasingly the global diet, is strikingly high in energy density, yet often low in nutrient density. This increase in energy density as well as calorie and fat intake is a major driver of the recent increase in obesity worldwide.

Mushrooms are a low-calorie source of nutrients, and have the added advantage of being useful as substitutes for high-calorie, low nutrient-density foods such as meats. The feasibility and effectiveness of using mushrooms as substitutes for meat in the diet was studied in a controlled clinical trial at the Johns Hopkins Weight Management Center, a program of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, in Baltimore, MD.

This study specifically examined the potential of white button mushrooms as a tool for controlling body weight and treating obesity.

Participants in this study were recruited via advertisements, which were placed in local newspapers (*Baltimore Sun*, *City Paper*), as well as via flyers posted at local sites (supermarket bulletin boards, e.g.) and on campus. The study included a total of 209 adult men and women aged 18 and older with a body-mass index between 25-40 (overweight to obese), who were interested in losing weight and reported a willingness to substitute white button mushrooms for beef in their daily meals over the course of one year. Final analysis included 74 participants, for a drop-out rate of 65% after 12 months.

Participants agreed to be randomly assigned to one of two diets: one based on the USDA Food Guide Pyramid with a reduced calorie level individualized to their needs (standard diet), or the standard diet plan enhanced by substituting some meat dishes with mushrooms (mushroom diet).

Participants assigned to the standard diet were instructed on various methods to improve their diet, without the recommendation of mushroom substitution. Both groups received vouchers for local grocery

stores in the amount of \$6 per week. Participants assigned to the mushroom diet were required to substitute mushrooms (8oz) for meat at three different meals each week, while participants assigned to the standard diet were required to eat 90+% lean ground beef for three meals each week. Purchases were confirmed by the return of the receipt the next visit. Subsequent food vouchers were not given unless proof of mushroom/meat purchase from the previous week was furnished.

Participants underwent a 6-month weight loss period, followed by a 6-month weight maintenance period. They were given diet counseling and were instructed on making healthy food choices. Since the study was a single-blinded clinical trial, the study counselor was not aware of the diet group to which the participant was randomized. The participants were instructed to not mention their diet assignment to the investigator conducting the counseling.

Baseline and follow-up measures of body weight, blood chemistries, and measures of oxidative stress, inflammation, and immunity were collected.

Results were that the people following the mushroom diet lost an average of 7 pounds, or 3.6% of their starting weight, and lowered their BMI, waist size, and percent body fat significantly, while people following the standard diet lost an average of only 2.2 pounds, or 1.1% of their starting weight. There were also significant improvements in blood pressure, triglycerides, fasting blood glucose, and cholesterol on the mushroom diet.

Following initial weight loss, people following the mushroom-rich weight maintenance diet maintained that loss well. Those who completed the full 12-month study period still weighed 7 lbs less than before starting their diet plan. HDL-choles-

terol levels also showed significant improvement at 12 months compared to baseline levels. Blood pressure and serum triglycerides also were significantly improved at this time point. It is well known that maintenance of lost weight can be more challenging than even the initial task of losing weight, so the high degree of weight maintenance seen in the mushroom group is very promising.

Further, consuming a mushroom-enriched diet led to improvements in measures of inflammation and oxidative stress, known to be markers of increased risk for cardiovascular disease, cancer, and other leading health problems.

One aspect of the findings is worthy of note: The drop-out rate, at 65% after 12 months, is high, but not out of line with other long-term weight loss studies. It is revealing that the rate of drop-out is no different between the mushroom-consuming group and the standard diet group, indicating that even people asked to eat mushrooms regularly for an entire year were no more likely to drop out of the study than people with no dietary requirements to eat mushrooms regularly. This speaks well for the long-term acceptability of regular mushroom consumption.

The cost of dieting using mushrooms as substitutes for high fat, high energy density meats and other foods would be quite favorable as well. Future work could calculate these cost savings, and benefits.

The results of this work demonstrate that a diet using mushrooms as a substitute for high-calorie foods such as meats can be helpful for adults seeking to control their weight and improve blood pressure, cholesterol, and measures of oxidative stress and inflammation. This message can be a driver of increased interest in the use of mushrooms by the general public.



Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins Weight Management Center, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD

The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health is dedicated to the education of a diverse group of research scientists and public health professionals, a process inseparably linked to the discovery and application of new knowledge, and through these activities, to the improvement of health and prevention of disease and disability around the world. Grant funding provided by the Mushroom Council and the Australian Mushroom Growers' Association.

# A Clear Concept, But Execution Is Tricky

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

**W**e have had the opportunity to taste both 100 percent mushroom substitutes and blends of meat and mushrooms. The exciting news is that these options taste great — so great that chefs of high caliber are now exploring ways to use these mushrooms in all sorts of dishes. Indeed the Mushroom Council has been brilliant in working closely with the Culinary Institute of America to introduce chefs to this concept.

This is really crucial. There are a lot of things that can improve health outcomes in one's diet, but most are perceived as a sacrifice of taste by consumers. Here is an opportunity to boost health outcomes without sacrifice. One can easily see areas such as school foodservice being early adopters in using such substitutes in vast quantities.

The problem, as much as anything, is a marketing one. The product tastes great, is priced well and is very versatile. The question is what is it?

Calling something a meat substitute is the kiss of death — people don't want substitutes put in for reasons of health; they want foods that on their own merits deserve to be on the menu.

We know from long experience that if one wants to kill one's exciting new line of culinary offerings that taste great and just happen to be healthier options, set aside a page of the menu in a restaurant and label it "Diet Options" or "Healthy Menu."

The message such declarations send to consumers is that here is an item that isn't good enough to be on our regular menu, but we will offer it in case you want to sacrifice taste to lose weight or be healthier. The whole concept transforms going out to eat from a joyous indulgence to a marginalizing disappointment.

So this product — and its application — needs a name and a marketing position that says: We stand on taste! If this product gets marginalized as a healthy meat substitute, it will never have a tenth of the market it could get if it is perceived as a delicious product that happens to be healthy.

The concept is clear, but the execution is tricky. The term *Mushroom* has its own meaning in the minds of the consumers, and this is really a different application, so simply calling this product Mushroom adds confusion. Ground beef is, of course, well-established in the diet, perhaps the most popular food in the country. What is the marketing space for this product?

We think the place to really start positioning this application is college foodservice. Primary and secondary schools are a ready market, but it might be seen as being adopted for reasons of economy and thus blunt the long term success. Certainly the elementary school lunch line is not thought of as a paragon of culinary innovation to be emulated in adulthood. McDonald's and hamburger chains are big volume, but none will simply switch over from ground beef to mushrooms and so they will market the product, if at all, as a diet burger and, once again, kill the product.

College and university foodservice, though, is the perfect market. You have growing numbers of vegetarians interested in pure mushroom products and a general interest in sustainability that encourages a more plant-based diet. These consumers, not yet out on their own, are still in the process of establishing their eating and buying habits. They tend to be more open to new trends, new cuisines, new foods and new ideas. Plus, if you want something on every menu in ten years, get college students to enjoy it now.

Maybe the best strategy would be for the Mushroom Council to do a partnership with 10 universities, get the product on the menu and then run a competition for the best name. Maybe there could be a prize for the individual and a donation to the school that comes up with the best branding. Maybe there could be a formal contest in which Business School students have an opportunity to present proposals for marketing campaigns, a winner is selected at each school and then the 10 winning teams present at a "shoot-out" before the Mushroom

**If this product gets marginalized as a healthy meat substitute, it will never have a tenth of the market it could get if it is perceived as a delicious product that happens to be healthy.**

Council and its ad agency.

There is a great deal of health-related research that is done in the produce industry, but most of it focuses on determining attributes of product high in a particular vitamin or in anti-oxidants or what not. What both the Mushroom Council and the Australian Mushroom Growers' Association should be lauded for is funding research that goes beyond identifying product attributes, many with unknown or questionable impact on health.

These two organizations anted up to actually study the health-related impact of consuming their product. They hit the jackpot when they found that very small changes in diet can have a big impact on weight and other healthful indicators.

All our industry efforts to increase consumption should never forget one thing: In order to increase produce consumption in general, we need to increase consumption of specific items.

Here we have a truly delicious item that is also good for you. If we can't make this specific item fly big time, it bodes extremely poorly for efforts to increase consumption in general.

**MAY 14 - 16, 2013****UNITED FRESH 2013**

Conference Venue: San Diego Convention Center,  
San Diego, CA

Conference Management: United Fresh Produce Association, Washington, DC

Phone: 202-303-3424

Email: [united@unitedfresh.org](mailto:united@unitedfresh.org)

Website: [www.unitedfresh.org](http://www.unitedfresh.org)

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Your Recipe for Global Success

Conference Venue: McCormick Place, Chicago, IL

Conference Management: NASDA, Fairfax, VA

Phone: 703-934-4700 • Fax: 703-934-4899

Email: [aff@naylor.com](mailto:aff@naylor.com)

Website: [www.nasdatradeshow.org](http://www.nasdatradeshow.org)

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Phone: 312-853-2537 • Fax: 312-853-2548

Email: [kskibbe@restaurant.org](mailto:kskibbe@restaurant.org)

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Email: [info@CandyUSA.com](mailto:info@CandyUSA.com)

Website: [www.candyusa.com](http://www.candyusa.com)

**JUNE 2 - 4, 2013****DAIRY-DELI-BAKE 2013****DAIRY-DELI-BAKE SEMINAR & EXPO**

Conference Venue: Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, FL

Conference Management: International Dairy Deli Bakery Association, Madison, WI

Phone: 608-310-5000 • Fax: 608-238-6330

Email: [IDDBA@iddba.org](mailto:IDDBA@iddba.org)

Website: [www.iddba.org](http://www.iddba.org)

**June 11, 2013****POMPANO BEACH/FT. LAUDERDALE MANGO OUTREACH MEETING**

Conference Venue: Fort Lauderdale Marriott North

Conference Management: National Mango Board

Phone: 407-629-7318 ext 106

Email: [mpeepe@mango.org](mailto:mpeepe@mango.org)

Website: [www.mango.org/industry/event/pompano-beachfort-lauderdale-outreach-meeting](http://www.mango.org/industry/event/pompano-beachfort-lauderdale-outreach-meeting)

**June 13, 2013****MIAMI, FLORIDA MANGO OUTREACH MEETING**

Conference Venue: Miami Marriott Dadeland

Conference Management: National Mango Board

Phone: 407-629-7318 ext 106

Email: [mpeepe@mango.org](mailto:mpeepe@mango.org)

Website: [www.mango.org/industry/event/miami-outreach-meeting](http://www.mango.org/industry/event/miami-outreach-meeting)

**June 14, 2013****ANNUAL TIPA CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT**

Texas International Produce Industry Charity Golf Tournament to help Food Bank RGV fight hunger and find hope in the Valley

Conference Venue: McAllen Country Club

Conference Management: Texas International Produce

Association

Phone: 956-581-8632

Email: [esmer.leal@texipa.org](mailto:esmer.leal@texipa.org)

Website:

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Conference Management: National Mango Board

Phone: 407-629-7318 ext 106

Email: [mpeepe@mango.org](mailto:mpeepe@mango.org)

Website: [www.mango.org/industry/event/mcallen-outreach-meeting](http://www.mango.org/industry/event/mcallen-outreach-meeting)

**June 19 - 21, 2013****IFE 2013**

International Floriculture Expo (formerly The Super Floral Show) is the only U.S. venue where people from every aspect of the floriculture industry will converge under one roof.

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Conference Management: Diversified Business Communications, Portland, ME

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**JULY 16, 2013****FRESH PRODUCE & FLORAL COUNCIL EXPO 2013**

Conference Venue: Disneyland Hotel, Anaheim, CA

Conference Management: Fresh Produce & Floral Council, La Miranda, CA

Phone: 714-739-0177 • Fax: 714-739-0226

Email: [info@fpfc.org](mailto:info@fpfc.org) • Website: [www.fpfc.org](http://www.fpfc.org)

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Conference Venue: Portola Plaza Hotel, Monterey, CA

Conference Management: Produce Marketing Association, Newark, DE

Phone: 302-738-7100 • Fax: 302-731-2409

Email: [solutionctr@pma.com](mailto:solutionctr@pma.com)

Website: [www.pma.com](http://www.pma.com)

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Conference Management: International Sprout Growers Association, Warwick, RI

Phone: (508) 657-ISGA

Email: [office@sprouts.org](mailto:office@sprouts.org)

Website: [www.isga-sprouts.org](http://www.isga-sprouts.org)

To submit events to our Forward Thinking calendar, please email [info@producebusiness.com](mailto:info@producebusiness.com)



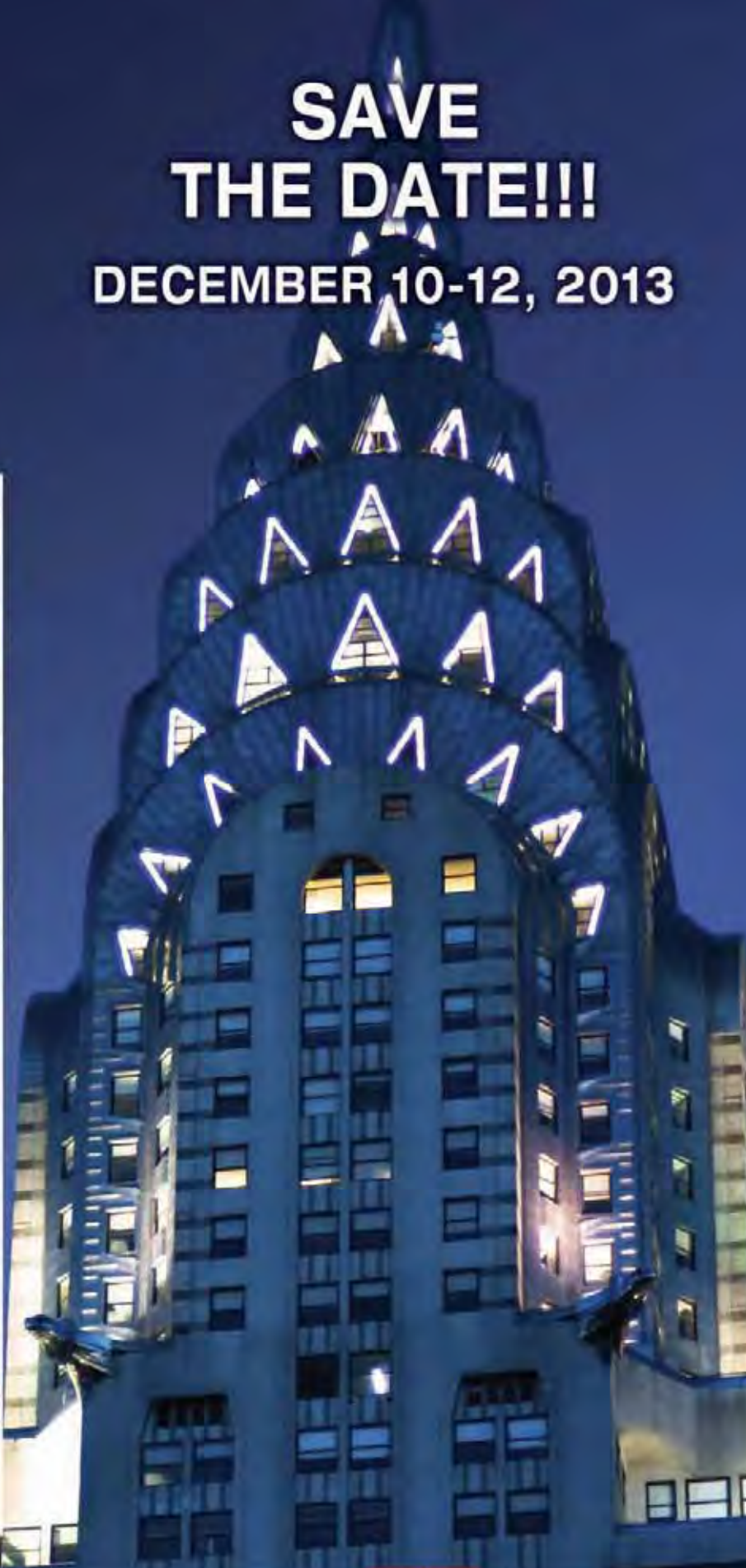
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# AGRITRADE RECAP

*Over 4,000 participants converge in Antigua, Guatemala, again with a theme of "Growing Business Together."*

PHOTOS AND RECAP BY PRISCILLA LLERAS

**N**ow in its 16th edition, Agritrade 2013 in Antigua, Guatemala, is becoming the leading regional international agribusiness trade show in Central America, welcoming Mexico, Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua to the line-up, with over 50 exporters/producers attending from those countries and over 75 exporters/producers from Guatemala.

"We are working diligently to make Agritrade the Number 1 Central America Trade Show located right here in Guatemala," stated Monica Figueroa, promoter of agricultural business for Agexport, the Guatemalan Exporters' Association. The expo and conference were well attended with over 4,000 participants and over 70 buyers from around the world.

The show presented a series of activities and conferences. Specifically a substantial exhibition area with 160 booth exhibitors, seminars and match-making meeting programs were available for those participants interested. Many exhibitors commented the show was an excellent source for networking! There were numerous opportunities for making new contacts with buyers from the United States, Latin America, Europe and Canada. Claudia Granados of sustainable fruit and vegetable exporter Fair-Fruit Guatemala said, "We are making quality contacts with not only buyers but with logistics companies, packaging and materials companies."

Gabriel Cespedes of vegetable exporter Vegsa of Guatemala added, "The benefits of participating in Agritrade are many, because of the opportunity to meet companies from the United States and Europe and that opens doors to new ventures."

New innovations for this year's event included special Priority Access from 25 to 30 European buyers as well as the inclusion of Processed Agricultural Products.









# Is Your Company's Culture A Strategy Or Is Your Company's Strategy Your Culture?

When it comes to evaluating your company's foundational culture, consider Food, Fun, Family and Faith as a starting point.

BY REGGIE GRIFFIN

**S**ounds like a harmless question until you give this some real thought. I won't bore you with the dictionary definition of culture, but from a commonsense definition, your company's culture is what your employees do when no one is watching!

Your culture was developed consciously over time or quite frankly, unconsciously over time. In many companies, especially those in the produce industry, the company culture evolved from the belief structure of the founder and was passed down from generation to generation. I believe that how you are viewed in the marketplace by your customers, your vendors and even your employees is a direct result of the culture that your company portrays.

The answer to the above question could actually be "yes" or it could be "no" depending on how your company is organized, mobilized, enabled and incentivized. My mantra is "growing the ultimate customer," and that is driven from a near life-long belief that the only way to truly be successful in business is to focus on the end user of your products. Some in the fresh produce and floral supply chain focus on their "one up" customer and not truly the person who actually consumes their product either from a food-service facility or from a grocery store.

This over the long term is a failed strategy.

I would propose that your culture, or at least a subset of your

company's culture, be focused on the ultimate customer. By having a laser focus on the end user, you become a partner with the person who buys your product. Your goals are more aligned, resources are spent more effectively and hopefully there is more success for all involved. In essence, you and your customers are collaborative partners with a common strategy and shared goals.

Now, let's look at some key components of what a focus on the ultimate customer might look like within your company culture. Again, a company's culture is what your employees do when you aren't watching them! Several years ago, I was fortunate to lead a fantastic team whose mission was to better understand the Hispanic grocery shopper and how to build a store, assortment and pricing structure that would be more relevant to them and help us better appeal to the needs of that key customer segment.

During our due diligence phase, four things surfaced that appeared to be key to the Hispanic shopper: Food – Fun – Family – Faith. Our assessment was that these four areas were the underlying culture, and for us to be successful, we needed to address these areas within our plans and strategies. In fact, what we found was that these four areas transcended our due diligence of the Hispanic shopper and rose to the top of our overall values as a company.

You could consider these areas as a foundation for your company's

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culture. These potential components of your company's culture can take on different meanings depending on your perspective, so I've tried to give you some thoughts on each one and how it could play into your company's culture, strategy or both.

**FOOD:** Food defines each and every one of us. If you think about all the happy times in your life, I'm betting that food was a part of that memory. For us in the produce industry, it is also our livelihood. Fortunately, what our industry grows, transports, distributes and sells either at retail or at a restaurant tastes great and is good for you. I happen to believe fresh produce is one of the most important to solving the obesity and health care crisis in the United States.

So in your company's culture, how is food viewed? Do you talk about it? Display it and allow your employees to sample or just use as a healthy snack? If you are in retail or foodservice, do you make a point of having all employees know about each item and let them taste it so they can better help the customer who is actually buying and/or eating the product? Or do you just think that it is shrink and can't or won't do it?

**FUN:** In many work environments, especially in the fast paced food production and marketing world, fun is usually not in the Top 5 things you expect from your team on a daily basis. There is just too much to get accomplished and too many deadlines to meet.

Now consider this: If your employees really enjoy coming to work and really enjoy the teams they are part of and what they can accomplish together, don't you think you may have higher productivity, lower turnover, and even more satisfied customers? If your teams are truly engaged in selling great food to the end consumer, do you think that gives their job a slightly higher purpose? Grumpy or disengaged employees typically don't make the best customer advocates.

**FAMILY:** This is an expansion of the fun factor mentioned above. Do your teams function like a family (I don't mean a totally dysfunctional family), or are they individual players who think success is just what they get accomplished and get their names attached to it? Think about your "Employee of the Month" recognition with its typical parking place near the front.

Have you ever considered "Team of the Month"? What is your company's culture when it comes to building effective teams that rely on each other to be successful? Instead of just having a sales person fly to some corporate office somewhere to sell them something, have you considered a total team effort that incorporates logistics, accounting, marketing, etc., in addition to sales so you not only offer your products at a

price, but you offer a collaborative approach where you build synergies together and share in the success you've built with logistics, etc.?

**FAITH:** By now you say this is too much. You can't mix politics and religion in the workplace. There are too many people who have different view points and are passionate about their views. Plus, legal would be all over us. I absolutely agree and am not advocating you do this in your work place. But let's look at another view of faith. Do the owners/managers of your company have faith in the team to empower them to make decisions that affect the customer even though in the short term it may cost some money? Are all the decisions made in the corner office or is each functional unit empowered to manage customer satisfaction? Do you trust your team?

Let's go back to the question, is your company's culture a strategy or is your company's strategy your culture? Many companies have gone through strategic planning sessions and outlined the key elements of their strategy. If one of these elements does not directly tie to the ultimate customer, then the first half of the question would be no. If everyone in your organization is not focused on the person who actually consumes what you grow and ship, again the answer is no. If you ask the manager of your shipping department what his or her job is and they say to get all the orders out, and not to make sure all our customers get what they want and when they want it, the answer is no.

If a key element of your company's strategy is a laser focus on the ultimate customer who consumes your product, then the answer to the second half of the question is yes. If each of your employees understands that for the company to be successful and for them personally to be successful, that we have to deliver the best product and flavor to the person who eats it, then the answer is yes.

Our industry exudes passion, and that is one of the reasons we all are involved in it. The ultimate customer is passionate about fresh produce. That is why survey after survey says fresh produce is a key determining factor on where they buy their groceries. I leave you with this final question: Is your organization from the top to the newest employee dedicated to satisfying the ultimate customer? **pb**



After a 42-year career with The Kroger Company, Reggie Griffin retired as the Corporate Vice President of Produce and Floral, Merchandising and Procurement and is now the principal of Reggie Griffin Strategies, LLC, working with both national and international clients in the fresh produce and floral industry to better connect with the ultimate customer. For more information, go to [www.ReggieGriffinStrategies.com](http://www.ReggieGriffinStrategies.com).



# Jan Fleming, Loved By All, Goes To God

FROM JIM PREVOR'S PERISHABLE PUNDIT 05.02.2013

**W**riting the Pundit is typically a joyous enterprise. We fight the good fight for clear ideas and smart thinking; we battle to better understand the world in which we live. Yet there are moments we wish we didn't have to write at all...

So it is today, when I have to tell you that my friend and a friend to all who loved truth, beauty and the produce industry, Jan Fleming of the Strube Celery & Vegetable Co., has passed.

We told the story of Jan's battle with cancer in several pieces:

- *To Endure And Prevail: With Thanksgiving Approaching*
- *Let Jan Fleming Know She Does Not Stand Alone*
- *Update On Jan Fleming...E-mail As Medicinal Treatment*
- *To Life! Raise A Glass For Life Itself*

Jan was the CEO of the iconic Chicago wholesaler, the Strube Celery & Vegetable Co., the daughter of an industry icon, Bob Strube, Sr., who was a founding columnist of Pundit sister publication, PRODUCE BUSINESS (we chronicled his passing in *Industry Giant Bob Strube Sr., Passes Away* in the January 18, 2010 edition of the Pundit). Jan's husband, Tim Fleming — as upstanding a man as the good Lord allows — was the Chairman of United Fresh.

Jan was just 67, and she leaves behind a young husband, children, grandchildren, a brother, nephews and nieces and a host of people — employees, vendors and customers I had the privilege to get close to — who truly loved Jan. How many of us will go being able to make such a claim?

She didn't run things in a typical Harvard MBA manner. She was more the mother hen who protected and counseled all around her. She cared about everyone and, naturally, they came to care about her.

My family knew Jan's family for generations. When, shortly after Jan was diagnosed, my father, Michael Prevor, was also diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, a story we told in *Never Tell Me The Odds: One Man, One Disease, One Battle*. The serendipitous forces of fate tied our families together in an unexpected manner. For months, on the same day, at the same time, my father and Jan sat in different cities receiving the exact same chemotherapy. As they did so, my mother, Roslyn Prevor, exchanged e-mail correspondences with Jan, and in a short but intense time, they built a special bond.

When we threw my father a surprise 75th birthday, despite her illness, Jan and Tim flew to Florida to be part of what was a salute and, in a sense, a bon voyage for my father. One doesn't forget when a woman with cancer makes time in her life to do such a thing.

My father passed first, and as it seemed likely he was about to



pass, I called Jan's family to give them the news. I wanted Jan to know that, though my father and Jan had journeyed together, it didn't have to end in the same place for her. Perhaps their journeys would diverge, and by the Grace of God, perhaps Jan would make it.

Of course, all our journeys end in the same place. I had tried to see Jan just this past week, but she was too tired, too sick, and so we let her be.

As it became clear that Jan's time on this earth was growing short, I sent Tim a note:

*Oh Tim –*

*We pray for you and Jan so very much. I shared this news with my mother, and we feel the loss of my father once again.*

*How much we would give if we could, just for a day, not be powerless mortals and instead be able to intervene.*

*We love you and Jan. We pray that her journey is an easy one and that the Lord grant you the strength to endure.*

*Love, Jim*

And Tim, who lovingly and stoically stood by Jan every moment of this battle, sent back his own note:

*You are right; it sucks to be just a corner man in this fight. We must realize that we need to be there to dress the wounds, to encourage the fighter, to give them water, to wipe their brow, and yes, to throw in the towel when the time comes — because the fighter never knows when they are losing.*

And my Mom, who knows this pain of loss acutely, sent her own note:

*Dear Tim,*

*I am so sorry to hear that Jan is losing her battle. She certainly fought long and hard.*

*I know how difficult this is for you, your family and all of those, including Mike, Jim and me, who loved Jan. How could anyone not love Jan?*

*If you can, please let her know that Mike is preparing to welcome her to a world without pain, but one filled with love, and they will both be looking down and blessing all of their loved ones.*

*I will always be available if you feel like writing or talking in the months and years ahead. I know how difficult they can be. How fortunate we have been, to have Jan and Mike in our lives, and to have the wonderful family and memories that they have left us. We have truly been blessed by God!*

*Wishing you peace.*

*Roz Prevor*

After losing Jan, I prayed to my father, telling him he owes Jan a party. I know he will make it a great one.

The memory of the righteous is always a blessing, and we pray that Tim and the broader family shall find solace in that memory.

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Sambrailo Packaging is a third-generation family-owned company that has served the produce and floral industries since 1923. Now in our 90th year, we have built our reputation on innovation, service and quality. With locations throughout Mexico and California, Sambrailo is known for “design to distribution” packaging solutions. Our motto, “whatever is best for the produce,” continues to be Sambrailo Packaging’s unifying theme and motivation for success.

Sambrailo specializes in improving and designing packaging systems for berries, grapes, tomatoes, leafy greens and value-added produce. We then enhance our products with our superior service—including on-site clamshell labeling, tray make-up, vendor managed inventory and warehouse-to-field distribution.

Sambrailo starts by listening—listening to the needs of the grower/shipper, the retailer and the consumer. By staying closely tuned in to each of

these three segments, we are able to devise innovative packaging solutions which add tremendous value to food packaging.

For example, Sambrailo was the first to develop a plastic clamshell for berries. Similarly, we have continued to provide improvements to the industry with a patented freight-saving MIXIM System. This unique packaging matrix of clamshells, trays and pallets dramatically cuts down on cooling time and product bruising while maximizing freight cube. Each feature results in cost savings throughout the distribution chain.

Through years of experience, Sambrailo has accumulated unparalleled knowledge of both our customers and their products. When this savvy is combined with our ingenuity and drive to stay in front of trends, the results are beneficial for all. For example, we foresaw the effects that the larger strawberry varieties would have on the clamshell capacity needs and have proactively come to the market with a MIXIM LV (large volume) 1-

pound clamshell.

Similarly, Sambrailo created the RunRite family of clamshells. Designed for packaging of blueberries and grape tomatoes on high-speed equipment, the RunRite denests, fills, closes and stacks more efficiently and with less down-time than any other currently on the market. The RunRites are available in 4.4 oz, 6.0 oz and 1-dry pint sizes.

Sambrailo and its thermo-former partners continue to expand clamshell production to facilities throughout Mexico and the U.S. This addition allows Sambrailo to produce clamshells in the heart of the major berry and vegetable growing regions. The result is a shorter travel time, quicker service turn-around and better relative prices.

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# 90

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# Savannah's Port Modifies Produce Supply Chain Models

For the Georgia Port Authority, it is location, cost-saving, efficiency, customer service and sustainability altogether leading the way for the incredible growth.

**T**he Port of Savannah, approximately two square miles in size, located along the Savannah River approximately 15 miles from the Atlantic Ocean, is the epicenter of a complex logistical development. Comprising numerous stakeholders working together for everyone's gain, the end objective is identifying and then satisfying the needs of their customers both regular and prospective.

Importation and exportation of produce items in the future may offer one of the largest opportunities to transform the Southeast and adjacent areas' supply chain model. With both custom and agricultural inspection facilities within the terminal boundaries, importers have the advantage of efficiency over those ports where product for inspection must be moved to a location away from where it was taken off of the ship.

This recent January, a shipment of blueberries from Chile arrived at the port. Alan Ebe, east coast general manager for Giumarra International Berry, a division of Los Angeles, CA-based Giumarra Bros. Fruit Co., was quoted, "Saving money going north and west is the reason we are here. The Port of Savannah has a streamlined flow which is fast and

efficient, and the Georgia Ports Authority gives us a high level of customer service."

With nearby Vidalia, GA, less than 100 miles distant, home to arguably the sweetest onion grown in the United States during the springtime, major growers in the area capitalize on their retail relationships by using the Port of Savannah for importation of Peruvian grown onions during the fall-winter season. From port arrival to reshipping to their customers, the turnaround may be as quick as one day depending on USDA inspection schedules.

## Continual Growth

Although the Georgia Ports Authority (GPA) was created in 1945 and given full ownership and operating control, the port had been in existence since shortly after 1733, when settlers began exporting agricultural commodities. By the time of the Civil War, it was a major Confederate port until Sherman's march to the sea in December 1864. Recognizing its potential, federal funding supported deepening the Savannah River until a 30-foot depth was reached during the 1930's Depression era.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GEORGIA PORTS AUTHORITY





## The port's refrigerated cargo facilities make it the largest refrigerated cargo exporter on the East and Gulf coasts. Refrigerated shipments go to at least 49 different countries.

Since the authority's inception, the port has grown continually and now ranks second in the United States for export of containerized tonnage and fourth busiest overall. It is the largest single terminal container port in North America, with container volume more than doubling since the end of fiscal year 2002, with fiscal year ending June 2012, the Port of Savannah moved 2.98 million TEU (Twenty Foot Equivalent) units.

Touring the Port with Chris Logan, senior director, trade development, one begins to understand some of the reasons for its efficiencies. Starting with an optical operated gate entrance which reads the truck vehicle numbers and driver credentials, the average of more than 2,000 daily arrivals and departures provides exacting detail of the round-trip averaging approximately 52 minutes. The yard data system leaves nothing to chance, providing driving instructions to container locations. In January, 2013, the main gate record was broken, handling 8,957 containers.

When the maximum 9-ship docking space is active, the best-in-class ship-to-shore cranes can each make 40 moves per hour. Recently the GPA unveiled a new electrified rubber-tired gantry crane (ERTG) design, which is the first of its kind in North America. This cleaner, more efficient method of terminal container handling reduces fuel consumption by 95 percent per crane for moving containers within the terminal.

Always looking for improvements for direct cost savings and efficiencies, reducing the environmental footprint is also important in supply chain decisions. At a recent Georgia Foreign Trade Conference, Curtis J. Foltz, GPA executive director, said, "We operate 200-plus marine tractors every day inside the port complex. I would suspect in the next two to four years, the vast majority of those will be operating on an alternative fuel other than diesel. We believe that's going to be either LNG (liquefied natural gas) or CNG

(compressed natural gas)."

### Hub To Almost Half Of US Population

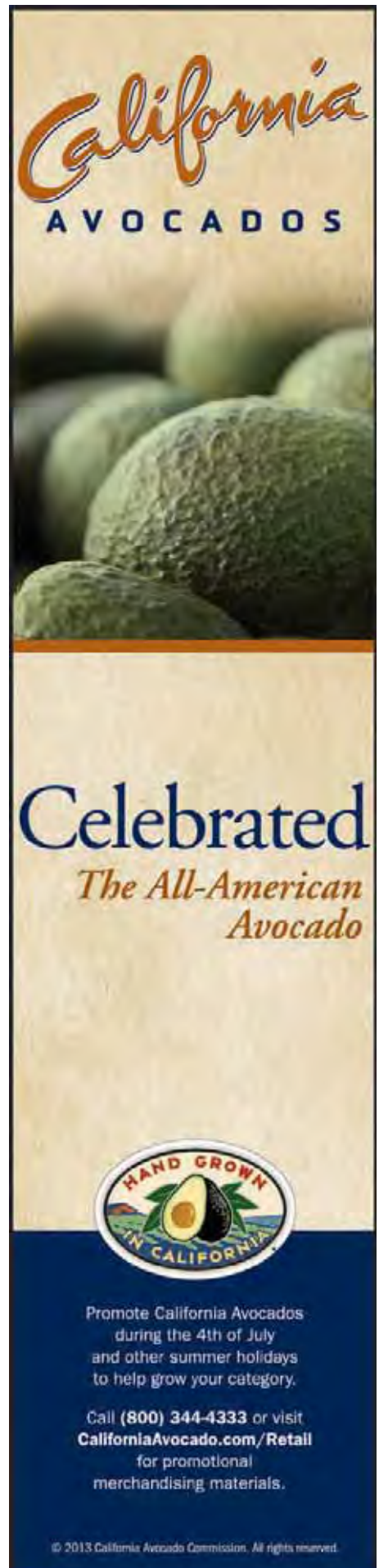
The Southeast location places the port's service area covering 44 percent of potential U.S. consumers. Florida's and Georgia's combined population exceeds that of New York and New Jersey. Two interstates and two class-one rail facilities on the terminal provide the potential market penetration. Each week 41 vessels currently call on the port with frequent additions.

Out of a total 44.1 million square feet of distribution centers in the area, the occupancy rate was 85.7 percent in the 2011 calendar year. Of these, 20 centers are located near Savannah with 200-plus distribution centers within a four-hour drive. Currently 300,000 square feet of refrigerated storage within five miles of Savannah is under construction, and storage being planned would double current availability.

The port's refrigerated cargo facilities make it the largest refrigerated cargo exporter on the East and Gulf coasts. With export volume exceeding import volume — contrary to the experience of competing ports — this enables the port to offer importing efficiencies. Refrigerated shipments go to at least 49 different countries.


Dr. Karl Mandrodt, Professor of Logistics at Georgia Southern University and principal researcher of logistics and supply chain trends and issues, recently provided his insight into the logistics industry for *AnchorAge* magazine. Among his predictions is information technology will be phenomenally different from where it was in the previous two years. Information in real time of where cargo is located as it moves from place to place is coupled with availability for delivery.

The expansion of the Panama Canal presents an opportunity to shift cargo from West Coast to East Coast as shippers develop measures for calculating total landed cost.



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Savannah handled 8.7 percent of U.S. containerized cargo volume and 12.5 percent of all U.S. containerized exports.

In the GPA 2011 Annual Report, then board chairman, Alex Poitevint, stated Savannah handled 8.7 percent of U.S. containerized cargo volume and 12.5 percent of all U.S. containerized exports as an outgrowth of management and staffing, planning, infrastructure and relationships. The professional staff members are strategic thinkers, who plan not for tomorrow, but for the next decade, anticipate customers' future needs and take necessary steps to provide them ahead of time, including more efficient procedures and innovative infrastructure improvements. A customer-centered mindset and fast cost-efficient services are what will keep Georgia's deep water ports in the lead as the fastest growing port in the nation.

However, the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project (SHEP), deepening the Savannah harbor up to 47 feet, is necessary to prepare for the new class of larger container ships that have nearly three times the capacity of those currently able to transit the Panama Canal. In 2014, the Panama Canal expansion will be completed and increase the maximum draft of vessels traveling to and from the U.S. East Coast from 39.5 to 50 feet.

The GPA executive director, Curtis J. Foltz, reported SHEP reached another major milestone in late October, 2012, when the Assistant Secretary of the Army issued the final approval and recommendation of the federal government to deepen the Savannah Harbor to 47 feet. Construction is expected to begin in 2013 and be completed by the end of 2016. The project is expected to reduce shipping costs more than \$213 million annu-

ally, providing a benefit-to-cost ratio of \$5.50 for every dollar invested.

According to Colonel Jeffery Hall, Savannah District commander and district engineer, the Record of Decision affirms deepening Savannah Harbor to 47 feet is economically viable, environmentally sustainable and in the best interests of the nation.

Foltz continued "the project delivers tremendous value to the supply chain. That is why it is so strongly supported by the United States Government."

In February 2012, Caterpillar announced selection of a site near Athens, GA, for a million-square-foot facility, which when fully operational will employ 1,400. The company's officials decided to shift production from Japan to the United States because of the proximity to the Port of Savannah. This proximity is being enhanced by building a new highway connector for direct truck access to Interstates 95 and 16. The reduction of truck traffic on local surface roads will reduce travel times for both categories of vehicle drivers.

### New Options In Logistics

For those involved in making product procurement decisions, there frequently is little time left after making purchasing decisions and balancing inventory turnover to get outside of the historically accepted format of logistical decisions.

Last Fall, this writer had the opportunity to visit a rapidly expanding, nearly century-old, vertically integrated agriculturally based organization located in the southeastern United States. Easy to overlook were traffic

managers for both receiving and shipping operations located in close proximity to the desk of procurement and sales personnel. Specialists from each activity recognize the demands and changing opportunities available to each and are more likely to recognize and communicate valuable improvement options as they become available.

Location, location, location is a simplistic phrase often used to identify the reason for success of many growing businesses. For the GPA, it is location, cost-saving, efficiency, customer service and sustainability altogether leading the way for the incredible growth.

A *Fortune*, February 25, 2013, article titled "Your Business Model Doesn't Work Anymore" concludes, "The largest obstacles will be weak imaginations, threatened interests and culture. Business-model innovation is the new essential competency. It will separate tomorrow's winners from losers." With the current rate of expansion and innovation, it is only a matter of time until the Port of Savannah becomes a more important factor in the perishable supply chain. The question is which of the global suppliers and their customers will take the next step in making a new perishable supply chain business model a reality.

**pb**

*Dave Diver is the former vice president of produce at Hannaford, and a regular contributing writer to PRODUCE BUSINESS.*

# producebusiness

MARKETING • MERCHANDISING • MANAGEMENT • PROCUREMENT



**HOMESPUN  
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*Wegmans*  
**FOOD MARKETS**

SUSTAINABLE WORKPLACE CULTURE

The workplace culture of Wegmans breeds a legacy of rich, colorful stories highlighting its values, which resonate daily in clear, consistent sustainability messaging throughout the close-knit community.

*Photo from left to right, at top: Dave Corsi, vp produce and floral, and Jason Wadsworth, sustainability coordinator; in middle row, Carol Duquette, vp development group, design services and maintenance, and Jeanne Colleluori, communications and media specialist; bottom row, Mira Slott, special projects editor (PRODUCE BUSINESS), Mary Ellen Burris, senior vp consumer affairs (Wegmans) and Ken Whitacre, publisher/editorial director, (PRODUCE BUSINESS).*



**Like Amish quilters, Wegmans sews its sustainability tradition into its visionary fabric.**

BY MIRA SLOTT

**S**ustainability at Wegmans, a 79-store family chain rooted in Rochester, NY, revels in palpable contrasts analogous to the making of an Amish quilt. One only needs to study a micro and macro image of a traditional quilt. First, zoom in on the exceptionally skilled craft, precision stitching and attention to complicated pattern detail. These quilters, like the Wegmans' family and their long-tenured employees and grower partners, accomplish this dedicated hard work through humble traditions, home-spun values, and organic collaboration, always staying true to their core.

Then, zoom out to reveal the entire quilt, an unexpectedly modern, provocative and innovative masterpiece; it could be an iconic

sunrise design jettisoning toward the edges, a strikingly contemporary, three-dimensional building block design, or a bold, colorful geometric, shockingly preempting the dynamic 20th century art movement.

The art of Wegmans' sustainability model layers realistic, internal, high-impact, cost-saving results with visionary resourcefulness and smart experimentation and discovery. The workplace culture breeds a legacy of rich, colorful stories highlighting its values, which resonate daily in clear, consistent sustainability messaging throughout the close-knit community.

Since its 1916 beginnings, Wegmans has emanated steadfast willingness to pave its own path, whether going against convention to sell irradiated beef to its customers when no other retailers dared, or taking on the complexities



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of its own organic farm to build a northeast organic produce supplier base.

**NO NONSENSE SUSTAINABILITY**

Wegmans' down-to-earth inclusiveness brings with it an imperative to share among other retailers and the broader food community its learnings from food safety to energy efficiencies to optimization of produce waste. Wegmans also is keen on dispelling sustainability myths and superficial fads to enact and encourage meaningful sustainable solutions for the long term.

"Beyond the rhetoric, what's the payoff?" asks Jason Wadsworth, sustainability coordi-

nator, whose history as a fourth generation poultry farmer invariably links back to Wegmans' entrepreneurial spirit and tenacity at the heart of its sustainability measures. In 1967, retail pioneer Bob Wegman appointed Wadsworth's grandfather general product manager to run Wegmans' first egg farm, and from there the family relationship was sealed.

However, it wasn't until 2007 that Wegmans decided to create a full-time sustainability position and formulate an official, corporate sustainability platform, which is now headed up by Wadsworth and overseen by Mary Ellen Burris, senior vice president, consumer affairs.

"It's easy to get inspirational about sustainability with all the feedback from our customers and watching the trends," says Burris, but "I resisted a full-fledged, formal corporate sustainability plan for a while."

Burris, who kicked off Wegmans' first environmental wave in the late 1980s, explains the hesitation of diving back in to champion a full blown program: "I was around in the 1980s when the environment was a hot topic, with Love Canal and the toxic garbage barge, and the catchy slogans, 'give a hoot, don't pollute'; 'reduce, reuse, recycle', establishment of Earth Day, etc., but somehow sustainability didn't seem to have the staying power. Fire-



## A Conversation About Organic Farming With Dave Corsi, vice president of produce and floral at Wegmans

Wegmans couldn't find a better advocate for championing the synergies between sustainability and produce than long-tenured Dave Corsi, vice president of produce and floral. Corsi plays an influential role in all things produce at a company where produce has been of paramount focus from its start.

During our recent visit to present Wegmans with the annual PRODUCE BUSINESS Retail Sustainability Award, Corsi took time out to speak with special projects editor Mira Slott on why he has taken such a strong interest in Wegmans Organic Farm and considers it uniquely representative of the company's sustainability mantra and direction.

**Q:** As a retail produce executive, why did you become so involved in Wegmans' Organic Farm, taking on responsibility for its finances, visiting regularly and staying so closely allied to its strategic initiatives?

**A:** The organic farm integrates Wegmans' overarching umbrella approach to sustainability. It fits with our mission to support regional and local sources. We view the organic farm as the best vehicle to develop and grow organic produce in the northeast and help the communities we serve.

**Q:** Did you experience a dearth of local organic sources?

**A:** Learning to grow organic produce successfully in the northeast can present challenges. We have partnerships with about 540 conventional local growers, many for over 25 years working with us directly. Because of the growth of organic produce at Wegmans, we wanted to build our organic grower base in the northeast. Originally, we thought to network, but realized farmers required larger numbers to grow organic. They really needed that scale to be profitable.

**Q:** How is the organic farm a catalyst to generate those economies of scale? Are you

reaching out to your local conventional growers to develop organic operations?

**A:** Yes. We're working closely with growers like Spiral Path, near Hamburg, PA. They partnered with us last year to grow their organic operation significantly, developing flexibility to produce the most flavorful vegetables.

We've partnered many decades with Doug Mason of Mason Farms, 25 miles east of Rochester, technically in Williamson, NY. He dabbled in organics over time, and is opening up acreage.

Our grandiose vision is that all our local conventional partners could branch out to organics if we can replicate our organic farm operation. It's really an efficiency issue. Growing organic is very labor-intensive. We need to figure out ways to extend the season, hone the varieties, and improve growing techniques.

The reason there isn't greater availability of organic produce in the northeast is that converting to organic can be difficult, factoring labor, yield, lack of sunshine...all those elements have an impact. We have to look at all aspects of organic farming, starting with the soil, where organic flavor can be better.

**Q:** Is there a profile for the Wegmans customer that you're attracting by offering

local organic produce?

**A:** That profile is broadening. It's not just the core organic customer we serve today; it's the health-conscious, those wanting to preserve the environment, supporting the community, or simply seeking out the best flavor.

There may be a price factor at play too, as the price of organics comes down in line with conventional counterparts. We had a merchandising approach to integrate organic with conventional. Now we're doing displays with nesting of organics.

We'll see what happens as the farm continues to come to life; how relationships with our current growers play a part in our mission to build a northeast organic supply and expand offerings to our customers.

**Q:** Oftentimes, growers say that retailers don't fully grasp the challenges they face. Has your integral role at the organic farm given you new insight on the grower side of the supply chain?

**A:** It's a conversation we're having with our growing partners today. Now that we have our farm, we have great respect for the effort our growers put forth. That respect is much higher because we've experienced it first hand.



# SOME GOOD BUZZ ABOUT THIS YEAR'S NY APPLE CROP

The 2013 New York State apple crop is on its way from blossom to awesome. Our growers are already seeing exceptional growth and great promise for 2013 in terms of quality and volume. After the challenges of 2012, it's heartening to hear this "good buzz."

With millions of local branches near you, New York apple growers are looking forward to harvesting a tasty crop of goodness this fall. We're growing together and continuing to deliver on our fresher, faster commitment to you and your customers.

*Photos courtesy of Mark Seetin, US Apple Association*



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crackers went up and fizzled.”

Jeanne Colleluori, communications and media specialist, describes the turning point: “Around 2005 and 2006, the ideas resurfaced, this time with the name sustainability, connecting how carbon footprints affected people and the financial aspects, and what things must fall together for truly sustainable outcomes. Now we were looking at a complete and lasting legacy.”

“I remember the onslaught of sustainability and my epiphany,” Burris continues. “I

thought of what Jason Wadsworth could do, and how we needed to implement a company-wide sustainability strategy and recoup sustainability within of our organization.”

Wegmans’ sustainability program extends throughout all aspects of the corporation, now some 44,000 employees strong. “It starts with our leadership and a commitment to work on sustainability, corporate-led initiatives department by department,” says Wadsworth. “The other side is the grassroots effort, creating Green Teams at the store level, employees

generating ideas.”

Wadsworth describes his role as one of “guiding the hotspots, what’s coming down the road that we should be working on, the priorities around sustainability, and then it’s up to folks in each department to figure out what they can do to affect the most change. Then we work together tracking progress and communicating internally.”

## FROM WITHIN ITS FOUR WALLS

Three things shape Wegmans’ sustainability focus: carbon footprint reduction, packaging/recycling and products that help customers make a difference, according to Wadsworth. “We picked these priorities by including customer input to determine where the largest environmental impacts were within our four walls. We found the largest environmental impacts also had the largest costs.

“We very much look at the economics as part of our sustainability platform,” says Wadsworth. “We have to move a business and if things are not economically feasible, how long can they truly be sustained? We firmly believe that.”

In 2007, Wegmans’ new sustainability team set out to apply all the good things the company had done in the past and set the framework for future endeavors. “We thought that reduce, reuse, recycle mentality was pretty spot on,” says Wadsworth. The underlying sentiment, according to Wadsworth: “You’re not going to save the world, but you can construct little changes along the way that will make a real difference.”

“The retail sustainability community is tight-knit because it’s small,” says Wadsworth. “One of our first decisions as an industry task force was that sustainability should not be a competitive topic because it’s the right thing to do, and with that spirit we share information and encourage other retailers to jump on board and follow along.”

Wegmans wants to ensure that investments and resources are not futilely misdirected within the company or externally by its customers. A critical goal is to forge a green path that leads to impactful results, and that also means setting the record straight for consumers on sustainable alternatives, according to Wadsworth, who devotes significant space on Wegmans’ website clearing up consumer misconceptions and differentiating between the folklore and the facts.

Wadsworth sheds light on the most popularly held beliefs about carbon footprints, recycling and biodegradability, and he provides action-oriented steps so consumers

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>GAP &amp; HACCP Programs</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Complete Traceability</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>California Grown</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>GMP, Organic, Kosher</b>
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can make informed sustainability choices. “Mary Ellen Burris blogs every week, and we also have a lot of other people throughout the company who we ask to blog about their area of expertise, so you often find talk about new products or other sustainability initiatives,” adds Colleluori.

“If we find something sustainable that is either cost-neutral or even if it’s marginally a little bit higher, but we still need to do the right thing, we’ll try to bring that in,” says Bill Guido, category merchant packaging and

supplies. On the packaging side, we try to find things either upstream or downstream that can be recycled or contain less plastic. For example, our food containers now have 40 percent less plastic going into them. We switched from polystyrene containers, which were not sustainable at all, and also a little more costly.”

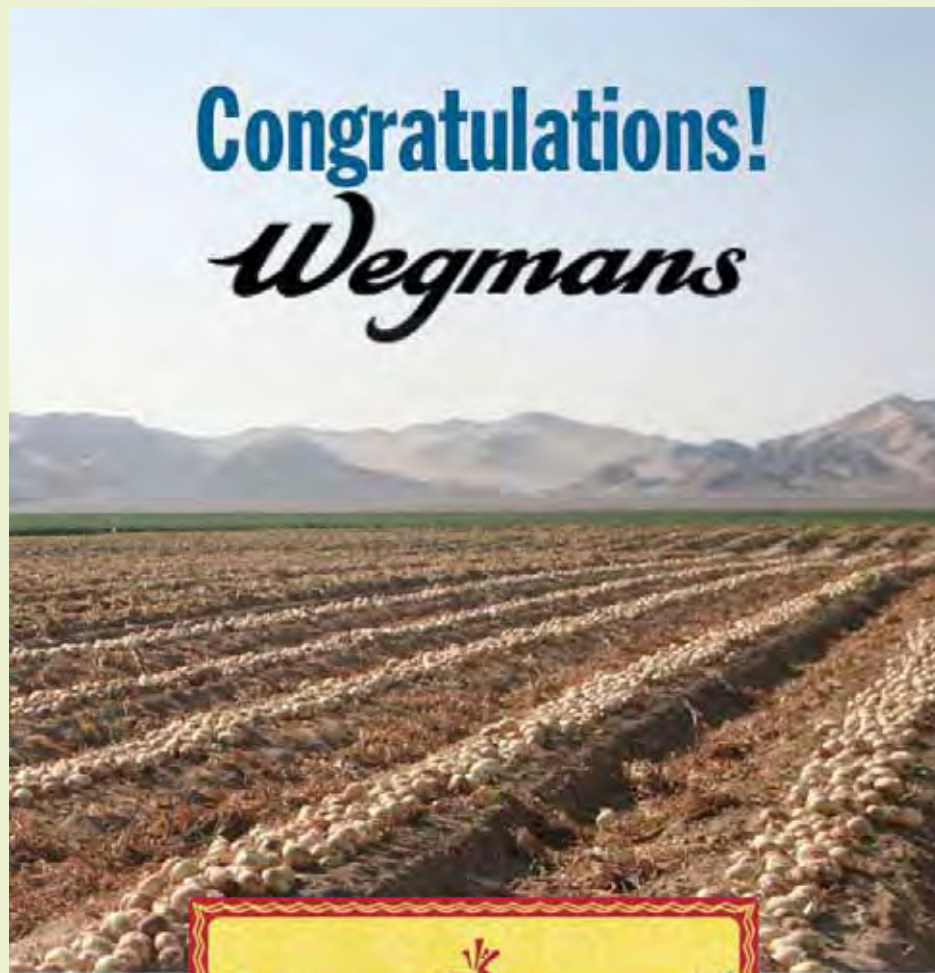
In this case, customers instigated the change, according to Wadsworth, who notes that Wegmans fields up to 1,400 consumer communications a week. “What customers say

**Bill Guido, category merchant packaging and supplies, discusses Wegmans’ decision to change food containers based on customer input.**



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within the sustainability area is fragmented, but we listen very closely. In fact, the move to get rid of Styrofoam came because our customers said, ‘We don’t want Styrofoam.’”

Yet, customers don’t always know the whole story. Styrofoam gets maligned, but it is not necessarily bad; it’s just not recyclable, explains Wadsworth. “So our mission is to get more recyclable containers so the customers can do the right thing with them.”

### ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS AND OTHER QUANDRIES

Similarly, the merits of using paper bags, plastic bags, or reusable bags depend on a variety of factors, and the choice is not so obvious. “A lot of customers don’t like plastic bags and would prefer paper as they feel paper is more sustainable,” says Guido. “We now have a plastic bag that is 40 percent recycled content, but it took us a while to get there because we wanted the bag to be strong. It’s pretty important that customers’ groceries are intact. If you decrease strength or weight of a package so much that the bag fails, you’ve increased customer frustration, whether it’s in our parking lot or home on their garage floor, and product is ruined, food is wasted, so you’ve just gone backwards.”

As Colleluori puts it: “Obviously, we are a retailer and we’re in business to sell product, so that’s the focus of the rest of the company. Now with that said, we go into select products with that mentality. We work with the best suppliers to make improvements.”

These more sustainable plastic bags are part of Wegmans’ closed loop, bag-to-bag program now, where Wegmans collects plastic bags at the store level from customers, and the



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bags get trucked down to its manufacturer in Houston, TX, which turns them back into resin and creates a percentage of the bags containing materials from the old plastic bags.

“Further, we actually reduced the size of the bag from 24 inches to 22 inches, which amounts to a savings of about 19 tractor trailer loads less per year of plastic bags,” says Guido. “That two-inch difference doesn’t sound like a significant amount, but it adds up when you look at such large quantities. We also eliminated the tie on it since we found most cashiers were just looping the bags anyway.”

“We often hear the argument that paper is more sustainable and that it’s better for the environment than plastic,” says Wadsworth, “and I guess it depends on what the end of a plastic bag’s life is or what the end of a paper bag’s life is. If you’re going to throw the plastic bag out of the window of your car, it has a bad end life compared to doing the same with a paper bag. If you recycle both of them, the plastic has a better end of life just because of the resources you use,” he continues. “It’s lighter and it takes seven tractor trailer loads to ship the same amount per bag of paper than

it does plastic.”

Further, “Most people think that plastic bags are made from oil. And they’re actually made from polyethylene, which is made from natural gas. So it’s still a fossil fuel gas, but we’re not shipping oil across long distances in containers to make plastic bags in the country. People say we’re wasting so much oil, but natural gas is produced in America,” says Wadsworth, adding, “Still, there’s a finite life of how many times you can recycle.”

Other quandaries must be considered, as in the sale of reusable cloth bags. “We’re procuring a reusable bag from China, because we had to keep the price low to get people to embrace its use. It’s harder to create a habit when you’re paying more for a bag, so that’s why 99 cents is what we sell ours for,” Wadsworth informs. But the issue is, if people are not reusing those bags, then actually, that bag has a worst imprint than a traditional plastic bag, he points out.

“We encourage people to choose reusable cloth bags with signage and other communication going out, but it’s a struggle because people are creatures of habit,” says Colleluori, adding, “I’m a diehard reusable bag user, and many times when cashiers get to my packages

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Green floor care, LED lighting and IFCO crates used as merchandising displays are among the sustainable bedrocks of many of Wegmans' produce departments.

of chicken or beef, they will frequently ask, 'Would you like me to put this in plastic?' but they're addressing an issue of potential cross-contamination. In the end, going green is a well intentioned balancing act."

#### TO LEED OR NOT TO LEED

"We don't believe in going after LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental

Design) certification to shout about it," says Wadsworth, noting companies that do big media events to unveil the shiny plaque from the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). "On energy efficiency, it makes all the sense in the world from a LEED-certified standpoint, but there are other elements like rainwater collection, green space and social aspects, where going through the LEED process may

not pay off. Why build bike racks and showers for employees who work in locations where they have to drive?" he asks, adding, "We hone in on what's important and do a gut check, looking at different certifications on a case-by-case basis."

For instance, Green Globes, an environmental assessment and ratings system, which originated in Canada and is operated in the United States by the Green Building Initiative in Portland, OR, is a better fit for retailers, according to Wadsworth. "The meat of what we're trying to do is reduce our carbon footprint, and we'd rather spend our money there. Green Globes understands retail construction more," he says, noting, "There is a pretty substantial cost to do a certification. If we're already doing most of these practices, why spend the money to get a plaque? What's fair to say, we would comply with any municipality that requires them, but if the certification doesn't meet our bottom line, reduce our carbon footprint, and make sense for our employees and our business, we won't do it," says Wadsworth.

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reputation as a premier fresh foods aficionado and merchandiser, with the produce department a cornerstone, so any sustainability measures – from flooring to lighting systems to refrigerant management – can only proceed with that in mind. Wegmans teams technology experts with retail floor executives to strategize compatible solutions.

“It was a big changeover going to green floor care,” says Guido. “During the summer months, we use ionized water and basically that’s all we use to clean the floor. When you’re

done with the chemical, you’re leaving a residue, so we’ve found things stay cleaner longer.” It’s electronically charged water, which duplicates the chemistry of chemical cleaners, where the chemical puts a positive and negative charge on the water to attract the dirt, Wadsworth explains.

“We thought we had a perfect solution, 100 percent chemical-free, but in the winter with snow, you use a lot of salt if you’re in the northeast – it’s back to neutral cleaners to help break that salt down. Even so, we still reduce

our chemical usage by half,” says Guido. “While in the new stores, floors are concrete, but some stores, where we have tile, present challenging floor situations. We are looking for long-term floor care products and try different things,” says Guido, quick to point out, “but our very first order of business is to make sure it’s going to do that primary function.”

A sweeping chainwide lighting retrofit and newly designed lighting systems for stores have dramatically slashed energy usage, while cleverly enhancing produce displays to better highlight products and the overall shopping atmosphere, according to Carol Duquette, vice president development group, design services and maintenance. “The payback on retrofitting LED spotlights in all our existing stores, with LED lasting seven to eight years, amounts to a 70 percent reduction in energy,” she says.

“On new stores, we did two things: reduced the amount of light fixtures in stores roughly in half from six years ago to now so that in itself is a savings, and I believe all the lighting in stores is now considered to be high efficiency,” she says, adding, “we’ve also gotten rid of halogens.”

At Wegmans, where proper lighting plays an integral role in merchandising and the customer shopping experience, messing around with the lighting fixtures can create quite a stir with produce managers and merchandisers, according to Frank Auria, project manager, who describes his role as more of a “grassroots, boots-on-the-ground approach to energy,” where Carol Duquette’s group focuses on the design side and larger scale picture.

“Tackling sales floor lighting was the most difficult piece,” says Auria. “When you’re on a sales floor in a retail store, the look and feel is the most important thing. Obviously, there are going to be a lot of passionate people as far as changing lighting systems.”

Lighting alternatives that maximize efficiencies can be counterproductive to showing off fresh fruits and vegetables in their most appealing ways. To get a clearer understanding from a produce department perspective, “We basically set up a program where we looked at each store; the guidelines on number of lights per foot, where and how people were directing spotlights and the effects they were hoping to achieve,” according to Wadsworth.

“Part of the issue we found with merchandising was that people were moving the displays around but were not readjusting the spotlights. In turn, people were putting up

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Wegmans' merchants have embraced sustainability to the point their recommendations are encouraged and acted upon by Green Teams in each division.

more lights complaining the displays were too dark when the problem was that the lights weren't focused properly," Auria explains.

Fortunately, technology is advancing and opening up creative solutions, according to Rich Kelley, manager of engineering. "Basically there are certain colors that make our product pop and certain colors that don't. At the end of the day we're merchants and we need to choose lighting fixtures that highlight product better but also are more sustainable

and cost effective."

According to Auria, "You couldn't have put LED in produce departments five years ago. The problem with them was the color rendering wasn't as good, so you wouldn't have gotten the greens and reds and yellows out of the produce that you can today. Now we can capture produce in its natural state and really enhance the look of the products. We waited until the LED gave us the light quality we were looking for," he says, adding, "You

don't always want to be the leader using the newest technology because there's a lot of things that don't always work well."

Auria acknowledges, "LED is getting there; it's not ideal, but we're close enough now where we made the changeover in our produce department. LED is still evolving and we are evolving with it."

Store design features also factor in to overall lighting affects. For example, in the new stores, the ceiling is a lighter color so it actually reflects the light better, which means you need fewer fixtures. In contrast, the more sustainable concrete floors, while still high polish, do not reflect the light as well as the stores with vinyl tile.

"It's a science and an art really," says Wadsworth, "but Wegmans has been ahead of the game as far as lighting of the stores. Founder Bob Wegman was always big into lighting, and his son and CEO Danny Wegman took it to another level in the look and feel and the comfort of the customer experience," he says.

In addition to the sales floor, better quality backroom lighting solutions have benefited produce operations as well. "The guy working in the backroom getting the produce off the

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truck can actually see the product in its natural state and say, 'This shouldn't make it out of the store tomorrow,' so that was an unexpected benefit we stumbled upon," says Auria.

At the same time, just turning off unnecessary lights proved quite impactful. "A test at one of our stores where we started turning off lights until our customers said it was too dark – 490 light bulbs in all – was estimated to save enough energy to power 23 homes for one year," says Wadsworth.

#### CHILL OUT

Reducing refrigerant leaks is critical for

Wegmans because of its focus on perishable foods and the need for extensive refrigeration in its stores. "Produce is very sensitive to temperature changes, and the cases are open, so it's a really good place to test secondary refrigerant loop technology," says Duquette. Wegmans was awarded an EPA GreenChill gold certification for its progressive refrigerant management system. GreenChill is an EPA partnership with food retailers to reduce refrigerant emissions and decrease their impact on the ozone layer and climate change.

"We are probably in the minority of super-market chains that actually can say we keep

track of all the refrigeration we use," says Duquette. "Most stores are too large to track, but we've been monitoring stores since 2009, which is a big plus in figuring out how to reduce leaks and also to design systems to use less refrigeration."

"It's difficult if not impossible for a refrigeration system not to leak in its first year, and the older the system the more likely it leaks, and there are two distinct negative aspects; one, it costs money because refrigerant is very expensive, and two, we all know leaking refrigerant into the atmosphere is not good; it's a greenhouse gas and can cause ozone deple-

## Seafood Lessons For Produce

BY MIRA SLOTT

**Carl Salamone, Wegmans' vice president seafood, knows of sustainability, since he's been at Wegmans for 47 years,** and opened up the first fish department in 1974. "Back then, we thought fisheries were everlasting and sustainability wasn't an issue," he says, remembering pivotal conversations with Danny Wegman when the tides started changing in the late 80s and early 90s.

"More and more east coast fisheries were closing, and Danny went back to all our suppliers to see what we could do." Certain areas banned fishing for scallops and for the first time there were more farmed fish than wild, he explains.

In 2004, the Environmental Defense Fund developed standards, particularly for salmon and shrimp. Wegmans challenged itself to take the lead in setting the highest standards for the industry, according to Salamone, adding, "Sustainability is not a marketing tool for Wegmans. We always share our findings with other retailers."

There's a large expense to implement many of these sustainable measures, which also can be extremely taxing and complex, according to Salamone. Wegmans has been able to overcome these challenges by establishing unique supplier partnerships, sometimes obscure and involving resourceful networking. For instance, "In Honduras, I was given the name of a family in Belize with a shrimp farm, and we formed a partnership that was a marriage made in heaven. The father had the idea for the business and the son is now stewarding the program," he explains.

"It was like Bob Wegman and Danny Wegman in small scale. It became our model," he says. "We brought in tough standards to

suppliers of Atlantic salmon," noting that six people run the whole operation for Wegmans' salmon farm in Ireland.

As Salamone has talked to suppliers to instigate EU standards, his hope is that EU standards will be regulated around the world, says Jeanne Colleluori, communications and media specialist, who also has been actively involved in Wegmans' seafood sustainability measures, noting that FDA has approved GMO salmon and it doesn't have to be on the label.

Wegmans is keen on educating its customers and sharing the stories behind its seafood sustainability ventures. When Wegmans introduced its Belize shrimp, now 17 percent of its shrimp sales, it did a lot of sampling and explained to customers why this is a premium product. "When customers hear the story, there is a segment of the population that is willing to pay the higher price it demands," she says.

A few years ago, tragedy struck the family of the Belize shrimp farm, forcing it to close. "I was heartbroken to learn the father, who had become my friend, was killed in a plane crash," says Salamone. Mary Ellen Burris, senior vice president, consumer affairs, wrote a blog informing customers of the news, and she received an outpouring of reaction.

When Wegmans was able to reopen the operation, customers welcomed the special product back, Salamone explains, noting its unmistakable presence because of the shrimp's rich pigmented shell, caused by the black lining on the tarp used during the more sustainable farming process.

A range of different seafood certifications can create confusion within the industry and at the consumer level, according to Colleluori,



Carl Salamone

adding that not all are created equal or in fact necessary. "Chilean seabass is an endangered species, so we want to guarantee it is MSC (Marine Stewardship Council) certified, and Wegmans outlines why on its website, where it lists all certifications for those who are interested. Although we don't always insist on certifications, we do have best practices that we expect as a baseline. It's a traceability issue," says Salamone, adding, part of sustainability is in knowing where product came from, going back to the feed. There are certain species Wegmans won't carry because there are not enough sustainability standards in place.

"Wegmans joined Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP) to gain a big overall picture of where we need to improve," says Salamone. Wegmans had all its suppliers fill out SFP's electronic questionnaire to help in gathering information on everything being sold at the stores. "The single biggest surprise in talking to the suppliers was that they had similar concerns but didn't know how to go about fixing them," he says.

In true Wegmans' fashion, "We brought in all our suppliers for a group meeting to share ideas. They were not used to sitting next to their competitors," he says, "but they were enthusiastic to soak in solutions and work together for a greater cause." **pb**

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## SWEETEN SALES WITH STELLAR'S TIGER FIG

Increased production of a highly demanded new fig variety poised to profit retailers.

Retailers across the country this summer will be able to ramp up fig promotions as a popular new variety becomes more available. Stellar Distributing in Madera, CA, has announced significant production volume increases of the popular tiger fig allowing for greater promotion and sales potential.

"We introduced this promising new variety to our California fig program a few years ago," states Kurt Cappelluti, Stellar sales manager. "Last year we shipped 15,000 boxes but this year we estimate an amazing and very promotable 100,000 boxes. Shipments will begin August first."

Stellar is the exclusive seller of about 300 acres of Tiger figs growing near Madera, CA, and has been preparing the marketplace for success. "These figs have been very popular in the past year and we've been challenged to adequately supply retailers," explains Cappelluti. "We've been priming the market by providing small amounts of production over the last few years to familiarize consumers with the product. We're excited to now have significant promotable volume."

The Tiger fig's sweet flavor, striped green and yellow skin, and bright red flesh set it apart from traditional figs. "Consumers love the honey-like taste and the bright red color when they open it," states Cappelluti. "The fact that it's different really attracts them. It's definitely something retailers can create excitement over."

Stellar recommends spurring promotion and consumption through sampling, demos, visible displays, and signage that draws attention to the figs.

The Tiger fig will ship in 12 eight-ounce clams, six 12-ounce clams, eight one-pound clams, 12 one-pint baskets, half trays, family pack trays and full trays. "We want to ensure a wide variety of pack options so retailers can take full advantage of

this delicious and profitable new item," says Cappelluti.

Stellar starts the season on May 1 with Sierra, Black Mission and Brown Turkey figs out of California's southern desert and closes the season with those same varieties by harvesting in the central San Joaquin Valley. The Tiger fig enters the market on August 1. Stellar will ship with no break from May 1 through January 15, 2014 due to the volume from the Southern California desert crop and

Central San Joaquin Valley crop.

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# Tiger Figs

Perfectly named, the **Tiger Fig** is recognized for its unique yellow stripes over green skin.

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tion,” says Kelley.

“The changes we’ve made in secondary temperature refrigeration not only help reduce refrigerant charge, but Wegmans feels better about its food quality. We’re not shocking the food. We’ve heard from our merchants that product stays at a more even temperature now,” Kelley says. “We were recognized by EPA for reducing our refrigerant charge by approximately 50 percent on our low temperature system,” says Kelley.

According to Duquette, refrigeration systems are tricky in talking carbon footprint because of all the variables involved, but moving forward, she says, “We will be able to reduce refrigerant needs by over 80 percent for low temperature systems.”

Once the foundation is in place, the ‘people’ piece of the equation is next, training and education and basic things that employees can do to reduce energy use. “It’s about going back to the basics, how to use the equipment,

and simplification of the process,” says Wadsworth. “One of the main elements is how do you sustain the energy systems that have been implemented, while continuing to innovate. It’s a never ending process.”

### GRASSROOTS GUMPTION

One day, Jack DePeters, senior vice president of store operations, who also is known for his employee communication site, Ask Jack, received an intriguing question from a New Jersey store employee. What do we do with all the uniforms when they get a stain or a hole in them from all the wear and tear? Alas, “Throw them in the trash wasn’t a good answer. With 44,000 employees, that’s a lot of uniforms,” says Wadsworth, pointing out the magnitude of the problem.

“We set out to find a better answer. We considered donating them, but there were some issues around donating a shirt that has our name on it. We weren’t comfortable with

that. So we sought out a company that would shred uniforms and we found one here in New York that actually makes the insulation for carpeted interiors in automobiles.”

“We don’t have all the answers here in Consumer Affairs,” admits Wadsworth, adding, “Often we find solutions through unlikely places. You never know until you start doing research and ask.”

Suzanne Dunn, resource recovery coordinator, who has an unlikely passion for touring landfills and composting sites, says, “I just can’t stand to see anything being wasted that others could use,” influenced by her childhood upbringing and work in Haiti. “When things we take for granted here, like running water, drinking from a faucet, and electricity, are scarce, you learn how to conserve and don’t buy things you can live without. We reused everything and didn’t throw things away.”

Needless to say, Dunn is well suited for her

## Distributing Sustainability

**“It all began with produce being one of the pinnacles of our company and a showcase department,”** says Dave Allar, Retail Service Center (RSC) maintenance manager, of the Pottsville, PA, distribution facility, an innovative multi-phase project, which now services half the chain, with the other half out of Rochester. Since it first opened as a produce warehouse in 2004 at 120,000 square feet, the Pottsville RSC has expanded to 500,000 square feet, including 12 banana ripening rooms, and has become a progressive sustainability testing ground.

Its underlying mission percolates on delivering the freshest, quality produce efficiently as possible. “When servicing everything from New York, many stores would have to order further in advance to account for, in some cases, eight hours of travel time. We dramatically cut down order cycle time to help the produce managers improve accuracy of their ordering with quick turnaround, and also greatly improved service by focusing on half the stores,” Allar says.

“Dave (Allar) has done a tremendous job of capturing all the energy efficiency projects. One of the big keystones is the hydrogen pallet jack program,” says Jason Wadsworth, sustainability coordinator.

“About three and a half years ago on this campus, we were running into some performance problems with battery charges for our fleet and started looking for alternatives,” Allar

continues. “Typically, you go to a quick-charge battery or something like that, which actually uses more electricity. I came across research on hydrogen fuel cells, which seemed promising.”

It’s worth noting that in Pennsylvania at that time, experts were predicting electricity costs would increase by 30 percent, and those predictions ended up being pretty close, according to David DeMascole, general manager. “We were facing electricity regulation coming up,” he says, adding, “When trying to maintain consistent low prices, we had to try to do something to offset that increase.”

At the same time, the facility was expanding its produce operation, plus doing floor work, and needed to increase batteries to run multiple shifts. “After some cost analysis, we decided to take a shot at using fuel cells,” says DeMascole. “The nice thing about the fuel cell... it never comes out of the truck. All you need to do is fill it up like your car, so we eliminated having to purchase 130 batteries, and replaced them with half the amount of fuel cells and started running that at the produce warehouse.

“Not to bash batteries, but there is the issue of how much acid is involved,” says DeMascole. “There are two things that are bad about the lead acid battery — lead and acid,” says Allar. “At this facility, we were reporting every year about 24,000 pounds of sulfuric acid that we had at the facility. So just in one move like that, we eliminated half of that problem.”

The performance of the jacks with hydrogen proved advantageous as well. “We never figured on this, but our employees liked this equipment better because it maintained full power, while the power of the battery would decline throughout the day,” DeMascole continues.

“It’s possible to produce our own hydrogen, but that would probably cost more and the process could use quite a bit of electricity too,” says DeMascole.

To that end, “We determined that finding the right partner to supply the hydrogen would be our best bet,” says Allar, noting that the facility has been capitalizing on its initial success with fuel cells by continuing to convert more pieces of equipment in its multi-phase expansion. “Our new facility was built without a battery room because we decided to go with fuel cells immediately,” says DeMascole.

In line with Wegmans’ corporate sustainability platform, other projects include a major revamping of its lighting systems, resulting in a significant reduction in electrical usage. “When we changed refrigeration systems, we required extra space, but we didn’t have to build another engine room thanks to the battery rooms we no longer needed,” Allar explains. More importantly, he continues, ammonia is a hazardous material and by changing refrigeration systems, “we were able to bring it down from 20,000 pounds of ammonia at our facility to 7,500 pounds. It makes our facility safer.” **pb**

position, where a big part of her job is developing and training the Green Teams in every store, standard procedures and best practices in regard to recycling, color-coding bins, making sure everybody has the tools they need, etc.

"We've always had some guidelines, but we had a lot of stores doing their own thing. Working with Jason, we've 'Wegmanized' things to make the process more official and ensure everybody is on the same page, that all stores are using the same signage and consistent messaging," Dunn says, noting that some of the divisions have quarterly meetings, where all the Green Teams come together to exchange information. The primary reason Wegmans developed these guidelines, according to Wadsworth: "How can there be accountability for recycling if not everybody knows what to do?"

Customers can bring in their plastic bags, their cell phones and inkjet cartridges, batteries, bottles, cans, and any paper products to recycle. "Last year customers brought back 775 tons of plastic bags, or 1.5 million pounds to help you visualize," says Wadsworth. Those all go to a central location reclamation center.

After attempts to reuse culled produce in stores or give donations to food banks and animal farms, produce is composted when economically feasible, says Jason Wadsworth, sustainability coordinator.



The produce department looks at shrink reports on a daily basis so managers know

how to change their orders based on what people are buying and the trends. But they also get a monthly recycling report, so they know what their rate is for their store and can measure progress, according to Wadsworth, adding, "There's a little competition brewing between the stores."

As Wegmans continues to grow, so does the impact of its sustainability measures, as well as the challenges of coordinating strategies chainwide. "We like to empower our employees to go to their produce manager and say, 'I think we could do this in a better way,' and the manager will listen," says Colleluori. "There is a bit of flexibility for a particular store to make a change, but when the produce manager sees this might be something that the entire chain could benefit from, then it gets moved up the ladder."

**PRESERVING PRODUCE**

"First of all, we like to reuse what we can in the store," says Wadsworth. "Then we donate to people, so every store has a connection with a food bank in its area. Animals come after that. So we have a lot of stores that have relationships with local farmers who come in and pick up the produce waste free of charge. It's

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# Farming For Answers

Danny Wegman's vision to build a burgeoning organic farm, nestled in the Canandaigua, NY, Finger Lakes growing region, where families have owned land for over 100 years, is emblematic of how produce-focused sustainability flows through the company's core.

When Danny Wegman came up with the idea, envisioning where customers would be five to ten years down the road, initial reaction by some was to question the logic, "We're grocers, not farmers," says Eben Kennedy, group manager, produce, who describes the evolutionary plan to transform the farm from its beginnings seven years ago as a research operation to a catalyst in developing a fertile and profitable northeast organic supply. "This is a unique opportunity to bridge disconnects and build relationships between the retailer, customer and grower," says Kennedy.

"It was Danny Wegman who said, 'How do you have credibility if you're always a researcher? At the end of the day, you don't take research to a bank. You take the money that you've earned from your successful business plan that produces a value,'" says Kennedy. "Farmers should always be doing research and learn from trial and error, but it's a business and you want it to be profitable," adds Jamie Robinson, organic farm manager.

"Wegmans has always done a great job of understanding what the customer's needs are, but we always have to link those needs with the grower," Kennedy continues. "Now when we sit down with growers, we talk a common language and that's key," he emphasizes. "We truly understand what they're going through because we're actually testing the varieties here. We can say, okay, that's not going to happen because the efficiency is not there, for example, so let's go in a different direction."

That direction involves channeling insight from a range of experts, including researchers at Cornell and other university ag extension programs, and down the supply chain consulting with seed companies. "If someone has an idea that we believe is going to work, we can test it, where the average farmer just can't because the investment is too big. If they make a mistake, it could cost them their business," says Robinson.

When Wegmans went out looking for local organic growers, it was very difficult to find them, according to Kennedy. "We have 540 conventional growers, and how do we get them to develop organic varieties with favorable



profiles, and will they work in recipes at restaurants and sell at retail?" asks Kennedy, adding, "Our goal is to grow 10 months a year and limit carbon footprint accrued when bringing in organics from California.

Customers appreciate that we are supporting our growers and the community."

Wegmans uses the organic farm as an educational tool for its merchants. "When we ask an employee a question of how a product is grown, often they can't answer it, so we established our Ambassador Program. Ambassadors from different Wegmans' locations spend time at the farm and actually help harvest the product, pack the product and learn everything about what's going on at the farm, and then they take that information back to the stores," Kennedy explains.

"We're also doing this with our grower partners," says Kennedy. "For example, Spiral Path [based in Loysville, PA] and Mason Farms [based in Williamson, NY] have ambassadors that spend at least one or two days a month at the farm. Then they bring that information back to the store and they sell the product directly to customers."

Wegmans calls it KBS — or Knowledge-Based-Service. "We're giving people the knowledge and they're taking it back and communicating with the customer. Our ambassadors will pick the produce from the farm, drive it to the store, set up their little cart and then they are there to explain," says Kennedy.

"It's awesome to have the organic farm so close and be serviced by them," says Brett Ahrens, perishable area manager at the Wegmans Canandaigua store. "We have a nice arrangement with the farm," he explains,



pointing to a fresh delivery from the farm of just picked organic mixed lettuces and micro greens gracing the shelves in Wegmans Organic Farm labeled clamshell packages.

"We feel lucky to be a part of this innovative model." Alvin Phillips, Jr., produce manager, adds, "We use this store as a pilot for sustainability projects. It's amazing what's coming out of the farm and what's being learned as Wegmans seeks bigger opportunities."

## LAYOUT OF THE LAND

The 50-acre property is set up on a plot system, so each plot represents a different crop to simplify the process and it also helps with traceability, says Kennedy. "We must trace our product from the field plot all the way to the store and back," he says, noting, "whatever we ask of our local growers, we do ourselves."

There are many organic growing challenges to overcome in this region. "In the winter time, we plant cold hearty crops like Asian greens, lettuces, spinach and kale, and we harvest in high tunnels, which are in plastic, covered greenhouse-like structures, as needed," Robinson describes. "We'll do micro greens and wheatgrass in our seed house, and we've also





been playing around with radishes," he adds.

In the summer, however, "you'll see organized chaos. The fields will be full," says Kennedy. "Year round, we're at about four full-time employees, but then in the summer we pick up anywhere from six to maybe ten. It sounds small, and it is, but we're trying to become automated because we know if we want to understand the real life of a farmer, they want to be automated. They just can't get the workforce."

"The relationship we have with our organic farm and local sourcing, and its connection to the stores and our restaurant, Next Door, in Pittsford, NY, folds beautifully into Wegmans sustainability approach for our employees and customers," says Jason Wadsworth, sustainability coordinator. "It's an arm of research and development and a way we can pilot and try new things."

Wegmans' restaurant, Next Door, nurtures an integral relationship with its organic farm, where in the spring and summer time, the restaurant will actually build menus around the seasonal varieties, with constant deliveries.

"Last year, we devoted a plot just for the restaurant," says Kennedy. "The staff comes down and helps harvest. The chefs will give us a list of items they want us to test for them. We do a lot of trialing of different herbs, for instance. The restaurant chefs always are coming up with a new idea or variety and we don't know how it grows in this area. We'll try it on a small scale. Then if it works well for the restaurant, we can put it in bigger production," Kennedy says, but emphasizes, "The big plots we save for the things that we know are working well for us and that sell well."

**pb**

taking tonnage out of our compactors and it's free food for their animals, so it's a win/win, and we've been very successful with that program. Other than that, it's composting, which is not always possible," he says, noting, "In Rochester and Buffalo, there's a lack of infrastructure to do that."

Composting makes sense when there are facilities within a reasonable distance, which for Wegmans generally means a 50-mile radius. "If we go further than 50 miles, tracking compostable produce waste, then the economics sort of fall out," says Wadsworth. "So it's always a give-and-take there. It's the right thing to do, but how much can you afford to do the right thing?"

It's hard to justify paying two times more to compost than to throw away in a landfill. When you try to tell the store manager, "Well, this is the right thing to do, but it's going to cost you twice as much," it's a hard sell," says Wadsworth.

Wegmans also has a six-store pilot in Rochester with a unique company that makes ethanol from foods, according to Wadsworth.

Without divulging any financials, Wegmans receives a rebate on its plastic and cardboard recycling. Unfortunately, today there is not a rebate structure on food waste, Wadsworth explains, and that's just an economic model that needs to be developed.

Wegmans is a member of the Food Waste Reduction Alliance, a collaborative effort from FMI/GMA, the National Restaurant Association and Feeding America. The goal is to donate more to people than animals. "In the last five years, we've gone from less than a third of our stores doing something in that area to around one-half to two-thirds," according to Wadsworth.

"We're doing pilots in our Buffalo stores to increase our food donations of protein to food banks, and hopefully we can expand the program to all our stores eventually," says Dunn. "We get tons of bread and how much can the food banks use? They need the meat, they need the protein, but we're also trying to find outlets for any food scraps," says Dunn.

There's the whole hierarchy that retailers go through of what to do with good, edible food, Wadsworth explains. "The produce may have a blemish and we'll set that aside in a back room. I'm not saying every single store does this, but the majority of them do. Our chefs will shop that produce first, rather than going to the sales floor and picking the best thing because they don't need it to look good. They just cut the blemish out and use it," he continues. "I couldn't call out specifically how

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much food is being diverted from a landfill, but it's an initiative through our sustainability platform. However, it was happening organically before the concept of sustainability existed because it was the right thing to do."

**GETTING PRODUCE SUPPLIERS ON BOARD**

One of the biggest sustainability challenges in produce is the wax-coated cardboard boxes, according to Dunn. "One of our

produce suppliers came out with a box that's recyclable. They call it a climate-proof box, and it seems like it is plastic from the outside, but it's recyclable with your corrugated materials. Instead of a wax coating, it's a plastic coating that comes off," she says, adding, "We also have had some successes going with collapsible plastic crates."

"That's a good example of a produce area where Suzanne brought the concern to us," says Wadsworth. Almost six years ago,

Wegmans started using IFCO reusable plastic containers to drive reduction, he explains, acknowledging their limitations. "What we learned when we piloted our RPC program was that there were certain SKUs where it just doesn't work. Some things you do need heavy corrugated boxes. If there's a category or SKU where an RPC would work well, I think the buyers would move forward with it, but we'll never sacrifice product freshness or quality just to have it in a more sustainable container," says Wadsworth.

Grapes have proven a real challenge, according to Dunn. "We've tried so many different containers, but it keeps coming back to the same one that is not recyclable. And the same goes for fish. What are you going to pack the fish in with ice that's practical, other than Styrofoam? You need to take shipping weights into account among other issues. So it's pretty hard to go to zero waste," she says.

Such decisions also must factor in the customer when moving to reduce food waste through the supply chain. "We faced customer uproar when we tried to stop corn husking in the store," says Wadsworth. "Local farmers are going to just use whatever is available to them at a very low cost. And in the summer you get corn with husks and customers do husking in the store. Many stores brought it back in, so now we contend with all the husks," he says. At the same time, it creates an atmosphere like a farmers market in your store, notes Colleluori.

This is a good example of where Wegmans tried using RPCs but freshness suffered, according to Wadsworth. However, there may be another solution. "Our buyer learned that Rosemont Farms [a division of CH Robinson, based in Minneapolis, MN] was trying to pilot an Eco-crate for corn, and made a recommendation for us to buy it," he explains, adding, "It's this kind of relationship that's been fostered with the folks in the company to seek sustainable ways to make a difference. Yes, go buy that Eco-crate. It's not that all corn must come in that box. Let's try it on a few different growers and we'll see how it works. And that's the stage we're in now," he says.

The employees have really embraced sustainability. "We thought employees were going to fight us on sustainability measures. It's more labor, and other excuses," says Wadsworth. "Where I get traction is on the business side. Once they get a couple of wins under their belt, they feel empowered to do more to the point where you can't keep up with it," he says, adding, "That's a good problem to have."

pb





ABOVE PHOTO COURTESY OF COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE. PHOTO ON RIGHT COURTESY OF HARVEYS

# State Ag Campaigns Move Label To The Table

State departments of agriculture partner with retailers and restaurants to promote 'locally grown'. **BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**

Consumer demand for 'locally-grown' fruits and vegetables is making it easier for state departments of agriculture branding campaigns to bring their label to the table. In doing so, and through the public sector's well-stocked marketing and merchandising tool box, everyone from producers to retailers and restaurateurs are reaping the benefits.

Tony Smith, manager of produce merchandising for Nashville, GA-headquartered Harveys Supermarkets, a Delhaize America banner that operates 73 stores in Georgia, Florida and South Carolina, offers a great example. "We work closely with both the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Service's (FDACS) Fresh from Florida program and Georgia Department of Agriculture's (GDA) Georgia Grown. As a result, when big items like watermelon, peaches and vegetables are at their peak, in May and June, up to 30 to 40 percent of our total produce department sales will be local."

## BRAND RECOGNITION AND ECONOMIC IMPACT

State departments of agriculture branding campaigns are making a name for themselves.

In fact, consumer recognition in some regions has grown to nearly that of some private-sector national brands.

Wendy White, marketing specialist for the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA), in Lakewood, CO, says, "According to a 2012 survey, 81 percent of respondents are very or somewhat familiar with the Colorado Proud logo, up from 76 percent in 2011, 68 percent in 2010 and 59 percent in 2008."

Similarly, consumer recognition of the Trenton, NJ-based New Jersey Department of Agriculture's (NJDA) Jersey Fresh logo is up to 78 percent in 2012 compared to 48 percent in 2003. As a result, says Al Murray, assistant secretary of agriculture, "this has translated into thousands of dollars for our farmers. The latest Ag Census shows we have 10,300 farmers in the state, a number that we last saw in 1964, and cash receipts back to farmers broke the record at \$1.12 billion."

Illustrated another way, 52 percent of survey respondents reported that the Austin, TX-based Texas Department of Agriculture's (TDA) GO TEXAN membership enhanced their marketing efforts. In total, says Bryan Black, the TDA's director of communications, "GO TEXAN members reported an estimated

\$493 million in sales, providing an annual economic impact to the Texas economy of more than \$877 million."

## ALL THE TOOLS TO INCREASE TRADE

The development of partnerships with retailers, restaurants and farmers in a way that meets individual needs, rather than taking a cookie-cutter approach, had led state agricultural departments to build up impressive tool kits. Tools include everything from sourcing assistance to point-of-sale (POS) and even TV and Social Media marketing outreach.

- **Sourcing Assistance** — When Whole Foods Markets announced it would open its first store in Idaho, Leah Clark and her team at the Idaho Department of Agriculture's Idaho Preferred program set up meetings between Idaho-member growers and buyers for the Austin, TX-headquartered, 330-plus unit supermarket chain that specializes in 'natural' and organic foods. "As a result, when Whole Foods opened in Boise in November, they had a great showing of the state's products, both organic and non-organic, such as potatoes, onions and squash," says Clark, Idaho Preferred brand manager.

The TDA works with retailers and the food-



PHOTO COURTESY OF TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

service industry to help them identify sources of locally grown Texas produce, says Black. “We maintain a database of Texas growers and suppliers and, as part of the services offered to our members, we frequently facilitate meetings, farm tours and sales between producers and retailers. We recently established an exclusive LinkedIn community to assist GO TEXAN members (whether buyers or sellers) wishing to network and do business with other members.”

- **Food Safety** — Assuring that locally sourced produce is safe for its customers, Acme Markets, a 114-store chain headquartered in Malvern, PA, has worked with the NJDA to set up a GAP certification class for its local suppliers, explains Jay Schneider, produce and floral director. “The class costs \$50, is online, is self-paced and takes about a month to complete. It educates growers on what is required for GAP certification, and it covers everything from risk assessment to water quality and employee training.”

Some states such as South Carolina employ a full-time food safety professional to work with farmers who want to sell their products to retailers and restaurateurs, while others like North Carolina and Idaho provide annual full-day seminars on GAP. Still others, such as the CDA, work in a different way. In the aftermath of a deadly *Listeria* outbreak that threatened the state’s cantaloupe industry, the CDA is working with the Rocky Ford Grower’s Association in a brand revitalization campaign. The campaign includes brand-building and food safety training to producers in an effort to restore consumer confidence in buying and consuming cantaloupe grown in this region.

- **Distribution** — The ability to get local produce to supermarkets or restaurants can be tough, especially for small farmers who spend most of their time in season literally in the

field. One way Harveys Supermarkets’ Smith handles this is to use the chain’s own trucks, rather than have them return to the distribution center empty, to back haul produce from local farmers. “We do this on items like peaches and Vidalias,” Smith explains. “It saves the farmer expense and we can pass that cost onto our customers in savings.”

Distribution of locally grown produce will become easier in New York this year. In March, the state government announced \$3.6 million in funding for the creation of four additional food distribution hubs strategically located throughout the state, in addition to the hub that already exists on Long Island.

Joe Morrissey, director of communications for the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets, in Albany, NY, says, “The hubs will help meet demand for local foods. Retailers like Wegmans, Tops and Price Chopper are already interested in utilizing this resource.”

- **Point-of-Sale (POS) Materials** — Display materials are at the heart of many state agricultural marketing programs. For example, the Buy California Marketing Agreement (BCMA), based in Sacramento, CA, provides a free online downloadable ‘California Grown’ logo tool kit complete with product photos, POS photography and logos.

Kasey Cronquist, chairman of the board of the BCMA, says, “Research shows that retail stores who use CA GROWN logo enjoyed a net volume increase of 4.5 percent over control stores.”

The NJDA’s 7x11-inch Jersey Fresh price cards and banners are backbone pieces of the locally grown program at Acme Markets, says Schneider. “We carry 50 to 60 different local produce items in-store from the end of April or May through the fall and we label them all with Jersey Fresh signage. In addition, we urge

our suppliers to use the logo too on their boxes and bins.”

Wal-Mart stores have introduced new locally grown signage. Moving forward, Jeff Thorpe, the San Antonio, TX-based senior director for global food sourcing, says, “We’re working with the TDA to additionally highlight individual farmers. Locally grown is important to us because it’s important to our customers.”

This year, Harveys added a new dimension to its massive in-store signage campaign, tells Smith. “We invited our grower partners to be more involved in their representation in the stores. Our local supplier partner for the technology and development of our Local Grown program provided a showcase for the participants to view the three choices of concepts. The concept of a Roadside Stand with the tin roof took a majority of votes. The focal point for this campaign is the 6-foot wide centerpiece depicting baskets full of each of the focus items. Perimeter signage features the local growers and their products. Each perimeter sign makes the consumer aware of what that crop represents in total revenue and jobs to either the Georgia or Florida products featured.”

- **Ad Incentives** — The Tallahassee, FL-based FDACS’s Fresh from Florida program includes a variety of components, including incentives to feature items in weekly store circulars.

Dan Sleep, the FDACS’s supervisor/senior analyst for the Division of Marketing and Development, explains, “Overall commitment has been steady, with retail stores remaining above 10,000 outlets since 2006 and total individual store ads advancing toward 500,000 while staying well above the 200,000 level since 2006.”

This ad incentive program can substantially grow retail sales of a particular fruit or vegetable. For example, total Florida strawberry cash receipts totalled \$167.6 million in 2000 and \$366.0 million in 2011.

The FDACS’s Sleep adds, “What has emerged in this past year is a willingness and interest in retailers in examining new ways to merchandise products and combine many items into single circular ads. We’re seeing items being linked at the store level, so when a shoppers purchase one item, they can very well be buying two to five for a particular meal or salad idea.”

The TDA has created the Specialty Crop Retail Promotion Reimbursement Grant. Retailers can submit a marketing proposal describing how they would like to work with



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## FOODSERVICE FEATURED IN STATE AG MARKETING PROGRAMS

Retail isn't the only sector targeted by state department of agriculture marketing programs. Many also operate innovate programs that help restaurateurs and other segments of the foodservice industry source and promote locally grown produce and other foods. Here is a sampling of these initiatives:

- **Colorado Proud Restaurant Guide.**

First published in 2011 and due to be revised and updated this year, this 32-page guide lists restaurants by region and city in the state that are committed to supporting the state's farmers, everything from meats and wines to fruits and vegetables. "This pamphlet is distributed at Welcome Centers in the state and is available online," says Wendy White, marketing specialist for the Colorado Department of Agriculture, in Lakewood, CO. "In addition, Colorado Proud restaurant members post a decal in their windows letting customers know that they feature Colorado agricultural products on their menu."

- **Georgia Grown Restaurant Program.**

In February, the Georgia Restaurant Association (GRA) and Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA) announced a unique partnership to promote the state's culinary abundance. More specifically, for \$100 annually or \$75 if a restaurant is already a GRA member, the participating restaurant has the right to use the Georgia Grown Restaurant Program logo on its menus and in advertising, is listed in an online searchable website complete with mapping, and receives a logo cling to display on the establishment's doors or windows. In addition, and for no added cost, chefs can self-select their level — Gold, Silver or Platinum—based on how much locally grown or sourced product they use. "Institutional organizations such as schools, colleges and universities and hospitals can also join the program as they believe in buying from local sources," says Matthew Kulinski, director of markets for the Atlanta, GA-based Georgia Department of Agriculture.

- **Flavors of Carolina Show.** This invi-

tation-only event gives more than 120 food-based businesses — everything from vendors of local produce to wines and other specialty foods — a chance to meet, greet and offer samples of their products to potential buyers, explains Randy Maness, retail marketing specialist for the Raleigh, NC-based North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services. "Buyers represent foodservice companies and restaurants as well as grocery chains and gourmet food stores."

- **Fresh on the Menu.**

Launched in 2008 and part of the Columbia, SC-based South Carolina Department of Agriculture's Certified SC program, this effort spotlights chefs that include at least 25 percent of state-grown foods as ingredients on their menus. New this year, says Martin Eubanks, the department's senior marketing specialist, "we're creating a phone app so that consumers can find restaurants in any city in the state that is a member of this program. We currently have over 300 members." A new 'Restaurant of the Month' program rolled out in March. This year-long program will culminate with a 'Restaurant of the Year' award based on an eatery's use of state-grown, produced or processed foods.

- **GO TEXAN Restaurant Round-Up.**

Four hundred and thirty-eight restaurants took part in this annual state-wide, week-long, dine-out event last July. During this event, participating members of the Austin, TX-based Texas Department of Agriculture's (TDA) GO TEXAN Restaurant Program served special Texas menu items and made donations to food banks across the state. The TDA publicized the event by creating and distributing 1,000 posters and 250,000 save-the-date cards. Partners included the Texas Watermelon Association. "Seventy percent of participating restaurants reported, on average, a 15 percent increase in sales of Texas fruits and vegetables and a 9 percent increase in consumer requests for local produce and other local products," says Bryan Black, the TDA's director of communications. **pb**

GO TEXAN to promote Texas-grown specialty crops such as fruit, vegetables and tree nuts. Selected retail recipients may be awarded up to \$20,000 to use toward promotional activities such as advertisements, store flyers, coupons and online advertising for Texas produce.

- **In-Store Events** — Hosting in-store events, or theatrical retailing, is something Schneider at Acme Markets sets up each season in coordination with Jersey Fresh and local suppliers. Last season, Schneider tells, "Donio came in with its Top Crop brand blueberries. Some of its staff dressed up like farmers in overalls and sampled the fruit to customers. We also had the New Jersey Peach Queen visit stores with a live radio remote at the same time. She was available to take pictures with the kids, and she handed out pamphlets with information about peaches. We ran a deep one-day discount on peaches at the same time. These events are always great. They generate a lot of energy and sales."

Last year, the TDA conducted more than 800 retail produce demonstrations and culinary events showcasing fresh Texas produce at retail outlets as well as at farmers markets and restaurants, says Black. "Reports from retailers indicate, on average, a 128 percent increase in sales of Texas produce during these promotions. Pecans, oranges, grapefruit and onions were featured from October to May; watermelon, cantaloupes, peaches and blueberries from June through August; and sweet potatoes, pumpkin, winter greens and pecans from October to December.

This season, the CDA is working with Safeway to host a series of Colorado Proud cooking demos in its demonstration kitchen at

the Boulder location, says White. "Although the cooking demo series started in March, we hope to also use the facility to showcase local products during Colorado Proud Month in

August."

- **Props** — The Raleigh, NC-based North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (NCDACS) utilizes it 40-

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foot long RV Ag Tour Bus and its Big Cart, a 13-foot tall by 15-foot long motorized shopping cart, to promote the Got to Be NC program.

Randy Maness, retail marketing specialist, explains, "Last year we visited between 100 and 125 retail outlets with either the RV or Big Cart. Retailers included Lowe's Foods, Wal-Mart and Piggly-Wiggly."

The Big Cart is again visiting Piggly-Wiggly stores in the state during a 14-week tour that spans every Saturday from the end of March to the beginning of July, says Tom Pittman, the Kinston, NC-based produce and deli director. "It's like a carnival... kids and grown-ups see the big cart and they come right over. Mr. Pig, our mascot, is there; we'll be cooking hot dogs

and farmers will be there with their produce. It might be strawberries, cantaloupe, watermelon, tomatoes, cabbage, turnip roots, sweet potatoes or white potatoes, all depending on what's available. Inside, we'll carry 10 to 12 locally grown fruits and vegetables in the spring and up to 24 or 25 in the summer. On average, local produce contributes up to 16 to 18 percent of our total produce sales," Pittman explains.

Similarly, says the CDA's White, "Our primary Colorado Proud promotion at the retail level this year is the Traveling Tractor. We have developed new POS materials to coincide with this campaign."

• **Television-** and YouTube-Based Advertising — The annual Colorado Proud

television advertising campaign on Channel 9 (Denver NBC affiliate) has proven successful, says White. "Colorado Proud and member partners ran 1,831 ads from July through September. We reached 99.9 percent of households an average of 29.1 times totalling 45.1 million impressions. The television ad featured Governor John Hickenlooper in a Brighton, CO cabbage field."

In May through August, consumers can look for ads that direct them to GOTEXANTV on YouTube to enjoy 'Watermelon Smiles,' says Black. "The 'Watermelon Smiles' video features kids enjoying sweet, juicy, healthy Texas watermelons. In 2012, the Texas Watermelon Association television commercial helped grow sales of Texas watermelons by 73 percent." **pb**

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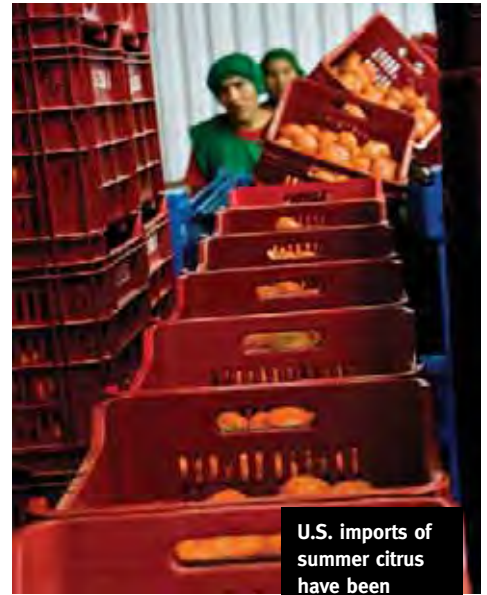
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**U.S. imports of summer citrus have been steadily growing over the past decade.**

# Growing Prospects For Southern Hemisphere Citrus

Quality and variety of summer citrus provide incremental sales potential. **BY JODEAN ROBBINS**

Imported citrus during the U.S. summer from Southern Hemisphere countries such as South Africa, Chile, Peru and Australia has become an essential element for produce programs. “Summer citrus brings additional sales,” states Dick Rissman, produce director with Dahl’s Food Stores in Des Moines, IA, an upscale independent chain with 13 stores. “At that time there are a lot of melons and soft fruit, so citrus is different and refreshing.”

“Navel oranges, clementines, mandarins and grapefruit are products every retailer must offer 12 months a year,” says Mark Greenberg, president of Capespan North America in Gloucester, NJ. “Southern Hemisphere suppliers are committed to getting retailers to offer them in a manner that increases their prominence on summer grocery shelves.”

Summer citrus helps drive year-round sales. Karen Brux, managing director North America for the Chilean Fresh Fruit Association in Redwood City, CA, explains, “Citrus is one of the top promoted items during winter months, so keep up the momentum. Stone fruit is big in the summer, but if retailers aren’t giving ample space to clementines and navels, they’ll lose sales in-store and to the competition.”

“Maintaining a permanent offering of

citrus helps stabilize prices so consumers have affordable prices all year long even when the United States is not producing,” adds Sergio Del Castillo, CEO of the Peru Citrus Growers Association (ProCitrus) in Lima, Peru.

U.S. imports of summer citrus have been steadily growing over the past decade. “There are more Southern Hemisphere citrus offerings in the United States than ever before,” says Greenberg. “Each year, the market is tested to see what the limits are, and sellers are challenged to expand distribution and increase customer commitment.”

“The availability of Southern Hemisphere citrus in the U.S. marketplace has boosted the role of citrus as part of the American consumers’ diet,” states Suhanra Conradie, CEO of the Western Cape Citrus Producers Forum (WCCPF) in Citrusdal, South Africa. “The offerings from South Africa over the past 13 years have established a growing and thriving category.”

“Since the beginning of the summer citrus program in the late 1990s, we have seen the volumes of summer citrus imports into the U.S. quadruple,” adds Mayda Sotomayor, CEO of Seald Sweet in Vero Beach, Florida. “It is well established and fills an availability gap from domestic citrus. The numbers have proven it

to be a solid category and respectable source of revenue.”

Indeed, statistics show exponential growth. Peruvian citrus exports to the U.S. have grown from 13,632 metric tons in 2007 to over 17,000 in 2012. Chilean citrus exports to the U.S. have increased from 27,403 metric tons in 2006 to over 122,522 metric tons in 2012. South African citrus exports to the U.S. have increased from just over 500,000 15-kilo cartons in 2000 to over 2.5 million cartons in 2011.

## A HIDDEN GEM

Despite incredible growth in this category, opportunity remains. “There is still room for growth,” maintains Dahls’ Rissman. “We’ve seen great growth in recent years, but there is more opportunity. It’s a hidden gem.”

“Compared to per capita consumption rates from other countries, the United States has room for continued demand,” explains Kim Flores, marketing manager for Seald Sweet. “Consumers are realizing citrus is not just available during winter months and are increasingly incorporating it in summer produce purchases.”

“There is still potential for expanding sales in the United States as the volume and variety



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from Southern Hemisphere sources continues to grow,” states Mark Hanks, vice president of sales and marketing for DNE World Fruit LLC in Fort Pierce, FL. “This allows retailers to offer year-round citrus to customers and grow the citrus category.”

Certain commodities may be primed for potential. “Easy-peelers seem to be the category with greatest growth potential as supply expands year-round with new seedless varieties,” says Chile’s Brux. Navels from the Southern Hemisphere have also experienced a

large growth in consumption, and the market should continue expanding as year-round supply promotes more steady consumption.”

“A recently completed study of the U.S. summer citrus market has indicated there is greater potential for growth in summer citrus,” reports Del Castillo. “The U.S. consumer is accustomed to consuming citrus, and if the relationship of price and quality is adequate, they will choose citrus. An exceptional potential growth area is in mandarins.”

“In the last year, mandarins have really

taken on movement,” agrees Dahl’s Rissman. “That will carry over through this coming season.”

Expanded geographic focus will also reap benefits. “Currently, there is a great deal of concentration of South African summer citrus available along the U.S. east coast,” explains WCCPF’s Conradie. “We are planning to increase sales by penetrating further into the United States with retailers in places where we are not and in places where there should be more.”

Alternating packaging may help maintain growth. “We know retailers like to capitalize on sales of larger packs but with high freight rates on the imports, often prices for the larger bags are cost-prohibitive for some consumers,” states Hanks. “Retailers can consider downsizing bag types in the early and late parts of the summer when imported citrus is at the highest price. Then increase the pack size in mid-season when prices reach their lowest point. This way, consumers don’t get sticker shock and abandon the category.”

#### A SEASON OF VARIETY

The season spans from mid-May to late October and includes great variety. Seald Sweet’s Sotomayor explains, “It starts with clementines and mandarins from Chile, South Africa and Peru, transitions into navel oranges from South Africa and Chile, and Minneolas from Peru, then finishes with Chilean Murcotts and South African late season mandarins, and then late navels from Chile and South Africa and Midnight oranges from South Africa.”

Clementines kick off summer sales and provide ample opportunity throughout the season. “Clementines from Chile and Peru should begin to arrive toward the middle of May,” says Capespan’s Greenberg. “The Peruvian clementines will be finished within six weeks, but Chilean product will remain available through August. South African clementines will arrive in a relatively short marketing period in July.”

“Our Clementines will be ready for shelves just before the Fourth of July holiday,” reports South Africa’s Conradie. “A red, white and orange promotion can be equally delicious and patriotic as red, white and blue!”



“In Peru’s case, we begin the season with Satsuma mandarins, then move to clementines followed by Minneola and the W. Murcott,” states Del Castillo.

Navels form the foundation of a summer program. “Navel oranges from South Africa will be available from July through October,” says Greenberg. “Chilean navel oranges can

  
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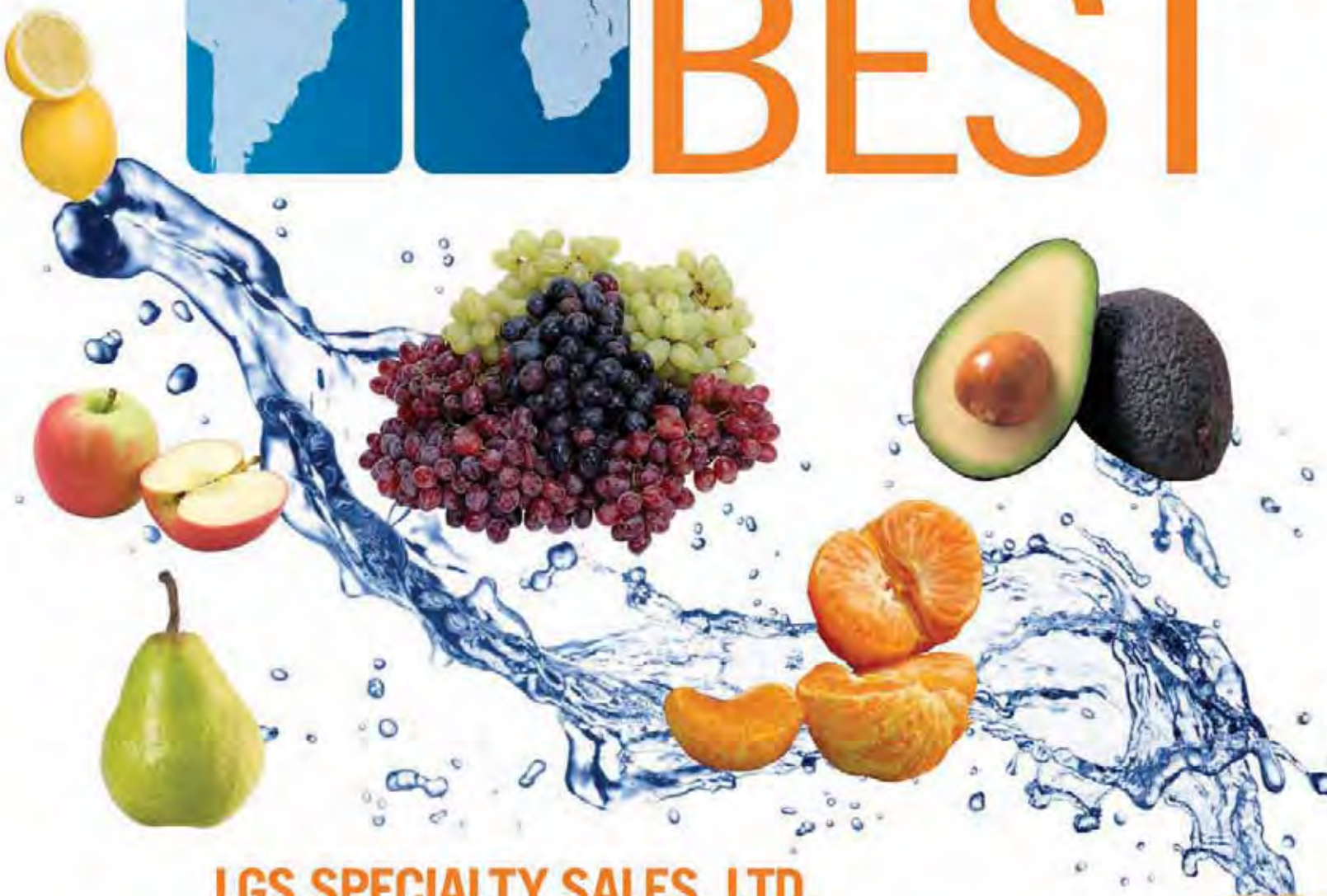




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## HELP FROM THE SOURCE

Retailers can look to source countries for help in education and promotion:

- South Africa's POS material, either via QR codes or actual literature, meets consumers' expectations to understand the source of their food. The information provides details of how the citrus export program to the U.S. from South Africa creates jobs in the U.S. and in South Africa and how the economic empowerment initiative known as Harvest of Hope enables formerly disadvantaged individuals of South Africa to develop their own land. Additionally, South Africa has in place a representative who will be calling on retailers directly to learn specifically

what they can provide to make it easier to promote South African citrus.

- The Chilean Citrus Committee offers point of sale materials, display and sales contest opportunities, recipes and usage ideas for both social media and retail consumer affairs professionals. The program focuses on what the organization and exporters can do to support retailers in driving their sales of Chilean citrus.

- Peru emphasizes a good working relationship between retailers and suppliers. ProCitrus works closely with exporters, importers and retailers to understand and manage constraints and grow the category.

arrive in June, but the heart of the Chilean navel season is really mid-July through late-October and even into November."

"Navels from Australia will be available July through mid-October," reports DNE's Hanks. "Cara Cara's from South Africa will be available mid-July through August and from Australia

during August through mid-September."

Orange offerings are complemented by South African Midnights, a seedless Valencia, with exceptional visual appeal and excellent eating characteristics. "These are typically available from late-September onward," says Greenberg. "Late mandarins will be available

from a number of sources starting with Peruvian Murcotts in July, Clemengolds from South Africa in August and Chilean Murcotts in September and October.

"Murcotts are increasing in volume and, as production increases, some new late varieties, mainly large size, seedless mandarins, should come into production within the next few years," reports Brux. "Cara Cara's are also growing in volume to the United States and are increasingly appreciated by consumers as a unique item."

Variety and distinct items create interest. "We try to offer as much variety as possible," reports Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce and floral for Kings Food Markets in Parsippany, NJ, with 25 Kings and 6 Balducci's stores. "Things like Meyer lemons, blood oranges, and Cara Cara's have a large appeal to our customer base."

"Daisy Mandarins from Australia will be available early July through September, and Blood Oranges from Australia will be available late August through September," states DNE's Hanks.

Capespan will feature South African Star Ruby grapefruit in July and August. Greenberg says, "It's unquestionably the very best grape-

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Suhadra Conradie, CEO of the Western Cape Citrus Producers Forum (WCCPF) in Citrusdal, South Africa, inspecting South African fruit at point of arrival in the U.S.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WCCPF

fruit available in the U.S. at the time.”

Seald Sweet will offer newer varieties of late season navel oranges available in late September. “These varieties have high color and high brix with great flavor,” says Flores.

### FOCUS ON QUALITY

Summer citrus success hinges on quality. “Citrus is an excellent product for summer because of quality,” says Kneeland. “In the past, we could only offer seeded California Valencia oranges in the summer. Now we get consistent navel oranges from the Southern Hemisphere.”

“Supply is consistent and quality continually improves with the growth of the program,” says Sotomayor. “The operations in these growing regions are very sophisticated, with high quality standards and state-of-the-art growing techniques and packing facilities.”

“Our shipments are timed to arrive every 10 days to ensure the freshest from the groves is available,” reports WCCPF’s Conradie. “Before the citrus ever leaves South Africa, it is inspected and pre-cleared by both South African inspectors and the USDA. On the voyage, the citrus is kept at about 32 degrees. We consider this cold option a better one than other treatments requiring chemicals. This enables a consumer to bring home an orange with good shelf-life.”

Quality means flavor. “Consumers want consistent flavor,” says Kneeland. “You can’t have a great product one week and risk sour product the next. To ensure this, partner with the right growers committed to the same things you are.”

“Our intention has always been to complement and not compete with U.S. domestic

fruit,” explains Conradie. “However, the quality offered toward the end of the U.S. citrus season is considerably less fresh than Southern Hemisphere product. Even though domestic citrus may remain in the market longer than it has historically, we anticipate sustained preference for the quality of our citrus.”

Knowing peak flavor periods helps retailers plan successful promotions. “Peak production and best internal flavor are an ideal time for promotions,” states Sotomayor. “For clementines this is in July and for navels it is late July to

August. Late-season mandarins in September have exceptional quality with great flavor.”

“Be well informed on the promotional opportunities and peak flavor period for each variety,” agrees Hanks. “If retailers know this, they can plan ads ahead of time and schedule in-store sampling.”

### BIG AND VISIBLE

Create an inviting shopping environment and grab the consumers’ attention. “You want citrus prominently displayed,” says Dahl’s

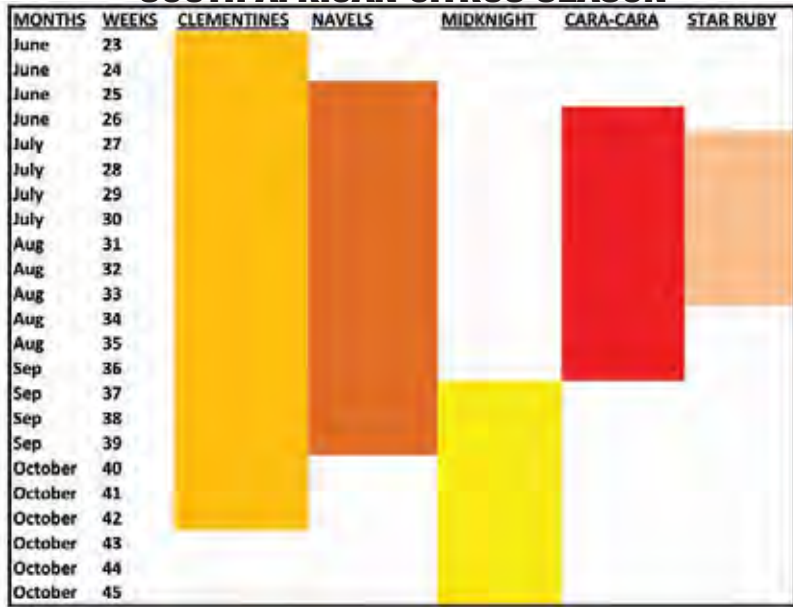
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## SOUTH AFRICAN CITRUS SEASON



GRAPH COURTESY OF WESTERN CAPE CITRUS PRODUCERS FORUM

Rissman. “You have to make it noticeable because people may not have it on the shopping list during summer.”

“Draw attention to the category by developing big, beautiful displays,” agrees Brux. “Give key health messages and show easy usage ideas with appetite appeal. Kids love the Easy

Peel message, so retailers should appeal to them at point of sale.”

Grower visits and in-store demos help grab attention. “We tie grower visits into demos in the store,” shares Kings’ Kneeland. “They’ve always been well received by our customers and the growers.”

“We believe in product demos to show the consumer first-hand what great internal eating quality these products have,” says Flores. “Our grower-attended in-store demos have been very successful in promoting product, educating consumers and raising product awareness.”

“Educate consumers on the imported varieties through effective point-of sale material and in-store sampling for each variety during peak flavor,” advises Hanks. “DNE offers a complete program of promotional support for retailers with many options for advertising, in-store sampling and merchandising displays.”

Citrus easily lends itself to promoting to kids. “Navels and clementines are excellent items for kids’ summer sporting events like soccer and football,” suggests Brux. “Follow themes used during winter like Easy Peel, great source of vitamin C, and a great snack.”

“Clementines and mandarins should be featured when kids go back to school before Labor Day through the end of October,” says Greenberg.

“From September to November, Murcott mandarins are available and are a fantastic back-to-school item,” adds Brux. “They have a beautiful deep orange color and they are sweet, easy to peel and seedless.” **pb**

## In Memoriam

### Austin J.P. Migotti

October 6, 1985 – April 11, 2013

Austin was fun-loving person who lived his life to the fullest. He was also up for anything. Whether it was a last minute camping trip, or you needed him to sub for a Saturday at work, he was always ready and willing. He was one of those people who never complained and could always be counted on. Austin was the heart of Coastline’s excitement and jokes. He could make anyone laugh at any given moment.

Austin began his career at Coastline on January 10, 2011 as a sales professional. He quickly progressed at Coastline and became the commodity manager for Parsley, Italian Parsley, Cilantro, Spanish, Leeks, Bok Choy and Napa. “Austin was like everyone’s brother” stated a close customer that had a daily relationship with him.

We will miss his kindness, support, dedication and humor here at Coastline.

Austin is survived by his loving parents, Steve and Valerie Migotti, Nonie Dolores Migotti; grandmother, Doris Hughey; brother, Danny Strancer and his wife Tricia; sister, Malanie Stracner; nieces, Brittanie and Marlene and his beloved Cari and dog Bella. He is also survived by his Uncle Joseph Migotti and Aunt Renee Elking, Uncle Lieutenant General Gary H. and Aunt Heidi Hughey, U.S.M.C. Ret. Greg and Linda Hughey, Roger and Diane Hughey, Richard Hughey and Aunt Barbara and Uncle Brad Hughey.

Memorial donations in Austin’s honor may be made to Woods Humane Society of San Luis Obispo, 875 Oklahoma Ave. San Luis Obispo, CA 93405.







PHOTO COURTESY OF FLORIDA SWEET CORN EXCHANGE



Higher shipping costs from California, coupled with consumer interest in buying fresh and local produce, have broken fertile ground for Southern growers to plant and ship more varied crops.

# Southern Vegetables And Fruits Branching Out

The range of crops grown and shipped from the South is increasing as growers add to their acreage of previously minor crops, including broccoli, blueberries, and even greenhouse grown leaf lettuce. **BY BOB JOHNSON**

**M**ove over, California — lettuce is leafing in South Carolina, broccoli’s blooming throughout the South, and enough blueberries dot Georgia to make it a contender for the nation’s newest blueberry capital.

According to Martin Eubanks, assistant commissioner at the South Carolina Department of Agriculture, Columbia, SC, “Consumers throughout the United States are looking for food that is local, both because of the carbon footprint and because it is fresher. We’re going to the Northeast with broccoli, asparagus and some cauliflower.”

There has always been an interest among regional supermarkets in supporting local agriculture. But higher shipping costs from California, coupled with consumer interest in buying fresh and local produce, have broken fertile ground for Southern growers to plant and ship more varied crops.

“Fresh fruits and vegetables grown in the Southeast have always been very important to

Publix,” says Maria Brous, director of media and community relations at Publix Super Markets, based in Lakeland, FL. “At Publix, we have always believed it is important to support the communities we serve. We attempt to purchase our produce as close to home as possible, assuming quality and value for the customer is equal.”

While supporting local communities is a long-held industry value, what’s new now is the sheer breadth of crops grown and shipped from the South as growers add to their acreage of previously minor crops, including broccoli, blueberries, and even greenhouse grown leaf lettuce.

“There are certainly opportunities for Florida growers to expand production of some of our 300-plus commodities and increase supplies of a number of products in traditional as well as new regions of the nation,” says Dan Sleep, senior analyst in the division of marketing and development at the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Tallahassee, FL.

## THE MORE BALANCED BASKET

No state has benefited more from this trend than Florida, which already held the title of most diverse agriculture in the region. “Florida continues focusing marketing and awareness campaigns using the ‘Fresh from Florida’ brand in advertisements and promotions. With 20-plus years of use, the logo generates solid recognition in recent consumer testing and will be a central component in supporting easy identification of the state’s agriculture for the foreseeable future,” Sleep says. “Florida is also in production from October to May, while most states remain dormant, even in the Southeast.”

But in the past few years, growers throughout the Southeast have boosted their acreage of crops such as broccoli or blueberries, or added acreage of crops usually associated with other areas in other regions.

“Our blueberry production has continued to increase. In the next two or three years, we’re going to be producing more than they do in Michigan,” says Charles Hall, executive



director of the Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Association, La Grange, GA.

Supermarkets welcome the abundance of varieties that once largely came from outside the region. “Overall volume has grown over the years, but there are some relatively new crops,” Publix’s Brous says. “The eastern cantaloupe has really matured both in availability and quality. We are especially pleased with the efforts in the area of food safety taken by the producers here in the deep South. More broccoli is being grown, blueberries have developed into an enormous crop, and Florida peaches are proving to be successful.”

Growers in the South have noticed the shift as their supermarket customers ask for a more consistent supply of a broader range of produce items. “We are expected to have all those commodities available on a weekly basis. It’s made a better balance for our business; it spreads the risk. It’s also made a more balanced basket for our customers,” says Brian Rayfield, vice president for sales and marketing at J&J Produce, Loxahatchee, FL.

J&J Produce grows and ships a wide variety of vegetables, including green bell and hot chili peppers, cucumbers, eggplant, green and yellow hard squash, vine ripe tomatoes, cabbage, green beans and sweet corn. “It’s been a gradual shift over the past five years.

**“More broccoli is being grown, blueberries have developed into an enormous crop, and Florida peaches are proving to be successful.”**

— Maria Brous, Publix Super Markets

Our customers started asking for this 10 years ago, and we started listening five years ago.”

Some growers answer the call for more local supply simply by offering every crop they grow all — or nearly all — of the time. “At our farm, diversification does not mean new commodities; it means having all the commodities we grow available more often. We have tried to have a good diverse crop mix. We plant multiple fields of numerous commodities. In the past, we might plant one commodity at a time,” Rayfield says. “We are also more diverse in our production geography. We have multiple small tracts spread out over different regions of Florida

for each crop.”

But the rising cost of shipping from California has also spawned opportunities for new crops in the South. “Rising fuel costs certainly have a role. I think they have led to more of the locally grown movement. I think it has led to Florida having more items that used to come from California, like leafy vegetables and broccoli,” Rayfield says.

While fuel costs are critical, new networks that link together growers, shippers, retailers and researchers have really sparked the growing diversity of Southern fruits and vegetables. “I think the cost of fuel is helping us in competition with California, but I don’t think it’s the main reason. We have more networking now, and a broader range of growers. We ship up and down the east coast. Traditionally we have shipped north and south of here,” says Kevin Hardison, agricultural marketing specialist at the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, Raleigh, NC.

Southern agriculture’s burgeoning diversity reflects a growing population diversity in the South. “I would say there is more diversity. We have more ethnic vegetables — more Asian vegetables and more traditional Hispanic vegetables like hot peppers,” says Hardison.

For Florida, too, agricultural change goes hand-in-hand with changing demographics. “Ethnicity and even an aging population may become much more important factors in how agricultural producers shift and expand production to commodities preferred by particular consumer groups,” Sleep says. And a more diverse population with different fruit and vegetable preferences will likely increase in the next few years, Sleep adds.

“Studies conducted by the USDA Economic Research Service project the U.S. population will reach 331.9 million by 2020 and the demographic composition of our nation will change as well, with a larger proportion of Hispanics — who as a cultural group tend to consume more fresh fruits and vegetables than most other ethnic groups. Hispanics may comprise 18 percent of the U.S. population, up nearly 50 percent from 2000,” Sleep says.

#### **IT TAKES A NETWORK TO RAISE A CROP**

Building the infrastructure to breed, grow and ship a variety to the highest standards in a specific region doesn’t happen overnight. It takes decades. According to Jason Stemm, vice president at Lewis & Neale, New York, NY, a division of CRT/tanaka and the



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**“We’ve seen increasing acreage of asparagus in the east, in particular, and in South Carolina in general. Historically, South Carolina was the largest asparagus producer in the country in the early 1900s.”**

— Martin Eubanks, South Carolina  
Department of Agriculture

marketing agency for the Florida Sweet Corn Exchange (FSCE), based in Maitland, FL, “The growers of Sunshine Sweet Corn have invested in having an infrastructure and best practices in place to provide retailers with consistently high quality sweet corn. Last spring was the launch of Sunshine Sweet Corn, and we received great feedback from retailers.”

Plant breeders have aided the diversification of Southern fruits and vegetables by

developing varieties more suited to the climate. “We’re certainly lucky to have the University of Florida on our team as we explore ways to produce commodities in the future. Cultivar enhancements and modifications can certainly change the competitive playing field over time,” Sleep of the FDACS says. “Blueberries are a great example of that. A relatively insignificant crop in the 1990s — around \$4 to 5 million in cash receipts — this status changed as new varieties were introduced and today Florida blueberries are worth around \$70 million, grown in a time period of April and May where few places on the earth grow them.”

There are now new broccoli varieties growing even where the plants cannot enjoy the cool climate of coastal California. “We have seen crops like broccoli that have traditionally come from California,” says Eubanks from South Carolina. “We’ve experimented with broccoli for 20 years. The seed companies have developed varieties specifically for the Southeastern United States; they grow in our hot, humid climate.”


Eubanks has even seen South Carolina growers find opportunities for leaf lettuce. “We’ve had folks grow leaf lettuce varieties in

greenhouses, mainly for the foodservice sector,” Eubanks says.

The recent inclusion of new crops can be a trip “back to the future” — a return to an era of greater agricultural diversity in the South. “We’ve seen increasing acreage of asparagus in the east, in particular, and in South Carolina in general. Historically, South Carolina was the largest asparagus producer in the country in the early 1900s. We got away from that when we moved to peaches. We’re seeing people diversify and move back to those varieties,” Eubanks says.

Farmers wanting to more fully use their facilities and spread out their risk can turn toward more balanced production. “Growers are diversifying to utilize land, packing facilities and infrastructure over a longer period of time. A peach grower might grow broccoli, for example, or look at many varieties,” Eubanks says.

For some, double cropping to keep land in production means fuller utilization. “We haven’t seen any major shifts in crops. There is some double cropping going on. People are growing cucumbers or watermelons, and then they’ll plant some cotton between the beds before they pull the plastic up,” Hall says.



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### WEATHER ALWAYS MATTERS

Although trends point toward more diverse Southern fruit and vegetable production, the availability of specific commodities varies over time. “Most commodities fluctuate from year to year,” Sleep says. “Like the stock market, it is more common to see gradual shifts up and down, with a mix of increases and decreases in volume, price and total cash receipts.”

The condition of other producers — from across the country or below the border — goes far in deciding how many Southern growers will offer a particular variety.

“International competition still plays a significant role in preventing unfettered expansion, as many products are grown in Mexico, Central America and other places on the same latitude as Florida,” Sleep says. “Increases in fuel costs alone cannot offset lower labor inputs in these regions sufficiently to level the playing field, so Florida farmers focus on high quality, excellent handling and distribution systems and safety and competitively priced offerings to balance out other price advantages enjoyed in other regions of the globe.”

But this is farming. And in farming, Mother Nature always has the last word. “If we have a good year, we’re going to be shipping more to the East coast. If we have a bad year, California is going to be shipping more,” says Hall from the GFVGA.

In the past two seasons, the weather has sent sweet corn production from lofty peaks to the valley floor. “It can be difficult to compare one year to the next. Last spring was a near record corn harvest, but due to a freeze in early March, volume — and therefore consumption — will likely be down this

spring,” Stemm says.

Geographical brand names, built up over decades, also still have great impact with consumers. According to Stemm, “As people consider eating locally or seasonally — two different things — it depends on the commodity. Florida oranges resonate strongly with consumers, and most states do not have local citrus. Vidalia onions are another one

where I think people throughout the U.S. have an appreciation for, although some don’t know that Vidalia is a town in Georgia.”

Stemm adds, “I think for an item like sweet corn, we do not focus on Florida. There is a reference to it in our logo — ‘Sunshine Sweet, Fresh from the Sunshine State’ — but we do not stress that to consumers since it is something that nearly every state grows at some time of year. Instead we focus on the season for Spring Corn, and encourage consumers to experience it for themselves.”

There is even work to do to establish a name for some local crops that have been national leaders in production for many decades.

“Florida has been the largest grower of sweet corn in the U.S. for over 50 years. It is an important crop for the state, and for Palm Beach County in particular. The Florida Sweet Corn Exchange has been working with their retail partners over the past 15 years to increase volume, drive sales and add sustainable value to the fresh sweet corn category,” Stemm says. “This commitment to improving the quality and consistency of spring sweet corn has led to greater consumer demand for Sunshine Sweet Corn from Florida.” **pb**



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Healthier flavors and yogurt-based dressings are appealing to today's consumers.

# Not Your Mother's Salad Dressing Or Dip

Refrigerated dressings and dips continue to expand in variety and healthfulness. **BY K.O. MORGAN**

**T**oday, more and more consumers are seeking variety and newer experiences in their quests to follow a healthier diet. The salad dressings and dips industry has responded to this demand with increasingly healthier and innovative choices to spice up salads, raw vegetables and other foods.

"We have seen an upward movement in products that offer consumers healthy alternatives to traditional salad dressings," says Buzzy Blyer, sales manager at Makoto Dressing, Inc., Melbourne, FL.

Mary Beth Cowardin, director of marketing for T. Marzetti Company, Columbus, OH, agrees. "In both the salad dressings and dip categories, we have seen that the influence of health and wellness concerns are impacting consumer decisions," she says. "For this reason, both the Marzetti Simply Dressed dressings and Marzetti Otria Greek Yogurt Veggie Dips have grown in popularity because they are attracting the consumer who is looking for products that fit with their healthy lifestyle."

Dan O'Connor, assistant category manager at Tops Markets, Inc., a chain of 155

stores, headquartered in Williamsville, NY, has seen the consumer demand for healthier salad dressing choices first hand. "This increase in more variety of healthier salad dressing flavors coincides with the increase in salad sales and in lettuce sales in general," says O'Connor.

## DEMAND GROWS FOR GREATER VARIETY

"The refrigerated salad dressing category has been growing," claims Marci Needham, director of insights, Ventura Foods/Marie's Salad Dressings, Brea, CA. "Consumers perceive the refrigerated salad dressings in the produce department to be healthier and more premium than shelf-stable salad dressings since they have to be refrigerated, implying that shelf stable salad dressings may contain more preservatives. And refrigerated salad dressings and produce dips are offering consumers healthier forms of options to enjoy with greens, vegetables or chips."

This demand for greater options includes a trend toward more variety in choices of flavorings. "Adding additional flavors, while focusing on healthful alternative products, is the trend," states Blyer of Makoto Dressing.

"At Makoto, the spotlight is on fresh ginger, which has many healthy attributes."

"Mediterranean flavors, vinaigrettes, and yogurt-based dressings are appealing now due to their health appeal and flavor profiles," says Needham of Venture/Marie's Salad Dressings. "In fact, many national brands have introduced a yogurt-based salad dressing and produce dip in recent years, items which were first popularized in restaurants and then migrated to the retail environment."

"Yogurt-based dressings have been growing over the past few years," agrees Cowardin of T. Marzetti. "For this reason, we've introduced several new Marzetti Simply Dressed dressings that are made with yogurt. Our consumer research shows that consumers are more likely to purchase a dressing made with yogurt because it is believed to be a high quality, healthy product that is considered lower in fat, and for some consumers to be the best tasting product."

Other new flavors also growing in popularity among health-conscious consumers include red wine, celery seed, raspberry acai, and roasted tomato, to name just a few. "Consumers are always looking for interesting

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new flavors in addition to long-time favorites like Blue Cheese and Ranch,” Cowardin points out. “Our Simply Dressed dressings are made with only the essential ingredients, like extra virgin olive oil, canola oil that provides Omega-3 ALA, and sea salt, and they have no preservatives, no added MSG, and no artificial flavors or colors.”

“Flavor innovation is the most predominant to offer consumers with variety and assortment,” agrees Needham of Ventura Foods/Marie’s Salad Dressings. “Marie’s is currently introducing Lemon Vinaigrette, a citrus-based vinaigrette salad dressing perfect for a light salad marinade for chicken, pork or fish.”

“Salad dressings are responding to the current health focus of consumers,” adds Cowardin. “Lemon vinaigrette, Cherry Balsamic and Balsamic vinaigrette are flavors that have grown in popularity and have become favorites among consumers.”

O’Connor of Tops Markets agrees. “We see a growing demand for the balsamics, vinaigrettes, organics and the gourmet dressings — especially with the vinaigrettes, which are the leaders and are currently very trendy.”

### MIXING IT UP WITH DIP CHOICES

Veggie dips and fruit dips are also enjoying a facelift in flavor choices. Eating patterns have changed from the traditional three-meals-a-day to grazing on five small meals a day or adding one or two snacks to the breakfast, lunch and dinner fare. Many consumers are seeking healthier alternatives to chips and sweets, and dips can provide a tasty way to

## “One of the best ways to display dressings and dips is as an addition to a salad set and what we call our ‘Salad Solution,’”

— Dan O’Connor, *Tops Markets, Inc.*

spice up fruits and raw vegetables.

“Consumers are snacking more often, which provides a key usage occasion for dip products,” says Cowardin of T. Marzetti. “Veggie dips continue to be a popular segment as many moms admit it’s a great way to help their children eat veggies as a snack. And now there are more dips as choices for consumers than ever before.”

Healthier choices in dips also make a nice addition to snacks such as chips and pretzels. “We’ve seen an uptick in sales of dips that offer healthy alternatives and new, innovative flavors,” says Blyer of Makoto Dressing.

“Dips can be used to add flavor to a variety of foods — a dip for veggies, fruit, chips, and breads, and also as a spread for sandwiches and wraps, or as a sauce or flavor base for items such as baked potatoes or boiled red potatoes, steamed green beans, etc. Consumers are finding versatile ways to use our products,” states Cowardin.

According to Cowardin, the Greek yogurt trend continues to expand into a variety of food categories, including dips, with non-traditional flavors, such as T. Marzetti’s Mixed Berry Medley and Sweet Vanilla Cinnamon. “With more consumers entertaining at home, dips are a great item to serve to family and friends, whether it’s a casual gathering or a more formal occasion,” she adds.

### FRONT-AND-CENTER MARKETING

Making consumers more aware of new offerings in salad dressings and dips is key in seeing these products move from the refrigerated shelves to the customer’s basket. This can be accomplished by creating promotions that show off the latest flavors and varieties resulting in an “aha” moment for the consumer.

“End caps that display salad dressings and dips with other produce items is one of the best ways to drive a retail sale,” offers Needham of Ventura Foods/Marie’s Salad Dressings. “Also, promoting them as a great way to marinate chicken, steaks, fish and pork can also drive sales.”

“Merchandising dressings and dips in the produce section provides consumers with the benefit of selecting a dip or a dressing that best complements their produce selection,” says Cowardin of T. Marzetti. “And be creative. For example, merchandising caramel dip next to apples is a proven method for successfully selling both apples and caramel dip!”

“One of the best ways to display dressings and dips is as an addition to a salad set and what we call our ‘Salad Solution,’ where you display the dressings and dips alongside the lettuces, croutons, raw vegetables and other items to create a total salad solution for the customer,” states O’Connor of Tops Markets, Inc.

Cowardin agrees. “Merchandising dressings next to lettuce and other fruits and vegetables commonly used in salad recipes makes it even easier for the consumer to shop. The same is true with dips. Put them next to raw veggies and fruits, especially the pre-cut items that make them great grab-to-go lunches and snacks.”

### FUTURE TRENDS

The desire among many consumers to eat healthier is expected to continue, and this will likely lead to more innovative flavors of, and uses for, salad dressings and dips in the future. They are two staples that provide an opportunity for produce departments to push their many varieties and the meals they can enhance.

pb





ABOVE PHOTO COURTESY OF CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION



Most of the people purchasing avocados, peaches and pears hope and expect to eat them shortly after purchase.

# Fruit Ripe For A Giant Step Forward

Fill the produce department with the sweet scent of ready-to-eat ripe fruit, and you can reap the rewards of super sales increases. **BY BOB JOHNSON**

**T**he reasons for the sales differences in ripened versus unripened fruit are as simple as the difference between a juicy perfumed peach that begs you to take just one bite, and that fragrant-free, green rock-like fruit on the window sill that promises it, too, shall one day become a peach.

“I think people have always wanted ripe fruit. You and I would both rather bite into a ripe peach. We’re doing a much better job as an industry of sending riper fruit to market,” says Don Goforth, director of sales and marketing at Family Tree Farms, Reedley, CA.

Other popular stone fruits, such as nectarines and plums, join that juicy peach in ripened programs, and avocados and bananas are also naturals.

“We get ripened peaches, nectarines and plums, and it increases sales at least 30 percent because people want ripe fruit,” says Jim Weber, produce director for Tadych’s Econo Foods, in Brillion, WI. Tadych’s Econo Foods is an independent chain with stores in Wisconsin and Michigan.

For sure, challenges exist in adopting a ripened fruit program... the most important being minimizing shrink. But those challenges are offset by the chance of double-digit jumps in fruit sales — even in your learn-as-you-go first year of the program.

“Retailers across the nation who’ve adopted a “Ripe” avocado program have seen a monthly lift in sales with an average sales increase of 11 percent during the first year. Increases can vary by region with retailers in these regions experiencing annual sales increases of 30 percent in the Northeast, 23 percent in Western states, and 19 percent in the Midwest during the first year of their ripe program,” says Jan DeLyser, vice president of marketing at the California Avocado Commission, Irvine, CA. “It improves the consumer’s experience with California avocados.”

## THERE’S GREEN IN THAT FRUIT

Most consumers want to have their fruit and eat it, too — and within a few days of buying it. Tree ripened stone fruit, in particular, is so popular that it can propel sales for

the entire stone fruit category.

“In the stone fruit category, when we put the tree-ripened fruit in the lead, it increases sales by 25 to 30 percent,” says Vince Mastro-mauro, director of produce at Highland Park, IL-based Sunset Food Mart, a small independent chain of supermarkets outside of Chicago.

“The most compelling reason for offering ripened fruit is to address the needs of those consumers who only purchase ready-to-eat produce and to drive impulse purchases. Ideally retailers should offer ripened produce in different stages that cover immediate and longer-term planned consumption occasions,” says Dionysios Christou, vice president for marketing at Del Monte Fresh Produce, Coral Gables, FL.

“Research shows that 77 percent of shoppers purchasing avocados plan to eat them within 48 hours of purchase,” DeLyser says. “Consumers know that ripe fruit is always available — during social gathering and celebrations. It is perfect for 4th of July and other American summer holidays. It also encourages

**“You have to order very tight. Say we get in 30 cases of nectarines; we sell 15 cases one day, 15 cases the next and then get in a new order. You have to keep good records.”**

— Jim Weber, Tadych's Econo Foods

impulse purchases: Shoppers can make an ‘avocado run’ to the grocery store knowing that ripe fruit is always available. Consumers can immediately take advantage of new recipe ideas.”

Satisfy that craving for fresh, quality fruit that is ready-to-eat, and watch sales shoot well through the treetops. “Consumption of tree fruit has huge upside potential with a ripened program. We’ve seen sales up 50 to 60 percent; I think 30 percent is the low end of what you can expect if you have a program that gives the consumer a consistently good product,” says Steve Kenfeld, vice president at HMC Marketing Group, Kingsburg, CA.

Avocados are among the fruits that show sustained double-digit growth with a ripened program, and the sky’s the limit. “With avocados, it’s night and day,” says Bill Tarleton, director of marketing and communications at Mission Produce, Oxnard, CA. “The consumer can buy an avocado and eat it that night. When we start new retailers on a ripened program after selling hard fruit, their sales can go up as much as 400 percent. Even retailers who have been on a ripened program see double-digit growth year after year.”

And what last-minute-planners — a category, that, at one time or another, includes all consumers — won’t appreciate finding same-day fruit when shopping for a get together for a special day? “The demand for preconditioned fruit has continued to grow each year and in every region of the country. Retailers can further maximize their sales performance by offering ripe California avocados during key holidays: Cinco de Mayo, Memorial Day, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, 4th of July, Labor Day and others,” DeLyser says.

A ripened fruit program says something about the quality of the entire supermarket. “Offering ripe California avocados at retail tells shoppers the retailer is offering the highest quality fruit that is ready to eat immediately. Increased retail sales and increased volume

most often result from a ripe program,” DeLyser says. “It improves the consumer’s experience with California avocados.”

The sweet smell of ripe fruit drives impulse purchases, and the taste brings them back for more. “In the past five years, consumers have moved toward purchasing ready-to-eat items. By providing ripe fruit, consumers will be more inclined to purchase the product, and should they have a good experience, they will repeat the purchase. Research has shown that many produce items tend to be an impulse buy; therefore, displaying fruit that is ripened, colorful, and fresh will appeal to today’s consumers,” Del Monte’s Christou says.

The growing popularity of ripened fruit has coincided with increased popularity of many fruits and vegetables among health-conscious consumers. “As we switched to ripened avocados, avocados were taking off anyway, so it’s hard to tell how much the ripened program has helped,” says Jeff Cady, produce category manager at Buffalo, NY-based Tops Friendly Markets, a chain of supermarkets serving New York and Pennsylvania.

The attraction of ripened fruit is closely connected to the greatest challenge in managing the ripened fruit program: Ripened can be just a few days away from rotten. “I grew up in the San Joaquin Valley, and the best fruit was always in the cull pile because it was too ripe,” says Dave Biswell, president of Ethylene Control, Selma, CA. “The riper the fruit, the shorter the shelf life.”

### **YOU CAN SHRINK THE SHRINK**

The greatest fear in putting ripened fruit on display in the produce department is the fruit will turn rotten before your customer’s eyes. Reducing shrink begins with having a very good idea how much ripened fruit you can sell and how quickly.

“You have to order very tight. Say we get in 30 cases of nectarines; we sell 15 cases one day, 15 cases the next and then get in a new order.

You have to keep good records,” says Weber from Tadych’s Econo Foods.

It is not a good idea to try to hedge your bets by storing stone fruit under refrigeration to keep it fresh. “We don’t ever refrigerate stone fruit. If you put stone fruit in the refrigerator you get brown spots,” Weber says.

Those who know best insist shrink can be managed, and even insist that in a well-managed ripened fruit program, shrink can actually go down. There isn’t necessarily any added shrink when selling ripe fruit, because ripe fruit can increase the velocity of sales — and the number of turns at the point of purchase.

“Shrink, of course, varies from retailer to retailer,” DeLyser says. “It is important to know the seasonality of the fruit and recognize that ripening rates in-store vary with the various origins of the fruit and at what stage in the season that fruit is. Retailers need to adjust inventory as needed for these seasonal changes.”

One key to managing shrink is the higher velocity of ripened fruit, as consumers rush to get a bite of the real thing. “Mature fruit sells faster. You’re going to have less shrink if you’re selling more fruit,” Goforth says.

Another key to managing shrink is developing promotional campaigns to fit the volume of fruit you need to move. “In addition to merchandising ripe fruit, there are other merchandising best practices retailers can use to optimize sales and minimize shrink: Utilize California Avocado POS and signage so shoppers know they are offering premium fruit from California. Use displays that appeal to local tastes, co-merchandising with complementary produce. Utilize signage to point out the nutritional benefits of California Avocados. Build sizable displays utilizing colorful creative materials pictures and help draw shopper attention,” DeLyser says. “The California Avocado Commission can provide experience, materials and information to help retailer ripe programs be successful.”

And tell the customers they are getting something special — clearly sign fruit as being either ripe or within a couple days of ripeness. Consumers appreciate knowing (and, bonus — they’ll squeeze less).

“An ideal effective ripe program offers varying degrees of ripeness available for the consumer — Ripe for today/tonight, ‘Breaking’ for use later in the week. Research has shown that offering avocados in various stages of ripeness can increase volume by up to 7.3 percent, and gross profits by nearly 12 percent,” DeLyser says.

Display of fruit at two clearly signed stages of ripeness also works well for bananas.

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“Providing a ripe fruit program can increase rotation of inventories at the retail store level. However, poorly handled fruit and bad rotation practices will affect the retailer’s shrink levels. Providing a two-color program for bananas and indicating ripe fruit will draw consumers who want to buy ready-to-eat produce,” Christou says.

As you reap the benefits of faster moving fruit, you need to also develop a display size that lets you keep putting out fresh fruit. Tarleton emphasizes the importance of putting out a modest sized display of avocados next to complementary items like onions, lemons, limes and tomatoes.

“As the display diminishes, you replace it with fruit from your cooler. Don’t build a giant pyramid of avocado fruit and watch them turn to mush. You will end up with shrink on the shelves unless they put out manageable displays,” Tarleton advises.

It is important to bring store personnel up to speed on the care and handling of the ripe fruit. “Retailers should pay close attention on how fruit is handled in their stores in order to keep produce looking its best. It’s important to educate personnel on the proper fruit handling

practices to minimize any damage, especially in store backrooms. When displaying fruit, retailers should also consider placing additional padding in shelves or displaying fruit in single layers to prevent fruit from bruising,” Christou says.

The program should also include, however, letting your customers know how to handle the fruit. “Optimal handling practices should be followed when offering ripened fruit. Retailers need to focus on rotating and displaying product properly. Retailers also should educate consumers on the various stages of ripeness to avoid shrink and to ensure they handle the fruit correctly,” Christou says.

The size of the display is important, regardless of whether the fruit is ripened or not.

“Even the unripened fruit, if it’s not handled correctly, will turn to mush on you,” Tarleton says.

Suppliers believe timely promotion, good velocity, and control of the display size all combine to reduce shrink in a ripened program. “When handled correctly, there really isn’t any downside to a ripeness program. With attention to the fruit and the display, shrink as a percentage of fruit on display may even be

lower. If shoppers know the fruit is ripe, they will handle the fruit less, which improves the overall quality of the fruit – improving shrink. A ripeness program when combined with promotion can increase sales velocity and the number of turns of the display, which can reduce shrink,” DeLyser says. “Retailers should work very closely with their California avocado shipper/handler to develop a program that will work well for their stores and their market. Ask the shipper handler about labeling ripe fruit.”

Development of a shrink management program, and of the entire ripened fruit program, begins with the relationships with your suppliers. “Shrink goes down, and if the retailers are doing their job, they should have shrink in the single digits. It’s more complex than any single silver bullet. It takes the same kind of commitment between the retailer and the supplier as any other value added program,” HMC’s Kenfeld says.

But doing the job right depends on getting information to employees at every store. “Education at the store level is critical; things like a quick turnover, and not over piling the fruit,” Cady at Tops Market says. When Tops began its ripe avocado program, the supplier

# Peter Sticco’s Legacy



Peter Sticco, the founder of Coast to Coast Produce, had produce in his veins at a young age. As a teenager Peter worked on his father’s farm in Connecticut, 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, Connecticut 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, Connecticut he grew the business. Coast To Coast will celebrate its 28th anniversary in May and now includes satellite offices in Monterey, California, Bakersfield, California and Beverly, Massachusetts.

Very sadly in 2005 Peter was diagnosed with liver cancer. Some men when given this kind of news

included educational information with every box of ripe fruit shipped to the store.

### IT STARTS BEFORE THE STORE

For ripened fruit to hold up at the store, it must be treated right before it even gets there.

"The main thing is the scrubbers remove the ethylene gas, and also kill molds and diseases. We can almost double the shelf life," Biswell says. A scrubbing unit as small as two square feet and four or five feet tall can treat the air in a distribution center building 80 feet by 50 feet and 25 feet tall, according to Biswell.

"Once they get the fruit ripe, they want to keep it fresh. The distribution center is the best place to do it. This machine sits at one end of the room and removes the ethylene, mold and fungi," Biswell says.

The temperature and atmosphere control all happen before the truck pulls up to the store. "It is mostly done at the supermarket warehouses, but you need proper temperature chain management from the warehouse to the supermarket, and proper temperature management at the supermarket," says David Byrne, vice president for sales at Thermal Technologies, Blithewood, PA.

Thermal Technologies ripens more than 100 million pounds of bananas every day. "The key to a good fruit ripening system is the ability to maintain the correct humidity level, and the correct temperature. You also have to maintain uniform distribution of the temperature by pressurizing the air," Byrne says.

Maintaining consistent humidity and temperature keeps you in charge of the fruit ripening process. "By controlling the rate of ripening, you can meet industry standards for how fast the fruit ripens. For bananas, the industry standard is four to seven days. If you rush the process, you will lose shelf life," Byrne says. "But you don't want to extend it beyond the industry standard. Fruit is a living thing, and you reach a point where the aging process of the fruit causes the quality to decline." There is good science behind the claim that fruit ripened at the right speed, stays fresh longer.

"The University of California at Davis did a great project showing that a piece of fruit that is ripened properly will have a better shelf life than a piece of fruit that is shipped green. If it is conditioned properly, it will last longer," Goforth of Family Tree says.

Even before the fruit is picked and shipped,

it has to be the good stuff. "It begins with the right fruit. The supplier has to have the right varieties, harvested at optimum maturity. Getting it through the supply chain is the challenge," HMC's Kenfeld says.

University and private breeders in the major fruit-growing regions have heard the word and are developing varieties with greater mouth appeal. "Genetics have improved. We're finding varieties that taste much better. When we talk about ripeness, we're really talking about enhancing the eating experience," Goforth says.

A ripened fruit program even calls for a change in the orchard harvest schedule. "We work very hard to harvest many more times. It would be most efficient to harvest twice two weeks apart, but you have hard fruit and soft fruit, and it all goes into the box. At Family Tree Farms we harvest every day or every other day. That's a major step forward we made as an industry," Goforth says.

At bottom, a good program depends on ripened relationships among all the parties from farm to fork. "The relationships have matured. We're seeing more partnerships of like-minded companies," Goforth says. **pb**

# Continues

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, California.

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. 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. 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's philosophy about the produce business was "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.



Sadly, Peter lost his battle with cancer on Labor Day, 2008. Peter will always be remembered with profound respect. He was a good guy in the truest sense of the word. He cared about people and treated everyone like family.

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# Eight Ways To Sweeten Cherry Sales

Cherries are such a powerfully profitable seasonal fruit that retailers say it's difficult to find another item to replace them. **BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**



Rainiers don't have as long of a window as red cherries. However, they do have their own holiday. July 11 is National Rainier Cherry Day.

**S**ales numbers can be deceiving... The cherry category accounted for only 1.5 percent of total produce dollars during the 52 weeks ending January 26, 2013, according to data provided by the Nielsen Perishables Group, a Chicago, IL-based fresh food consulting firm. This figure doesn't seem as if this sweet, juicy, bite-sized fruit is about to set cash registers on fire. This is especially true when you realize that cherries are one of the few fruits that aren't available year-round on U.S. supermarket shelves.

What really puts the cherry category on top, however, is that at certain times, cherries contribute double-digit sales numbers to the produce department.

Alfonso Cano, assistant produce director at Northgate González Markets, a 36-store chain based in Anaheim, CA, explains, "Since cherries don't last long and they don't store, we jump right in and immediately let customers know they're available with big displays in high traffic areas and secondary displays up by registers. If we didn't do this, it would be virtually impossible to make up those dollar-per-square-foot sales with other items. Since we are aggressive,

cherries in-season will contribute up to 10 percent of our produce sales."

Here are eight ways retailers can earn a lucrative piece of the cherry pie.

## 1. SELL BY COLOR AND VARIETY

Customers at Kings Food Markets, a 25-store chain based in Parsippany, NJ, buy cherries both by color and by variety, says Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce, floral and seafood. "It's reds and Rainiers. In the reds, a deeper burgundy color sells better than a lighter red. Our customers equate color with eating quality. However, they do understand the Rainiers."

According to Nielsen Perishables Group data, red cherries accounted for 89.8 percent of total category sales during the 52-weeks ending January 26, 2013, while the yellow-skin and yellow-flesh Rainiers made up the rest at 10.2 percent of cherry dollars.

Chuck Sinks, president of sales and marketing for the Sage Fruit Company, headquartered in Yakima, WA, says, "Consumers typically do not shop cherries by variety; mainly just dark sweet and Rainier. Often, all dark sweet cherries are viewed under the

umbrella of Bing cherries by consumers."

Bing is the highest volume red variety produced in the three major growing areas that supply the U.S. market — California, the five-state Pacific Northwest and Chile. However, there are many other red varieties that ship into the market throughout the cherry season. These include Tulare, Brooks, Sequoias, Corals, Chelans, Lapins, Skenas and Sweethearts in the United States, as well as Santinas and Reginas out of Chile.

Beyond Bing, most consumers do not shop by variety, explains Suzanne Wolter, director of marketing for the Rainier Fruit Company, in Selah, WA. "Although some of the smaller, independent retailers do call out the varieties, it would be extremely difficult for most retailers to accurately sign their department throughout the season if they were to call out each individual variety."

Therefore, "It's best to sign and advertise red cherries as 'Dark Sweets' or 'Red,'" recommends Roger Pepperl, marketing director for Stemilt Growers, Inc., in Wenatchee, WA,

Rainiers, with their sunny yellow hue that stands out on the shelf, are slowly gaining in both production and popularity. Cano of

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## WILL CHERRIES EVER BE AVAILABLE YEAR ROUND?

Cherries are one of the last truly seasonal fruits on U.S. supermarket shelves. It's easy to see the gaps when you look at the numbers. Cherry's contribution to total produce sales was 2.0 and 3.6 percent during Q2 and Q3 of 2012, respectively, while these numbers drop to 0.1 and 0.3 in Q4 and Q1 when only imports are in the market, according to data provided by the Nielsen Perishables Group, a Chicago, IL-based fresh food consulting firm.

Will cherries forever remain a seasonal fruit? We put this question to industry experts.

Currently, the first domestic cherries start harvest out of California as early as the last week of April, says Ron Morway, in sales and merchandising for Grower Direct Marketing, in Stockton, CA. "It's tough on the front end, though, due to issues like poor dormancy."

Dovey Plain, marketing coordinator for Reedley, CA-based Family Tree Farms, adds, "Our feeling is that, as an industry, we'll see a large crop on the early varieties. Several growers experienced a reduced crop set last year and they now have a better understanding of how to avoid that."

California's crop starts to wind-down mid-June while the Pacific Northwest ramps up.

Chuck Sinks, president of sales and marketing for Sage Fruit Company, in Yakima, WA, explains, "More volume

comes in to production in high elevation orchards, which could push the Northwest cherry season even later into September. With the highly perishable nature of cherries, it is unlikely Northwest Cherries will be available much later than September in the near future. When the weather cools in the Pacific Northwest, it is not ideal for cherry harvest and that is when we get in to apple harvest. If cherry harvest were to bleed in to apple harvest, we would get ourselves in to serious labor issues."

The shipping schedule for Chilean cherries goes from November through January, says Karen Brux, North American managing director for the Fresno, CA-based Chilean Fresh Fruit Association. "The latest arrivals into the U.S. are by the end of January. Some of the cherries from the south of Chile are able to make St. Valentine's Day. It's still hard to fill the gap of March and October with cherries. These are the months where there are no cherries in the market. We are working in Chile with later varieties with longer post-harvest in order to fill this gap."

New varieties and new growing areas continue to expand the season on both ends but there will always be a limit to how far that can be stretched, says Family Tree Farm's Plain. "But if those same varieties are grown in the southern hemisphere, then the possibility exists for year-round availability someday." **pb**

Northgate González Markets says, "The Rainiers are so delicate, they don't last long. Instead of ordering how much you want, the shippers will tell you how much they have, and you must make a decision fast or they'll be sold to someone else."

There continues to be tremendous growth opportunity for Rainier cherries, says Rainier Fruit's Wolter. "Retailers should highlight the flavor profile and general characteristics of Rainier cherries such as 'extra sweet' and 'white flesh' through their in-store and weekly ads and use these same descriptors on in-store point-of-sale (POS). Promote the Rainier cherry alongside the dark sweet cherry in order to maximize category dollar impact."

It's not only important, but lucrative, to

educate customers about Rainier cherries. According to research conducted in 2010 by the Nielsen Perishables Group on behalf of Yakima, WA-based Northwest Cherry Growers, the Rainier buyer spends \$42 more per shopping trip compared to \$28 more for the average red cherry buyer.

### 2. BIGGER IS BETTER

The bigger the cherry, the better the cherry sales at Kings Food Markets, says Kneeland. "Large or small, the pit is the same size. So small cherries have less meat on the bones, so to speak. Customers don't feel like they're getting a value with small cherries. We try to have 9 or 9.5 row cherries. The smallest we'll carry are 10 row. Competitors that carry 10.5 to 11 row can

really beat us up on the [price]. However, we use size as a selling point. In ads, we'll show pictures of two cherries, ours and theirs, showing that ours are 33 percent or 40 percent bigger."

Sizing plays a big role in cherry sales, says Howard Nager, vice president of marketing for Domex Superfresh Growers, in Yakima, WA. "The industry is selling less and less 12 row and more 10 and 10.5 row. In the height of the season last year, 10 and 10.5 row represented almost 55 percent of the cherries sold."

Dovey Plain, marketing coordinator for Family Tree Farms, in Reedley, CA, agrees with the bigger-is-better view and backs this up with consumer research presented in 2005 at the International Cherry Symposium. "This research showed that only 25 percent of consumers preferred a 10.5 row size, while 70 percent preferred a 9 row. The 10.5 was once considered a large cherry so the scale is definitely moving up on size."

Beyond eye appeal, large cherries taste better, adds David White, president of Trinity Fruit Sales Co., in Fresno, CA. "As a result, repeat sales are better."

Larger sized cherries also mean higher returns to growers, says Karen Brux, North American managing director for the Chilean Fresh Fruit Association (CFFA), based in Fresno, CA. "However, different markets take different sizes according to the price points that work for them. Some retailers carry 2 or 3 size programs."

### 3. SERVE NICHE SHOPPERS WITH ORGANICS

Demand for organic cherries is steady, yet small. In fact, organic sales accounted for only 1.0 percent of total cherry dollars during the 52-weeks ending January 26, 2013, according to Nielsen Perishables Group data.

Eric Patrick, the Yakima, WA-based marketing director for the Grant J. Hunt Company, headquartered in Oakland, CA, says, "Organic cherry sales are growing, but not as quickly. They are harder to grow, therefore not as consistently produced, and there are more peaks and valleys in supply than for conventionally grown cherries."

Price is also an issue, explains Mac Riggan, vice president of marketing for Chelan Fresh, in Chelan, WA. "When the market is \$50 to \$55 for conventional reds, it's hard to go beyond this and get the \$60 to \$65 premium needed for organics. Organics represent less than 5 percent of what we sell."

Domex's Nager agrees. "A person needs to be a strong organic consumer to substantiate



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This is why some retailers sell conventional reds in a 2.25-pound bag and organic reds in a 1.5-pound bag, says Bob Mast, director of marketing for Columbia Marketing International, Inc., (CMI), in Wenatchee, WA. “They do this so there isn’t a big sticker shock.”

**4. REFRIGERATE, ROTATE AND REFRIGERATE**

Temperature is critical to maximize the shelf life of cherries. James Michael, promotions director for the Washington State Fruit Commission and Northwest Cherry Growers, in Yakima, WA, says, “Research shows that the loss seen in cherries in one-hour unrefrigerated equals that of all day under refrigeration.”

Cherries should be maintained as close to 32°F as possible. However, says Rainier’s Wolter, “Many times this is not possible at shelf level, so make sure the displays are at least located in high traffic areas to take advantage of impulse purchases and keep fruit rotating.”

**5. TEST OUT NEW PACKAGING**

Cherry packaging type is a consumer preference, says Domex’s Nager. “In a recent study

conducted by the Perishables Group, it was determined that consumers preferred to buy cherries in ziplock bags (39 percent) or bulk (25 percent). Nineteen percent had no preference and only 7 percent said clamshell.”

There are pros and cons in choosing cherries packaged in bags versus clamshells.

Bags are the easiest and fastest to pack, says Sage Fruit’s Sinks. “The advantage to a clamshell is that there are a few size options to choose from — 1-pound, 2-pound and 3-pound. However, packing cherries into clamshells is not quite as fast and the packaging costs more.”

In general, adds CFFA’s Brux, “Consumers just aren’t willing to pay the premium that comes with a clamshell. It seems the trend is to go into more sophisticated bags that provide an advantage to the appearance of the product without increasing the cost too much.”

A big focus for CMI and other cherry grower/shippers is a new 2-pound random weight high-graphic gusseted pouch bag with handles. Mast explains, “Household penetration is low for cherries. Many consumer’s think they’re a gourmet item and don’t realize they’re seasonal. We hope this new bag will increase both penetration and purchase frequency. It

does add to the cost, but as we’ve seen when grapes changed over to a pack like this that stands up better on the shelf, sales increased by 20 to 40 percent.”

Kings Food Markets’ Kneeland will be featuring these bags in-store this season. “They do tend to show the product better. However, unlike grapes that are on a vine, the cherries will lay in the bottom on the bags. So, I think the most successful designs will be those with graphics on the top so customers can see the fruit.”

Some Northwest grower/shippers will also feature promotional bags this season. Sage Fruit will have its *Biggest Loser* brand cherry bag, while Chelan Fresh will pack cherries in a 2-pound Disney-theme bag, along with rub-on temporary tattoos for kids during the last three weeks of August.

Cano at Northgate prefers to merchandize cherries packed in clamshells. “We like the clamshell because our staff can rework it but customers don’t pick through it, the fruit looks better, clamshells stack better and we like the 2-pound size for its big ring.”

Some retailers utilize both bags and clamshells, says Grant J. Hunt’s Patrick. “They’ll use bags with small fruit and clamshells for 9-row fruit.”


**6. MAKE PLENTY OF ROOM**

There’s not much arm-twisting in the produce department when it’s time to find display space for cherries. Northwest Cherry Grower’s Michael explains, “More of something doesn’t always equate to more sales. However, research shows that cherries return more sales dollars per square foot of increased space than any other produce item on the shelf in July.”

Retail cherry display space in the summer averages 20-square feet nationally. However, Chelan Fresh’s Riggan says, “Ideally, it should be at least 8-foot wide and 4-foot deep.”

Retailers who want to sell more cherries but don’t have the shelf space should utilize secondary displays, recommends Northwest Cherry Grower’s Michael. “Research shows that cherries on a secondary display outside of the produce department sold 13.6 percent more volume and 22.4 percent more dollars. If retailers display both the red and Rainier cherries, sales increased 31.3 percent in dollars and 39.7 percent in volume.”

Produce managers at Northgate Markets have found success in displaying clamshell-packed cherries by the registers. Checkers assist by asking customers if they’d like to purchase cherries when checking out. The result has proven effective for individual stores, which

  
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compete in a chain-wide sales contest that nets a pizza party for the store's staff.

**7. USE RECIPES TO SELL EVEN MORE CHERRIES**

Recipes can be helpful in increasing cherry sales, says Stemilt's Pepperl. "It offers customers another reason to buy, like adding fresh cherries to a salad, or using them to top yogurt, or in a sauce over meats."

Grant J. Hunt's Patrick adds, "Tie recipes like cherry smoothies right in with cherry displays. Recipes are also a great platform to give customers nutrition information and let them know that cherries are a super fruit."

Sage Fruit's Sinks tells about an outside-the-box cross-merchandising promotion that he

was involved in last year. "The retailer called it 'Cherry Jubilee'. In their ad, they promoted everything cherries: bulk cherries in produce, cherry pie, chocolate dipped cherries and different cherry flavored items. This was the first Cherry Jubilee run with this retailer, and they plan on doing it again!"

Since Chilean cherries are available during the winter holiday season, says the CFFA's Brux, "Retailers can boost sales by promoting festive recipes and usage ideas such as cherry pies, breads, scones, jams, cheesecakes, bars... even cherry champagne cocktails."

**8. HIT THE HOLIDAYS**

Major holidays are a great theme in which to promote cherries. Starting off the year, the

CFFA's Brux says, "Chinese New Year comes right at the end of the Chilean cherry season, and with the premium image of cherries, they're perfect to promote in gift boxes for this important festival."

California may have promotable cherry volumes by Memorial Day, says Ron Morway, in sales and merchandising at Grower Direct Marketing, in Stockton, CA. "This is usually easier for West coast retailers to take advantage of than those in the East."

If cherry volumes aren't enough for healthy ads in May, there's always Flag Day on June 14. "The first two weeks of June are when promotional pricing is at its best for California cherries," says Stemilt's Pepperl.

Fourth of July has been the traditional holiday to promote Northwest Cherries. A cold snap may make this difficult, as it did a few seasons ago. However, the Northwest is trending toward peaking longer and later, which makes front page promotional opportunities available through to Labor Day.

Rainier Fruit's Wolter says, "Late July and August sales are becoming increasingly important to retailers as Northwest growers focus efforts on later maturing varieties and increasing volume in these months. Research shows that core buyer cherry sales per trip don't decline as the season progresses, but actually increase 8 percent in the late season."

There is no one best way to promote, says Domex's Nager. "But having retailers advertise cherries on either front or back pages of their ads is a surefire way to generate excitement. Typically a retailer will advertise at least once in June and twice in July and August. Some retailers even more. Price is always an important element but cherries must also be the right quality, size, and flavor."

In addition to holidays, other promotional themes, suggests Grant J. Hunt's Patrick, are, "Announce cherries are available at the start of the season, then during the peak season, promote them at hot prices, and then wrap up the late season telling customers to get them before they're gone."

Rainiers don't have as long of a window as red cherries. However, they do have their own holiday. July 11 is National Rainier Cherry Day.

Stemilt's Pepperl recommends, "For Northwest Rainiers, get that first ad out for July 8 and then do two more follow-up ads in order to get 2 to 3 purchases out of a customer during the season. Use Facebook and twitter to push information out quickly. Don't forget good old solid POS materials like display pieces and iron-man posters. They're still the fastest way to communicate with consumers right at the display." **pb**



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# Five Ways To Sell More Mangos

Though mango consumption is growing, suppliers claim there is still one in three U.S. consumers who have not tried a mango. Here are some tips to change the equation. **BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**



Suppliers recommend merchandising at least two varieties of mangos at a time.

**M**angos are moving closer to mainstream. That's the consensus of mango suppliers importers and retailers in the United States and Canada.

"Mangos are a very important and staple item for us," says Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce, floral and seafood at Kings Food Markets, a 25-store chain based in Parsippany, NJ.

Year-round availability supplied from up to a dozen countries, emerging chef interest with more menu placements, and fast-growing Latino, Asian and Indian populations in the United States are driving retail sales of this tropical fruit. As a result, per capita consumption of mangos has steadily increased from 1.88 pounds per person when the Orlando, FL-headquartered National Mango Board (NMB) was founded in 2005 to 2.47 pounds per person in 2012, or an increase of 32 percent, according to USDA/ERS statistics.

At the same time, the mango category only accounted for 0.4 percent of total produce dollar sales during the 52-weeks ending January 26, 2013, according to data supplied

by Nielsen Perishables Group, a Chicago, IL-based fresh food consulting firm. This contribution did rise to 0.7 percent in Q2, but dropped down to 0.2 percent in Q4.

What this shows is that all consumers may not yet view this fruit as mainstream. That means there is definitely room to grow mango sales and profits.

## 1. VENTURE BEYOND TOMMY'S

Consumers buy based on looks and appeal, says Richard Perez, sales associate at M&M Tropicals, Inc., in Miami, FL. "That's why the Tommy Atkins is so popular. It has a very attractive red blush. Plus, this variety travels well. If you're going to stock more than one mango at a time, don't combine a Tommy Atkins and a green-skinned variety like the Kent. Many customers buy with their eyes and don't realize that the Kent has less fiber and tastes better. Therefore, the Tommy's will cannibalize sales of the Kent's due to customer confusion, and you'll also have more shrink with the green skins because they won't sell as well."

Usually, adds Larry Nienkerk, partner and general manager of Splendid Products, in

Burlingame, CA, "retailers that carry two varieties will have a 'red' or round and a 'yellow' or oblong."

The best-selling variety of mango for Ciruli Bros., in Nogales, AZ, is the yellow-skinned, oblong-shaped Ataulfo. "It is incredibly sweet and smooth, and its texture is not stringy like other varieties. We market it in our premium Champagne mango label," says chief operating officer, Chris Ciruli.

If Mexico, which annually supplies approximately 65 percent of the mangos U.S. consumers eat, is any indication of trends, it's interesting to note that in 2012 — and for the first time — the Ataulfo variety was tied with the Tommy Atkins at 34 percent each as the most imported varieties from Mexico, according to NMB data. In addition to Mexico, Peru has recently become another source of Ataulfo. This South American country shipped approximately 9 million boxes of Ataulfos to the U.S. market during its 2012-2013 season.

In addition to the six major varieties of mangos — Tommy Atkins, Kent, Keitt, Ataulfo, Haden and Francis — there is some cultivation work being done on Thai- and Indian-type



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**“The NMB is working with key retailers who want to ripen mangos in-house using their own ripening rooms. The interest has grown rapidly since we started making the offer about a year ago.”**

— Megan McKenna, National Mango Board

mangos in some of the growing regions now permitted into the United States.

**2. BUILD SALES WITH MULTIPLES**

Many retailers stock only one SKU of mangos. Others, like Kings Food Markets, carry two, says Kneeland. “We stock the

Tommy’s (Tommy Atkins) and Ataulfo pretty much all the time.”

Still others carry up to three SKUs of mangos. At Northgate González Markets, a 36-store chain based in Anaheim, CA, assistant produce director, Alfonso Cano, explains, “We stock a Kent or Tommy Atkins 365 days a year and then an Ataulfo when it’s seasonally available as well as a baby mango like a small Kent, Keitt or Tommy Atkins. It all depends on taste, price point and availability.”

Retailers can build sales by carrying multiple varieties and sizes of mangos. “We are seeing more retailers implement a dual-variety system but not a two-size system,” says Ciruli Bros’ Ciruli. “Very few chains go to a two-tier system based on size; it’s difficult to execute. This is in part because stores tend to purchase mangos based on consumer size preference of tree fruit in their region. For instance, people in the Northeastern U.S. tend to buy bigger sizes. In California and Texas, conversely, buyers prefer a smaller size and lower price points. Generally, the buying patterns for tree fruit are mirrored in mangos.”

However, says Bill Vogel, president of Vision Produce Company, in Los Angeles, CA, “A two-size program can be beneficial, and the PLU numbers are designed to assist the retailer to do this.”

M&M Tropicals’ Perez agrees. “Large national chain stores will often carry one size like a 12-count and give it a good price point. Upscale independents or gourmet stores typically want larger or a 6- to 9-count size fruit and sell it at a premium.

The majority of retailers sell mangos by the ‘each’ or multiples like two or three for a dollar, but a few will sell by the pound.”

Non-UPC mango sales accounted for 91.4 percent of total category sales during the 52 weeks ending January 26, 2013, while UPC mangos accounted for only 8.6 percent of category sales, according to data supplied by the Nielsen Perishables Group. Yet, some suppliers are offering retailers the opportunity to add a packaged SKU to their offerings.

Jeff Friedman, president and sales manager for CarbAmericas, in Pompano Beach, FL, relates, “Some Mexican growers are experimenting with putting three or five Ataulfos in a vexar bag with a header card.”

Retail demand is on the rise for value-added packs, says Ciruli. “For example, clamshells and retail-ready consumer cases feature recipes and nutrition information. We offer a few of these packs and we are selling more each year.”

**3. MEET THE CHALLENGE OF RIPE FRUIT**

One of the challenges in selling mangos, says Kings Food Markets’ Kneeland, “is for customers to tell when the fruit is ripe.”

Ripe is important, agrees Northgate González Markets’ Cano. “Ripe mangos outsell unripe 2 to 1. We manage our inventory at the distribution center level and deliver to stores 7 days a week in order to achieve a constant supply of ripe fruit in our shelves. It’s a fine line, because once the fruit becomes over-ripe you can’t give it away.”

There is growing interest among retailers and shippers for ripe and ready-to-eat mango programs, says Megan McKenna, the NMB’s marketing manager. “The NMB is working with key retailers who want to ripen mangos in-house using their own ripening rooms. The interest has grown rapidly since we started making the offer about a year ago.”

McKenna adds, “Meanwhile, we want consumers to be well educated so they can choose the fruit that meets their needs, so we teach them to squeeze gently, and let them know that if the fruit is too firm, they can leave it at room temperature to ripen for a few days. We offer header cards and tear pads that share this knowledge at the point of sale.”

Cold temperatures will stop mangos from ripening as well as cause chill damage and loss of flavor.

Ciruli says, “Retailers need to remember that mangos are a tropical item and don’t need to be displayed on a cold rack. In the backroom, mangos should be kept at 50 to 55 degrees Fahrenheit (F). Mangos will hold



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color well at 55 degrees F, but anything lower than 50 degrees F will subject them to internal chilling injury. This causes the pigmentation of the inside of the fruit to turn dark.”

The NMB has developed a new backroom piece that tells produce associates to treat mangos like a banana.

**4. GET CREATIVE WITH DEMOS**

In addition to gauging ripeness, barriers to increased mango sales are customers not knowing how to cut and how to use this fruit,

says Ciruli Bros. Ciruli. “We have to keep in mind that most U.S. consumers have never tried a mango – only one in three people have.”

That’s where in-store demos come in.

Mario Cardenas, the Edinburg, TX-based sales manager in charge of mangos at the Nogales, AZ-headquartered Farmer’s Best International, says, “Demos are very important in mango sales. They educate the customers who take the time to watch them.”

The most important factor in conducting a successful demo is to have the right level of

ripeness in the fruit, explains Wendy McManus, who manages the retail marketing and promotions program for the NMB. “If you are sampling mango cubes, you need great tasting, ripe fruit. Otherwise, you can do more harm than good. If you are sampling a recipe, you need the level of ripeness that will complement the recipe. For example, a mango salsa tastes fantastic with slightly under-ripe fruit. A chutney cooks up beautifully using over-ripe fruit. Finally, we try to get each of our demonstrators to show shoppers how to cut a mango. Tasting and liking the fruit is a good first step, but if they don’t know how to cut it, they probably won’t buy a mango.”

Demos are a big investment, but can be worth the cost in repeat sales from customers who have never before purchased the fruit.

However, Kings Food Markets’ Kneeland utilizes a merchandising tactic that works as well as a demo and makes, rather than costs, money. “We make it easy for customers to try mangos. We’ll carry the value-added chunks and spears that are easy to eat. Then, we’ll promote the whole category in an ad. That means different varieties of whole fruit, fresh-cut and even 1 to 2 juices. The idea is that if they taste the juice or fresh-cut and like it, they might be more comfortable coming back to buy the whole fruit.”

**5. GIVE ‘EM SPACE**

Traditionally, most retailers have displayed mangos with tropicals, says the NMB’s McManus. “As mangos become more mainstream, we are encouraging retailers to experiment with different locations for mangos. It is well documented that avocado sales took off when they were moved out of the tropicals section. We think that displaying mangos with stone fruit in the summer might be a great option.”

Mangos and stone fruit are merchandized together during the summer at Kings Food Markets, says Kneeland. “Other times of the year, we’ll build a big display of mangos in with pineapples and melons.”

At Northgate González Markets, Ataulfo mangos are displayed with tropicals, such as pineapple, coconuts and specialty bananas, Cano explains. “We’ll give the regular mangos a big display of their own such as on an end-cap.”

Nationwide, mango dollars account for 43 percent of tropical fruit sales (not including bananas), according to data supplied by the NMB, yet some retailers are not allocating adequate space to realize those sales.

According to Tom Hall, sales manager for

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PHOTO COURTESY OF CIRULI BROS.

Freska Produce International, LLC, in Oxnard, CA, “it’s not effective to put a little

basket of mangos in the tropical display.”

Ciruli Bros. Ciruli agrees. “Retailers need to treat mangos as a mainstream and not as a specialty item. Larger displays featured earlier in the season work well. Bigger displays draw more attention and generate foot traffic. Displays should also feature some ripe fruit in case customers want to sample a mango in-store and to appease those who want to purchase for immediate consumption. Some retailers also feature multiple varieties on display, which gives customers more buying options.”

In addition, says the NMB’s McManus, “Every retailer we’ve worked with has been able to grow their mango sales by increasing the size of the display and adding secondary

displays during promotions and high volume periods.”

New for 2013, the NMB offers an attractive and educational secondary mango display. The high graphic unit shows how to cut a mango, squeeze gently to judge ripeness and don’t judge a mango by its color with photos of yellow, red and green-skinned mangos. The display will hold from nine to 17 boxes of mangos.

Lastly, says the NMB’s McManus, “My favorite promotions are multi-layered events, where retailers run story box ads, build beautiful end-cap or front-of-store displays, offer an incentive to their store-level associates and offer mango samples to their shoppers.” **pb**



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# Where Do Suppliers Envision The Lettuce Category In The Year 2020?



**Ernst Van Eeghen**  
**Director of Marketing &**  
**Product Development**  
**CHURCH BROTHERS / TRUE LEAF FARMS**  
**Salinas, CA**



I expect the lettuce category to continue to grow as the economy seems to be in a recovery mode. On the longer term, I specifically see the category evolve to more unique varieties and

blends that really cater to the end users' desire for flavor, color and texture... a produce flavor explosion or a unique taste experience.

Church Brothers has a very strong and innovative product development team that is constantly working on new varieties, blends and flavor profiles. Food safety remains on top of our list, and we see the industry being challenged further to improve current programs and processes. We're continuously and proactively working on improving our food safety programs. This is an on-going, day-to-day process for us.

Food safety is not something you can buy off the shelf, but needs to be specifically tailored to a farming and processing operation. Additionally, we continue to invest in new and better processing technologies. Our Fresh Cut Salad category continues to be our fastest growing category, and I don't see any reason

why this growth would stagnate.

A large part of our growth has come through existing customers, which we consider a reward for meeting and exceeding our customers' expectations, but our corporate-to-market strategy dictates that we become even more "taste-sensitive"!

**Chris Mayhew**  
**Vice President, Marketing**  
**DOLE FRESH VEGETABLES**  
**Monterey, CA**

We believe that the convergence of several positive consumer dynamics, focused around 1) Ongoing trends toward healthier eating, 2) increased media and consumer awareness around organics, 3) product innovation as it relates to new lettuce varieties, and 4) growth in new distribution channels (increase in Club, Dollar, and Convenience stores) will all bode

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well for lettuce in general.

We'll continue to see a shift in the types of lettuce that shoppers buy, as well as in the package formats that they choose. Iceberg and Romaine play an important place in the market now because of their broad family appeal and will continue to do so, although there will be a continued move toward the greener products. For example, Iceberg consumption in tonnage has been steadily declining since 2009. A lot of that is driven by consumers shifting toward more "convenience" packages, such as Packaged Salads, Packaged Shreds, or even 3-Pack Romaine Hearts.

We will continue to see this in the next five years as time-starved consumers will seek convenience and value. We'll also continue to see increases in darker green and baby leaf lettuces as the health trend grows. Additionally, food trends are changing with ethnic foods, stronger flavors, and more natural ingredients growing in demand, which will also affect choices as consumers become more adventurous with their food.

Freshpack Romaine consumption has been steadily declining over the past several years through traditional retail channels (24 percent decline in pounds sold over the last 3 years), however there has been a significant 35 percent increase in 3-Pack Romaine hearts driven by organics. We see this trend continuing as the price gaps between organic and its conventional equivalent close.

**Vincent E Choate**  
**Director of Marketing**  
**HOLLANDIA PRODUCE, LLC / LIVE**  
**GOURMET / GROWER PETES ORGANIC**  
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Consumer demand, labor availability, energy cost, land use regulation, water supplies and governmental compliance mandates will increasingly impact the entire leafy greens category. I believe there will be vast changes in how, when and where many of the leafy greens crops are grown and how they will be marketed by 2020.

Food safety, merchandiser labor input reduction and consumer preference will help drive more packaging in the category, and I believe by 2020 packaging will finally be the norm rather than the exception.

Additionally trends suggest organically grown and nutrient-dense selections of leafy greens will garner a larger share of category sales.

**Rick Antle**  
**CEO**  
**TANIMURA & ANTLE**  
**Salinas, CA**



The bulk lettuce category, with the growth of new varieties like Artisan Lettuce, Artisan Romaine, Little Gem and other vibrant varieties soon to hit the market, will continue to grow!

With an emphasis on taste and nutrition, these new lettuce varieties will not only be good for you but will also provide a culinary experience. While Iceberg lettuce historically has been the most consumed bulk lettuce, Romaine will soon surpass it driven by the consumers' quest for nutrition.

Packaged salads will continue to play an important role, meeting the needs of time-strapped consumers. However, as more consumers reconnect with the experience of home-prepared food, high quality bulk lettuce will be their choice.

Retailers driven by the need to reduce labor and costs, and at the same time meeting the needs of their shoppers, will learn that wrapped bulk varietal lettuce not only improves their bottom line, it satisfies their shopper demand for high quality fresh picked flavor.

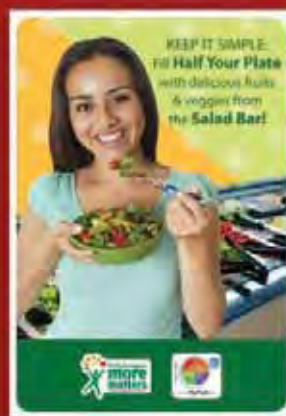
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# Are Dried Fruit And Nut Snacks The New Meal?

According to suppliers of dried fruits and nuts, strong messaging, secondary displays and offering variety all help remind the consumer of the concept of mindful snacking. **BY MEREDITH AUERBACH**



Evolving consumer trends make snacking as an eating occasion even more important.

Looking at today's fast-paced lifestyles, it can become easy to look at snacking and call it the new meal paradigm, driving the development of different strategies, products and messages to the consumer. Is this perception real or merely a view from a different angle?

Harry Balzer, chief industry analyst, NPD Group, Long Island, NY, reports that 20 percent of eating occasions are snacking, and the figure really hasn't changed in 20 years. "As household income has plateaued, it has become harder to hire someone else to cook so American households, seeking an easier approach, select food requiring little to no cooking," Balzer says. Some of the top foods we see are nuts, yogurt, snack bars, pizza, water and cheese. People want foods that can be snacks or in some form or combination the main meal, certainly breakfast and lunch if not yet dinner, where assembled meals account for 58 percent of the total."

Evolving consumer trends — attitudes

toward health and wellness, food any time, any place, emphasis on single-serving packaging — make snacking as an eating occasion ever more important. The time is ripe for produce retailers and dried fruit and nut producers to take advantage of sales opportunities within the produce department.

## Produce Opportunities

"Consumers looking for nuts in the produce aisle are very different from consumers in the snack aisle. Produce consumers are looking for healthier choices and want pure and simple nuts and dried fruits," points out Brendan Honan, director of brand marketing for John B Sanfilippo & Son Inc., Elgin IL, producers of the Orchard Valley Harvest line of nuts and dried fruits.

"Our research indicates the strongest place for dried fruits is in the produce section," reports Joe Tamble, vice president of sales, Sun-Maid Growers, Kingsburg CA, "The produce department is where we see sales 30 percent

higher than in other locations in the grocery store. Other locations — baking and front-of-store displays where you increasingly find all kinds of foods suggesting on-the-go consumption — do add value to make it well worth the retailer's allocation of space."

Sharon Jensen, director of marketing, National Raisin Company, Fowler CA, agrees that produce is the best location, but there is something to be learned by placement in non-produce aisles. "Our data also shows that in the center store, the highest category sales rates correspond to dried fruit merchandised next to fruit rolls and bars, suggesting that consumers appreciate fruit-based destinations."

## Numbers Tell the Story

Even if the snacking share of eating occasions hasn't significantly changed, producers of dried fruits and nuts report increasing sales. According to Stephanie Blackwell, founder and president of Aurora Products, Stratford, CT, "Our overall sales have increased every year,



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**“We do know that 70 percent of dried fruit is eaten as a snack; snacks are consumed more than regular meals during the breakfast and lunch time periods.”**

— Miranda Ackerman, Mariani Packing Company

and we can attribute some of that to more choices and new blends of dried fruit and nut snacks that our R & D department develops to stay current with consumer tastes and desires for new flavor experiences.”

“The produce nut category is growing faster than the overall nut category” comments Sanfilippo’s Honan, “up 14 percent as of January 2013 versus 9 percent for the total nuts/trail mix category, according to ACNielsen.”

Marianne Copeland, executive director, Virginia-Carolina Peanut Promotions, Nashville NC, points to worldwide snacking increases and the importance of snacks such as snack peanuts that are easy to carry, put into a lunch or a backpack. In a similar vein, Ryan Lepicier, vice president of marketing and communications for the National Peanut Board, says, “We run a research project every couple years to track attitudes and consumption of peanuts and peanut butter. The 2012 study, conducted in November, showed a consumer self-reported increase of five points in snack peanut consumption over 2009, largely tied to the interest in wanting a healthier food, something good for you.”

Increases such as these are a signal to retailers that dried fruits and nuts carry value in the minds of consumers and are well worth more development in displays and promotions.

### Visibility Counts

Miranda Ackerman, marketing director, Mariani Packing Company, Vacaville, CA, says, “Merchandising is key and so it is our goal to work closely with retailers and develop partnerships with them. Compared to salty snacks, establishing a strong price/value relationship can be a challenge, but strong messaging, secondary displays and offering variety all help remind the consumer of the concept of mindful snacking. We do know that 70 percent of dried fruit is eaten as a snack; snacks are consumed more than regular meals during the breakfast and lunch time periods. In essence, there can be five to seven mini-meals and this

is true across a variety of demographics. Retailers can target shoppers based on this kind of information about behaviors.”

“When supermarkets chains can put together full programs and offer single-serving packages in a 10 for \$10 promotion, we know the consumer perception of value is there. Providing free-standing shippers and countertop displays enables retailers to promote product where it makes the most sense to them,” comments Aurora’s Blackwell. She continues, “Our dried fruits and nuts are all natural and/or organic without sulfites, food coloring or artificial flavors, so they can also be displayed in specialty health food sections or natural foods retail stores.”

### Consumer Choice

Consumers increasingly understand that snacking on dried fruits and nuts makes good nutritional sense. Convenience, however, including portability, may be just as important an attribute.

Sun-Maid’s Tamble says, “We pack single-serving packages of regular raisins and yogurt-covered raisins to make snacking more portable but in fact our canister pack, introduced 30 years ago, is still the top seller. We have taken it down to 20 ounces to better help retailers meet margin needs. IRI reports the typical national non-promoted price at \$4.46. Consumers do want choice, and retailers do need to make margins and be sure the product mix is right for their stores. We see a merging of health and portability.”

In contrast, Mariani, with its extensive selection of dried fruits, has moved away from a full line of single-serving packaging. “We think it makes sense for items like raisins, yogurt-covered raisins, cranberries and a cranberry trail mix-style product but not for items such as dried apricots. You have to look at each product to decide the best packaging. We know that impulse drives these decisions along with seasonal promotions. Education is still a big program for us,” comments Ackerman.



PHOTO COUTESY OF AURORA PRODUCTS

“Orchard Valley Harvest offers a mini stand-up bag that provides consumers with trail mix or snacking nuts, perfect for the on-the-go consumer,” says Sanfilippo’s Honan.

Recipe use, especially around the holidays, is still a factor and the reason behind larger packages. National Raisin’s Jensen comments, “Dried fruit, especially raisins, is uniquely positioned as a good-for-you snack, an ingredient or a topping. We work to communicate all these uses in packaging that is attractive, informative, secure and ecologically balanced. Consumers still want good, easy, healthy recipes with a minimum of ingredients. We have to satisfy multiple needs.”

### Future Trends

Over the past couple years, the growth of dried fruit and nut snacks has been fueled by added flavors, appealing to consumers’ willingness to try new experiences and make flavors more personal as favorites. Nuts have proved to be an excellent carrier of flavors such as smoke, ranch and hot and spicy. Many dried fruits have counted on blends of fruits and nuts and the seasoning that can be gained through the addition of other fruit flavors such as citrus.

This coming summer, Tamble of Sun-Maid anticipates new products with additional flavors. “Look to see yogurt-coated fruits full of youthful flavors. Our core business is still raisins, but the new items have a twist targeted to delight younger consumers.”

Aurora’s Blackwell describes the process, “We’re looking to use anything that is new, healthy and tastes good. Things like gogi berries, acai, and hemp are all viewed as good for you, but they don’t necessarily taste great. We see value-added blends of fruits and nuts that are not only good for you, but are delicious as well. Think smoked almonds, cinnamon pecans, and honey-roasted cashew.

In the end, we go back to Harry Balzer, who says, “Innovation drives marketshare within the category and determines those who move ahead.”

pb

# MAKING CATEGORY DEVELOPMENT WORK IN PRODUCE



In the present world of Produce at retail, the use of a process known as Category Development has begun to see substantial use. This is a product of the grocery department, which used this over the years along with category management to justify space allowed for products on the store shelves. Upper management, which is dominated by grocery people, believes this is the “Holy Grail” of product management and is the driver of sales and profits. While this

is certainly true in Grocery (and in other parts of the store), the application for Produce is different and, because of this, upper management “just doesn’t get it!”

The use of Category Management/Category Development in Grocery dictates the placement and size of display (number of facings) for a product on the grocery shelves. It is basically a space management tool that measures the velocity at which the products sell to determine their importance and to guide management in shelf placement and display size. If the strict Grocery model is used in Produce, the department would be far less interesting and have a more sterile presentation of the fruits and vegetables.

The proper use of Category Development in Produce is to determine not only the space to be allocated to a commodity but also its priority in placement in the department and its potential for growth, plus the item’s ability to drive sales. Certain categories inherently have more value and drive more dollars per transaction. It is also true that many of these items are favorites of the consumer, which also enhances their importance. Category Development provides the focus needed to properly align your department during each of the key selling seasons in Produce. In this manner, the process can be utilized to most effectively group commodities together to enhance their salability and velocity along with providing exciting presentations for consumers.

An excellent example of Category Development is the berry category. This category has grown to be the largest fruit category and arguably the largest category in the produce department. Forward-thinking suppliers and retailers used Category Development principles to measure the velocity and salability of each individual variety as well as their impact as a whole category. What they found was that as a

group the sales were greater than they were individually. It was also determined, by examining and analyzing the numbers, that this category should be located at or near the front of the department to further drive sales.

In my experience, this has proven to be true in every instance where I have utilized it or where it has been utilized by other retailers around the country. The highly consumable nature of the berry category, plus the high consumer appeal of berries for flavor, nutrition, and healthful benefits, has helped drive the consumer demand and acceptance of these commodities. More and more retailers are beginning to realize this concept and are continuing to use the process to further develop and drive sales in this key category. Other categories are also beginning

to use this process to develop their sales mix based on their commodity mix within a category and the value of adjacencies to other categories.

It is also true that Category Development can help highlight actions that can damage the sales and profit potential of an item or category. I have observed that sometimes this information can allow the category to continue its growth momentum without interruption or setback. One case in point is in seasonal placement

of products. Again, berries provide an excellent example. Conventional wisdom had berries being placed in the upright refrigerated case during the off-season. What the Category Development analysis showed was that sales declined to less than half (and sometimes even less) than during the “berry” season.

As before, forward-thinking retailers reviewed this process and found that keeping the same midseason display in the front of the department maintained the sales momentum and even grew the velocity of the product to higher levels. This analysis proved that the benefits of maintaining the entire category presentation outweighed any savings in shrink created by placing the product back in the department in the upright refrigerated case.

It would behoove any retailer to encourage suppliers of various commodities to engage in a Category Development process to provide actual data on the potential of their category. Armed with this information, the retailer could then utilize the data to plan a department that would be exciting visually and would have key areas of sales power located strategically throughout the department. The utilization of this process may be one of the areas that unlock the sales potential and future growth possibilities for our produce departments. **pb**

**It would behoove any retailer to encourage suppliers of various commodities to engage in a Category Development process to provide actual data on the potential of their category.**

**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)

# FRUIT EXPORTS CHANGE SHAPE AND DIRECTION



Over the past 10 years, the U.S. fresh produce industry experienced a significant change in the volumes produced and the direction of international trade. It might be argued that the industry emerged as a leaner, more cosmopolitan and fitter industry as a result.

This has been driven by a combination of factors, not least is the emerging competition in supply, as well as opportunities in a range of developing markets around the world. In recent years, we saw the impact of the global financial crisis on the sector in the United States too, with the economy still struggling to show genuine recovery.

Looking at a number of key categories, a series of recurring themes begins to emerge.

## Fruit Production: Struggling To Keep Pace

In the apple industry, whereas world production grew by just over 20 percent in a 10-year period — from 57 million to 69 million tons — U.S. production has gone backwards from 4.6 million to 4.2 million tons. In other key producing countries, most notably China, India and Chile, production has surged ahead in comparison. Even in the U.K., we have seen an increase in volume of 12 percent in the same time.

For grapefruit, world production increased from some 5.5 million tons per annum to around 7 million tons. Total U.S. production fell in contrast by 55 percent, from 2.5 million tons to just over 1.2 million tons. There have been significant increases in countries such as China of almost 1,000 percent and up to 2.8 million tons, as well as in other producing areas such as Mexico, Thailand and India.

In the pear sector, world production increased from just over 16 million tons to just under 23 million tons per annum. Following a familiar pattern, U.S. production fell by 14 percent to just over 700,000 tons. There have been significant increases amongst other producers such as China, India and Argentina.

In the grape sector, worldwide fresh production increased from some 10 million to 18 million tons over the past 10 years. U.S. production fell modestly by around 3 percent and is still at a level of 6.7 million tons; whereas China, Chile, Brazil, and in a number of countries of the Former Soviet Union (FSU) and parts of North Africa saw influx.

Cherry production bucks the trend for the United States. Where global production saw an increase from 1.7 million tons to just over 2 million tons, the U.S. share remained strong and actually increased from 185,000 tons to almost 285,000 tons per annum.

## Fruit Export: A Change Of Direction

When it comes to U.S. exports, the volume and direction of trade over the past 10 years shifted dramatically. U.S. apple exports increased radi-

cally by 170,000 tons in a 10-year period to over 830,000 tons. In contrast, U.K. imports of U.S. apples fell consistently from around 30,000 tons down to just 10,000 per annum.

U.S. exports of grapes also increased by around 70,000 tons per annum over a 10-year-period. However, U.K. direct imports of U.S. grapes fell from 13,000 tons down to 6,000 tons.

U.S. exports of grapefruit fell over a 10-year period from just under 400,000 tons per annum to 225,000 tons over a 10-year period. U.K. direct imports from Florida fell from 13,000 tons down to just over 3,000 tons, but these are supplemented by re-exports from the likes of the Netherlands. U.S. exports to the Netherlands also fell from 28,000 tons down to 16,000 tons in the same period.

In terms of pear exports, U.S. trade fell slightly from just above 180,000 tons per annum to just under this level. Mexico and Canada account for an impressive 65 percent of overall exports between them, but the real growth over a 10-year period is coming from increased exports to the likes of Brazil, Russia, Colombia, China and the Middle East.

For the cherry sector, U.S. exports are booming — up from 42,000 to 78,000 tons per annum over a 10-year period. Japan and Canada still account for over 50 percent of overall U.S. exports, and U.K. imports of U.S. cherries on a direct basis remained relatively constant at around 2,000-3,000 tons per annum.

**The U.S. horticultural industry is now fully exposed to the same pressures, opportunities and challenges as any other international supplier to the global fresh fruit market.**

## What Does It All Mean?

The historical view of the U.S. fruit sector was that with a huge domestic market to serve, it focused on the North American market as well as the export business. This perspective totally changed. While U.S. production — with the exception of cherries — struggled to keep pace with developments in China, India and part of the FSU market, in terms of sheer volume, this meant that the industry had to increasingly focus on its high quality, premium position in international markets.

While the Canadian and Mexican markets are still extremely important, the real growth is coming from the emerging markets of Russia, India, China, the Pacific Rim, Central America and the Middle East.

In this respect, the United States is now more like any other major international supplier — seeing mature markets but with emerging markets showing the way ahead for the future. What's the role of the U.K. market in all of this change for the United States? It is still seen as a flagship market meeting technical and environmental standards. For many in the United States, though, the U.K. clearly downgraded in overall importance over the past 10 years.

This status seems unlikely to change in the immediate future. The U.K. now has assumed the position of a classic “maintenance market” for most U.S. horticultural products. The U.S. horticultural industry is now fully exposed to the same pressures, opportunities and challenges as any other international supplier to the global fresh fruit market. **pb**

By John Giles

John Giles is a Divisional Director with Cheshire, U.K.-based Promar International, a leading agri-food demand chain consulting company and a subsidiary of Genus plc. He is also the Chair of the Food, Drink & Agriculture Group of the Chartered Institute of Marketing, based in Berkshire, U.K.

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Chief Financial Officer, Nathel & Nathel, Inc. Founder, We Are Many Foundation



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# FIVE THINGS EVERY PRODUCE EXECUTIVE NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA



As social technology moves forward, the produce industry needs to adapt to this evolving trend and turn its brands and businesses into social entities that reach out to broader community. To that end, business managers need to understand five crucial points about social media in order to use it efficiently within their organizations.

## 1. Balancing gains against risks

Social media offers several business opportunities, including communication, collaboration, communities and collective intelligence opportunities. Each of these business opportunities can be used both externally, between a company and other nodes of the business, such as customers or suppliers, and internally, within a company itself.

Social media also brings risks, such as reputation or security issues. However, social media opportunities far outweigh its risks, thus choosing not to go ahead with social media because of possible risks is a counter-productive strategy. Whole Foods, for example, embraces social media wholeheartedly by leveraging Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest,

YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram and Google+ to its business advantage.

Not only does Whole Foods have one overarching account for its brand, but also hundreds of social media accounts for every local Whole Foods store. This allows the company to capitalize on each local market and be more relevant to each and every consumer.

## 2. Aligning social media goals with business goals

Aligning social media goals with the more general business goals is crucial to your social media strategy. Implementing social media without a properly thought-out plan can bring more risks than opportunities, or simply lead the company to waste valuable time. Executives need to develop a sound strategy that will serve to answer business needs rather than simply incorporate Facebook or Twitter into the company's website.

Many produce brands simply add a Facebook icon to their brand's website and think that they are now in the game. Strategy, however, is key, as going enthusiastically in the wrong direction is the biggest trap with social media; thus executives need to make sure the social media project is supported by a clear perspective, one that is along the lines of the company's general business objectives.

## 3. Actively supporting the project

Implementing social media needs to happen as much at the mana-

gerial level as at the lower levels of the organization. A business will not move forward by simply hiring a social media administrator who does not have proper knowledge of the business, industry and the general vision of the company. Executives need to be actively involved in the social media project by creating a social media vision for the company and supporting social media investment throughout the project's implementation, rather than looking at it from afar.

## 4. Include training

Developing a social media training program for your employees will serve to create a common language for everyone to communicate with regards to what social media is and what it can achieve for the organization. Secondly, it will help reveal different aspects and issues that may not have previously arisen, which will allow for a more carefully developed social media strategy to take shape.

Preparation is key to both reduce risks and optimize benefits, which social media training answers efficiently. For example, many produce brands have faced recalls. Instead of being open with the public about these recalls, many brands remain silent on their social networks. In the transparency-driven culture we live in, brands need to

address the negative issues as well as the positive. When a recall occurs and leaks in the news, consumers will turn to the brand's social networks for clarification and verification, but a brand that remains silent or, worse, that tries to cover it up, is the brand that cannot be trusted, and thus does not drive consumer loyalty.

## 5. Thinking about culture

Organizational culture can either be impeding on the use of social technology within your business, or, on the contrary, a constructive catalyst. Organizational culture typically falls between a closed to open continuum, and having a culture at either one of the extremes can be damaging to the company. A closed company culture will not help social media thrive as a strategic tool, and an overly open culture might lead to information leak and company vulnerability.

Organizational culture needs to be open for social media to become a tool for progress, and at the same time, it needs to be within a regulated, defined cultural framework so that social media use is conducive to growth.

These five crucial points will allow produce executives to develop a sound social media plan in order to take their organizations one step ahead of their competitors. Social media is here to stay, so it is important to incorporate it within your produce business now if you do not want to end up lagging behind everyone else tomorrow.

**pb**

**Organizational culture needs to be open for social media to become a tool for progress, and at the same time, it needs to be within a regulated framework so that social media use is conducive to growth.**

By Steve Nicholls

Steve Nicholls is a social media expert and the author of *Social Media in Business*





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# TURN YOUR MARKETING INTO AN **AWARDING** EXPERIENCE

Right now, and on through June 7, 2013, we're taking entries for the **25th Annual Marketing Excellence Awards Program**, presented by **PRODUCE BUSINESS**. The awards recognize excellence in marketing in each of six categories: retailers, restaurants, wholesalers, shippers, commodity organizations and allied service/product providers. Print, broadcast and other media are eligible to win.

**To participate, send us the following for each entry:**

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2. Type of business.

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3. Names and dates of promotion (must have taken place between June 1, 2012 and June 1, 2013).

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4. Promotion objectives.

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5. Description of promotion.

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6. Promotion results (sales or traffic increases, media attention). What made this program a success?

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7. All support materials used in the promotion – such as POP, ads, posters, TV commercials.

**High-resolution images to illustrate the promotion are encouraged. (Please do not send any produce)**

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# DE FRANCO & SONS UPHOLDS ITS LEGACY

Surrounded by phones, papers, and family photos, the idea man, the entrepreneur, and the people-person of Los Angeles, CA-based De Franco & Sons conduct business in their sharp hats and suits in this photo taken in the mid-1950's. Victor De Franco (pictured standing) was the first-born child to founder Dominic De Franco (pictured seated) and took his place as the company leader with creative ideas and the artistic salesmanship to put wheels in motion. John De Franco (pictured writing) managed the warehouse and rallied the crew for everyday business.

"Everyone was very social and jovial," says Jerry De Franco of his uncles and grandfather. The youngest of the third-generation De Franco brothers (and son of Salvatore, who is not pictured here but was the third son of Dominic running the business), Jerry is vice president of the company. He and his brothers, Paul (president) and Richard (secretary), are the leading men now and operate the De Franco business. "If my grandfather could see what we do today, it would blow his mind," exclaims Jerry. "Business has evolved so much from the good ol' days when everything was done with a handshake and phone calls," says Jerry.

Known for its packing, shipping and growing of fresh corn, green beans and tomatoes, the De Franco family continues to work hard and take pride in upholding the company legacy. The industry has become very demanding, with food safety requirements, accountability and legislation since the 1950's, and many of our customers want pricing six months in advance. "You hope that your forecasts are correct and that Mother Nature is kind," says Jerry. "In this business, you have to be transparent, and you want everyone to know we're doing it right," adds Jerry.

In addition to the company's three staple commodities, business is augmented throughout the months of October to January with walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts, filberts and pecans. By educating their crews, building trust with partners, and growing quality product, the De Franco brothers continue to grow a successful business.



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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Maurice A. Auerbach, Inc.	65	201-807-9292	www.aueerpak.com
Maurice A. Auerbach, Inc.	47	201-807-9292	www.aueerpak.com
Babe Farms, Inc.	99	800-648-6772	www.babefarms.com
Baero North America, Inc.	15	314-692-2270	www.baerousa.com
Big Red Tomato Packers	77	772-466-0700	www.bigredtomatopackers.com
Bland Farms	102	800-440-9543	www.blandfarms.com
Blue Book Services	107	630-668-3500	www.producebluebook.com
Boskovich Farms, Inc.	9	805-487-7799	www.boskovichfarms.com
C&D Fruit & Vegetable Co., Inc.	45	800-899-9175	www.c&dveg.com
C.H. Robinson Worldwide, Inc.	44	877-679-2933	www.chrobinson.com
California Avocado Commission	57	800-344-4333	www.californiaavocado.com/retail
California Avocado Commission	33	800-344-4333	www.californiaavocado.com/retail
Capespan North America	68	856-742-5446	www.capespan.com
Capital City Fruit Co., Inc.	50	515-981-5111	www.capitalcityfruit.com
CarbAmericas	98	954-786-0000	www.carbamericas.com
Center for Produce Safety	27	530-757-5777	www.cps.ucdavis.edu
Coast To Coast Produce Co.	84-85	877-836-6295	www.ctcproduce.com
Coastline Produce	5	831-755-1430	www.coastlineproduce.com
Coastline Produce	71	831-755-1430	www.coastlineproduce.com
Columbia Marketing International	87	509-663-1955	www.cmiapples.com
Crowley Maritime Corp.	7	800-CROWLEY	www.crowley.com/partner
Del Monte Fresh Produce	116	800-950-3683	www.freshdelmonte.com
Dole Fresh Fruit Company	2	818-879-6600	www.dole.com
dProduce Man Software	28	888-PRODMAN	www.dproduceman.com
Family Tree Farms	99	866-FLAVOR-1	www.familytreefarms.com
Fierman Produce Exchange	50	718-893-1640	
Floral Business	17	561-994-1118	www.floralbusinessmagazine.com
Florida Department of Agriculture	63	850-488-4303	www.freshfromflorida.com
Galaxy Nutritional Foods	43	800-441-9419	www.goveggiefoods.com
The Garlic Company	64	661-393-4212	www.thegarliccompany.com
The Garlic Company	40	661-393-4212	www.thegarliccompany.com
Gourmet Specialty Imports LLC	64	610-345-1113	
Gourmet Trading Company	92	310-216-7575	www.gourmettrading.net
Greenhouse Produce Company, LLC	76	888-492-1492	www.greenhouseproduce.net
Harris Produce Vision	28	269-903-7481	
Hollandia Produce	103	805-684-4146	www.livegourmet.com
Hood River Cherry Company	90	541-386-2183	www.hrcherrycompany.com
House Foods America Corporation	58	714-901-4350	www.house-foods.com
I Love Produce LLC	65	610-869-4664	www.iloveproduce.com
Idaho Potato Commission	41	208-334-2350	www.idahopotato.com/retail

COMPANY	PAGE #	PHONE	WEBSITE
Inline Plastics Corp.	30	800-826-5567	www.inlineplastics.com
Jem D International	51	519-733-3663	www.jemdfarms.com
Keystone Fruit Marketing, Inc.	42	717-597-2112	www.keystonefruit.com
Keystone Fruit Marketing, Inc.	102	717-597-2112	www.keystonefruit.com
LGS Specialty Sales, Ltd.	69	800-796-2349	www.lgssales.com
Mann Packing Company, Inc.	11	800-884-6266	www.veggiemadeeasy.com
Marzetti Company	79	614-846-2232	www.marzetti.com
Melissa's/World Variety Produce, Inc.	44	800-468-7111	www.melissas.com
MIXTEC Group	13	626-440-7077	www.mixtec.net
National Mango Board	97	877-MANGO-1	www.mango.org
New Jersey Department of Agriculture	61	609-292-8853	www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov
New York Apple Association, Inc.	39	585-924-2171	www.nyapplecountry.com
Nickey Gregory Company, LLC	75	404-366-7410	www.nickeygregory.com
Pacific Tomato Growers	76	209-450-9810	www.sunripenproduce.com
Paramount Citrus Association	67	213-612-9957	http://www.paramountcitrus.com/
Peri & Sons Farms	55	775-463-4444	www.periandsons.com
Primavera Marketing, Inc.	99	209-931-9420	www.primaveramarketing.com
Produce for Better Health Foundation	105	302-235-2329	www.pbhfoundation.org
Produce Marketing Association	93	302-738-7100	www.pma.com
PuraVida Farms	37	480-588-7012	www.puravidafarms.com
Ready Pac Produce, Inc.	46	800-800-4088	www.readypac.com
Red Blossom Farms	92	805-981-1839	www.redblossom.com
Red Jacket Orchards, Inc.	48	315-781-2749	www.redjacketorchards.com
Roberson Onion Co.	102	912-375-5760	
Sage Fruit Company	91	913-239-0060	www.sagefruit.com
Sambraio Packaging	31	800-563-4467	www.sambraio.com
Spice World, Inc.	65	800-433-4979	www.spiceworldinc.com
Stellar Distributing, Inc.	53	559-275-8400	www.stellardistributing.com
Sunkist Growers, Inc.	49	818-986-4800	www.sunkist.com
Sweet Onion Trading Company	102	800-699-3727	www.sweetoniontrading.com
Tanimura & Antle, Inc.	101	800-772-4542	www.taproduce.com
Tater Man, Inc.	55	813-707-0075	www.tatermaninc.com
Thermal Technologies, Incorporated	83	803-691-8000	www.gotarpres.com
United Fresh Produce Association	70	202-303-3400	www.unitedfresh.org
The USA Bouquet Co.	22	786-437-6502	www.usabq.com
USA Pear	13	503-652-9720	www.usapears.org
Vision Import Group LLC	95	201-968-1190	www.visionimportgroup.com
We Are Many Foundation	111	877-319-9613	www.liemasquerade.com
Well-Pict Berries	92	831-722-3871	www.wellpict.com
Western Cape Citrus Producers Forum	71	610-688-3164	www.summercitrus.com
Yakima Fresh LLC	89	800-541-0394	www.yakimafresh.com

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