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## **Spring Navel program increases at Booth Ranches**

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Booth Ranches LLC in Orange Cove, CA, a grower, packer and shipper of citrus from California's San Joaquin Valley, "is unique in that we are a fully integrated company only selling the fruit we grow ourselves," according to Tracy Jones, vice president of domestic sales. Owner Loren Booth "grows 7,500 acres of citrus stretching across California's Central Valley," Jones said in a written statement to The Produce News. "We own and operate two cold storages, both in Orange Cove." The packing facilities and acreage are all certified under GlobalGAP.

Booth expects to have "decent volume this year despite last year's freeze and the current drought we are experiencing," Jones said in the statement. "We are estimating slightly fewer than 3 million cartons of Navels" for the 2014-15 season and 1 million cartons of Valencias next summer.

"The more mature blocks of our Navels have a lighter set and small fruit," she continued. "Our younger blocks have a good set with larger fruit. Booth Ranches has spent the last few decades cultivating and matching the right varieties with the right root stock and soil types. The results are a great lineup of varieties with consistent supplies from the start of the season in late October through June. This year 32 percent of what we will be harvesting are of young blocks 10 years and younger. These young trees will produce bigger fruit, which will help us supply our customer base on a year that the industry is reporting a smaller size structure."

One of the company's highlights this year will be "our Spring Navel," booth said. It is "an excellent piece of fruit that is high in sugar and low in acid" with "a bright orange skin color that stands out on display. We have had Spring Navels in production for over 10 years. However, the majority of our blocks are under 10 years of age. These young blocks will come into production over the next several years, soon to represent around 20 percent of our overall Navel production." When in full production,

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“with this volume, we will be able to offer a significant Spring Navel program.”

The normal harvest schedule is from mid-January into April.

“We have received excellent feedback on our Spring Navels with its distinct flavor profile and popping color,” Jones said.

Another highlight for Booth Ranches this year is what Booth Ranches and the Otis Booth Foundation are doing “in our community,” Jones said in the statement. “Current projects include scholarships awarded to qualifying full-time students with parents employed at Booth Ranches, Camp Booth, The Boys & Girls Clubs of Fresno County, the Imagine U an interactive children’s museum in Visalia, CA, plus our ongoing support for the Children’s Institute located in central Los Angeles. We feel it is important to support the community in which we live and work in and do so with several different sponsorships and donations.”

Booth offers yearly scholarships to qualifying students whose parents work for Booth Ranches full time,” she said. “This program has been ongoing for several years and we have seen great success in the participants.”

Camp Booth is a biannual program first offered a few years ago, Jones said in the statement. “We host a few dozen children from the inner city of Los Angeles up at our Minkler Ranch located near Orange Cove.” The camp “offers experiences such as an introductory into agriculture, livestock, fishing and all-around fun outdoors.”

This year, Booth donated to the local Orange Cove, CA, Boys & Girls Club, “funding the staff and supplies needed to start a culinary program and a career launch-work enforcement program,” she added.

“The Imagine U interactive children’s museum is a new facility located in Visalia, Booth said. “With the donation from the Otis Booth Foundation, the museum is creating a room dedicated to the education of agriculture. The initial plans have been drawn up, and we are excited to see the results.”

The Otis Booth Foundation has been an ongoing supporter to the Children’s Institute in Los Angeles, Jones said in the statement. “The Otis Booth Campus has been created representing 48,000 square feet of program and office space to serve as one of the main hubs for the Children’s Institute.”

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