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## Oakes Farms continues growth with yet another new Georgia partner

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As it heads into fall, Immokalee, FL-based Oakes Farms is continuing to meet its nearly relentless growth strategy.

In early August, the company announced that it had achieved its goal of becoming a year-round supplier of all of its commodities when it partnered with Chill C Farms in Moultrie, GA.



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In mid-August it announced it had partnered with Bar 4J Ranch, formerly SA Flint Farms, in Arcadia, FL, which now adds hard squashes to the company's line.

On Sept. 6, Steve Veneziano, vice president of sales and operations, told The Produce News the company has now partnered with Tucker Family Farms in Tifton, GA.

"Owner Ricky Tucker and his son, Clay Tucker, are the growers," said Veneziano, adding that the Tucker team is partnering with Oakes Farms to grow Bell peppers, eggplant and Jalapeño, Cubanelle and Poblano peppers for the fall 2016 season.

The product will be marketed under the Oakes Farms Seed to Table premium label. Veneziano said harvesting will run from early October until mid-November. Tucker Farms will then produce cabbage and greens for the winter season.

"Our primary strategy in this strong growth spurt is to have year-round products and to expand our already wide line," explained Veneziano. "Tucker Farms offers more commodities, including grape tomatoes and cucumbers, and they will be adding a round tomato program. Added to our other growing partners up and down the East Coast, this will give us seamless year-round volumes."

The company also partners with M. D'Ottavio Produce Inc., located on the Vineland Produce Auction, for its New Jersey program. And it plans to begin a new partnership in North Carolina next year. The company services wholesalers, retailers and foodservice operators.

Tucker Family Farms facilities are equipped with a large forced-air cooling room as well as a large amount of cold-storage capabilities. The facilities and ranch have excellent third-party audit scores. The 75,000-square-foot facility is conveniently located less than a mile from I-75, and a stone's throw away from Love's and Pilot truck stops.

Oakes Farms is also engaged in state-supported locally grown initiatives. It uses the Fresh from Florida logo on its Florida-grown produce, and Jersey Fresh on product produced in the Garden State. The different areas will supply the locally grown demand in each region.

"Our goal for spring 2017 is to partner with another grower who will produce a seasonal cucumber and grape tomato line for us," said Veneziano. "Additionally, we plan to be fully set up to pack and market these items under our premium label."

He pointed out that this rapid growth strategy is in place to better service Oakes Farms' customers throughout the year.

"We are very excited to continue our growth in Georgia," said Veneziano. "We are also in the planning stages of adding import programs in the future."

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