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Oakes Farms, M. D'Ottavio Produce partnership continues to blossom

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The partnership between Oakes Farms and M. D'Ottavio Produce continues to blossom. Steve Veneziano, vice president of Oakes Farms, said although markets are mediocre this season, the companies' diverse programs are shining.

"The quality and grade of our specialty program is second to none," said Veneziano. "Coming from the retail background, both Alfie Oakes, chief executive officer of Oakes Farms, and I know the importance of a quality pack. End users will pay a little more if you're giving them the high-end quality they want, and the demand for our signature high-graphic Oakes Farms Black Box program has been overwhelming this season."

He added that retailers have been able to promote chili peppers with confidence with the quality and diverse packs the company has been providing.



Mike D'Ottavio, owner of M. D'Ottavio Produce, and Alfie Oakes, chief executive officer of Oakes Farms. "Ultimately the farm packs fewer boxes per acre by grading this way, but we are providing a high-end product that allows us to compete with other growing regions during this time of year," explained Veneziano.

To keep up with continued demand, Oakes Farms will be looking to create additional refrigerated space to accommodate further growth to its facilities during the off season at both of its main facilities in Immokalee.

"We will look to add enough refrigerated space to accommodate an additional eight loading docks and add a giant staging area to increase speed and ease of loading," noted Veneziano.

Oakes Farms' sales team is also growing quickly to keep up with demand and customer service. The company recently added Conor Leach, a Midwest sales specialist, to its team, as well as an intern, Tom Leronimo, to the company's staff.

"Our partnership with Oakes Farms has continued to grow in every way," said Mike D'Ottavio, owner of M. D'Ottavio Produce based in Vineland NJ. We contribute this to the support of our existing customers and the growth of so many new ones.

"With many new varieties of fruits and vegetables along with an extensive bag and variety pack program, we have diversified ourselves to combat a season like this with markets much lower than previous years," he continued. "We are pushing into the spring with a tremendous amount of volume, and with all the weather issues going on throughout the country we hope to finish strong."

Oakes Farms is riding the heels of the past year that brought amazing growth, expansion and new partnerships, and it shows no sign of slowing down. Despite its ongoing rapid growth, Veneziano noted that Oakes Farms and its partners all agree that quality and service must never be secondary.

"With multiple warehouses that have state-of-the-art pre-cooling, and new packing lines, we will be able to better serve our customers now and into the future by producing the best produce the South has to offer," said Veneziano.

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