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Jackfruit production featured by Cabefruit

November 1, 2017

MCALLEN, TX — If jackfruit is the new 'it' in the produce industry, Cabefruit Produce LLC is where it's at.

In Mexico's tropics, Cabefruit has long been a tropical fruit grower. Therefore, jackfruit production is rapidly expanding. Beyond the North American fresh market, the firm is also developing a value-added line of jackfruit tea. Sealed plastic containers of pre-cut jackfruit are sold in the domestic market.

Third-generation family business member Vicky Cabello said the firm grows 250 acres of jackfruit in Tapachula, Chiapas, and is the only commercial grower in Nayarit.

On a year-round basis, the firm also grows, packs and ships mangos, avocados, guava, Persian limes, mangosteen and rambutan from the same areas. The firm produces 3,200 acres of mangos in Tapachula, almost 2,000 acres in Nayarit and about 500 acres in Jalisco, Cabello noted.

All packinghouses and fields carry food-safety certifications.

The firm has its own transportation company, giving Cabefruit "a completed circle" in vertical integration.

Currently, Cabefruit's largest jackfruit volume comes from February to November, "with the best quality in September," she said. The firm has 20,000 jackfruit trees in Chiapas. That production and year-round availability will greatly expand in the next year to fill the demand for jackfruit tea.

Cabello described jackfruit as “super sweet. It’s crunchy like pineapple.” The orange-yellow flesh brings a variety of tastes to different people, but this can be a mix of pineapple, kiwifruit, guava and papaya.

Cabello said her grandfather, Jorge Cabello, began producing tropical fruits in 1960. His sons expanded the business in Tapachula with pineapples, cacao and mangos. Serving the domestic market came first and the firm expanded to Canada in 1994. Sales to the U.S. market followed in 1996.

Three of four Cabello brothers — including Vicky’s father, Cesar — started Cabefruit in 2008.

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