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# **Tesco makes U.S. debut**

November 11, 2007

United Kingdom-based Tesco PLC was scheduled to open the doors of its first six U.S. stores, located in the Los Angeles area and flying the "Fresh & Easy Neighborhood Market" store banner.

Tesco was slated to begin operations Nov. 8 in those six stores, followed by openings later in the month and before the first of the year in both Arizona and Nevada. By early next year, the chain is expected to open about 50 convenience-style hybrids in the Southern California, Phoenix and Las Vegas areas.

The company has held its plans close to its vest for the past year, but information has leaked over the past few months. The buzz in the California real estate industry is that Tesco is also scouting for new locations throughout the San Francisco Bay area and greater Sacramento area in anticipation of opening dozens of the small grocery stores throughout Northern California sometime during 2008.

The first group of stores are each approximately 10,000-15,000 square feet in size, which makes them about one-quarter to one-third the size of the average supermarket and much smaller than the 50,000-60,000 square feet that are typically devoted to newer supermarkets.

As a point of reference, a Wal-Mart supercenter is over 100,000 square feet in size.

The stores are expected to be a cross between a convenience store, which is usually less than 5,000 square feet, and a small supermarket. The product mix is expected to be heavy on prepared foods or easy-to-prepare foods, as the store moniker indicates.

Tesco is a leading European retailer that studied the U.S. market quite extensively before launching this effort. In fact, the company opened a generic store two years ago in the Los Angeles area to study the buying habits of U.S. consumers.

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A Santa Maria, CA, grower who asked not to be identified recently told The Produce News that a few rows of a red European-type lettuce with which he was experimenting on his land was planted on behalf of Tesco.

"Tesco has experimental plots all over California," he said.

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