
- Advertisement -

Del Rey Avocado continues its cutting-edge ways

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Currently, fruit from Del Rey Avocado Co. Inc. is involved in a test marketing program with Apeel Sciences gauging how plant-based materials can act as a second skin and greatly enhance the shelf life of avocados and other fruits and vegetables.

Bob Lucy, president of Fallbrook, CA-based Del Rey, told *The Produce News* at the end of October that the test program is going well.

“We are very encouraged by the early results,” he said, but added that Apeel Sciences are the experts and Del Rey is just providing the fruit. Apeel Science has launched a test program with Costco that includes the Del Rey avocados, as well as fruit from other suppliers.

Del Rey’s involvement is emblematic of the firm’s cutting-edge philosophy. The company is a leader in the organic avocado business, and is also the marketer for the special late-season fruit produced in California’s San Luis Obispo region under the Morro Bay brand. And for good measure, it is a marketer of Fair Trade avocados from some of its international sources.

“We are encouraged by retailer acceptance of the Fair Trade fruit,” Lucy said, adding that the firm has solid production of that fruit from Mexico this season.

Of course, Fair Trade fruit costs a bit more, as it is certified as fruit picked from farms that are socially and environmentally responsible and offer workers a living wage. Del Rey’s website says it best: “When buyers throughout channels of distribution and consumers make a choice to purchase ‘Fair Trade Certified’ products, they are helping families in Mexico improve their lives. With Fair Trade, agriculture workers are able to earn fair wages, work in safe conditions, protect the environment and

keep their kids in school. Buying Fair Trade is an easy way to support the hard-working people who grow the products consumers love.”

As Mexico moves into its “regular crop,” Lucy said supplies have increased, the market price has declined and promotions at retail are on the rise.

Speaking to *The Produce News* on the last Monday of October, he said there was a bit of a coordinated picking slowdown in Mexico on that day but he was expecting that it would be short-lived. Lucy said Mexico has a good-sized crop this year and volume picked up throughout October. That led to a market price in the mid- to high-\$20s, which is lower than most expected, and also led to the late-October slowdown.

But moving forward, Lucy was expecting a stronger-than-usual November in terms of both volume and promotions. “November is usually a slow month but we are seeing more promotional activity this year,” he said.

He predicted that retail ads would pick up again in December as the holidays approach and continue through the New Year and throughout the month of January. January is typically a very strong month for avocado promotions leading up to the Super Bowl. Lucy expects both fruit volume and ad support to be substantial throughout that month.

He also noted that organic production is on the rise and is expecting a strong organic avocado crop from Mexico this season. He said production has been strong and steady with excellent quality allowing for some promotions of organic avocados at attractive price points.

And like every other packer questioned for this special avocado section, Lucy marveled at the growth in the bagged avocado category. What was once the domain of a few retailers “is now everywhere,” he said. “Every retailer offers at least one bagged avocado option and some offer both organic and conventional avocados in bags. That’s very encouraging.”

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