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Rice Fruit's apple trees have very deep family roots

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At over 100 years since its beginning in its current company structure, Rice Fruit Co. in Gardners, PA, receives, stores, packages and markets fruit for more than 40 farm families in the surrounding areas.

Vice President of Sales and Marketing Brenda Briggs, said the company is excited about the 2019 PMA Fresh Summit in Anaheim, CA, Oct.17-19.



“Rice Fruit will be at Booth No. 749,” said Briggs. “Joining me in greeting and meeting with current and prospective clients will be President Ben Rice and Sales Associates Jill Hughey and Maggie Travis.

“We will be showcasing our new Rice Fruit Co. Honeycrisp Traypack box and updated pouch designs, in addition to our new tote bag,” she continued. “The tote features a pop of our branding on

a clear tote for maximum fruit visibility.”

Located in the picturesque foothills of rural Adams County in the heart of Pennsylvania’s apple country, Rice Fruit Co. is a family run business which was founded by Arthur Rice in 1913. However, the Rice family has been growing apples in Adams County since Daniel Rice arrived as a young German immigrant in the 1790s.

Like other small farmers in the area, Daniel Rice and his descendants grow apple trees in the scenic foothills of the South Mountain; the eastern-most region of the Appalachians. This region has ideal soils and topography that forms effective micro-climates for growing many kinds of fruit.

With these valuable qualities, a commercial fruit growing industry began to develop in the 1900s. Throughout the several decades since its founding, Rice Fruit shipped apples worldwide.

In 1955, Arthur Rice, Jr. built a new packing facility in Gardners, which remains the site of its operations today. He also formed a partnership with William Lott to form R&L Orchards Co. to grow high-quality fruit to be packed by Rice Fruit. The partnership between the Rice and Lott families continues to this day.

Until recently, Rice Fruit Co. was managed by Arthur Jr’s four sons; David, Ted; John and; Mark. Today, Rice’s strong management team includes members of the next generation.

In 2017, Briggs took over leadership of Rice Fruit’s sales department from John Rice who has embraced a fruitful retirement.

The company continually upgrades its operation in its orchards as well as in its facilities.

Briggs said the company recently added three robotic palletizing systems to improve worker safety and guarantee gentle handling of the company’s fruit.

“We are so excited about our three new palletizing robots that we added viewing windows through which employees and visitors can watch the stacking action,” she explained.

“The installation of these robots has been directed by Danijel Lolic, who was recently promoted to vice president of operations.

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