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IMG Citrus celebrates 40-year anniversary in the Florida citrus industry

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IMG Citrus, a family-owned, vertically-integrated citrus grower, packer, and shipper in Vero Beach, FL, is celebrating its 40 years of business. Its Florida citrus business began in 1979 when Michel Sallin, IMG Citrus president, traveled to Florida seeking investment opportunities in agriculture. Sallin and his wife, Veronique's, first investment, 72 acres of the Hamlin Juice Orange groves in Manatee County, would become the beginning of IMG Citrus' innovative and resilient history.

Sallin's first investment led to a brokerage business, selling and exporting Florida grapefruit internationally to France, a market they knew well. In 1981, they furthered their Florida Citrus venture with the purchase of a 260-acre grove off Cherry Lake Road located in Lake County to expand their business. After experiencing a devastating setback caused by the freezes of 1983 and 1985, which destroyed all of their groves, the Sallins decided to rebuild, diversify, and explore the production of a variety of agricultural crops. They settled on pursuing containerized tree farming on the previously frozen Groveland property, and relocated their citrus operation, IMG Citrus, to the warmer Indian River County. In 1999, with the purchase of a packinghouse in Vero Beach, Florida, IMG Citrus becomes a fully integrated citrus company that grows, packs, and markets fresh Florida citrus around the world. The following year, IMG Citrus would begin marketing on the domestic market for the first time.

"[IMG Citrus] is totally integrated," said Sallin. "We are the marketing, the grove production, and the packinghouse. We started as a marketer, and then we went toward production."

Through constant reinvention and diversification, IMG Citrus has secured their position as an

established citrus leader in the state of Florida, solidifying its commitment to the industry.

"One of the phrases we use here a lot is, 'If it's not broken, break it and make it better,'" said Sydney Allison, IMG Citrus director of sales. "I think that really encompasses the culture and the people we have here. We are always up for challenges. We are never complacent. If things are going too well, we know something is not right. We are always willing to pick up, keep going, and keep looking for the next project, the next change, and the next innovation."

IMG Citrus recently announced the acquisition of one of the largest grapefruit groves in St. Lucie County. The 4,000-acre grove increases its control of citrus land management in Florida by over 75 percent, and it also contains a 300-acre reservoir. The grove has been aptly renamed Happy Food Grove, after their main consumer brand "Happy Food," which can be found in supermarkets across the United States, Canada, Europe, and Asia.

"I would like to congratulate IMG Citrus for their 40th anniversary," said Ryo Takahashi of Tenor Trading Co. Ltd, "I am grateful to have had an internship with IMG Citrus about 20 years ago, beginning my career in citrus. Since then, I have worked closely with the team importing their citrus to Japan. I look forward to continuing and growing our partnership in the future."

The IMG Citrus family has grown both locally and globally over the decades, acting as a vital aspect of the company's overall evolution.

"Florida grapefruit has always been a product that was special and rewarding because of its quality and because of the relationship we built along the way," said José Barbera of Agruban in France, a customer of IMG Citrus for the past 35 years. "We do not just do business with IMG Citrus, we are all apart of the great fruit family."

Today, a second generation of family-operators are involved and working alongside the most professional industry leaders who makeup the IMG Citrus team.

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