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## **Prime Time enjoying success in Nogales**

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Prime Time Produce carries its nickname, “The Pepper People” with pride and for more than 25 years has been a leader in growing, packing and shipping quality colored peppers in the United States.

Over the last few years, the Coachella, CA-based company has also become a major supplier of sweet mini peppers and asparagus, as well as increasing its interest in items such as vine-ripened tomatoes, watermelon and sweet corn.

One of the areas that has contributed to the company’s success is its work in Nogales, AZ. Prime Time crosses Bell peppers and sweet mini peppers into the U.S. through Nogales from mid-October through April each year.



“Prime Time has been involved in Nogales since the company’s inception and we have continued to grow every season at our farms along with our grower partners,” said Katy Johnson, marketing director at Prime Time. “Prime Time has participated in the Nogales produce deal from the beginning. We have always had growing partners in Mexico which goes hand in hand with shipping product from Nogales.”

Consistent supply and quality products, have been keys to success throughout the company, as well as the ability to service both its customers and its grower partners.

“We have efficiency in logistics in shipping and receiving areas, that keeps us on top,” Johnson said. “Networking is a key to being successful in Nogales. You need to stay one step ahead of the pack by keeping a close eye on the volume, quality and pricing of the competition. It is difficult to play an active role in Nogales without being locally present.”

Eric Meyer, Nogales sales manager and Art Mendoza, sales, run Prime Time’s Nogales operation and are onsite year-round and keep a constant pulse on market conditions.

Meyer said the area offers tremendous volume and does a great deal of green peppers, field red and shade house reds as well as the greenhouse red, yellow and orange peppers.

“This year we are just now getting underway on our produce season out of the Nogales area,” he said. “It’s a bit difficult to compare to other seasons at this time but we are optimistic for a great season and will keep a close eye on the many market variables.”

As of mid-November, Nogales crops were looking healthy and young overall.

“There haven’t been any significant adverse weather events to impact the crops,” Johnson said. “However, there were some September late rains after plantings, which could delay the start of some harvests out of the Sinaloa region.”

Working in Nogales does not come without challenges. Johnson noted that the legislation and government politics involving trade with Mexico are a challenge for all Nogales-based grower-shippers and they are doing their best to work around the issues.

Thankfully, she said, Prime Time’s retail partners do a great job promoting its products whether they are grown in Mexico or the United States.

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“When a commodity is coming in at peak levels, even for short-term, it would be nice to have more stores be able to react rapidly for a fast-attack type promotions to help the commodity move and avoid a glut,” she said.

Elsewhere around the company, it recently unveiled its foodservice partner Chipotle’s “Farm to Foil” campaign featuring Prime Time as one of their fresh produce suppliers.

“Both Prime Time and Calavo had the unique opportunity to participate in the unfolding of the Chipotle story which is beginning to be featured on several media platforms,” Johnson said. “The new Farm to Foil TV commercials have already started airing and will continue to be released in the near future. You can see several Prime Time faces and growing locations in these ad spots, which is a very exciting and a proud moment for us.”

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