
- Advertisement -

Wada Farms sees some of the best quality Colorado potatoes ever

February 6, 2020

Five months into the shipping season, Michele Peterson, who heads the Colorado sales office of Idaho Falls-based Wada Farms Marketing Group, was seeing the quality of the 2019 potato harvest in Colorado's San Luis Valley measure up to her expectations.

On Aug. 15, one week before the anticipated start date, Peterson told *The Produce News* that based on test digs "the quality is exceptional. It looks wonderful."



Michele Peterson, who heads the

Colorado sales office for Wada Farms, said this is one of the better years she has seen for Colorado potatoes.

She added a qualifier that there can always be surprises as the crop is harvested.

But in mid-January, Peterson confirmed that her initial assessment had held true. “This year, I have seen excellent quality,” she said. “It is probably one of the better quality years that I have seen.”

While many factors contribute to potato quality, from seed to sorting and beyond, Peterson gave much of the credit for the quality of the crop to the growers. “We’ve got wonderful farmers and growers we work with that take great pride in their product,” she said. “A lot of our growers are responsible for the storage aspect as well as the growing and harvesting.” Proper storage management is also critical to potato quality.

From the time the farmers plant the seeds “to the time we pull the potatoes out of their storage, there is always great pride in how they care for the crops,” she said.

The packinghouses take similar care in how the potatoes are handled from that point up to the moment they are shipped. It’s the entire process that assures customers receive a quality product, she said.

Wada Farms works with several shippers in the San Luis Valley. In 2012, Wada took on the marketing for Worley-McCullough in Monte Vista, one of the major shippers in the valley, and that exclusive relationship continues. In addition, Wada works with other co-packers in the area and is working to expand that to additional growers and shippers as well as to expand the varieties of Colorado potatoes the company handles.

Russets constitute the biggest category of potatoes Wada handles out of Colorado, with Norkotahs being the prominent russet variety. Among the several other russet varieties, one of the newer ones is the Mesa Russet, which came out of the Colorado State University potato breeding program.

“I’ve seen great results with the Mesa,” she said. “It’s got a lighter skin with very smooth netting. So far, I have seen very few injuries to it. The only thing is it doesn’t bulk up, so you get very few cartons. Hopefully, we’ll figure out how to get it to bulk up.”

Wada Farms also handles red, yellow, and fingerling potatoes out of Colorado and is working to increase volume in those.

The company offers organics in all varieties and is also working with suppliers to expand that program.

The potatoes are packed in the Wada and Dole labels and are available in a range of bag sizes as well as cartons.

As anticipated, the Colorado crop is a little short this year, and larger-sized potatoes are in tight supply, although the size profile varies from lot to lot. “Right now, we are really struggling to generate cartons, and that is Colorado across the board, so we’re trying to buckle down and extend the crop,” Peterson said.

[Print](#)