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## **Eagle Eye expects strong watermelon volume through spring and summer**

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With production in Arizona, California and Mexico, Eagle Eye Produce, headquartered in Idaho Falls, ID, is

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a year-round grower-shipper of watermelons.

“October through May, we rely on our grower relations throughout the country of Mexico,” John Gee, vice president of sales, who is based in Hemet, CA, told *The Produce News* March 31. “Basically, we are just getting started in northern Mexico now, and that will keep us in supplies through May. Then in June we get started here domestically” with shipments continuing through September. “Then we start back down in Mexico in October.”

Weather issues in southern Mexico resulted in short supplies over the past couple of months, Gee said. But that is changing as production shifts to the north. “Right now, we are getting started in Guaymas, Sonora.... We look forward to having a good crop there.”

As the harvest begins in Guaymas, “the sizing seems to be a little on the smaller side at this point in time,” he said. “We think that is related to all of the cool weather and rain that we have had thus far. We think we are going to start out that way. Then we should get into a normal size in the coming weeks.”

Quality looks good so far, he said. “We are not seeing any quality issues at this point in time.” Importantly for markets that have been dealing with tight availability and high prices in recent months, Eagle Eye expects “a very large crop” out of Guaymas with aggressive pricing.

“We feel like we’ve got more than ample supplies as we move forward,” with production out of Guaymas continuing “all the way up to possibly the last week of June,” Gee said. That will mean “an abundance of watermelons for April, May, and pretty much the whole month of June ... coming from Mexico.”

From Guaymas, Eagle Eye’s watermelon production will transition to Arizona, then to the Five Points area of California, and then to “our largest area in California, here in Hemet,” Gee said.

“Basically, we are planting now” the crop in Five Points that will be harvested “hopefully around June 15 to June 20,” he said. That will provide “a lot of July 4th watermelons. “We should finish in that area probably right around August 1 to August 5.”

In Hemet, “we will start planting April 16,” with the harvest starting probably about July 4 or shortly after.

Eagle Eye ships its watermelons from facilities in Nogales, AZ, and Hemet, CA, to customers throughout the Western states, primarily Wyoming, Colorado and New Mexico west, although “there are times when we ship further into Texas, or into Missouri when there are issues with supplies” in those areas.

The company, which is also a major grower-shipper of potatoes, onions, table grapes and Nogales vegetables, offers both seeded and seedless watermelons, but “we do not do personal watermelons, the little minis,” he said. “Everything is shed packed in one of our facilities, so we have the ability to do cartons, bins, certain counts, or weight ranges. We definitely can custom pack to whatever the customer’s needs are with the shed pack.”

The melons are marketed under Eagle Eye’s HarvesTime label.

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