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Southern Specialties harnessing trends

September 30, 2020

Exporters such as Southern Specialties in Pompano Beach, FL, are working hard to maintain the supply chain in the face of this year's challenges.

"Like other countries around the world, Peru has been affected by COVID," said Charlie Eagle, vice president of business development. "Fortunately the Peruvian government included asparagus exports on its list of essential business, helping us maintain good supplies."

In the coming season several trends may affect the deal, one of which, according to Eagle, is the majority of product reaching consumers through retail.

“As supplies pick up, we look forward to providing more promotional opportunities to bring value to both retailers and consumers,” he explained. “Though the foodservice sector is lagging, recent promising news regarding testing and vaccine approvals signal increased dining and travel may help create some growth in this sector.”

Bagged product and increased marketing support are other areas to watch, and Southern Specialties continues to develop options for fresh asparagus.

“You name it and we pretty much have it available in the way of retail and foodservice presentations for asparagus including private label opportunities,” said Eagle. “Our Southern Selects line of value-added asparagus has been popular for several years. We see our retail customers not only expressing interest in packaged product but also looking into different presentations within our packaged lineup.”

Eagle noted retail customers are leaning more on Southern Specialties for category support. “This includes marketing, merchandising and packaging advice, as well as menu development geared towards prepare-at-home programs,” he said. “For 30 years we have been proud to have built relationships that create the type of dialogue that enhances business for both parties. We continue to learn from our customers and adapt to their needs.”

The company has expanded its facility over the past year. “The expansion includes additional cooler space, cooling and handling equipment, docks and offices,” said Eagle. “Our services now include receiving, cross-docking and storing for third parties, as well as processing and packaging.”

Additionally, Eagle emphasized continued focus for Southern Specialties at the farm level. “As one of the leading importers of asparagus from Peru, we continue to invest in our farms to bring our customers consistent supplies of safe, top-quality product,” he said.

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