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## **PMA pulls back the curtains on the Fresh Summit 2020 virtual experience**

August 13, 2020

The Produce Marketing Association welcomed guests, suppliers, and media to a public webinar on Thursday, Aug. 13 to get a sneak peek at the Fresh Summit 2020 experience. The event, held each year in October, convenes over 20,000 industry members to share insights, showcase new and innovative products and solutions, and make connections for both individuals and organizations. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the on-site event has shifted to a virtual experience that will take place Oct. 13-15.

“The industry has been coming together for Fresh Summit for more than 70 years, and while it will be disappointing to not see each other in person this year, I’m inspired by the vision from our volunteers and team,” said PMA CEO Cathy Burns. “We have all faced new and unpredictable challenges this year, but we have also seen a great surge of recognition of the absolute importance of our industry. Our products are key to a healthful life and to growing a healthier world. We look forward to the opportunities this year to amplify the message that fresh produce and floral is relevant and essential to new global audiences.”

The webinar on Thursday was the first of many touchpoints between guests and event organizers and had two major sections addressing first the promise of a tailored and personalized experience for all guests and a second section focused on buyer and supplier connections. The event is being planned in partnership with the Fresh Summit committee, a volunteer group comprised of industry members including Co-chairs Shawn Peery, vice president of produce and floral at Albertsons Cos., and Angela Fraser, director of trade affairs at California Avocado Commission.

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“Going virtual means we have an unlimited audience that we can connect with, market to and communicate with,” said Peery. “That means potential new partners in new parts of the world, but it also means we can reach out to people who don’t often get the opportunity to see this side of the work we do.”

While Fresh Summit has always been a place of great opportunity, it has also been a way to peer into the future of the industry. In past years, the nature of the world has allowed that future to be years out, but with the pandemic changing almost all ways we work, the industry has required support, insights, and solutions in real time. In order to determine that Fresh Summit would continue to provide the needed experience at the right time, the Fresh Summit committee provided feedback and insights to guide the design and development of this year’s event. In those discussions, three themes rose to the top.

**Content:**

Over the past several months, PMA has provided regular, weekly connections through the Virtual Town Halls, LinkedIn Live recordings, Podcast episodes, Interviews with Experts, consumer reports and more to provide up-to-the moment resources to help make the decisions to help our industry recognize and respond to changing conditions. While the content is always an important part of the Fresh Summit schedule, this year, the insights from PMA, CGT, industry peers and experts will address critical and relevant topics to help the industry reflect back on the year we’ve had and see where we’re headed in the coming months. More information will be provided about the specific sessions and speakers closer to the event, however, it was confirmed that there will be a lineup of live, on-demand, and interactive content on this year’s agenda.

**Community:**

“Every year, Fresh Summit has been the produce and floral industry’s family reunion,” said Fraser. “Though this year will be different, Produce Marketing Association will serve as the leader in guiding and directing our industry through this ever-changing world.”

Some people can measure their careers in the number of Fresh Summits they’ve attended. It is a tradition that is core to the spirit of the industry — lively, enthusiastic, and dedicated. While it will be the first time in over 70 years that the industry will not meet in person, it will still be Fresh Summit. It will still be a time to learn, to connect and reconnect, and to celebrate. The way we do these things may change, but the reason will remain the same. To come together to drive consumption of fresh produce and floral products and in turn, to grow a healthier world.

**Connections:**

Most years, people would prepare for Fresh Summit by picking out their comfiest shoes, studying the Expo and Conference Hall map, and making a plan to cover as much ground as possible. This year, that may look a bit different, but guests’ goals are the same and the team has selected a virtual platform to prioritize connections. Guests can expect a personalized experience, tailored to their individual goals. The platform will prioritize connections between buyers and sellers and feature a number of ways to engage with and discover the latest products, services and solutions. For example, the presentation showcased ways for suppliers to connect by smart and simple “matching.” Using artificial intelligence, the platform will continuously provide recommendations of relevant people, products, services and content to engage with based on information provided at registration and how one explores the system. The experience will resemble a personalized shopping or entertaining platform like Amazon or Netflix.

The interactive platform will allow individuals to build their own schedule, setting aside time for

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content or meetings and will also allow for a variety of meeting types including one on one, small group, or large groups during general sessions, mixers or receptions. The event will be global, with guests tuning in from all over the world, and providing a place for all guests to build the experience that will help them get the most out of their three days in October.

While the event itself will run from Oct. 13-15, guests will be invited to login well in advance with the goal to let guests build their schedule, make connections and set up meetings so that when the event begins, there is not a minute wasted.

The second part of the webinar showcased a more in-depth look at the tools and potential resources available to guests who may participate in a broader capacity such as sponsors and suppliers. There are different opportunities available at each level of participation. This may include opportunities like, Buyer Preview Days, which provide buyers with uninterrupted time prior to the official event days where they can actively look for all the latest products and services to meet their needs and set up meetings before the actual event even starts; guaranteed meet and greets with buyers, and more. The platform is also built to streamline business processes for companies, with features like a robust lead tracking system that allows for company representatives to add notes and tags to contact lists in order to export for easy and immediate follow-up. PMA has also committed to providing detailed guiding resources to help buyers and suppliers gain the most value from the platform and the event.

“2020 has been a year like no other,” said Burns. “The pandemic has changed our world and wrapped up in these changes are incredible opportunities for the produce and floral communities to leverage the momentum as more consumers seek our products. While we have had our challenges, I am excited that this will be a Fresh Summit where we come together to connect, welcome new audiences, discover new partnerships and ideas, and celebrate our work to grow a healthier world.”

PMA will continue to provide regular updates to prepare all guests and suppliers for the upcoming virtual event. All interested in receiving updates about Fresh Summit 2020 can sign up [here](#).

Exhibitors can reach out with all questions or requests for immediate support at [showlogistics@pma.com](mailto:showlogistics@pma.com).

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