
- Advertisement -

'Exceptional' onion movement noted by Gumz Farms

By

Kathleen Thomas Gaspar

November 30, 2020

Gumz Farms Sales Agent Doug Bulgrin recently gave a positive update of the 2020-21 onion shipping season, noting the Endeavor, WI, operation was seeing good demand and excellent movement ahead of the holidays.

“Movement has been exceptional, and, we definitely are benefiting from people cooking at home,” Bulgrin said about consumer trends as the pandemic continues.

And the Wisconsin onion man noted, “We are definitely seeing an increase over normal holiday movement, which makes sense as there will be more households preparing smaller meals versus fewer larger gatherings.”

Along with good demand, Gumz Farms has seen prices hold. Bulgrin said, “Pricing is actually above normal, and given the supplies and movement, there will for sure be an uptick in the market going forward.”

Bulgrin said the year got off to a slightly unusual start. “We had an early start to planting and were able to get the crop in a week earlier than normal,” he said. At harvest time, he noted, the area had “a two-week window of beautiful weather that allowed us to speed up harvest, and we brought the onions in under great conditions.”

Shipping began the last week in August, which Bulgrin said is again about a week earlier than normal.

As the season has progressed, Bulgrin said demand has been highest in retail. “Consumer packs of prepack and medium yellows seem to be of the highest demand,” he said. One factor in demand has been the Farmers to Families Food Box Program, and Bulgrin said Gumz Farms is participating in the USDA initiative.

“It has definitely helped move some of the smaller sizes and odd lots,” he said, adding, “It has had a significant impact on supplies and the market.”

COVID itself brought new challenges and issues with social distancing and other protocol put into effect. A shortage of labor, which is a perennial issue, and Bulgrin said, “Labor for harvest is always a concern and have changed a few things to reduce the number of people needed. It always seems to be a concern and is always at the front of our minds as to where and how we can reduce the number of people we need.”

He said that trucks are also a concern. “Transportation is also a tough area right now, although given our location in the Midwest, we seem to do better when transportation gets tight.”

No one has a crystal ball when it comes to 2021, but Bulgrin said some plans have already been made. “Acreage will remain the same,” he said. “And we will continue to make improvements to our packing and growing operations to better serve the needs of our customers on a year-round basis.”