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## **Parker Farms focuses on the big picture in Georgia**

By

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Parker Farms enjoys an outstanding reputation for providing its clients with top-quality produce items consistently and efficiently. While many factors have contributed to the company's success over the years, the most important one is the fact that it builds long-lasting relationships with its grower partners.

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“When we work with a new grower, our goal is to establish a 10-, 15- or 25-year partnership with them,” said Jimmy Carter, sales manager at Parker Farms, headquartered in Colonial Beach, VA.

Building those relationships, he added, comes down to a simple principle.

“It’s about doing what we say we’re going to do,” Carter said. “There really isn’t much more to that. We work hard to get the sales lined up. When you’re selling a farm’s produce, you are obligated to sell everything — you have to sell No. 1 product, and you have to sell No. 2 product as well. We market all the growers’ product aggressively and have good, solid outlets for every box of produce, whether it’s No. 1 or No. 2. We work hard to do that, and I think the growers see that.”

That hard work is done in fulfillment of Parkers Farms’ motto, “Growers First.”

“We’re a grower ourselves, so we understand the challenges that they face and the concerns that they have,” Carter said. “That’s helped us expand our grower base and expand our sales with other growers.”

Among the initiatives Parker Farms is focused on at this time of year is the Georgia spring deal, which began with broccoli around April 15. Squash will start around May 1, followed by sweet corn two weeks later. Cucumbers and peppers will start sometime in mid-May.

Carter noted the Parker Farms doesn’t chase production based on what happened in prior years or what they think may happen.

“We just kind of stay status quo, which we’re going to do again this year,” he explained. “There won’t be any real major increase in acreage, some things are tweaked a little bit here and there, but we tend to go with a plan that best meets the growers’ needs and the customers’ demands. A lot of growers sometimes will chase markets and have a real good market one year and double up acreage the next year. We all know what can happen when that takes place, so we focus with what’s good for the land, what’s good for our growers’ profitability and what’s good for our customer base, year in and year out.”

Parker Farms distributes its goods from Florida to Maine, and does most of its business east of the Mississippi. Recent expansion into the Midwest and Texas has resulted in additional market channels.

Last year, COVID-19 changed everything, and in 2021, everyone is wondering what’s going to happen over the next few months as the process of vaccinating the nation is underway.

“Down south, most everything is open, but with restaurants opening in the northeast, it will be interesting to see how demand comes back into play on the foodservice side,” Carter said. “Whether that will take away from the retail side is to be determined, no one really knows the answer to that.”

Whatever the future holds, the team at Parker Farms is sure to be ready.

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