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TMK Produce is ready for a successful summer season

By

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May 3, 2021

There is a level of excitement and optimism in the produce world because people are getting vaccinated and we seem to get closer and closer to normalcy with each passing day. And that, according to Tom Kovacevich, has the Philadelphia area's produce professionals looking forward to a busy and successful spring and summer.

“The Philadelphia market buzz is one of excitement over the robust return of walk-in trade,” said Kovacevich, President of TMK Produce, headquartered in Philadelphia. “As you might imagine, the pandemic saw drastic drops in foot traffic. As merchants on the Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market, we all appreciate the opportunity to ‘show our wares’ and get customers excited to sell the best new vegetables in season and the sweetest and crunchiest fruit in stock. These face-to-face—or even mask to mask—interactions are what make the market, The Market.”

He added that the PWPM’s offerings and talents make everyone in the industry better, which has resulted in a long history of cooperation among the market’s merchants.

“Like each company’s team, you can look at the market as a whole, as a team,” he said. “From cooperating to do what is best for the customer, to coming together to build this great facility, to trading back and forth daily, we understand the sum is greater than the parts.”

The company’s 2021 year-to-date sales are comparable to last year’s, and revenues are up largely because of an average price increase of 10 percent.

“The price increases are mostly explained by certain high-volume lines, such as apples and oranges, experiencing very strong markets and, of course, increased freight costs across the board,” Kovacevich said.

Consumers can expect a high-quality crop this year, and Kovacevich is particularly excited about locally grown items that are sure to be featured in barbecues and celebrations all summer long.

“We, of course, love the produce we sell from the West Coast, Florida, Texas and all around the world for that matter, but there is something special about distributing our local crops,” he said. “This summer season looks exciting, with increased production of corn, watermelon, blueberries, peaches and local vegetables. Many of our local farmers also have farm markets that sell a wide range of products we offer. The consumer trend of shopping at smaller stores bodes well for these hands-on retailers.”

Labor continues to pose a challenge for the company, as many businesses are struggling to find workers.

“What concerns us most in this regard is the lack of labor available to plant, prune and harvest the crops that we all sell,” Kovacevich said. “The two biggest drivers of this problem are the prolonged unemployment benefits bestowed by Congress and our farmers’ lack of normal access to seasonal immigrant workers.”

Still, the TMK team is hard at work in service to their customers and partners, and Kovacevich gives credit for his company’s success to his dedicated staffers.

“We are very deep, and like most great teams in sports, success comes from the team not having a superstar but the team having a depth of talents in all aspects,” he said. “There is no better feeling for a manager than to look around and see the team working well together. From the unloading teams to the order selectors, inventory and order management, invoicing, quality control, to sales and buying, we are constantly amazed at the volume going through this place.”

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