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Red Sun Farms seeing big success with Sweetpops

By

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July 21, 2021

Red Sun Farms, based in Kingsville, ON, believes that greenhouse-grown produce should deliver the very best flavor while encompassing food-safety, quality and a year-round supply.

“Our values are built around accountability, collaboration, trust and innovation,” said Leona Neill, director of marketing and packaging for the company. “The team at Red Sun Farms is committed to delivering these values both within our organization and to our customers.”

With a value proposition that covers seed-to-plate, Red Sun Farms prides itself in owning every step of the process from hand selecting seeds, propagation at its farms, greenhouse operations, harvesting, packing and distribution.

“This vertically-integrated business model meets the demand for quality, food-safety, flavor and supply throughout the year,” said Harold Paivarinta, senior director of sales for the company. “The master growers at Red Sun Farms have hand-selected varieties of organic tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers that will delight and exceed customers’ flavor expectations.”

Working together, the leadership team at Red Sun Farms has built a vertically-integrated business model that ensures quality, food safety, flavor and supply throughout the year. This vision has resulted in farms in Mexico, the United States and Canada with distribution centers throughout to support the demand.

In 2021, the company is excited to see the growth and incredible following that its Sweetpops variety is experiencing.

“This variety is quickly redefining our snacking tomato standards,” Neill said. “Sweetpops is all about delivering an explosion of flavor, in a snack-size tomato. This sweeter than sweet snacking tomato has already established a dedicated consumer following that have connected with the brand and redefined the expectation of sweetness in tomatoes.”

The packaging on the new variety was designed with the millennial generation in mind by creating a connection and making the exploration of the tomato an experience.

When looking ahead, Red Sun Farms sees numerous opportunities for growth, a continuation of what it experienced over the past 16 months.

“We saw categories shift at an accelerated rate towards specialty and snacking varieties as consumers opened up their repertoires and discovered many new items and incorporated them into their menu plans,” Paivarinta said. “We are truly excited about building on that momentum.”

During the pandemic, greenhouse produce was driven by supply and availability.

“When the pandemic broke out, the field crops were not yet available,” Paivarinta said. “It has been an unusual time to be in the produce industry. However, working through these challenging times has resulted in enhancements in communications, planning, as well as building upon our very robust health and safety programs to ensure the safety of our team members while protecting our supply chain to ensure the needs of everyone remains our primary focus.”

However, as demand increased across the U.S. and Canada, meeting the demand was a challenge.

“We continue to invest in growth at both the farm and D.C. levels to be able to better support our retail partners,” Paivarinta said. “Our recent growth announcements have grown to 646 acres across the organization including an additional 35 acres at Red Sun Mexico. This additional acreage will reaffirm Red Sun Farms as the largest vertically integrated high-tech greenhouse in North America.”

Red Sun Farms has also committed to significant growth in its state-of-the-art distribution centers to support the greenhouse developments. Pharr, TX will increase its capacity by 40,000 square feet of cold storage, an addition that will be completed to support the 2021 winter season. Additionally, Kingsville, ON is moving forward with an additional 22,500 square feet of cold storage this year.

One of the biggest trends that Red Sun Farms is seeing from customers and consumers concerns sustainability and sustainable solutions.

“This is not a new business approach for Red Sun Farm, as we have been utilizing sustainable practices at our farms, and in our packaging for many years,” Neill said. “What is new is the increased focus on sharing those sustainable practices, in combination of pushing for new technologies.”

The company has been utilizing sustainable practices in water recycling, yield optimization, and minimizing food waste.

“Red Sun Farms is a proud industry leader in sustainable agriculture, closely working with packaging suppliers to develop new and sustainable options,” Neill said. “Our farms have been utilizing sustainable practices in water recycling, yield optimization, and minimizing food waste. Over the last 6-7 years, the team has also challenged our packaging suppliers to push sustainable technology resulting in the commercialization of recyclable flow wraps, increased recycle content in clamshells, fiber punnets, compostable PLU’s, and labels with washable adhesives.”

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