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# Ron Budd seeing good quality, pricing and yields for New Jersey potatoes

By

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“The program is going real good right now,” Ron Budd of Gloucester County Packing Corp. told The Produce News Monday, Aug. 9, when asked how the New Jersey potato season was progressing. “We started with red and white varieties on July 19. Quality and color on both of them has been excellent. We are going to start on Wednesday [Aug. 11] with russet and yellow varieties.”

Regarding the reds and whites, “Quality has been very good, pricing has been above average, and yields have been slightly above average,” said Budd, who is vice president of the company, headquartered in Woodbury, NJ. “So it’s a great combination for the growers. The stars don’t usually align like that very often.”

The growing season “was very well suited for potatoes,” he noted. “We had some timely rains [but] not too much rain.

He continued, “The demand has been good. Our challenge is not enough help. Our sales are limited to what we can produce. I’ve been doing this for 34 years, and I’ve never encountered this.”

Gloucester County Packing Corp. does not grow any product itself, but its 45,000-square-foot facility packs, distributes and handles potatoes and onions from all over the United States and beyond. But with headquarters in the Garden State, Jersey potatoes hold a special significance.

“The Jersey Fresh potato program is a very integral part of our business plan because with freight rates the way they are, we’re at a very competitive advantage being close to such a densely populated area,” said Budd. “The freight rates have increased here steadily over the last 18 months. You want to try to source your product as close to home as possible to cut down on the costs. The Jersey Fresh program fits right into that.”

He added, “The local program checks a lot of boxes. The Jersey Fresh brand is being very well received by retailers. Consumers get to know the farmer and where the food is coming from. It’s a piece of the over all Jersey Fresh theme that retailers promote. In addition to corn and tomatoes, they can add potatoes -- four different varieties of potatoes.”

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Along with potatoes, Gloucester County Packing Corp. has an imported sweet onion deal.

“We just started receiving our first containers from Peru on Tuesday, July 27” in Philadelphia, said Budd. “We generally go through March with those. The season is getting extended in recent years, starting earlier and going later.”

Asked if the company has any projects planned for the future, Budd replied, “With the labor shortage, we’re going to put our heads together and we’re certainly going to consider all options on getting more automated. I don’t have a specific area what that’s going to be, but with the labor shortage, automation is becoming more and more critical.”

*Photo: At Gloucester County Packing Corp. are Bob Budd, Ron Budd, David Budd (Bob’s son) and Jackson Budd (Ron’s son).*

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