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Parker Farms prides itself on being grower-centric

By

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Oak Grove, VA-based Parker Farms prides itself on being a grower-centric business.

“We are always focused on the success of our growers,” Sean McFadden, business development for Parker Farms, told *The Produce News*. “As a result, we have been able to partner with over 16 growers on the East Coast and the Midwest. Our growers understand the importance and necessity of being a part of a larger group in order to meet the needs of today’s retail buyers.”



The company is not resting on its laurels.

“We’re always looking for new grower-partners in different geographic regions and different states,” McFadden noted.

Parker Farms works with growers in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York and Indiana. The company grows and markets broccoli, sweet corn, squash, cucumbers, peppers, eggplant, and beans, and offers most of those commodities in organic options as well, which McFadden noted is a growing part of the company’s repertoire.

“Every year organics seems to grow by about 5 percent,” he said.

Parker Farms markets its broccoli under the Atlantic Fresh brand, which is a partnership between Parkers Farms and Raleigh, NC-based L&M Cos. that has been ongoing for over 10 years.

McFadden said crops this season are looking above average in quality, however, markets are lower than 2020 across the board.

“I feel like our industry is at a crossroads right now with all the changes going on in markets,” he said. “Labor costs and input costs have skyrocketed. Sourcing labor is a challenge. All of that being said, we have not seen markets for fresh produce go up in response to these increased costs of production. Something’s got to give or a lot of growers won’t be able to continue or will be forced to scale back production.”

McFadden added that the market shift began earlier in 2021, noting that the company secured excellent prices for the growers in 2020, which he attributed to the increase in retail business when consumers were eating at home more often.

“This year, we’re seeing lower demand from retailers, lower shipping point prices and increased supplies on the other end of the chart,” he said, adding that things are starting to slowly recover on farm prices. The flood of excess production seems to be receding.

Community involvement is also an important component of Parker Farms. The company participates in several service projects and events throughout the year.

“We offer scholarships to Virginia College students here who are entering the field of agriculture,” McFadden said. “They will be the future of farming here in our area of Virginia and we want to support them all we can.”

Parker Farms is on the board of directors for the local food bank as well, and offers educational events and tours for non-profit groups to understand where their food comes from and get a better feel for what it takes to be successful.

To learn more about Parker Farms, visit www.parkerfarms.net or follow the company on Facebook and Instagram @ParkerFarms.

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