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Major developments for Sunrays grape program

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Jac. Vandenberg Inc., a fresh produce importer and marketer, is gearing up for the second year of its Sunrays grape brand. After a successful debut, Sunrays grapes is announcing several new developments to its 2021-22 program which officially starts next month.

"Ever since we launched Sunrays with mandarins in 2017, we have sought new ways to connect with today's consumers," said Brand Manager John Paap. "If we're not doing something new that advances the brand, then we're going backwards. There's always something we can do to improve what we are offering, whether it be advancing our mission, improving our packaging or expanding our product options."

Kicking off the Sunrays grape season this year will be Cotton Candy grapes packed out of Brazil, available in loose-weight bags and one-pound clamshells. Already a popular variety among consumers and retailers, Sunrays Cotton Candy grapes allows retailers to add an additional SKU to the varietal mix in one uniform presentation. Brazil will also become the fifth sourcing region for the Sunrays grape program, which already has Peru, Chile, Mexico and California growers participating. As with last season, Vandenberg has carefully selected its growing partners to participate in the Sunrays grape program ensuring those participating growers meet strict quality and flavor requirements to ensure a consistent, premium eating experience for every bag of Sunrays grapes packed. Additionally, there will be quality control personnel on site at origin to ensure only the best grapes are being packed in the Sunrays bag.

Another major development for the Sunrays grape program this year will be a limited offering of its brand new, innovative BIO bags out of Peru. These bags will be among the first biodegradable, home compostable grape bags in the U.S. market.

"We are extremely excited to yet again be leading a category in sustainable packaging," said Paap. "Our BIO bags for mandarins have been a great success, earning awards and recognition and we're excited to expand that success into the grape category with this truly unique solution."

The majority of grapes in today's market are packed in bags made from polyethylene material, a common plastic. The Sunrays Grape BIO bags are manufactured by TIPA, an Israeli-based eco-conscious flexible packaging company, which has developed flexible packaging that mimics the values of traditional plastic packaging but is made with materials that return safely to the biosphere.

"Grape packaging, particularly bags, have been a tough nut to crack in terms of sustainable solutions," said Paap. "Many of the solutions we've seen in the market thus far have been paper-based but the problem there has been visibility of the product. We've heard time and time again from retailers and consumers alike the importance of being able to see the product. With TIPA's innovative materials, we are confident that we have found a successful solution that allows visibility of the product while also being sustainable."

The Sunrays Grape BIO bags will be available in limited quantities starting in late January or early February 2022.

Building on their commitment to sustainability, Vandenberg has set its sights to have all growers

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packing in the Sunrays brand to be certified Sustainably Grown. The Sustainably Grown certification program is one of the world's most strict, with standards and initiatives that provide a framework for environmental stewardship and social responsibility.

“Sustainability has always been at the core of the Sunrays brand and we want to now make that message clear and transparent to the public with this certification,” said Paap. “What’s unique about this certification is not only is it looking at environmental sustainability but also social and economic sustainability. All of these areas play an important role in the success and longevity of the farm and product.”

Vandenberg expects to see its first growers certified early next year with Sunrays bags carrying the Sustainably Grown certification by November 2022.

“We’re very proud of what we’ve been able to achieve in just two years with Sunrays grapes,” said Paap. “We’re committed to building a robust grape program that not only exceeds expectations for flavor, consistency and availability but also makes a positive impact, environmentally and socially. We want to show the world that you can offer a premium product while also doing good — building a brighter future for our communities and our planet. After all, Sunrays is not just a snack but a snack with impact!”

Sunrays grapes are available year-round from Brazil, Peru, Chile, Mexico and California.

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