



- Advertisement -

Honeybear seeing great consumer response, despite difficult

growing year

By

Maggie Hanna, video and social media editor

October 8, 2021

The past year and a half has been difficult for many reasons, but 2021 posed some major weather challenges for Elgin, MN-based Honeybear Brands' apple crops.

"In Washington, we experienced record heat for an extended period of time that has impacted both size of the apples harvested as well as the overall crop size," Don Roper, vice president of sales and marketing for Honeybear, told The Produce News in early October. "We feel the crop is going to come in around 122MM cases, which is right around where we were last year. Our biggest concern will be how fruit is holding up in late storage periods later this spring and into the summer."



Roper noted that the company is hopeful that the intense heat only had a minimal impact on the crop, but they won't know for sure until they begin to open controlled atmosphere rooms in late spring and early summer.

In contrast, the eastern apple crop was not impacted by heat, but instead an early frost that took a big toll on Honeybear's overall eastern production through the Midwest to the Northeast.

"We are seeing quite a bit of reduction in crop size compared to last year's above average eastern crop yields," Roper said. "This, coupled with high pricing on processing apples, is leaving less apples

for the fresh market which is what ends up on your retail store apple decks.”

These challenges in both eastern and western apple production will result in upward price pressure on several varieties, Roper noted.

Despite these difficulties, Honeybear’s Washington apple production will be up strongly, thanks to continued internal growth of its own orchards and Honeybear growing partners.

“Honeybear continues to over-index on organic apple production and our conventional varieties, specifically Honeycrisp, Pazazz, high-color Galas and Fujis, continue to add strong production gains,” Roper said.

As for the upcoming fall and winter seasons, Roper expects pricing to be stronger than last year primarily due to recognition that the overall national apple crop will be smaller.

“Add in the fact that the eastern apple crop is short by comparison to last year, and will finish up



marketing their crop earlier this year than last year, we would expect even more pressure on the Washington stocks to support retail movement, leading to increasing price pressure on apples,” he said.

When it comes to consumer response, Honeybear is continuing to see an increase in demand for its Pazazz apple. Roper mentioned that before the pandemic, Honeybear hosted an in-person blind taste test for Pazazz.

“With the popularity of Honeycrisp, there was no surprise that participants were almost all self-described Honeycrisp fans, but it was interesting that 91 percent of them selected Pazazz as their favorite apple over their beloved Honeycrisp,” he said.

As for its organic apple and pear crops, Honeybear is enjoying strong growth of its Honeybear Organic Cubbies product line.

“Several of our retail partners have embraced our Honey Cubbie branded bags and additionally we are supporting many private label retail organic brands,” Roper noted. “Our retail partners can expect the same quality and consistency from our organic programs that they have come to expect in our conventional line-up.”

Honeybear was looking forward to showcasing a potential new apple variety during PMA Fresh Summit this year, but with the show now cancelled, the company is pivoting and getting creative with how it will share this exciting news in a different format.

“This variety is a clean, bright and full colored yellow apple that retailers are looking for on their apple deck,” Roper said. “The radiant yellow skin with firm, crisp flesh and a refreshing mellow flavor makes this apple something special.”

To learn more about Honeybear Brands, visit www.honeybearbrands.com.

[Print](#)