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Quality the name of the game at R.C. Hatton

By

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[R.C. Hatton](#), which has been in business since the Great Depression, is committed to providing high-quality produce and sugar cane, from farm-to-table, with a philosophy that revolves around improving the community through hard work and honest business practices.

“We have been in the vegetable business for more than 60 years,” said Paul Allen, vice president of R.C. Hatton, which operates farms in Florida and Georgia. “Smaller units for produce are the most change we have seen over the years.”

Originally known as R.C. Hatton Farms, the company produced sweet corn and beans and expanded over the years from several hundred acres to its present size of 12,000 acres.

“Fall produce kicks off the Florida season with the holiday that is accompanied by a great big meal for families that includes many different veggies,” Allen said. “We offer 3,500 acres of sweet corn annually, 2,500 acres of green beans annually and 900 acres of cabbage annually.”

The company has found the best way to be successful with fall produce involves the product delivered and the care provided to customers.

“Quality, quality and more quality are the key to success, and a lot of luck with the weather helps as well,” Allen said. “Furthermore, having a year-round supply for customers is always important. Also, hard work and honest business practices.”

In 2021, the company has experienced an oversupply in many of its produce items, something that has been happening for much of the year up until late October.

The fall crops are looking strong, though sporadic rain at planting time started the season, but Allen still expects an adequate supply for the fall.

Some of the recent trends that are impacting fall produce, he noted, are more need for private label and higher production costs.

“Maintaining a price strong enough to cover the fast-increasing production cost is a challenge,” he said.

Looking out to next year, he sees several ways that R.C. Hatton can improve, such as developing

recyclable/compostable containers for products, having a consistent supply and improving the variation of products.

Allen also thinks retailers can do their part in helping to promote fall produce by labeling local, promoting grower relationships, and doing volume buy ads.

R.C. Hatton continues to see growth in all the different crops that it grows and are excited about the brands named after the family — such as GraceLynn for cabbage and Courtneys Elite for its foodservice beans.

Family is a big part of the operation and the reason for the success the company has seen.

“My son, Jonathan, is the best produce farmer I have known and looks after much of our three vegetable crops,” Allen said. “My brother, Dan, manages our packinghouse operations that consist of bean and corn lines, plus our traypack corn line, which is one of the reasons we have so much growth, quality, quality and more quality.”

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