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OGS to honor Vic Smith as Grower of the Year

November 24, 2021

The Organic Grower Summit, presented by Western Growers and the Organic Produce Network, will honor long-time organic grower Vic Smith as the recipient of the fourth annual Organic Grower Summit's Grower of the Year. Smith, CEO of JV Smith Cos., was selected based on his ongoing commitment and dedication to excellence in organic production, organic industry leadership, and innovation.

The Grower of the Year Award, sponsored by AGCO, will be presented to Smith as part of the Keynote presentation at the Organic Grower Summit, Dec. 1-2 in Monterey, CA. The fourth annual OGS is designed to provide information vital to organic growers and producers, as well as an overview of the opportunities and challenges in the production of organic fresh food. The Grower of the Year presentation is part of an extensive educational program designed to inform and engage organic producers, their service providers, and supply chain partners.

"We are honored to present the annual Grower of the Year award to Vic Smith. Vic is truly a grower's grower, and his decades long work exemplifies what hardworking, passionate organic farming is all about," said Greg Milstead, director of sales, Southwest region for AGCO.

Since 1991, Smith has overseen the companies' farming, packing and cooling operations, including over 32,000 acres of vegetable production annually, half of which are grown organically. He started his first organic operation in El Toro, San Luis, Mexico (a farming area across the border from Yuma, AZ). Within a year, he purchased an organic carrot operation in Colorado, and today farms a wide array of organic specialty crops including romaine, iceberg, celery, mixed leaf and spinach.

"Over the past three decades, Vic has worked tirelessly to encourage water conservation, natural methods for pest control, and always found ways to share information about those practices with other organic farmers. His dedication to the environment and community is what makes the organic sector special and make him so deserving of the title of Grower of the Year," said Milstead.

Previous winners of the award have been The Lundberg Family (2019); Thaddeus Barsotti of Capay Organic (2018); and Vernon Peterson of Peterson Family Farms (2017).

OGS exhibition and general registration is currently open, but the trade show floor is sold out, with exhibitors including companies involved with soil amendments, ag technology, food safety, packaging, and equipment connecting with organic field production staff, supply chain managers, pest control advisors and food-safety experts.

Among other educational sessions slated for 2021 OGS are:

- Building Resilience through Organic Farming Systems
- SmartFarm: AgTech in the Field
- Organic Grower Perspectives on the Challenges of Scaling

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- Growing and Selling in the Mexican Organic Market
 - Are Regenerative and Sustainability Labeling Good for Organics?
 - Organics at Retail — Performance and Consumer Expectations

“In partnership with Western Growers, this year’s OGS will provide up-to-date resources and information to support the continued success of organic producers, with an emphasis on the role of ag technology,” said Tonya Antle, co-founder of the Organic Produce Network. “From seed to soil to harvest, our goal is to present the most relevant information on the most important subjects and issues facing organic production.”

Photo: Vic Smith

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