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IPR Fresh seeing growth on retail business

By

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Nogales, AZ — The cancellation of the PMA Fresh Summit was especially disappointing for [IPR Fresh](#), according to company President Jose Luis Obregon.

“We were looking forward to going to New Orleans and seeing our clients, and getting back to normal,” Obregon said of the event, which was cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19 and again in 2021 due to Hurricane Ida.



Jose Luis Obregon, president of

IPR Fresh, with a carton of green Bell peppers at the company's warehouse in Nogales, AZ.

Had Obregon and his team, including his brothers Alvaro, vice president of finance and administration, and Enrique, vice president of sales, were anxious to tout the upcoming season, which is setting up to be a winner due to favorable growing conditions in Mexico.

“We start to see a surge when the local deals on the East Coast wind down,” said Obregon. “Cucumbers and soft squash start to pick up in mid-November, and our sweet corn deal starts in late November and goes to April, and then we have green Bell peppers starting in early December. We also have watermelon going now, and quality on everything is looking excellent. The downside is that there is still a lot of product on the market, so prices are low, but that will change later this month when the local deals clean up and we see more demand.”

IPR is increasing its organic offerings, which include colored Bells, yellow squash and zucchini, but its focus right now is on the conventional deal that runs through May, including a new cucumber deal out of Culiacan. It then transitions to organics for the summer and into the early fall.

“This was our second year as a year-round operation, which is good for us since it keeps us sharp,” said Obregon. “We also do a lot of customer visits during the summer to see how we can more closely work together with them.”

Obregon said that as IPR has added to its product roster, it has gotten more into servicing retail accounts, which range from small chains to large national retailers. But along with that comes a

different set of challenges.

“Servicing retail accounts means dealing with more logistical issues, which is a whole different challenge than FOB sales,” he said. “But at the same time, it is a lot more exciting because we are handling much higher volumes and quality control becomes that much more important.”

Obregon said to help meet these challenges, IPR has hired people with specific skill sets in logistics.

“It used to be me and my brothers and my dad doing everything, but things have gotten much more complicated, and so it became necessary to add people with certain expertise,” said Obregon. “In my opinion, there is no better investment than investing in human resources. It can be difficult to find good people, but when you do find the right person you want to treat them well so they stay, and that is something we look to emphasize.”

“Having a great staff has given us the confidence to seek out bigger accounts because we know we can meet their needs,” he added.

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