



- Advertisement -

Forrence Orchards keeps working to succeed during tough

By

Keith Loria

August 18, 2022

While the team at Forrence Orchards is hard at work on its traditional McIntosh apple program, it is also dedicated to providing consumers with other types of apples that are growing in popularity.

“We’re trying to pepper in some of our other varieties that we’ve begun packing, like SnapDragons, and we’re working on getting back to having packed Cortlands and continuing to round out the options we have,” said Henry Forrence, packing house and sales manager for the Peru, NY-based company.

The company’s process and internal structure has changed since the installation of a new five-lane Compac sorter and two-lane Compac bagger.

“We hope that in short order our investment in more efficient and precise technology will increased our capacity to produce bagged apples while allowing us to continue to satisfy our tray-pack customers,” Forrence said. “At this point we’re still learning how to use the new equipment but we’re starting to recognize new levels of efficiency.”

He added that fewer apples have been available in 2021, which he expects to have a positive impact on pricing for companies like Forrence Orchards that have an adequate supply of apples.

“The market indicators are pretty clear that there are fewer apples and we hope that is clear to the buyers,” Forrence said. “There aren’t as many apples, and we’re also dealing with shortages of everything and trying to manage that as best we can.”

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to make its impact, including on supply. That’s gone into the strategy the company has prepared for the year ahead.

“Anything you need, you can’t get it, and that becomes problematic,” Forrence said, adding that the supply issue has affected even items people have long taken for granted, like tape.

“I’m waiting on a pallet of tape right now,” he said. “It’s just not here and I don’t know where it is, and nobody is giving me an answer as to when it’s coming. This forces me to have to pay 2-5 times what I normally would for tape. A price increase the market does not compensate me for. In a normal scenario, you could call somebody and say, ‘Hey, what’s going on?’ and they could at least give you an accurate delivery date. Now they say, ‘We’ll let you know when we have some.’ Thankfully everybody kind of gets it — there’s no buyer at any level who doesn’t understand that it’s out of our

control and we're doing the best we can."

One challenging area Forrence Orchards has navigated well is the transportation issue.

"The transportation costs haven't been too bad in the sense that our routes and our customers are pretty well established, and not all that far away," Forrence said. "The truckers who have taken two of my customers loads are either right down the road or just up the road, and their models are built interdependently with ours."

COVID-19 has been part of the U.S. for nearly two years now and succeeding during this strange era takes a lot of hard work and experience. Those are two things Forrence Orchards always brings to the table.

"You just have to be consistent and level-headed," Forrence said when asked what it takes to succeed during these times. "It really is about not letting any of the different things that can really put a monkey wrench in the whole thing get in the way. You have to just slowly but surely get things taken care of."

He added that even though the produce business can be a high-stress environment, especially now, it's important to reassure employees and let them know it isn't their fault if a customer they are dealing with is in a bad mood or is upset about something.

"You just go about your job," he said. "That calming influence allows people to at least continue to show up for work and not feel like they're in a scenario of stress in a way that they can't manage."

[Print](#)