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North Bay offering organic Sekoya blueberries

By

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[North Bay Produce](#) is a year-round berry shipper, offering a continuity of supply between regions and hemispheres in the fall, which allows for consistency and stability of product.

“Blueberries, blackberries, and raspberries are our core commodities and fall signals the transition from domestic to our import berry supplies,” said Ryan Lockman, vice president of sales and procurement for the grower-owned cooperative based in Traverse City, MI. “North Bay has a very long history with berries and participated in the evolution of the transitional supplies when converting Northern Hemisphere and Southern Hemisphere berries.”

Four key areas come to mind when North Bay thinks of success in the berry category, starting with the quality of the berries.

“Berry quality is very important, along with finding optimal areas around the globe to grow the fruit efficiently and consistently,” Lockman said. “Logistical solutions for quick turnaround from field to store give customers a high-quality, long-lasting berry.”

Berries are some of the top producers in the produce department and sales continue to grow year after year. This was true during the pandemic when the category saw an uptick in sales. Successful retailers are offering different sizing options and cross promoting berries with other departments and consistently running berry promotions during the fall.

“We always recommend when the product is readily available, to increase the concentration of berry promotions to move through the volume and keep quality consistent,” Lockman said. “Some growth opportunities within the category would be more consistent supply and the continual development of new varieties within each category.”

North Bay berries include the American Heart Association logo on its top seal punnet packaging. The packaging helps reduce the amount of plastic used by 34 percent compared to traditional clamshells and the bright, modern color combination of teal and lime green plays off the berries well — offering a nice pop in retail berry displays.

When North Bay thinks about impacts to the category, it considers climate/weather changes in the growing regions and how growers are learning to adapt to these changes.

“There’s increased growing costs due to a myriad of issues farmers are facing today, including logistical challenges that have impacted many stores throughout the country,” Lockman said. “Lastly, changes in consumer behavior have impacted the category.”

The current berry season is looking strong with North Bay expecting an increase in Peruvian

blueberries over last year, with bigger arrivals to fill in the domestic gap over previous years.

There is considerable excitement at the company over the long-anticipated arrival of its first Sekoya blueberries. With the objectives to provide crunchy, long-lasting and tasty blueberries every week of the year, the first shipments of these blueberries will be in August. These first available Sekoya blueberries are being grown in Peru and North Bay Produce also has farms growing Sekoya varieties across North, Central and South America as well as South Africa.

“We truly believe these blueberries are a game changer and we are extremely proud to be offering them,” Lockman said.

[Keith Loria](#)

About Keith Loria |

A graduate of the University of Miami, Keith Loria is a D.C.-based award-winning journalist who has been writing for major publications for close to 20 years on topics as diverse as real estate, food and sports. He started his career with the Associated Press and has held high editorial positions at magazines aimed at healthcare, sports and technology. When not busy writing, he can be found enjoying time with his wife, Patricia, and two daughters, Jordan and Cassidy.

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