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Wada Farms cites 'unprecedented' 2022-23 market for Idaho potatoes

By

Kathleen Thomas Gaspar

September 22, 2022

With an Idaho potato harvest kick-off during the week of Aug. 8, Idaho Falls, ID-based [Wada Farms](#) is seeing what Director of Marketing Eric Beck termed an “unprecedented” market this 2022-23 season.

Beck, who said in mid-September the grower-shipper operation was in “full force harvesting in all growing areas,” commented on current market conditions and demand.

“What we are seeing is unprecedented for the Idaho potato industry,” Beck said. “We do feel there will be a market correction at some point, but we are hopeful that correction will settle at a point that is healthy and sustainable for the grower, buyer, and end consumer. Having equitable market value on the potato crop is good for all parties.”

He continued, “Demand remains strong and consistent. Potatoes tend to do very well in an inflationary environment based on the per-pound value they bring to the shopping cart. When budgets get tight and discretionary spending is limited, potatoes are a great value to make sure a healthy vegetable option is still on the table.”

And, he added, “We don’t anticipate much change in the demand trajectory for most of the 2022-2023 crop season.”

The earlier harvesting started with some of the company’s western and central Idaho growers, and later in the month growers started harvesting in eastern Idaho.

Beck said the Russet varieties started with Norkotahs. “These will be in the queue for the better part of the fall and winter seasons,” he said. “We will have some Burbanks flowing as well during these shipping windows, but for the most part, we are shipping Norkotahs from August thru March, and then we will transition to Burbanks that run from March thru July.”

He went on to say, “The variety used for the Varietal Red and Yellow program is dynamic and changing from month to month. Our focus is growing those varieties that are best suited for the agronomy in our area. We strive to grow varieties that are rich in color and that have good flavor profiles.”

Looking at its marketing and promotions, Beck said Wada will “continue putting focus on our value-added products such as the Easy Baker, Easy Grillers, and Smalls Bite Size Potatoes. We see continued demand for ‘Ease of Use’ from the consumer, and these products help satisfy that need.”

He said, “There hasn’t been much change in our marketing campaigns for 2022. Our end goal and

motto for our customers is simple — ‘Their Success is our Success.’ Our responsibility to our customers is to assist in positioning them in a manner that best serves their end consumer.”

Beck added, “Being fair and consistent partners along with providing a premium quality product are all foundational to building a successful program together.”

That philosophy has well-served the operation since 1943, when Japanese immigrant Frank Wada relocated his family from California to Idaho and restarted farming as a sharecropper. Frank’s son, Albert, took the helm of Wada Farms in 1972, and today Albert’s son, Bryan, is CEO of Wada Farms. Bryan Wada was also welcomed as new as chair of Idaho Potato Commission at the 94th annual Idaho Grower Shipper Association convention held in late August at Sun Valley.

Beck spoke optimistically about the rest of the season. “We are seeing good quality coming out of the fields now, and we don’t foresee any change to that momentum at this point.”

He went on to say, “We learned a lot during the 2021-22 season that will only help us be better as a grower-shipper for the 2022-2023 season. We keep a steady pulse on the constantly changing socioeconomic environment and how it impacts consumer demand for potatoes. Being dynamic, nimble, and transparent with our customers will be paramount in keeping the supply chain healthy and flowing for the upcoming crop season.”

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About Kathleen Thomas Gaspar |

Kathleen is a Colorado native and has been writing about produce for more than three decades and has been a professional journalist for more than four decades. Over the years she's covered a cornucopia of crops grown both in the United States and abroad, and she's visited dozens of states – traveling by car from her home base in Colorado to the Northwest and Southeast, as far as Vancouver, BC, and Homestead, FL. Now semi-retired, Kathleen continues to write about produce and is also penning an ongoing series of fiction novels. She's a wife, mother of two grown sons and grandmother of six, and she and her fly fisherman husband Abe reside in the Banana Belt town of Cañon City.

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