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NoKota Packers enjoys working in Red River Valley

By

Keith Loria

September 28, 2022

For more than four decades, [NoKota Packers, Inc.](#), has been providing high quality service to the potato industry, storing, washing and packaging tablestock potatoes for resale throughout the country.

“NoKota Packers has been in business since 1979,” said Carissa Olsen, president and CEO of the Buxton, ND-based company. “We have worked hard to stay true to the values of our company—quality, integrity and service—in all we do when working with our growers, employees and shareholders.”

Many equipment upgrades and several additions have been made through the years of operations to keep the company as one of the most progressive wash plants in the area.

While the company historically has only dealt with red potatoes, it added a few yellow potatoes to the mix last year and have increased its volume in 2022 to meet demand from customers.

“Business has continued to rebound after COVID,” Olsen said. “We still see some supply chain issues with lead times on inventory and lack of trucks for shipping, but overall there are continued improvements.”

Working in the Red River Valley has been a key to the company’s success, and NoKota Packers takes pride in being able to work with growers from what Olsen called “the best potato growing area around.”

“We have been located in a small farming community in North Dakota since our beginnings and some of our best customers are the residents and surrounding community members that come in regularly to purchase potatoes,” Olsen said. “Since our inception, we have been known to provide the best spuds around. Many people who have moved on—some even states away—still return to purchase potatoes whenever they are in the area. The people in the Red River Valley know a good thing when they see—and taste it.”

To combat some of the cost challenges it is facing, NoKota Packers is working hard to make sure it is offering fuel rates that are fair and loads are ready to ship when trucks arrive at the facility.

“We have increased starting pay in all of our positions and worked hard to retain current employees as well,” Olsen said. “We are planning some automation updates to help fill the gaps of inefficiency and open labor positions.”

The company works with a variety of major retailers across the county.

“The secret to strong partnerships is our ability to provide an exceptional quality product and service that exceeds their expectations,” Olsen said.

While the Red River Valley experienced a pretty dry year in most of the growing areas, causing yields to be lower than usual, the potato quality has looked good overall and the company is excited to be shipping at the end of September.

“We are predicting to have a more average crop than we have had the past three years for tonnage,” Olsen said. “The quality will continue to be top notch coming out of the entire valley.”

Through its Fresh Solutions Network, NoKota Packers is continuously looking for ways to offer specialty items and convenient packaging to appeal to the consumer.

“Side Delights, an exclusive brand of FSN, has continued to offer options that are quick to prepare and budget-friendly,” Olsen said. “In 2022, there are also some new and exciting additions coming in convenience items and packaging updates.”

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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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