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**Nash Produce gives smaller family farms a voice**

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By

Keith Loria

September 29, 2022

The genesis of [Nash Produce](#) began in 1977 as a large farming and produce packing and shipping operation focused on cucumbers. In 2006, a group of local growers recognized the need for a packing facility, which led to the purchase of Nash Produce. Since that time, the company has transitioned away from cucumbers to a more singular focus on sweet potatoes.

“With the combination of the North Carolina soil and climate, our local family farms provide the perfect environment for growing the world’s best sweet potatoes,” said Robin Narron, sales support and marketing director for the Nashville, NC-based company. “Today we are proud to be a leading supplier in the industry with a focus on innovation, high quality produce, and unrivaled service. We are considered front-runners in a constantly evolving fresh produce industry and strive to stay ahead of the latest food trends, technological advances, and food safety initiatives.”

At Nash Produce, the combination of its experienced staff, dedicated group of growers, and continued investment in its large state-of-the-art facilities allow the company to continuously provide exceptional service to customers while also providing the highest quality sweet potatoes year-round.

“The 2021 sweet potato crop was significantly larger than previous years, as inventory levels are expected to run longer than usual,” Narron said. “However, the 2022 crop is projected to be down in acreage by 20-23 percent compared to last year. This can be attributed to pricing not keeping up with the inflation rate, causing growers to focus on other commodities. Additionally, we are used to seeing our export market grow year by year but inflation impacted that sector of the market as well.”

With harvest season being in full gear as of mid-September, the yield and quality of the crop looks good so far; however, with the decrease in acreage, the industry can expect to see a decrease in supply from last year.

Plus, a rising cost of supplies and freight have made this year more difficult than previous years.

“Inflation has been one of the major challenges in this particular segment,” Narron said. “Not only have we experienced this from the supplier side, but our growers are feeling the effects as well. It is not just one part of the supply chain that is having to eat the cost, rather it is the whole supply chain starting with the grower and ending with the consumer. Though these problems are industry wide, we are focusing on ways to counteract these issues by implementing innovative processes to become more cost efficient.”

From a marketing perspective, one thing that Nash Produce prides itself on is how it gives smaller family farms a voice in the industry.

“Our packing facility allows these smaller growers to have a presence in big retail stores like

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Walmart, Trader Joes, and Publix,” Narron said. “We take pride in maintaining these relationships with our local growers and appreciate all that they do for the industry. The least we can do is ship their product across the world so everybody can enjoy a North Carolina sweet potato.”

Behind the scenes, Nash Produce recently filled three new positions within the company. In addition to Narron coming on board, Randi Ricks became the new sales representative for domestic operations, transitioning into her new role at the beginning of the year; and David Bradley was hired as director of business development, joining the company in April.

All three employees will join company president, Thomas Joyner, in Orlando this October for the IFPA show, exhibiting at Booth No. 4327.

“We will be reconnecting with old faces and eager to connect with new ones,” Narron said.

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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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