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IPR Fresh celebrating 20th anniversary in business

By

John Groh, publisher

NOGALES, AZ — [IPR Fresh](#) will celebrate its 20th anniversary in business this December, marking a progression that saw the company first operating as a broker before evolving into its current status as a top distributor of Bell peppers and other staple Mexican vegetables.

Jose Luis Obregon, president of IPR Fresh, here, said the company was founded by his late father, Francisco Pancho Obregon, a well-known member of the Nogales produce scene who died in 2015.

When my father first started IPR Fresh, we were a broker and started working with a grower directly, buying chopper peppers for special orders, he said.

"Today, IPR Fresh is a specialist in colored Bell peppers, which it offers on a year-round basis. We do conventional Bells through June, and we are year-round on organic colored Bells," he said. "Summer volumes are a bit lower, but we manage to keep ourselves busy."

Obregon attributes the success of IPR Fresh to focusing on what we really know and enjoy, referring to Bell peppers. He said that category makes up approximately 65 percent of what the company handles. The rest includes squash, cucumbers, melons and eggplant. He said IPR is also planning to continue with their sweet corn program in December through one of its pepper growers.

Obregon said volumes would be picking up in December, and there would be promotable volumes by the middle of January.

Charged with selling IPRs vegetable lines is a solid young team we have here, he said. We have brought them along, from unloading to dispatch and now to sales, so they understand the business and what we do very well.

He commented that the younger generation works a bit differently than how he was taught. Sometimes I feel like the office is very quiet, but they are very productive, he said. Most of their sales are done with texting or on WhatsApp, so it is different than what I was used to at that age.

Obregon said most of what IPR distributes on the West Coast crosses at Nogales, while its product destined for the East crosses in Pharr, TX. But our day-to-day FOB comes up through Nogales, and that has been pretty efficient lately, he said. But we try to stay on top of things and communicate with our growers to know exactly when we should be crossing.

IPR has seen some substantial growth, especially since starting its organic program five years ago. Two years ago, the company added an additional 20,000 square feet of warehouse space across the street from its facility in Nogales to accommodate the extra business.

Regarding the season ahead, Obregon said, Right now, we are seeing good pricing on Bell peppers due to a lack of volume in the market, so we are looking forward to getting started.

Photo: Enrique.Jose.Alvaro Jose Luis Obregon (center), president of IPR Fresh, at the company's office and warehouse in Nogales, AZ

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About John Groh |

John Groh graduated from the University of San Diego in 1989 with a bachelors of arts degree in English. Following a brief stint as a sportswriter covering the New York Giants football team, he joined The Produce News in 1995 as an assistant editor and worked his way up the ranks, becoming publisher in 2006. He and his wife, Mary Anne, live in northern New Jersey in the suburbs of New York City.

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