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Grapeman Farms remains a leader in Chilean grapes

By

Keith Loria

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[Grapeman Farms](#) has a rich history in the grape category and is the largest importer of Chilean grapes to the West Coast.

“Being that we are a 52 week a year shipper, it’s a very important segment to our company,” said Jared Lane, vice president of sales and marketing for the Los Angeles-based company. “We have grapes every day of the year. We’ve been importing Chilean grapes for over 18 years now, so it’s become a pretty big part of our business.”

The company imports various different pack styles from clam shells to bags so it can meet the needs of all its customers.

“Chilean grapes can range in quality quite a bit,” Lane said. “Grapeman has been in the Chilean import business for so long, we have been able to situate ourselves to where we have some of the most premium quality grapes.”

The Chilean season starts in early January, so growers are just starting to harvest the grapes now, and once picked, the grapes will take about two weeks to arrive to the U.S. on boats. Once they come into the port, they must be fumigated before heading to Grapeman’s facilities.

“They have to be a strong quality in order to make the arrival,” Lane said. “The season will last until about May 15. Peru is getting more and more into the mix and typically eats up a lot of the early half of the season.”

Chile, Lane noted, has had a lot of challenges in recent years, and not just with labor and water, which have historically been an issue. Because of that, things are uncertain about what the upcoming grape season will look like.

Two years ago, Chile had big rain, which impacted the crop significantly and hurt a lot of growers. Last season, it saw lower FOBs, which Lane called a double-edge sword for the growers.

“We’re hoping this year will be more manageable and it seems like with the added volume from Peru and a little bit from Mexico, it pinches Chile on both sides,” Lane said. “We just don’t know what the volume is going to be right now. They are saying that everything is going to stay constant from last year, but I have to think that over time, the volume might drop, especially in the later growing regions which have been challenged the most.”

As the industry has evolved over the last 50 years, so has Grapeman Farms. The company has sales offices in Philadelphia, Nogales and Bakersfield, CA, so it can be near the fruit and provide the very best hands-on service to customers.

“The secret to success is have programs, and have as much of your business programmed out,” Lane said. “Certain customers rely on you, and you need to be certain you have the right ads at the right color to keep the fruit moving through the system.”

Overall, the company had a lot better year than it experienced in the previous three, with Lane noting it was up in volume.

Grapeman Farms will be expanding its Chilean grapes to the East Coast on a more consistent basis and sees that as being where the majority of its growth will be in 2023.

[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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