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Michigan apples beating preseason estimates

By

Kyle Eberth

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With a preseason estimate of 29.5 million bushels via the USDA August report, the [Michigan Apple Committee](#), based in Lansing, MI expected this year's crop to beat that estimate by several million bushels. "Based on conversations with industry members and looking at storage reports for the year so far, I'm thinking the crop size is closer to the mid-30s [million bushels]," said Diane Smith, executive director of the Michigan Apple Committee.

Michigan averages a yearly crop size of 24-25 million bushels, but Smith expected that average to grow as she looks toward the future. "With many new plantings and high-density orchards, I think we are going to see larger crops going forward," she said.

Michigan currently ships to nearly 30 states in the U.S., but with this year's bumper crop, Smith said Michigan growers have seen expanded opportunities to ship to new retailers and wholesalers. "Buyers are noting freight savings and are being more conscious of their carbon footprint, not to mention the freshness factor — less travel time means fresher fruit," she said.

As for quality, Smith said, "pack-outs have yielded great quality and color," with orders ranging from traditional tray pack sizes to lunch box and pre-packaged sizes this season. "Michigan has what buyers and consumers are looking for," she added.

Smith noted the momentum for Michigan apples has not slowed, as the robust crop gives Michigan the opportunity to ship later in the season on most varieties. "Coupled with the fact that our competitors have produced smaller crops this year, means there is more space and time for Michigan in the retail marketplace — it's a chance for consumers to experience the flavor and quality of Michigan apples," Smith said.

On the subject of promotion, Smith explained, the commission's messaging to customers will focus on healthy eating and availability.

"At retail, we are utilizing opportunities with our retail partners on their web platforms, with digital offers and click-through banners showing success in increasing volume and promoting additional sales," said Smith.

EverCrisp® will be a big area of focus for Michigan, as the variety continues to gain popularity, building upon the success of past seasons. "Pink Lady® and Ambrosia are also great apple varieties to promote healthy eating," Smith noted.

As for the big picture, Smith said, "Michigan apples are a great value in the produce department throughout the entire year."

[Kyle Eberth](#)

About Kyle Eberth | 

Kyle Eberth is new to the produce industry, but has grown up around it, in proclaimed "Apple Capitol of the World," Wenatchee, WA. For the past 14-years he has worked in the non-profit sector with an emphasis on brand storytelling, community engagement, and donor relationships.

Kyle graduated from Whitworth University (Spokane, WA) in 2007. He and wife Kelsey were married shortly thereafter, when they moved to Wenatchee to launch their careers. Kyle is "Dad" to Brooklyn and Hudson, together the Eberths enjoy skiing, biking, their family and friends, and playing together in the beautiful place they get to live.

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