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Coast Tropical continues to grow in Mexico mango segment

By

Keith Loria

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Coast Citrus Distributors, doing business as Coast Tropical, is enjoying a good start to its 2023 season and expects the remainder of the year to be just as fruitful.

“There’s been a lack of cold weather and overall, we’re happy,” said Isabel C. Freeland, vice president at the San Diego-based company. “It may not be as good as other years margin-wise; costs have gone up in California with new higher rates per hour, and freight has been extremely high, but we just keep trying to adapt and go forward.”

The company has a long history dealing with Mexican mangos, and have been growing at a steady pace of 15-20 percent each year in the category.

“We love the category and are now an importer and distributor with fruit 52 weeks out of the year, so no gaps,” Freeland said. “Obviously, there are some shortages, but when there are, and you can’t find fruit anywhere else, we have it. We have been able to maintain our contracts and customer base fully supplied 52 weeks out of the year.”

Coast Tropical deals with all the variety of Mexican mangos that are available, which includes Tommy, Atkins, Haden, Kent, Ataulfo and Keitt. It also has organic mangos available.

“Now and then, we will have varieties that nobody else carries,” Freeland said. “We have grown a lot.”

As of mid-February, the first area in Mexico that Coast Tropical ships from was going through certification, so that was ready to head out before the first of March.

“The product is expected to have excellent quality this year,” Freeland said. “If you look at the imports, there are a lot of people who have already imported fruit into the U.S., but we prefer to wait until the proper maturity. Also, because there is very good supply from Peru with very good quality, there’s no need to begin early.”

So, it’s not just about getting out there early with a higher price; the company cares more about providing customers with good quality fruit. Freeland has seen other companies go to market early if there’s a chance of getting a little more in the spot market, even if it means disappointing their own customers. That’s something Coast Tropical would never do.

“The most important thing to us is to provide a good quality fruit on a consistent basis and respect your customers because they’re going to be with you for a long, long time,” Freeland said. “If there are any problems, you must react immediately to their demands or issues. There’s no point continuing to do the same things again and again if someone isn’t happy. You have to take all concerns seriously, correct it and go forward.”

More growth for Coast Tropical is expected in the next year or two, as the company continues to add packaging houses that are exclusively packing for them. For instance, in 2023, the company is working with two new packing houses in Mexico which will bring in extra volume.

“We spend a lot of time educating them on what we want, which is what our customers want,” Freeland said. “They learn about the quality, the different pack types that we make and therefore, we have less quality issues.”

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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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