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Vidalia onion season continues winning ways

By

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The [Vidalia Onion Committee](#) noted that the Vidalia season starts around the third week of April and ends in August, and people are gearing up for another exciting season. With Vidalia season starting mid-April, six weeks goes through Memorial Day as consumers get into the swing of summer grilling season and the habit of summer cooking.

There has been a shortage of Western onions over the past couple of years, which has driven the Vidalia volume up. So, while the overall average is down for the industry, the demand remains strong.

“This class of the sweet onion category, Vidalia sweet onions, is famous for their unrivaled mild and sweet flavor,” said Troy Bland, CEO of Bland Farms. “These sweet onions are always in high demand with consumers and boast a name recognition that spans the globe.”

John Shuman, president and CEO of Shuman Farms, noted over the Christmas holiday, record-low temperatures swept through much of the United States, including Southeast Georgia which experienced multiple nights in the mid to high teens.

“After giving the crop time to recover, we do see some reduction in plant population across the industry,” he said. “The crop is currently growing as expected and with good growing conditions going forward, we are looking forward to the upcoming Vidalia onion season.”

Steven Shuman, general manager and vice president of sales for G&R Farms, noted last year, Vidalia onion sales were up even though volume was a bit flat, which is clearly a product of inflation.

“However, we’re a category that’s still winning overall thanks to the shift in more at-home cooking that has helped reverse the previous trend of declining sales,” he said. “Through close relationships with our buyers, we have been able to collaborate on sales and marketing strategies that help motivate sales and grow the category. Each year is proof that our relationships and quality have us on a winning trajectory that is helping our customers reap rewards.”

G&R Farms’ whole team is involved in various relationship building efforts, working closely with buyers on their needs, but also the industry at large, through involvement with the Vidalia Onion Committee, Vidalia Onion Business Council and the Georgia Fruit Business Council.

“Connecting with consumers through social media and content is always one of the best ways to grow our business,” Steven Shuman said. “We get up every day thinking about onions, while consumers typically don’t. We want to give them tools and resources that help them use sweet onions to make dishes that their friends and family enjoy and tell our story so they know the food they eat is coming from a responsible third generation family farm.”

Thanks to social media platforms, G&R provide educational tools that give insight on its purpose, its products, and ways customers can integrate onions into their meals. This form of digital marketing has been instrumental in creating opportunities to attract consumer loyalty and traffic to the select stores that sell Vidalia onions.

“From day one, consistency of flavor and quality continue to be our priority and are always at the forefront of our decisions related to company change and growth,” Steven Shuman said. “From our variety trials to our new packing line, to new marketing programs, we put the customer first by thinking about quality. We want each of our changes to always move us forward in ways that make us better producers prepared to offer best-in-class customer service and consistent quality.”

With inflation ever-present, consumers have become more selective of the products they buy in stores. Therefore, the key to increasing sales with Vidalia onions is having eye-catching packaging and selling Vidalia’s that are consistent in their quality and flavor — that sweet and savory taste.

Steve Shuman recommends placing Vidalias on endcap for six weeks to build repeat purchase leading into the summer.

“Onions bought by the bag will likely be purchased every other week,” he said. “Today’s shopper is back to one stock up, plus multiple fill-in trips per week. I would not remove endcaps until after Memorial Day. After Memorial Day, I would focus on alternating bag and bulk promotions within your regular set.”

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