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Westside Produce, Classic Fruit establish marketing alliance

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Two of the larger seasonal melon shippers are joining forces to provide retail, foodservice and fresh-cut customers with year-round supplies of cantaloupe, honeydew, watermelon and mixed melons.

[Westside Produce](#), based in Firebaugh, is one of California's largest melon suppliers and has domestic operations in Arizona and California from May through November. [Classic Fruit](#), a leading importer of melons from Guatemala from November through May, has farming operations in Guatemala and sales offices located in California and Florida.

"By joining forces, Classic Fruit and Westside Produce are formalizing a 20-year relationship that will offer our customers top quality melons 52 weeks of the year," said Garrett Patricio, president of Westside Produce. "A steady and consistent, uninterrupted supply of melons is what most customers desire. This alliance allows both companies to better serve those looking for that option."

"What's unique about Westside Produce and Classic Fruit is that both companies control every aspect and phase of their operation," said Paul Raggio, president of Classic Fruit Co. "This begins with proper ground preparation, planting decisions, variety choices, cultural practices including inputs, pollination and pest control. Classic Fruit and Westside Produce also each own and control our harvest, packing, quality control, cooling, marketing and shipping operations."

In addition, the two firms offer comprehensive food-safety and traceability management systems, while incorporating sustainable production practices and safe work environments that promote social and environmental responsibility throughout all their operations.

Sales for the new alliance will be collectively led by Tom Ferguson, Tom Conrado and Mark George. Each has over 20 years of experience in melon sales and nearly as many working together on programs to service their customers. Working with their sales teams, both companies have developed trusted relationships across the aisle and throughout the melon industry.

"Westside Produce and Classic Fruit are respected, vertically integrated grower, packer, shippers and each offers marketing and customer distribution across North America," said Conrado.

"We've worked together for nearly 20 years, this alliance just formalizes what's become a valuable resource in keeping our customers happy," added Ferguson.

"As our customers ask for more service and support year-round, having a stable and consistent supply of fruit becomes ever more important. The shared values and unique similarities between Westside Produce and Classic Fruit will make delivering on our promises much easier," said George.

The Westside Produce and Classic Fruit alliance will begin this spring with melons from Arizona and immediately be followed by production from California's central valley, July through October. Production will return to Arizona in the fall months and between November and May, Westside and Classic will have imported melons from Guatemala.

"We are very excited to begin this venture that allows us to offer our valued customers melons for 52

weeks out of the year,” said Patricio.

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