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**Smith's Farm applauds FFVA efforts for promoting Florida ag**

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By

John Groh, publisher

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Growing broccoli in Florida has its challenges, as the climate can be unpredictable. Despite that, [Smith's Farm](#) has worked hard to develop varieties and growing practices to minimize risk associated with wild weather fluctuations that can crop up during the season.

This year was no exception to those challenges, according to Tara Smith Vighetti, president of Smith Farms Sales, which just wrapped up its Florida broccoli production for the season.

“We endured a hurricane and a tropical storm during planting and then a record freeze during early harvest in December,” she said. “At the time, there was a really strong broccoli market and a lot of demand for eastern produce due to a late start to western winter production in Yuma. But through it all, we were able to provide our customers with a stable supply, and we are very proud of that. The program is well established and still growing.”



Tara Smith Vighetti

(center), president of Smith's Farm Sales, and Lance Smith (in hat at right), chairman of Smith's Farm, hosted a group of nine Florida-based influencers at their Florida farm in early April as part of a two-day field tour conducted by the Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association.

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She added that, especially now with inflation as high as it is, having stability in deliverable volume and price is beneficial to both farmers and consumers alike.

“The fact that we could deliver stable contract pricing to our partners is a great comfort for consumers,” said Smith Vighetti. “Unstable markets and short supply force retailers to either raise prices at point of sale or suffer heavy losses in an already challenging economy. People are already stretched, and we want them to buy fresh produce. We don’t want to compound things trying to cover with crazy prices and a volatile market.”

Smith Vighetti credited the Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association for its work in promoting the Sunshine State’s crops.

“FFVA works so well together with the Florida Department of Agriculture to support growers through the Fresh from Florida program,” said Smith Vighetti.

“The Fresh from Florida program is one of the strongest of its kind,” she said. “It shows us that Florida values its ag producers. The branding is highly recognizable, and the marketing materials even integrate with technology in places like Instacart. These efforts really help to highlight what the state has to offer.”

The FFVA, along with the Agriculture Communicators of Florida, hosted a group of nine Florida-based social media influencers on a two-day farm tour in early April that included stops at Smith’s Farm and three other growers, as well as the University of Florida’s Institute of Food & Agricultural Sciences Cowpen Branch Demonstration and Research facility. During the tour, the influencers were able to see broccoli, cabbage, kale and potato production, as well as artichoke trials at UF/IFAS.

During the stop at Smith’s Farm, Smith Vighetti, along with her father Lance Smith, who is chairman of Smith’s Farm, spoke to the group about the history of the company, which dates back to 1859 and has operations in Maine, New York, North Carolina and Georgia, in addition to Florida.

Smith Vighetti and Smith gave the influencers a first-hand look at how broccoli goes from the field to consumers’ tables, starting at harvest through being packaged for retail at the packinghouse.

Smith Vighetti also touched upon the company’s relationship with the Florida-based quick-service restaurant Fresh Kitchen, which has a build-your-own-bowl concept. Smith’s Farm supplies the broccoli for the chain, and Fresh Kitchen has made it a priority to source local product.

“This is what farm to table is really all about, and Fresh Kitchen has invested in being loyal to Florida produce,” she said.

FFVA said the tour was designed to showcase what Florida farmers do on a daily basis to bring fresh produce to local grocery stores, and ultimately to consumers’ tables. By hosting the influencers, who walked the fields and connected with the farmers, it hoped to generate awareness and educate followers on Florida produce.

*Top photo: Tara Smith Vighetti (fourth from right), president of Smith’s Farm Sales, with a group of nine Florida-based influencers at the company’s farm in early April as part of a two-day field tour conducted by the Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association.*

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[John Groh](#)

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## About John Groh |

John Groh graduated from the University of San Diego in 1989 with a bachelors of arts degree in English. Following a brief stint as a sportswriter covering the New York Giants football team, he joined The Produce News in 1995 as an assistant editor and worked his way up the ranks, becoming publisher in 2006. He and his wife, Mary Anne, live in northern New Jersey in the suburbs of New York City.

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