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## Rich Marolda Jr. seeing ‘phenomenal’ quality’ on early items

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Rich Marolda Jr. of [Marolda Farms](#) spoke a little about the weather over the winter and early spring in southern New Jersey before addressing the upcoming New Jersey spring vegetable deal.



Rich Marolda Jr.

“It was mild for us,” he told *The Produce News* Wednesday, May 3. “I think it was really good for all of our overwinter crops [such as] kale and parsley.”

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He added, “We’re finishing up all of our overwinter stuff this week, and we started harvesting new spring plantings about a week ago on items like cilantro, dill and leaf lettuce.” That’s a bit earlier than normal because of the mild winter, he noted.

Asked which items the company would be handling by the end of May, Marolda replied, “We’ll be in cilantro, dill and parsley. We’ll be in lettuce, beets, collards and kale, Swiss chard, spinach, dandelion. Basically we’ll have everything in our lineup except for leeks.”

Regarding the quality on the very early items, Marolda stated, “Everything’s been phenomenal quality. I couldn’t really ask for nicer stuff. All around it hasn’t been perfect weather, but generally speaking, all the crops have fared well.”

As to pricing so far, he said, “A couple of items have been weak. The radish market has been weak. Other markets have been pretty steady.”

Marolda Farms, located in Vineland, NJ, is owned and operated by Richard Marolda Sr. and his wife, Sherry. Richard Marolda Jr. (their son) is the production manager and also spearheads the company’s organic program; those products are shipped under the “Rock & Roll Organics” label by the entity known as Sweetvine.

Marolda Farms harvests from about 250 acres of conventional acreage and more than 100 acres of certified organic acreage, according to Rich Jr.

In light of the ongoing interest in organic items by retailers and consumers, Marolda stated, “Every year we’re increasing on the organic side of the operation, and that’s across the board.”

About six to seven years ago, the company’s sales were about three-quarters conventional produce and one-quarter organic produce, he estimated. “At the end of last year, our sales were about 50-50,” he said. And going forward, he expects that increasing focus on organic produce to continue.

An example of the attention on organics, there’s a new item this year. “I’m going to plant my first organic fig trees this year,” he announced. “Normally you will see some fruit in the first year of planting but nothing significant. That comes in the second year,” he said.

So the fig trees should produce some fruit by around late August, but by next summer they “should see good production,” he concluded.

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