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Sunny Valley International filling demand for Jersey Fresh Blueberries

By

Keith Loria

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[Sunny Valley International](#) is a supplier of imported and domestic blueberries, with strong supplies in the category 12-months a year.

“Our import program includes programs out of Peru, Chile and Mexico,” said Tom Beaver, director of sales and marketing for the Glassboro, NJ-based company. “Domestically, we supply berries out of the Southeast, the West Coast and British Columbia, but our most noteworthy domestic program is our New Jersey deal.”

In fact, Sunny Valley is the exclusive marketer for the “Jersey Fruit Cooperative,” marketing blueberries for 10 family-owned blueberry growers in New Jersey.

“Sunny Valley International has marketed imported and domestic blueberries for the better part of three decades,” Beaver said. “The blueberry deal has evolved significantly over the years. Obviously, imports have had a dramatic impact. Consumers now have access to blueberries 12 months out of the year, which has cemented blueberries as a fixture in berry displays 52-weeks out of the year.”

Consumer demand has also skyrocketed, based on the notably health benefits of blueberry consumption, the perception of berries as a convenience/snack item and the incredible flavor profile of blueberries.

“What’s exciting for us is that all of this evolution in the category has not undercut consumer demand for and interest in domestic blueberries, especially in New Jersey,” Beaver said. “No matter what happens the other 10-months out of the year, we know that consumers cannot wait for Jersey Fresh blueberries, especially here in the mid-Atlantic and into the greater Northeast. There is nothing like fresh, local blueberries at the peak of summer.”

Success in the berry category, as in most other categories in this industry, is grounded in going above and beyond for customers.

“That’s what we strive to do every day for our customers at Sunny Valley,” Beaver said. “Our focus is on durable partnerships, and we know we can’t get there without offering real solutions for our retail and wholesale accounts. This means we have to time ads and promotions correctly to drive sales at retail. It also means that we need to do everything we can to deliver on time and in full so our customers have product when we need.”

Above all, Beaver added, it means relying on a network of growers who are peerless.

“Nowhere is that exemplified more than in our upcoming Jersey Fruit blueberry program,” Beaver said. “We know that our growers will pick, pack and ship product that is unrivaled, and our customers know that as well.”

Demand for blueberries remains durable, and so far inflationary pressures and a drawdown in consumer spending have not appeared to affect the category.

“Blueberries are a ubiquitous item in millions of shopping carts now,” Beaver said. “Even with this durable demand for blueberries, the oversupply challenges are real at different points throughout the year. The key is to identify these windows to drive promotion and volume movement to ensure that the growers are getting a fair price and retailers are able to drive sales and volume movement at the right points in time.”

For New Jersey, Sunny Valley is expecting a full crop for the season ahead and will most likely be shipping a week ahead of normal.

“By June 12, we should be into full volume, and we anticipate an excellent crop, aided by perfect weather and excellent pollination outcomes,” Beaver said. “The New Jersey season should carry us well into July, and we will transition into mostly Peruvian supplies by mid-August. We will then continue with imports from Peru and Chile primarily through March of next year, before transitioning back to domestics.”

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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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