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**Plenty of experience behind NuBerry Farms**

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By

Keith Loria

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It was four years ago when Fru-Veg Marketing first partnered with Berry Bros. allowing the company to expand its blueberry program to include domestic blueberries to customers from farm-to-table. It also created a 12-month, year-round supply of fresh blueberries.

Fru-Veg has been in the blueberry import business for 20-plus years and the Walker family, the growing entity of Berry Bros., has been farming blueberries for several years. They made the savvy business decision to market its own crop under NuBerry Farms. Today, the entity provides blueberries from 2,600 acres in Florida, Georgia, New Jersey, North Carolina and Michigan.

“We grow and market our own fruit so we’re vertically integrated and in control — as owner/growers — of everything from the bees to the bushes and we pack safe, great-tasting, healthy blueberries every day,” said Jason Rudd, vice president of sales for NuBerry Farms. “We ship year-round, several million pounds of blueberries.”

The company does work with a handful of third-party growers, but for the most part, NuBerry Farms is the grower for the bulk of its blueberries.

This season, NuBerry has all new branding on its blueberry products, including a bright yellow label that pops in the stores, and a light green label for its organic products.

“Although the label is new, the infrastructure and people who make up the company are not,” Rudd said. “Most of us have been in the business 15-20 years.”

That experience is helping NuBerry quickly become a brand people are looking for.

“We’ve been working with multiple marketers for 15-plus years. We decided to take a portion of it and sell retail and wholesale direct,” Rudd said.

At the end of May, the company was harvesting blueberries in Georgia with North Carolina ramping up and running until about mid-June. New Jersey was scheduled to start around Father’s Day and that will run until the end of July. At the beginning of July, NuBerry’s 1,000 acres in Michigan starts, and that will go to the end of September. Input season comes in September as well.

“We’re in all these regions and have been for many years,” Rudd said. “In those regions, we do own and operate six packinghouses.”

So far, the crops all look pretty strong as there have been little to no major weather events in any of the areas NuBerry grows.

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“We expect a good season,” Rudd said. “The market has been really, really good in Florida and Georgia, and demand has been very strong.”

The reason that consumers are more attracted to blueberries than ever before, Rudd theorizes, is that marketing has been very detailed about all the health benefits that blueberries can offer, but also it has become more affordable in recent years.

“They are great tasting and are very diverse, whether eating fresh, mixed in a cereal or put in a pie,” Rudd said. “There are so many ways people can eat blueberries.”

Looking ahead, those at NuBerry Farms believes the future is wide open with the company controlling its own destiny.

“We are still buying farms and looking to expand from east to west,” Rudd said. “Being vertically integrated has a huge value for us.”

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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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