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**Duda Farm Fresh Foods is a family affair**

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By

Seth Mendelson

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Six generations later and the Duda family still maintains a rigorous commitment to innovation, sustainability and growing a healthy future for all of the company's retail and foodservice partners, as well as the many consumers who love their produce.

This consistent and reliable business model has helped [Duda Farm Fresh Foods](#) become a leading grower, shipper, processor and marketer of fresh vegetables and citrus, including the celery market, where company officials say that about 33 percent of all celery consumed in this country comes from a Duda farm. All in all, not bad for a company that was started in 1926 by Andrew Duda with just 40 acres of Florida farmland and now has locations in Florida, California, Arizona, Georgia and Michigan.

"We provide a true national solution with our production regions in California, Arizona, Florida, Georgia and Michigan," said Rick Alcocer, senior vice president of sales and marketing at the Oviedo, FL-based company. "We continue to grow our national footprint to provide not only regional and local product offerings, but also multiple growing regions in production at any given time. This improves our opportunity to provide surety of supply of quality products.

"We also continue to educate ourselves on what is driving consumers purchasing habits and preferences," continued Alcocer. "Our marketing, consumer research and innovation efforts will continue to support each customer and their specific needs to grow our collective businesses and partnership."

Attendees at the IPFA Foodservice show can expect to see a broad range of products, including celery, lettuce, leafy greens, radish and corn, at the Duda booth.

Celery remains a priority for the company. Alcocer said that Duda is focused on providing great taste, freshness, progressive processing and in-house freight and logistics and proprietary celery seed varieties.

"Duda Farm Fresh Foods leads the world in research and development to naturally breed superior seed varieties for a difference you can taste," he said. "We have invested heavily in research and development as well as worked alongside nature to perfect growing the sweetest, crispiest, less stringy propriety seed varieties available. Our research and processes give us the capability to grow in different regions of the United States without compromising the deliciously sweet flavor consumers enjoy."

Alcocer added that fresh-cut Dandy celery utilizes a variety of processes to protect and extend the shelf life of company products. In 2016, the Dandy brand introduced "Celery Snack Cups" for on-the-go health and convenience.

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“From seed selection to transplant, growing, harvesting, processing and shipping, Duda Farm Fresh Foods ensures best practices to deliver unmatched freshness and quality to the customers worldwide,” he said.

Duda Farm Fresh Foods also uses a highly innovative waterjet cutting technology that eliminates the use of metal blades. This technique cuts the celery more smoothly, leaving less strings and pits and locks in moisture, resulting in a higher quality product.

Alcocer said that the company’s own in-house freight and logistics team does not depend on the open truck market to cover delivered business. “In addition to our own truck fleet, we have developed direct relationships with various trucking companies which have dedicated specific trucks for our program,” he said. “Our consistent truck supply means on demand deliveries and excellent customer service.”

In the end, Alcocer and others at the company point out that its history, family values and track record working with both retailers and food service operators help make Duda stand out in a crowd.

“Duda’s foodservice program offers fresher product from multiple growing locations,” Alcocer said. “Our year-round availability makes menu planning and sourcing easier for foodservice professionals. We’ve seen that all lettuces are a key commodity for foodservice — from the traditional salad bowl to a fancy garnish or warmed and sauteed — almost every plate going out has some form of lettuce on it.”

With future generations becoming prepared to join in, Duda officials are confident that the company will work closely with its partners in the future to ensure that they get the best product possible. “We will continue to work with our customers to help them through the current challenges faced with labor and logistics shortages,” Alcocer said.

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