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**Del Rey offering organics 365 days a year**

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By

Tim Linden

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[Del Rey Avocado Co.](#) is a year-round supplier of avocados from multiple sources of origin, but it still focuses on its California crop with an organic-forward mentality.

“As a California avocado grower and packer, our No. 1 priority is California,” said Patrick Lucy, president of the Fallbrook, CA-based company. “We always strive to be the first in and last out with California fruit.”

This year is no exception as Del Rey still represents a sizeable portion of the avocados grown in California’s most northern district encompassing San Luis Obispo and Morro Bay. “We expect decent volume from Morro Bay through the end of September. At that point that area should be producing the best tasting avocados of the year,” he said.

Morro Bay growers keep their fruit on the tree much longer than any other region in California, and even the world.

Area growers have long touted that this cultural practice, allowed by the area’s cooler temperatures, leads to a flavor profile that no other area can match when it is at the peak of its season. Anecdotally, they have many avocado devotees who support that proposition.

Lucy said like much of the avocado crop from the Golden State as well as Mexico and even Peru, this year’s size profile for the Morro Bay fruit will skew smaller than usual, allowing for some good bagged fruit promotions.

Lucy said the company is also well known for its devotion to organics and he believes Del Rey is the largest California grower and packer of organic avocados.

He noted the company also sources organics from Mexico and Peru allowing it to provide its customers with an organic avocado option all year long. “Peru has joined the table the last couple of years helping us to have organics 365 days a year,” he said.

It is that desire to be a year-round avocado supplier that has driven Del Rey to continually look for suppliers in the various producing countries. Mexico has long had a major role in the company’s sourcing strategy as it is the No. 1 supplier of avocados to the United States. This year, Lucy said Peru is also doing an excellent job and seems to have found its sweet spot in the June through September time frame when Mexico’s fruit is at its low point.

“This is Peru’s best year to date,” he said. “They have very good quality fruit.”

Lucy opined that this summer window may prove to offer the best opportunity for Peru. He added that

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Del Rey largely uses Peruvian avocados to satisfy its East Coast customers.

The company opened a new packing and warehouse facility in Vista, CA, several years ago so it has nothing new to report on the facilities front, but Lucy did say the grower-packer introduced a new pack for its GEM variety fruit this season. GEM was released as a new variety about two decades ago but it's just now finding its way to the marketplace in significant numbers as a California-exclusive variety.

Lucy said it's a good variety that tends to produce a larger size curve than the Hass. It also matures a bit later and its tree structure makes it less prone to wind scarring. The Del Rey executive said sales of GEM are going pretty well this year and it is starting to get a good following. California growers have increased their plantings of the variety significantly over the last decade. "We're expecting it to double in volume each year for the next two seasons," he said. "This year, the industry has about 2.5 million pounds. We're expecting 5 million in 2024 and 10 million pounds in 2025."

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## About Tim Linden |

Tim Linden grew up in a produce family as both his father and grandfather spent their business careers on the wholesale terminal markets in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Tim graduated from San Diego State University in 1974 with a degree in journalism. Shortly thereafter he began his career at The Packer where he stayed for eight years, leaving in 1983 to join Western Growers as editor of its monthly magazine. In 1986, Tim launched Champ Publishing as an agricultural publishing specialty company.

Today he is a contract publisher for several trade associations and writes extensively on all aspects of the produce business. He began writing for The Produce News in 1997, and currently wears the title of Editor at Large.

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