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**Honeybear's new partnership key for upcoming Michigan season**

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By

Kyle Eberth

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Elite Apple Co., has partnered with Honeybear Brands to promote its apple varieties this coming season. The Elite Apple Co. is a privately held, grower-owned production facility located in Sparta, MI, the heart of Michigan's apple country. The legacy grower has been in the premium apple business for more than four decades, a strategic move by Honeybear Brands, bolstering its Midwest programs.

Don Roper, vice president of sales and marketing at Honeybear said, "The increased production will provide greater depth and scope for our market leading regional apple program." A lead aspect of Honeybear's retail offering centers on providing strong regional supply of key retail varieties.

Honeybear Brands, based in Elgin, MN, has acreage and processing facilities in Washington state and throughout the Midwest, to go along with its newest partnership in Michigan. Roper noted Honeybear's geographic diversity is strategic, "we are able to provide a seamless solution for many of our retail partners as we can leverage our local market supply of great everyday varieties and provide necessary supply assurance of non-regional Washington apples, Cosmic Crisp and other organics varieties."

Honeybear's Midwest mix consists of both newer varieties to go along with premium mainline varieties. "The new production will help us reach our goal of having year-round regional production of key varieties, like Honeycrisp and Gala," said Roper, who confirmed an additional volume of new varieties like Ambrosia, Pazazz, and EverCrisp is on the way.

On the horticultural front, The Elite Apple Co. has invested in its orchard practices via irrigated, high density plantings, utilizing the latest agronomic practices to ensure consistent apple production year over year. The 2,000-acre farm also utilizes self-driving platforms to support overhead hedging. From a facility standpoint, Roper said, "Elite has heavily invested in modern technology to simultaneously provide high quality and large volumes of premium packed fruit, with the ability to scale."

As for the upcoming Michigan season, Honeybear is planning on another nice crop year. "We are expecting it to be 28MM coming off the prior year of nearly 30MM," said Roper. He added, "There are lots of young trees in the ground and the weather has been fantastic the past month and getting nicer — with some luck, we could be pushing 30MM again this year of high quality production."

Honeybear expects to see some Wildfire Galas and Ginger Golds being picked week 8-15, while Roper added, "If we get the crop size we are hoping for, I see our Michigan production carrying through next summer on several varieties." Roper has high hopes for Honeybear's upcoming Michigan season, particularly with Elite Apple Co. in the fold.

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[Kyle Eberth](#)

**About Kyle Eberth** | 

Kyle Eberth is new to the produce industry, but has grown up around it, in proclaimed "Apple Capitol of the World," Wenatchee, WA. For the past 14-years he has worked in the non-profit sector with an emphasis on brand storytelling, community engagement, and donor relationships.

Kyle graduated from Whitworth University (Spokane, WA) in 2007. He and wife Kelsey were married shortly thereafter, when they moved to Wenatchee to launch their careers. Kyle is "Dad" to Brooklyn and Hudson, together the Eberths enjoy skiing, biking, their family and friends, and playing together in the beautiful place they get to live.

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