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**New equipment for O.C. Schulz & Sons has been a big blessing**

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By

Keith Loria

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For more than 50 years, [O.C. Schulz & Sons](#) has been meeting the needs of customers, growing, packing and shipping potatoes in the Red River Valley.

Operating out of Crystal, ND, the company specializes in red and yellow potatoes and utilizes sugar beets, wheat and soybeans for rotational purposes. Currently, it has 1,400 acres of potatoes, with 70 percent reds and 30 percent yellows.

“We finished packing and grading the 2022 crop in May and put the 2023 crop in the ground that same month,” said David Moquist, a partner in the company. “We just started harvesting the potatoes on Sept. 11, and we’ve been a little limited on what we’ve seen so far.”

However, what Moquist has seen has been all positive. One variety of yellows has already been harvested, and all the early reds have looked nice as well.

“It looks like excellent quality and at least an average crop,” he said. “We’re pleased. It’s all we can ask for.”

In 2022, O.C. Schulz & Sons stayed busy through the whole packing season and got all the potatoes out in a timely manner to keep its customers happy.

“We were pleased with everything,” Moquist said. “Last year, we put in new equipment and totally re-did our pack line. We put in an Ellips sizer/sorter with grading capabilities and it did a great job for us as far as putting out consistent quality. We had extremely limited hand grading, so it worked well and we were extremely happy with it.”

The company also added some other equipment for bagging 50s in bags and cartons and have the ability to put out all consumer packs someone would want (3- 5- and 10-pound packs).

The rain-fed potato farm is dependent on the area’s good weather and stable snowpack, with Moquist noting that the beauty of the Red River Valley comes from its soil, resulting from the area being formed by a glacial lake, Lake Agassiz. That has helped the Red River Valley remain the premier place to grow red potatoes in the U.S.

“We’re one of the few areas that are still raising dry-land grown potatoes,” he said. “We don’t have irrigation, so it makes us more sustainable. It’s worked for over 100 years since my great-grandfather homesteaded here. Along with that, our soil has good moisture-holding capacity, we’re high-organic soil, and along with the minerals that are in it, it provides excellent red color.”

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With more than 50 years of experience, the company is no stranger to working through challenges and this year, it is facing many of the same things that other companies in the produce industry are—mainly labor and cost issues.

“Labor is the biggest issue. We make use of H2A labor from South Africa, which helps a lot and makes a big difference to us,” Moquist said. “It just seems there isn’t the local labor available anymore that used to be here.”

O.C. Schulz & Sons’ customer base is comprised of wholesalers and re-packers.

The company recently collaborated with Hall’s from Hoople, ND on a new brokerage venture called H&S Marketing LLC, with Jeff Lazur hired to run sales.

“So, we’re probably looking for more retail business as we go forward,” Moquist said.

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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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