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Southern Specialties adds green onions to product mix

By

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Southern Specialties has a produce portfolio that includes asparagus, baby squash, baby carrots and other baby vegetables, as well as broccolettes and clipped greens — all available under the company's Southern Selects label.

“In November, we are celebrating our 33rd year in business,” said Charlie Eagle, vice president of business and development for the Pompano Beach, FL-based company. “We started out growing specialty produce in Guatemala, and today, we grow, import, process and distribute product in 10 countries and the Americas.”

One of the chief reasons for its success, Eagle noted, is that Florida is a fantastic gateway into the United States for products grown in Central America and South America, which has been the company's sweet spot for many years.

“Our Pompano Beach location is ideally located along the Eastern seaboard corridors and enables us to deliver product to our customers as far north as Canada and as far west as Texas and the Midwest,” he said. “We are minutes away from the Ports of Miami and Fort Everglades, and international airports.”

Southern Specialties operates out of a 175,000-square-foot facility, which is optimized to handle all the products it brings into the U.S., including storage with ideal temperatures and humidity, as well as computer-controlled ripening rooms.

This year, the company has faced some challenges from El Nino. In one of its main growing regions in Guatemala, it's experienced six months of a dry spell and it's entered the rainy season a bit late, which is expected to extend the growing season into the first half of 2024.

“Peru is seeing normal than warmer weather, which will be followed by more rain than usual through the first quarter of 2024,” Eagle said. “We are expecting good supplies of asparagus from Peru heading into November, but we're forecasting a significant decline in production as we near mid-December and January.”

In 2023, Southern Specialties has added green onions to its mix, seeing good quality and volume, and is letting customers know about the new offering, which has been well received.

The company's greenhouse-grown heirloom tomato production has been a little lower than usual due to overcast weather patterns, but that should mean it will last longer through the winter season.

“Our green bean deal should have good supply through January,” Eagle said. “Florida has just started production and will be in full swing shortly.”

New fields of snow peas are slated to open soon and that production is expected to run through April.

Southern Specialties will soon be heading to the New York Produce Show, where it expects to talk about the majority of its products at booth No. 653. “We’ve enjoyed being able to meet and greet customers and potential customers at both the national and regional produce shows,” Eagle said. “We’re fresh off the global show, where we had a team of 10 people attending and had some excellent follow-up. We look forward to being in New York and meeting some of those people who weren’t able to make it out west for that show. This is always a good show for us; it’s more intimate and gives us time to spend with some of our existing customers.”

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