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North Bay sees big year ahead for Michigan apples

By

Keith Loria

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Michigan apples are a year-round program for [North Bay Produce](#) and are therefore a very important segment to the company's sales and profits.

A cooperative of more than 32 grower-owners from North, Central and South America, North Bay started as an apple company but has since expanded to a plethora of fresh fruits and vegetables year-round.



Ken Korson

Ken Korson, apple category manager for the Traverse City, MI-based company, is tasked with collaborating with growers to determine the best time to pack apples, and also oversees the organization of its controlled atmosphere rooms for the season.

These have been his responsibility going on 15 years, and under his leadership, the company's six packingsheds have upgraded their packinglines and facilities, which has increased the quality of the apple pack and efficiency of each shed.

"North Bay Produce started our business with Michigan apples and soon began to operate year-round," Korson said. "We have also made efforts to cultivate better eating varieties, which has contributed to increased sales."

As the manager of these six sheds, it's Korson's responsibility to oversee the fruit once it's been harvested and placed in the bins, and it's a part of the job he has excelled at over the years.

"The growers depend on me to inform them about the daily packing schedule and ensure that the fruit is efficiently processed," he said. "Having strong relationships with growers, customers, and other shippers is key to success in the apple category."

North Bay experienced a successful 2023 apple season, and the company hopes that this year will be even better.

"As long as we continue to prioritize our customers' needs," Korson said, "The upcoming crops look promising due to high-density plantings, but the final yield will depend on the weather during spring and summer."

North Bay's main customer base is in retail, and the company has a strong presence in export, foodservice and USDA business. These are all areas that the company continues to grow in and is always up for new prospects to further that growth.

"The biggest growth opportunity for apples lies in exporting them to establish new, affordable businesses," Korson said.

For retailers, he noted that the most effective way to boost sales is by placing apples in high-traffic areas and regularly rotating new varieties to keep the display fresh for customers.

"At North Bay, we are constantly inspired by the dedication of our staff and growers who are driving sales higher every year," Korson said.

[Keith Loria](#)

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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