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**Industry hoping for strong Peruvian onion season ahead**

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By

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Peruvian sweet onions play a crucial role in the onion category by providing a consistent supply of high-quality, flavorful onions during the fall and winter months when Vidalia onions are not available.

Plus, their mild, sweet taste and versatility in cooking make them a popular choice among consumers, driving sales and enhancing the overall appeal of the produce department.

“These onions help maintain a year-round availability of sweet onions, supporting retailers in meeting customer demand and ensuring category growth,” said John Shuman, president and CEO of Shuman Farms. “Additionally, their attractive appearance and reliable quality contribute to an appealing and diverse produce display, encouraging repeat purchases and customer satisfaction.”

Last Peruvian onion season, things were status quo, with about the same number of onions in acreage, though volume was down due to severe weather challenges.

“Like everywhere, weather can be a challenge and last year was no exception,” said Steven Shuman, general manager and vice president of sales for the Glennville, GA-based G&R Farms. “At this point, we have our acreage pretty well dialed in, but you never know the hand Mother Nature might deal you, so our start times and stop times for the season can vary, as can our yields, which last year was true on all levels.”

The industry is hoping for a better outlook for the 2024-2025 season but as of late July, there were still some unknowns.

“It’s a little too early to make any predictions about the Peruvian season as it’s hard to guess at what Mother Nature will do,” Steven Shuman said. “What we do know is that last season was marked by an intense El Niño pattern which is now rapidly shifting to a La Niña pattern. We are still on target for our first shipments arriving in the U.S. in late August.”

Still, weather isn’t the only thing to keep an eye on. “Additional challenges with our Peru program continue to be ocean freight and port issues but we believe those challenges are starting to stabilize

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creating fewer delays in arrivals,” Steven Shuman said.

Those working with Peruvian sweet onions feel there are many ways to boost the program in the produce department. Collaborative marketing efforts, such as in-store promotions, attractive displays and edutainment messaging, can engage and educate consumers about the versatility and health benefits of sweet onions, encouraging increased purchases.

“Through our proven track record of delivering premium-quality sweet onions, our retailer partners can enhance their product offerings, attracting more customers to the produce aisle,” John Shuman said. “Additionally, Shuman Farms’ expertise in sustainable farming and commitment to freshness ensures that retailers can provide a consistent supply of high-quality produce, driving repeat business.”

Steven Shuman feels there isn’t a one-size-fits-all approach to marketing sweet onions.

“Of significance is making sure you seize as many impulse and strategic purchases as possible in as many locations as possible with omnichannel strategies,” he said. “That includes in-store, online digital, out-of-home, and other pathways to get into the consciousness of the consumer with mealtime inspiration that includes sweet onions. We need to be on every list, every week.”

By leveraging these strategies, retailers can increase their consumers’ market baskets and promote the overall consumption of fresh produce, fostering a healthier community and boosting store loyalty.

“I think the opportunity continues to be in meeting customers where they are — either the buyer or the consumer,” Steven Shuman said. “At the farm level, that means making changes in our technology and sustainability programs to continue to support efficiencies across the board for our buyers. And for consumers it means delivering a high-quality, consistent onion 365 days a year and reminding them sweet onions are the starting point for nearly every meal they make.”

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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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