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Eagle Eye Produce continues to advance, expand on every front

By

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The past 12 months have brought several significant changes and continued growth to [Eagle Eye Produce](#)'s Nyssa, ID, operation.

One change occurred during the growing season, with company veteran Joe Ange moving into the role of director of onion sales. Ange had previously served as director of business development.

Ange commented in June on his new role and the continued expansion of one of the industry's key players.

“Over the past season, we have grown our support and sales staff to better serve our customers,” Ange said. “We have hired more industry veterans onto our sales team, including Dillon Duncan, who brings more onion expertise to our team.”

He continued, “We have also introduced a new internship program to welcome young professionals into the produce industry. As part of these changes, I've taken on a revamped role as the director of onion sales, and I'm looking forward to leading our team as we continue to grow and improve.”

In addition to the new faces at Eagle Eye in Nyssa, the company has also grown its footprint. Ange said, “We have significantly expanded our supply network in Idaho and eastern Oregon. This includes the addition of a state-of-the-art storage facility in Nyssa, which improves our ability to maintain the quality of our onions for longer.”

Ange added, “We have also increased our access to production capabilities by partnering with additional warehouses, ensuring a steady year-round supply to meet growing demand.”

New technology and equipment are part of the continued growth as well.

“We have made several upgrades and improvements over the past year,” Ange said. “We have continued to develop our retail packaging line to meet our retail partners' needs,

allowing us to pack everything from two-pound retail bags up to 50-pound bags,” he said. “We also installed a new automated bin stacker at our Nyssa warehouse, and we have invested in a high-tech storage facility in Nyssa to keep onions fresh until later in the season, with a long-term goal of extending our supply later into the spring.”

The team continues to research new varieties “to plant later in the season to further extend our season in Idaho and eastern Oregon,” he said. “This year, we introduced a full line of shallots, including pearls and cipollinis, sourced directly from family farms in eastern Oregon. These shallots are available under the Harvest Select brand in various pack sizes, from one- to 50-pounds.”

Food-safety is paramount at Eagle Eye Produce, and Ange said, “Over the past five to 10 years, we have made significant improvements in food-safety. We recently partnered with HeavyConnect to digitize our practices and improve transparency.”

He added, “We participate in Certified Onion Inc. testing and conduct audits for Good Agricultural Practices, focusing on better record-keeping for pesticide applications, equipment cleanliness, water testing and field risk assessments.”

In the company’s facilities, he said, “We have improved transparency with suppliers, updated policies to keep up with evolving food-safety trends, increased labeling for better traceability and strengthened employee training. We validate our practices and conduct audits for Good Manufacturing Practices, including environmental monitoring and developing Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point plans.”

As one of the major onion operations in the Treasure Valley and Northwest, EEP has a deep-rooted history of commitment to quality and service in producing onions. Based in Idaho Falls, with numerous partnerships in Idaho and Oregon as well as Washington, Texas, California and New Mexico, EEP grows, packs and ships more than 100 million pounds of onions annually.

It was established in 1996 and started as a simple office in the laundry room of President and CEO Newman Giles. EEP began with a focus on growing and shipping potatoes and expanded its product line over time to include domestically grown onions, multiple varieties of melons, Nogales vegetables and value-added potato products.

Several years ago, the operation doubled its Treasure Valley onion supplies by merging with Fiesta Farms in Nyssa, OR, and in 2021 EEP entered an exclusive sales and marketing arrangement with Central Produce in Payette, ID.

As partners with EEP, Central Produce and Fiesta Farms, each brought generations of experience and dedication to the mix.

Fiesta Farms began as a Bybee family company well over 70 years ago through the efforts of Shay Bybee. Today, Marc Bybee, grandson of Shay, oversees operations at the Nyssa facility where Eagle Eye onions are packed.

Over the past 75 years, other Bybees have been a part of Fiesta. Marc’s late father, Garry, and Garry’s brother, Jay, became owners of the family company in the late 1960s, and in the 70s Garry Bybee took over as sole owner. Marc and his wife, Tamara, continued the family tradition as well.

Central Produce began shipping in 1943. During the ensuing eight decades, the company has had

several owners and growers; today it is owned by WBH Farms and Starr Island Farms, both multi-generational farms who came on in 2005.

The collaborative experience and skills have worked well for the company during good years and those with big challenges. Ange said 2023 saw a good market for Treasure Valley onions.

“The 2023-24 season was defined by hurricanes and storms decreasing onion supplies in Mexico, creating high demand for onions from Northwest growers,” he said. “In response to this remarkable demand, we exported more onions to Mexico than ever before. The industry benefitted from elevated markets for the entire season, allowing our growers to reinvest in their crops and further strengthen Idaho and eastern Oregon’s production capabilities.”

Some challenges are ongoing, such as the labor supply, but Ange said EEP has a handle on the situation.

“Although labor continues to be tight, our growing teams and warehouses have managed to adapt,” he said. “We usually struggle early in the season, particularly during harvest, but we typically resolve challenges as the season progresses.”

And automation helps, he said. “Last year, our Nyssa warehouse installed an automated bin stacker, making the binning process during harvest more efficient and less demanding for workers, which has also helped address our labor challenges.”

Using ever-changing technology and building on the combined skills of its partners and team members, Eagle Eye Produce also continues to stay the course with generations of experience to provide top quality and excellent service.

Photo: Dan Corn shows off a mid-July Spanish Sweet onion. Photo courtesy of Eagle Eye Produce

[Kathleen Thomas Gaspar](#)

About Kathleen Thomas Gaspar |

Kathleen is a Colorado native and has been writing about produce for more than three decades and has been a professional journalist for more than four decades. Over the years she's covered a cornucopia of crops grown both in the United States and abroad, and she's visited dozens of states – traveling by car from her home base in Colorado to the Northwest and Southeast, as far as Vancouver, BC, and Homestead, FL. Now semi-retired, Kathleen continues to write about produce and is also penning an ongoing series of fiction novels. She's a wife, mother of two grown sons and grandmother of six, and she and her fly fisherman husband Abe reside in the Banana Belt town of Cañon City.

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