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Advance Customs Brokers expands with partnership

By

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In an effort to better serve its customers in U.S. ports of entry around the country, Miami-based [Advance Customs Brokers International LLC](#) has entered into a strategic partnership with two other customs brokers.

The company, which was formed more than a decade ago by Patricia Compres and Maria Bermudez, has joined forces with Alba Wheels Up, headquartered in Valley Stream, NY, and John A. Steer Co., based in Philadelphia. The three firms will continue to operate independently, while also offering collaborative services to each other.

“This will give us boots on the ground in Philly, New York/New Jersey, California, and Houston as well as Miami,” said Compres.

Bermudez added that this additional level of service will give its customers hands-on representation in the major U.S. ports in which they import fruits and vegetables. The collaboration combines expertise across a broad line of imported products. She noted that Alba specializes in dry cargo while John Steer concentrates on imported wines and meat. Of course, Advance Customs Brokers International LLC (its new updated name) focuses its efforts in the fruit and vegetable arena.

Compres did add that from time to time, its customers do get involved in bringing in other items, such as equipment or materials that they use in their operations. “This collaboration allows us to have a working relationship with brokers in other ports that have an expertise to service our customers when they are in need,” she said.

Speaking in late August, Compres and Bermudez noted that new offices are being opened in the other ports by mid-September to give their customers the peace of mind they want. The pair of veteran custom brokers, who have been working together for more than two decades, said the digital advances in customs clearance procedures over that time frame have allowed the industry to successfully work remotely and clear product in ports of entry across the country. But many customers like the idea of having a physical presence in those major ports.

“We never like to stand still,” said Compres. “This collaboration gives us advantages and also gives our customers something that they have asked for.”

The two brokers also revealed that it has allowed their operation to upgrade its logistics software package to CargoWise, which they indicated is the gold standards in customs brokerage systems. “It is the most complete customs brokerage program,” said Compres.

Bermudez added that it will make life easier for their customers and for their staff. On its website, CargoWise reports that users can execute complex logistics transactions and manage their freight operations from a single, easy to use platform, powered by advanced technology, automation and analytics. The systems should be up and running for Advance Customs by Nov. 1.

Turning their attention to the Peruvian asparagus deal, the Advance Customs Brokers owners noted that imports were down in the past year, largely because of weather issues. While they do anticipate increased asparagus volume, Compres said there is a shift going on in Peru as some growers are looking toward other crops that they expect to be more profitable.

Regarding the customs brokerage business itself, Compres said the most impactful change coming down the pike is the relaxation of the fumigation rules for some Chilean grape exporters. The change was announced recently by USDA, with the details still being worked out. “We can’t wait to see USDA’s final result and which growers will be approved for clearance without fumigation,” she said.

The systems approach for clearing those approved grapes shipments is the same procedure that the Peruvian asparagus industry has been advocating for the past few years. Compres and Bermudez said the industry is hoping that the action for Chilean grapes is soon extended to Peruvian asparagus, but waiting seems to be the name of the game.

Surveying the U.S. port situation, the pair said there have no major changes though Port Hueneme in Southern California and the port of Savannah in Georgia on the East Coast continue to be solid alternatives for produce shipments. Bermudez said Savannah’s location halfway between Miami and Philadelphia makes it attractive for some produce importers. Compres said Hueneme has fared well because it is run very efficiently and produce importers find it to be an excellent port in which to clear their product quickly.

Photo: Maria Bermudez and Pat Compres

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About Tim Linden |

Tim Linden grew up in a produce family as both his father and grandfather spent their business careers on the wholesale terminal markets in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Tim graduated from San Diego State University in 1974 with a degree in journalism. Shortly thereafter he began his career at The Packer where he stayed for eight years, leaving in 1983 to join Western Growers as editor of its monthly magazine. In 1986, Tim launched Champ Publishing as an agricultural publishing specialty company.

Today he is a contract publisher for several trade associations and writes extensively on all aspects of the produce business. He began writing for The Produce News in 1997, and currently wears the title of Editor at Large.

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