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FruVeg Marketing continues to expand its Peru asparagus footprint

By

Tim Linden

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According to company president Steven Espinosa, FruVeg's asparagus volume from Peru has increased by between 10 and 15 percent year over year for many years running.



“Peru is a very important factor to the success we’ve had on asparagus,” he said. “FruVeg was one of the first companies to start importing asparagus over 25 years ago. It’s an amazing program for us, with a lot of success, and vertical integration.”

For the 2024-25, he said volume should be over the previous season. “The overall volume should be better than last year,” Espinosa said. “Peru got off to a slow start during our summer months, due to cold weather, but it’s starting to shape up. We should start seeing promotable volume toward mid/late September and all October if Mother Nature permits.”

South American crops have been impacted significantly by weather this past year because an El Nino effect but Espinosa said the extent of the impact varies from area to area. He added that the southern regions of the country were not affected as hard as some of the areas north of Lima. “Volume out of northern Peru has been a struggle and could possibly continue through the remainder of the year,” he said.

That situation has led to a strong market which has not been conducive to promotion in the U.S. market in the early going. “Unfortunately, retailers have not been able to promote to their ability due to uncertainty of volume and high prices,” he said during the last few days of August. “We do expect that to start changing within the next 30 days. Many retailers are anxious to promote, so ads will begin in October and will flow into Thanksgiving.”

Turning to FruVeg’s situation, Espinosa said the future is bright, with volume increases across the board. “We continue to experience growth on asparagus, kiwis, blueberries, grapes, clementines, pears, cherries, plus many more items,” he said. “Between the value-added packs for each commodity, and the excellent customer service our sales staff provides our clients, it has all helped us immensely in our yearly growth.”

Speaking specifically of its Peruvian asparagus program, the company’s top executive said its Petit Gourmet Green Asparagus one-pound and eight-ounce bags are doing very well at retail. “Our team took some time to perfect the material of the bag and handling to ensure a good shelf life and it has truly paid off,” he said. “Our staff also does constant store checks of our bags, they take some home, and study the shelf life of the product to ensure perfection.”

Concerning industry trends and issues, Espinosa said green asparagus continues to dominate sales to the U.S. market. And he said ocean shipments of asparagus have improved dramatically over the years, which has helped that less expensive mode of transportation dominate the business. “We will have a similar mix of sea/air as the previous year (20-30 percent by air). The air freight cost is what dictates how much we import between both services,” he reasoned. “The sea shipments arrive very quickly now a days, so the product arrives in much better conditions than it did many years ago.”

Peruvian asparagus still must be fumigated before it can be sold in the United States which eliminates the possibility of organic asparagus imports, but there have been signs that the USDA could alter the protocol. In fact, within the last several months the agency has approved a non-fumigation alternative for some Chilean grapes. “The Peruvian Asparagus Importers Association, importers, growers and many others have been trying hard to eliminate the fumigation,” Espinosa

said. “It’s been an ongoing topic for many years. It does seem like we are getting somewhere, but difficult to know when it may happen.”

He did praise the efforts of the logistics firms in delivering excellent quality Peruvian asparagus to the U.S. market. “Inbounds are currently running very smoothly. The asparagus shipping lines do a phenomenal job getting through the Panama Canal and around high seas during challenging weather,” he stated.

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