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Smith's Farm looks to inject fun with mock political campaign

By

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The IFPA Global Produce & Floral Show will take place just weeks prior to the 2024 presidential election, but early voting will be in place for those in attendance at the show in Atlanta for a whole different kind of campaign that [Smith's Farm](#) thinks everyone can get excited about.

Smith's Farm is giving people who stop by their booth a chance to step outside the hotly debated presidential campaign into a refreshingly positive 2024 Campaign for Produce, where the competing tickets are Broccoli/Cauliflower, running as "Superfoods for a Strong America," and Kale/Collards, which promises to be "Fueling a Healthier Future for All."

Tara Smith, president of Smith's Farm Sales, said that with such a polarizing tone dominating the political climate these days, she wanted to inject a little fun and try to unite the industry behind ideas on a platform designed as a campaign that has ideas everyone can get behind. These include priorities like increasing produce consumption and providing increased access to healthy fruits and vegetables.

"The '2024 Campaign for Produce' was an idea we had to bring some fun to the show, but in reality we as an industry are in a fight to promote our products to leadership positions in the marketplace," said Smith. "Whether you are an OG superfood Broccoli supporter like me, or a trendier cohort for Kale, both are quite literally the answer to our nation's health and wellness woes. We thought, why

not put our key commodities on a platform as leaders to stand up against the unsustainable impacts of sugary and processed foods on public health. As a company, we wanted to take a good hard look at what we are doing to help achieve those goals, and to encourage other companies to do more as well beyond just making a sale or getting our brand noticed. We think there is a higher calling for all of us and our products.”

Smith said the platforms contain key ideas like advocacy for domestic family farms, improving access to fresh produce and educating people on simple preparation to make produce less daunting to the inexperienced.

Smith’s Farm participates in some initiatives locally, such as donating product to food banks and sponsoring a garden at area schools. While those are notable on a micro level, Smith feels more can be done.

“I’m asking our team to look at the programs we are doing to see if we can work with our partners to do more,” she said.

Smith said she is looking for where first step impacts drop off. For example, produce donations are great, but what is happening beyond the larger scale food bank?

“Many food pantries that pull from food banks lack refrigeration to properly store fresh food and/or lack resources to help those served know how to prepare it,” she said.

Smith said the IFPA Global Produce & Floral show seemed like a good place to take this fun idea out of the box because she credits the association for having strong leadership on nutrition and advocacy, which are both part of the Campaign for Produce platform.

“I am looking to our team at Smith’s Farm to come up with next-level ideas,” she said. “We want everything from small, internal company-wide culture choices to a wider net in the communities in all of the states we produce crops.”

Smith said the “real nuts-and-bolts” of the campaign starts at the farm level, with growers facing myriad challenges each year to produce a crop.

“Farms need to be sustainable, but it is getting more difficult each year,” said Smith. “It’s hard to produce fresh food. We have issues with labor, land and regulatory compliance that must be addressed every year, and as an industry we need to be aligned on those issues. Family farms in America need loud voices and strong leaders who are not afraid of a fight. A lot of us have our heads down working hard for our own companies, but sometimes we have to look up and see what needs to be done in the larger industry. It’s not about us showing up at a convention and meeting with our own customers, though those partnerships make the

rest possible. We want to support the whole industry as a health provider.

“It’s difficult to see Americans so much less healthy than they were 10 or 20 years ago, and if we could help people eat just one more piece of healthy food each day, that would represent progress in this fight.”

Smith doesn’t claim to know all the answers, but she urges her own team, as well as the industry at large, to keep these goals in mind as they interact with their own customers, vendors and even competitors on a day-to-day basis.

“We really need to be advocates at every level,” said Smith. “We need to make increasing access and consumption of produce more of a priority. We don’t just want a chance to meet customer demand, we want to explode that demand level and blow sales trends wide open. It takes new ideas to do that.”

At the IFPA Global show in Atlanta, Smith’s Farm will promote the 2024 Campaign for Produce at its booth by handing out custom t-shirts for both the Broccoli/Cauliflower and Kale/Collard tickets. Smith said there will be a social media component to the campaign and there are plans in the works for a mock vote to decide a winner, though plans are still evolving.

“This is all about getting the conversation started and having some fun,” Smith said of the initiative. “It’s easy to think our little company is too small to move the needle on a challenge this big, but dad [Lance Smith] says, ‘farmers are the eternal optimists, the job demands it.’ So, we at Smith’s Farm won’t resign to do nothing just because we can’t do everything. We’re going to run this campaign and put our products front-and-center, and we’re going to find new ways to get them noticed and consumed so that my family can stay in agriculture for another 100 years.”

This is not the first audacious promotion for Smith’s Farm, which famously took on kale at the height of its popularity earlier this century. It held retail demos for broccoli, touting it as the “Alpha Vegetable,” and handed out “Respect the Tree” t-shirts in support of its broccoli crop. But a familial love of the trendy Kale has grown for Smith through its close ties with Georgia greens producers like Baker Farms, which works with Smith on Southeast broccoli crops.

Smith said she hopes those who visit the Smith’s Farm booth, which is located within the Fresh from Florida pavilion, have fun with this promotion while also taking the message seriously.

“The IFPA show is all about networking and camaraderie, and it’s an ideal place for the industry to meet and exchange ideas,” she said. “We have the USDA recommendations on our side, telling people to fill half their plate with fruits and vegetables, yet there is still a gap between the recommended number of servings and the number of servings people actually eat. I want to try to help close that gap. Even slight progress is good progress, and I know that we can do more as an industry if we work together.”

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About John Groh | 

John Groh graduated from the University of San Diego in 1989 with a bachelors of arts

degree in English. Following a brief stint as a sportswriter covering the New York Giants football team, he joined The Produce News in 1995 as an assistant editor and worked his way up the ranks, becoming publisher in 2006. He and his wife, Mary Anne, live in northern New Jersey in the suburbs of New York City.

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