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Western Fresh represents California kiwifruit growers from Bakersfield to Oregon line

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In its California kiwifruit program, Western Fresh Marketing in Madera, CA, works with about 20 different growers with kiwifruit vineyards spread out over a wide geographic area. “We have ranches that range from Bakersfield [CA],” at the southern end of the San Joaquin Valley, “all the way to the Oregon border,” said Chris Kragie, deciduous fruit manager.

All of the fruit is packed in either the “Western Fresh” label or the “Krazie Kiwi” label, in an assortment of pack styles. “We do a lot with trays and a lot with bags,” as well as the standard nine-kilo volume fill box, he said.

“Western Fresh will have about the same volume as we had last year,” which will be around 300,000 nine-kilo volume fill equivalents, he said Sept. 26.

Like almost every other crop in California, the kiwifruit crop is a little later this year. “Last year, we started the 16th of September. [This year] we are not going to be starting until Oct. 3, so we are a couple of weeks late.”

The company’s California kiwifruit production is part of a year-round program, which includes imports from Italy and Chile. “We have kiwifruit 365 days a year,” Mr. Kragie said. “We are just now winding down the Chilean season.” That will finish about the same time the California season starts.

California shipments for Western Fresh will run from early October through about the first week of April, he said. Meanwhile, “we will start Italian the first week of November and then go right back into

Chile late March or early April.”

The company also handles a variety of other fruit items, both imported and domestic, throughout the year. “The fig season is still going,” Mr. Kragie said. That will continue “until the first real frost,” which hopefully will not be until sometime in December.

Western Fresh also had pomegranates, persimmons and fresh olives coming up for the fall season. “Our fresh olives [start] in about a week,” he said. “Pomegranates start here in about three weeks and persimmons in about three to four weeks.”

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