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Fourth generation steps up at Southern Produce Distributors

February 8, 2012



Kelly Precythe at Fruit Logistica in Berlin.

At Southern Produce Distributors, it's all in the family.

Kelley Precythe, sales representative for Southern Produce Distributors Inc. in Faison, NC, is a fourth-generation family member to work in the produce trade. He spoke to *The Produce News* from his exhibition booth at Fruit Logistica in Berlin Feb. 9.

“The crop this year is good and demand is strong,” said Mr. Precythe. “We’re sitting pretty as far as sweet potatoes are concerned. Processing and foodservice are particularly strong, especially with the strong demand for sweet potato fries, but retail is also holding nicely.”

Mr. Precythe added that value-added sweet potatoes for the fresh market are performing well. These include bagged, steamable and microwavable options.

Mr. Precythe’s grandfather started the current business in 1942.

“I’ve been hanging out at the company since I was two years old,” he said. “Even though I’m under 30, I’m pretty seasoned by now.”

The company also handles fruits and vegetables, such as bell peppers from Florida.

“We have a large bell pepper processing operation,” he said.

Southern Produce Distributors uses several labels on its sweet potatoes, with “Pointer Brand” its primary brand.

“Sweet potatoes are coming out of storage in very good condition,” said Mr. Precythe. “We will have supplies to get us through until the next cured crop is ready to ship. We always make sure we have ample supplies for our customers. We haven’t run out for 35 years, and we don’t plan to.”

Southern Produce also sources from its growing partners in Louisiana and Mississippi, but the majority of its sweet potatoes are produced in North Carolina.

The company offers microwavable sweet potatoes, as well as three- and five-pound bags.

The 2012 Fruit Logistica expo was the second at which the company has exhibited.

“We do a big export business to the U.K., Germany, France, Spain and Italy,” said Mr. Precythe. “Europeans are quickly learning about our delicious and highly nutritious sweet potatoes, and the demand is growing quickly.”

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