

# Fresh Digest

A Publication of the Fresh Produce & Floral Council

Winter 2020 / 2021



VALLARTA'S  
**PAIGE VENABLE**  
TOOK UNIQUE CAREER PATH

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DON GANN  
**SERVING AS FPFC'S**  
INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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PRODUCE PAIR  
**SOAR**  
TO NEW HEIGHTS

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## Fresh Digest

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Volume 48, Number 4

Winter 2020 / 2021

Fresh Digest (ISSN-1522-0982) is published quarterly for \$15 of FPFC membership dues; \$25 for annual subscription for non-members by Fresh Produce & Floral Council; 2400 E. Katella Avenue, Suite 330, Anaheim CA 92806. Periodicals postage paid at Anaheim, CA, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Fresh Digest, 2400 E. Katella Avenue, Suite 330, Anaheim CA 92806.

# EDITOR'S VIEW

By Tim Linden



## Lipstick on a Pig

In early December I was interviewing a Central Coast grower-shipper who noted that his attitude about the pandemic and all that it has wrought is a choice. He remarked that about mid-year he had to proactively determine to be optimistic and concentrate on what he can control and put aside what he cannot.

Of course, that is great advice. But it is also the definition of putting lipstick on a pig. By all accounts, 2020 has been a rotten year. And as I write this, California is shutting down again – for good reason. The virus is spiking again in the state and the nation. It is very likely that many, many, many states across the country (you know who you are) will record their worst COVID day ever in January. Last February, few among us would have ever even entertained the thought that the virus wouldn't reach its peak in the United States in 2020. That is clearly a colossal failure. Place the blame where you will.

But there is also reason for optimism. The calvary is on the way. It appears likely that hundreds of millions of extremely effective vaccine doses will be available in the

first and second quarter of 2021. It also appears that while people are clearly weary of this whole thing, I do note a renewed effort and a renewed hope that communities are coming together to beat this thing. I am optimistic that a sense of normalcy will start showing up again by the summer. And on my really optimistic days, I dream that the shared effort in beating COVID-19 will become contagious in its own right and we will be able to work together to fix some of the systemic problems that have surfaced over the past few years that we can no longer ignore.

The list of people that have suffered tremendously in this past year is almost endless. Of course, the deaths and illnesses are tragic. It is devastating how many people have lost their jobs and homes and remain unemployed or underemployed. School children and college kids alike have had a year of unique experiences taken away that will never return. Some industries won't recover until at least 2022. The travel industry comes to mind.

But there have been some learnings and some good changes will come from it. We are all tired of

Zoom and virtual meetings but they aren't going away. From both a personal and professional perspective, they offer efficient connectivity that will outlive the COVID virus.

For many years before the pandemic, Americans were discovering or rediscovering the art of cooking. That trend has clearly been accelerated, which is good for the health of our nation and our industry. Elsewhere in this issue, it is revealed that retail sales of fresh herbs grew 15-20 percent this year.

The air around the world is measurably cleaner. There was an 8.8 percent reduction in global CO2 emissions during the first half of 2020. While that level of reduction won't be sustained, it is expected that more people will work from home, which will have a positive, long-term impact on our environment.

There is evidence that rural areas are receiving an economic shot in the arm as telecommuters can live further from the home office. Rents are actually decreasing in our major business hubs. San Francisco has become semi-affordable.

I could go on and on, but I'm running out of lipstick. 🍷





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## In Closing, A New Beginning

I close out my year as FPFC Chairman in retrospect. What an interesting year it has been! I recall in January an extremely fun Dinner Dance that I shared with an expanded number of the Pete's team along with many industry friends. A weekend away closely followed with my beautiful wife, Jeanette. I took my first trip to Europe to learn from the leaders in the greenhouse space. THEN, IN A SINGLE MOMENT, LIFE AS WE KNEW IT ENDED.

The revelation of this new virus, COVID-19, really did a number on the world. The seemingly endless disruptions and heartache is still affecting us as areas of California are in the midst of their second shut down. Through it all the industry came together. We fight, we change, we do whatever it takes.

At the FPFC, we made a number of changes and laid the foundation for support of our members in 2021.

The Luncheon Committee reformed its focus from in-person luncheons to engage members and provide value through webinars that covered personal and professional branding to become thought and industry leaders, virtual charity auction and an upcoming Retail Panel in 2021 to name a few.

The Expo Committee reviewed options then refocused efforts to 2021. With the understanding that many of our members are still working hard to stay afloat, the team joined forces with a leader in the produce space, United Fresh, to put on a combined convention for 2021. One cost, two expos!

August showed a bit of relief as

we were able to join together once again safely outside with our Southern California golf tournament. It was hot but the group had a blast reconnecting with friends and colleagues. Building on that success, a second golf tournament in Northern California culminated in allowing us once more to get together outside.

Another program that continued for 2020, albeit under a different light, was the formation of the Apprentice Class. While much of the work has been done virtually, the group has gotten a lot out of the programs and I have been able to witness some upcoming superstars. Kudos to the Apprentice Committee for making an excellent Lemon Vodka Martini out of lemons.

While we did lose some fun networking events like Day At The Races, I am extremely proud how our volunteer leaders pulled together and delivered value to membership in an extremely tough year. I want to give an extra big hug and love to Emma McBride-Taylor and Linnie Nojadera who tirelessly worked with committees to execute the programming.

In closing, I want to give a heartfelt thank you to the membership for giving me the opportunity to serve an industry and association that I love so much. It's been real! Be a light to others and much love to you all.

A new beginning, I pass the baton to Sean McClure...Hello everyone, I work at Professional Produce, three generations of providing the best value and service to our customers while focusing on packaging, repacking, sustainability, and social responsibility. I began my produce career like many

others starting in retail at a grocery store. It was there where I learned to love this business and as I moved up there were very important people as well as the FPFC that helped guide me in ways I'll always be grateful for.

As we close out 2020 I would like to acknowledge and thank our chairman Brian Cook for all he has done this year to help guide the FPFC and its members thru these very challenging times. Without question, COVID-19 continues to have significant impacts to so many. Brian's leadership, along with the FPFC Executive Board and full Board, has ensured the FPFC continue to power through. His commitment has made all the difference and I cannot thank him enough. Our industry, the FPFC, and its members are very resilient!

As I begin my year as 2021 FPFC Chairman, I do so with great pride and appreciation for not only what's come before me but what still lies ahead. I believe our approach should remain open; we'll continue to look for new and safe ways to gather, provide volunteer efforts, networking opportunities, and creative ways to give back to our members, this association, and an industry I so love. For now, virtual is in; hopefully in the near future were back to in-person events. Either way our message will remain the same -- to continue to help our produce and floral communities come together and make heartfelt connections. If I learned anything this year, it's those connections that mean more now than ever before and the deeper we can involve ourselves in the community the stronger we will all be. Happy Holidays, and be safe. 🍀





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# DON GANN SERVING AS FPFC'S INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By Tim Linden

**T**he longtime Fresh Produce & Floral Council member and former Stater Bros. Markets produce executive Don Gann has been serving as interim executive director of the council since November 1 and is looking forward to continuing his tenure into 2021.

Gann said it has been a very interesting year with the COVID-19 pandemic eliminating almost all the events of the FPFC since March. “Emma McBride-Taylor, Linnie Nojadera, the committees, and the board itself have been doing an excellent job keeping the FPFC moving forward,” Gann said. “There are members of the board that have been filling in, basically working two fulltime jobs. Everyone has done a great job.”

Gann and Chairman of the Board Brian Cook began a conversation at the FPFC summer golf tournament in Southern California as to how the recently retired Stater Bros. senior director of produce might help in getting the FPFC back in action once the pandemic got under control. Gann had retired from Stater Bros. after 35 years of service in June to be with his wife, Heidi, who is battling Stage 4 breast cancer. He agreed to work part time for the FPFC for the first couple of months and possibly take on an expanded role in 2021. “For these first two months, we have been engaging with the membership and assessing what the FPFC should look like moving forward,” he said.

Gann said COVID-19 wiped the calendar clean and the board is using that opportunity to determine which events should come back and which ones need updating. “We are rebuilding the road map,” he said. “We want to change with the times and make sure what we do is relevant to the membership.”

He continued: “I am talking to as many members as I can. We want to make the FPFC better.”

The first event that has been placed on the 2021 calendar is the FPFC Expo. For 2021, the FPFC is partnering with the United Fresh Produce Association, which is scheduled to hold its annual convention and trade show in Los Angeles in June. The FPFC Expo will be held in conjunction with that show. Gann

said they are keeping their fingers crossed that the coronavirus is under enough control to allow that event to happen. Realistically, he indicated that a final decision on that end-of-June event will be made during the first quarter of 2021.

If the rollout of the several expected coronavirus vaccines quells COVID-19 quicker than expected, Gann said it is possible that the council could hold an earlier event, but the first one in the books at this point is the United Fresh/FPFC collaboration. He said the FPFC is a great organization with a long history and the key is to reinvent it in a thoughtful manner. “I would guess that in 2021 we will still have some virtual events and some hybrids, but the goal is to get back to in-person activities as quickly as it is safe,” he said.

Gann grew up in the desert town of Barstow, CA, joining Stater Bros. in 1985 after graduating from high school. He stayed at the store level for about 15 years before becoming a retail supervisor in 2000, handling stores in Riverside and San Diego counties. By then he had returned to school, receiving an Associate Arts degree from the local Barstow College.

In 2008, he completed the Food Industry Management Program at the University of Southern California and moved into the Stater Bros. corporate office. He worked his way up through the produce ranks serving as a senior produce specialist and then a senior director as Roger Schroeder’s right-hand man. When Schroeder retired several years ago, Gann moved into the top produce department position.

Don and Heidi Gann live in Lake Arrowhead. Their son, Mason, is in college, though, like everything else, that is another activity that has been relegated to the virtual world. 🌱



Don Gann





By Tim Linden

Pete's, which has specialized in living butter lettuce, is introducing a new line of "Greenhouse Fresh" packaged lettuce items, with an emphasis on sustainability.

Brian Cook, president of the Carpinteria, CA based company told *Fresh Digest* in early December that the new line, which features four items, would have a soft launch in December and would be available for West Coast regional distribution in January. The lineup consists of Indoor Romaine, Hydro Spring Mix, Nice & Crunchy green leaf and Benevolent Butter. The four varieties are each packed in a plastic container with a resealable top. The base is made of 100% post-consumer recyclable material, with recycled water bottles the most likely source of the base plastic.

Cook explained that the use of this plastic is only one of the many "sustainable" aspects of this long-time coming new introduction. The "Greenhouse Fresh" branding refers to the growing method, which the company touts as more sustainable than field-grown lettuces. The hydroponic production method uses 90 percent less water and land and the pristine greenhouse conditions negate the need for "triple washing" with a chlorine solution, an industry practice that Pete's president says wastes more water. "With our product, the consumer only has to do a quick rinse, which uses much less water," he said.

Greenhouse production, he maintains, is a more efficient use of land and other resources as the yield per acre is far greater.

The Greenhouse Fresh packaging also prominently notes that it is aligned with the "1% For The Planet" program which is a cause marketing effort. Literally 1% of the sales price is donated to a non-profit involved in the sustainability effort. Pete's

went into this project wanting to donate to the "Recycling Partnership" and will be doing so. Cook explained that while the packaging being used is recyclable, much more work must be done to assure that these recycled items complete the circle and don't end up in landfills. Often, packaging is recyclable but a label isn't, so the plastic doesn't get into the recycling stream. The Recycling Partnership is a non-profit working on real solutions to that dilemma.

The greenhouse messaging on the packaging also speaks to consumer preferences. Cook said research has shown that indoor production equates to increased protection, which means safer and cleaner to many consumers. The packaging uses the descriptor "Hydroponically Indoor Grown" to give shoppers a better sense of the process. Research has shown that hydroponics is not a word understood by all. "A lot of people just don't know what that means," said Cook. "Greenhouse grown and indoor grown are more meaningful. Consumers see that as a benefit and associate it with locally-grown, which is another benefit."

The packaging also touts Pete's as an employee owned and operated company. Cook said that business model helps to inform the company's business practices as employees are in this together and have a vested interest to work for their common good and for a greater goal.

The four varieties are mostly self-explanatory utilizing romaine lettuce for Indoor Romaine and butter lettuce for Benevolent Butter. Hydro Spring Mix uses a variety of lettuces as the name implies and Nice & Crunchy features an ice lettuce with great crunch in its leaves, which are darker than a typical iceberg head. Each package contains 4.5 ounces of lettuce leaves. 🌱

**T**he grower-shipper community is chock full of professionals that followed the trail blazed by their parents to become leaders in that industry segment. For most supermarket executives, the path started as a courtesy clerk in high school.

Paige Venable took an entirely different and truly unique journey to her floral director position at Vallarta Supermarkets, a 52-store chain headquartered in Southern California.

“I had a misspent youth,” Venable says in a rather understated manner. “I grew up in Oxnard but I didn’t go to high school. I was a rarity as I dropped out of school at a young age. I thought I didn’t need it. I was kind of a rebel. I didn’t want to conform.”

the job,” she said. “I had not really had a job and knew nothing about flowers. I was not a good candidate.”

But Paige filled out an application and presented it to the store manager, Bob Peterson. She was truthful on that application, including the fact that she had a criminal background. Peterson interviewed her and saw value. “He said I had a good personality, which was very important, and he can teach me the rest.”

But before Paige was hired, Peterson had to convince his boss, who was skeptical. Venable admits, she didn’t look good on paper. “I was a girl with no job experience and a criminal record. But he (Peterson) did take a chance on me. I am so grateful for that opportunity. I have been really, really blessed my entire career with great bosses and leaders.”

## Vallarta’s Paige Venable Took Unique Career Path

**By Tim Linden**

She remembers being a curious kid always asking why. She didn’t get a good answer about attending high school, so she didn’t go. Venable does not dwell on life in her teens and 20s. “I struggled with drug and alcohol addiction,” she says. “For me, life started at 30.”

By that time, she was living in San Pedro and participating in a treatment program for her addictions. She began to see life through a more normal lens. “I had street skills but that was about it.”

While many people can point to a mentor or a significant event that created a course correction, Venable truly had a specific moment that turned her life around and led her to where she is today. She had not really had a “real” job in her life but needed to get one. It was the late 1990s and she was dating a guy whose mother worked at a Ralph’s Supermarket. She told her about a floral department manager position that was open. “I was absolutely the wrong person for

Venable stayed at the Ralph’s Supermarket in Marina Del Rey for seven years and learned a lot. She loved her customers, especially the more demanding ones. “I like difficult customers,” she said, adding that she enjoyed meeting their expectations.

And she learned about floral merchandising. But in the mid-2000s, there was a prolonged Southern California supermarket strike at Ralph’s that caused a lot of bad feelings and so shortly thereafter, Venable took her love for floral and her developing management skills



*Paige Venable*



to a Whole Foods store where she became part of a floral team. In her Ralph's position, she was very grateful to finally have a career and basically the years flew by without her considering advancement. "But when I went to Whole Foods, I had a plan. I did not want to stay at store level."

She was very quickly promoted to the lead position and then became a floral specialist. Eventually, the floral buying position opened up, which she applied for and got. "I became the floral buyer for the (then) 23 stores in the Southern Pacific Region working under Kristin Lares as the then coordinator," she said.

It was here that she spread her wings. When she started as a buyer, Whole Foods was making bouquets at the warehouse, buying components from growers, and each store could buy whatever they desired from local suppliers. "Every store was very independent. We'd put a product on ad and have only one store participating."

Eventually Lares left for new endeavors and Venable began changing things. She continued developing the program and took away the bouquet making model. She started doing bouquet business with suppliers and required the individual stores to participate in established programs. "Anytime you implement change, there is always going to be push back," she said, adding that it wasn't easy. "I get it. The stores believe they know better."

She instituted category management practices for the floral department and basically built a robust floral department from the ground up. She admits that she wasn't quite ready for the position, made lots of mistakes and learned by doing. In working with the store level employees, she had to learn that it was as much about people and psychology as it was about the product.

Venable was at Whole Foods for 12 years from 2006 to 2018, growing with them from 23 to 56 stores. "I had no intention of leaving", she states. But she admitted that once the department was built and humming along, the job lost some of its excitement. "But I loved the culture. Whole Foods will always have a special place in my heart. They taught me almost everything I know."

While Venable had been contacted by job recruiters in the past, the Vallarta floral director job, when presented, appealed to her. "I had the opportunity to build a program again from the bottom up. They had sales in place, but it was still a very young category."








Venable was able to come in and implement a new program creating better displays, improving the quality of the product being sold, again adding category management practices, establishing a better pricing model and increasing gross profits. “We’ve brought the floral departments into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by making them more modern, adding more gift items and more upscale potted plants. We went away from the third party servicing model and went direct to the growers.”

Venable claims to be crafty and said she is always trying to make floral presentations bigger and better by giving suppliers different ideas for arrangements and products. “I have a very busy, busy, busy mind. I always want a bigger and better wheel. It drives the suppliers crazy sometimes.”

But Venable is still learning by doing and making mistakes along the way. “I moved too fast my first year here. I needed to settle in a bit slower at the beginning.”

She is also relying on knowledge gained in early years in Oxnard. Vallarta is a market that caters to the Latin community, which is the same community that Venable grew up in. She said at Whole Foods and Ralphs, almost all the floral purchases were made by consumers buying for themselves. “The Latin culture is different,” she said. “Ninety percent of our sales are bought by shoppers who are going to give the item as a gift.”



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and very close, so it was wonderful to add her and her two girls into that mix.”

Venable is also so grateful for the “tons of friends” she has made in the produce and floral industry. “I’m not sure what I would have done if I didn’t find the supermarket industry. It is my whole life.”

Venable is now in her second year on the board of the Fresh Produce & Floral Council and is excited to make the Council bigger and better. She admits to sitting back and listening a lot in her first year but is now ready to take a more proactive role.

Reflecting on her life, she does appreciate her journey. “All of that early struggle helped make me who I am. It is a part of me. But I am proof that people can change,” she said. “My past is just a footnote.” 🌱

That allows for a more up-scale item and more gift items in floral. That is all part of the learning that Venable says is still going on. “We are not anywhere near the end game. I have at least six or seven more years before we are where I want to be.”

Paige Venable does not have a long list of hobbies but she does have a full personal life filled with a few very close friends and their families, including her brother and one of her oldest friends. Like her career, she measures her friendships from when her life turned around a couple of decades ago. “I did not have a big world and really didn’t have any friends when I started at Ralph’s. But immediately I forged a friendship with Ann Pffifner in my home store. We became best friends and have remained so ever since. We are family. My family is small

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# OXYION GENERATORS HELP MAKE HENRY'S PLANT SANITATION UNSURPASSED

BY ROB BRYANT

The multiple safety measures that went into the design and construction of Henry Avocado's packing and distribution center in 2018 were just a beginning. Since then, empowered employees have investigated and implemented new processes to maintain a leadership position in product and facility cleanliness.

A year-round distributor since 1990, and a grower-packer since 1925, Henry has established many important partnerships, yet none more important nor timely than those involved in strengthening its product purity from sourcing to distribution from a number of sources.

Luke Varvel, food safety manager, and Jorge Tostado, sanitation manager, have linked their responsibilities to give Henry an around-the-clock regimen that is among the finest in the fresh produce industry, and one that certainly far exceeds established standards.

First, Henry launched an upgraded sanitation program in 2019 that was developed under the expert guidance of Justin Kerr at Factor IV Solutions, a food facility sanitation consulting firm recognized for creating customized food safety practices.

At his suggestion, Henry reworked its packing line to eliminate components that were difficult to clean and implemented several operational improvements. Among them are the nightly use of state-of-the-art cleaning equipment, including foamers, floor scrubbers, and a dry vapor steam machine. New cleaning agents like chlorine dioxide were an important part of the mix.

Now, Tostado's cleaning crews apply rotating sanitizers to effectively treat all equipment and they have implemented a Full Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SSOPs), validated by Factor IV Solutions. It includes modernizing the packing line and performing annual "deep-cleaning" procedures. The after-hours sanitation crew was provided with the latest hygienic sanitation tools and detergents best suited to avocado packing lines.

Kerr believes that the Henry duo of Varvel and Tostado has exceeded fresh avocado processing standards. "Luke and Jorge's objective was to create the best sanitizing system possible by reducing contaminants from every source possible," Kerr recalls. "Ensuring their success, all levels of Henry's personnel showed a remarkable spirit to learn and practice the procedures we introduced."

"A sanitation program, however, is only as good as

its verification by independent sources," Kerr advises, "and we are allowed to continuously validate that Henry is getting the results you need to be the best."

Capping the Factor IV innovations is a product flow sequence that limits the possibility of cross contamination. It includes isolating all product handling equipment to designated zones.

Any bins used in overnight storage are cleaned and sanitized with a bin-washer, before being returned to the field for reuse. And, all food surfaces in the production area are cleaned and sanitized nightly. Even Sterilex Ultra Step treated mats are placed at entrances, and between the rest area and production area, to eliminate contamination from employee footwear.

## Elimination of up to 99.9% of viruses and bacteria

As part of the facility-wide sanitation upgrade, Henry also added the products and services of Oxyion, whose process features Oxyion, a scientifically-validated antiviral and antimicrobial technology that eliminates up to 99.9% of viruses and bacteria such as *Listeria*, *Salmonella* and *E.coli*.

Jimmy Williams, sales and marketing director for Oxyion North America, explains the hydrogen peroxide-based system effectively sanitizes the product and work surfaces at Henry. "The Oxyion generators, which now operate continuously throughout Henry's production and cold storage areas, offer a food safety solution, and an important level of biosecurity through continuous neutralization of air and surface pathogens," he confirmed.

Oxyion is also applied in the pre-cooler area to treat field bins of avocados nightly prior to entering the production facility, and to sanitize all production area surfaces and equipment on a round the clock basis.

After packing, all cartons of avocados are placed into forced-air rooms as soon as possible and are then cooled and treated with ozone, at a minimum of 300 ppb for 6 hours prior to being released for forced-air ripening or shipping.

"Henry's commitment to bring their customers an overall better, safer avocado enabled it to develop one of the best overall post-harvest solutions currently available. We were proud to play a role in setting that bar," Williams said.

## Coronavirus prevention requirements

Coronavirus prevention practices were swiftly put into place in the packing and processing areas and will evolve as health agencies develop new models. Among them are prohibiting visitors in the processing areas, and, prior to starting a shift, all employees must wear a mask, answer Coronavirus questions, and have their temperature taken.

As a new facility, Henry's production area was built to handle higher volumes in the future and therefore has ample space to place workstations at least six feet apart and social distancing is required in the break and lunch rooms.

Headed by the Escondido facility, all of Henry's Primus Labs-certified distribution centers meet or exceed the federal, state and Industry Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) guidelines. Two are located in Escondido and there are one each in Phoenix, AZ; Milpitas, CA; San Antonio and Houston, TX and Charlotte, NC. All participate in the safety programs



*Henry employees have taken ownership of the new sanitary processes featuring an Oxyion program that have helped the grower/packer/shipper establish a new standard in year-round product and facility cleanliness.*

of the home office wherever applicable.

"We strive to lead our industry with the latest and most effective food safety programs," Phil Henry added. "We've made a commitment to stay current and vigilant so that our customers in retail and food-service can be confident in receiving fresh conventional and organic avocados that surpass industry food safety standards." 🌱

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# NORTH SHORE SEES SPIKE IN HERB USAGE

BY TIM LINDEN

It has been well-reported that the coronavirus pandemic, and the curb on restaurant dining, has reacquainted many consumers with their kitchens, as well as introducing the next generation to the art of cooking.

Survey after survey is reporting the obvious which is that more meals are being prepared at home. It was always said that about 50 percent of the food dollar was spent in the foodservice sector with the other half spent on retail sales at one venue or another. Take away or greatly limit foodservice options and it stands to reason that retail sales would spike, and they have. But new surveys are suggesting that while consumers will frequent restaurants once they are fully back to normal operations, these consumers are reporting that they will continue to expand their culinary skills.

“People are moving on to more complex cooking, and we don’t see that going away,” Kroger Chairman and CEO Rodney McMullen told *The New York Times* in late summer. The supermarket chain reported a 30% spike in sales at the beginning of the pandemic, and sales have remained robust.

A company perfectly positioned to gauge the home cooking trend, as well as benefit by its continuation is Thermal, CA-based North Shore Living Herbs + Greens. Recently Marketing Director Vivianna Greene and Creative Director Brittney Bubb discussed the pandemic and North Shore’s experiences over the last nine months. “Our sales have definitely registered a spike since the pandemic,” said Bubb, who noted that North Shore is heavily dependent on retail sales with very little of its product going the foodservice route.

Greene explained that North Shore specializes in living herbs with roots attached in most instances, which is a retail-focused pack. The company also has a line of potted herbs, which again is a retail-centric item. She said there is no doubt the increased cooking at home has been a difference maker for herb sales.

While the adventurous home cooks might be trying a vast array of herbs, during these times the top

movers for North Shore are the fresh recipe additives that are typically on the top of the sales charts, such as basil, thyme, mint and rosemary. Bubb said chives, dill and sage are also popular. North Shore sell its many different herbs in a variety of packs with Greene stating that its roasting mix, which features rosemary, sage and thyme, is always one of its best sellers, especially around the end-of-the-year holiday season. She also noted that thyme has done particularly well during the pandemic.

The company features as many as two dozens fresh living herbs either in clamshells or potted, with several different sizes of each of those pack types. They also offer retailers different rack sizes with spring-loaded displays for easy merchandising of many different herbs. Greene said the typical retailers utilizes a rack with six slots and many uses two of them, with multiple slots for their more popular sellers. “We offer a multitude of merchandising solutions to fit every retailers’ needs,” she said.

Commenting on the use of herbs, Greene said utilizing these flavor enhancers is an evolutionary process as home cooks start experimenting with more than just salt to spice up their dishes. Bubb noted that the newest trend is to use fresh herbs to add a flavor to water or in cocktails.

In a November report, Nielsen Data (52 weeks ending 10/31/2020), revealed that the North Shore Culinary Grade Potted is the number one brand in America, selling 34% more than the second-ranked brand according to the latest numbers, with potted basil, taking the nation’s lead with a growth rate at 39%.

“The whole North Shore team is proud of the products we produce and that pride shows through in produce departments,” said Sales Manager Tyler Clear in a press release. “Home cooks can taste the difference as we continually push traditional herb category norms of freshness and flavor. We are honored to be leaders in the industry and will continue innovating to make every home cooked meal a special occasion.”

North Shore had its best year yet this Thanksgiving and is going strong through the holiday season with consistent double-digit year-over-year sales increases. They are expecting these trends will continue through 2021 and are prepared to cater to a high demand of product.

“Consumers are more aware of their health and actively prioritizing it,” said Julie Buehler, business development manager. “That is causing a shift in key drivers of purchase decisions for many categories, including herbs. Considering that, more cooking from home and the holidays, it’s an exciting time to be growing Living herbs!”

North Shore’s stable of products are grown in greenhouses in the Coachella Valley so they have year-round production of almost all of their herbs and offer them both conventionally and as an organic option. Greene said sales of organic herbs continues to rise off the charts, with many retailers only offering an organic option to their customers.

Fresh herbs are not an item that tends to be promoted but Greene said sales do increase when they are put on ad. Bubb said the company does much of its promotional work on social media and touts an everyday low price strategy. The company is constantly releasing new recipes through its blog post and social media channels. “We’ll do a big push around the holiday season,” she said.

“Cross promotions with the meat department also work very well,” Greene said.

More than 30 years ago, Leo and Suzette Overgaag started their family farm in the Coachella Valley on a shoestring budget but have continually expanded the operation to the point where it now occupies 10 acres of hydroponically grown greenhouse space. Their goal was to raise their family, support the community and grow the freshest living produce on account. They appear to have succeeded on all fronts. 🌱



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# FPFC APPRENTICES HAVE BUSY YEAR

**Y**es, we had a pandemic, which undeniably altered the experience for the Fresh Produce & Floral Council's 2020 Apprentice Class, but it didn't end it. Meeting virtually, the 12 members of the class were able to attend seminars, tour produce operations and form a bond with each other through digital media, with most of them feeling right at home on that platform.

On Thursday, September 10, the class virtually toured both Duda Farms Fresh Foods in Salinas, CA, and LA Produce Distributors, which is located on the Los Angeles Wholesale Produce market. Duda Regional Sales Manager Susan Kavanagh-Duda, who is a fifth generation member of the Duda farming family and Quality Control Field Supervisor Brad Stinson conducted the tour. Stinson was live in Salinas where he showed the apprentices how Duda's celery is grown, cut, and packaged, while also informing the class about the company's process for planting seeds and ensuring food safety in the field. For many, many decades, Duda has been among the top growershippers of celery in the United States.

FPFC Apprentice Allie Fafard of Frieda's noted how pleased she was with the virtual tours. "One of the advantages of modern technology is the ability to visit Salinas Valley and walk the LA Produce Wholesale Market in just two hours," she said. "Our tour guides were very interactive and happy to answer all of our questions. I learned more about supply chain management and considerations that take place from seed to sale of a product. I look forward to more interactive tours provided by the FPFC Apprentice program!"

FPFC Board Director Rachelle Schulken of the Renaissance Food Group, who is serving as Apprentice Program Committee vice chair, reported that the tours went very well. "The FPFC is grateful to our partners, Duda Farms and LA Produce Distributors, for hosting the Apprentice tours virtually in this time where we can't meet face-to-face," she said. "We are proud to be able to continue providing apprentices with educational and enriching content through vir-

tual meet-ups, speaker panels, and live tours."

On Wednesday, November 4, the apprentices again met virtually in a classroom setting to present their most recent "homework assignments" to the Apprentice Task Force and judges. The assignment was to create a product or service that provides a solution to a challenging issue currently facing the fresh produce and floral industry. The task involved identifying and solution during a 20-minute sales pitch presentation.

The apprentices were judged by a panel of industry leaders including Jan DeLyser of the California Avocado Commission, Marty Craner of B&C Fresh Sales, and Myisha Nathaniel of Raley's Supermarket. The apprentices tackled such thorny issues as utilizing and receiving real-time data in the industry, how to solve and eradicate the "food deserts" that exist in our society, and handling the issue of assuring the accuracy of complying with the concept of first in, first out along the perishable product supply chain.

"Each of the groups did a great job identifying a challenge and all of the apprentices presented their pitches for solutions very well," commented DeLyser. "I appreciated the opportunity to experience the passion and enthusiasm of these members of our industry. They are contributing today and represent a bright future for leadership in our industry."

DeLyser noted that each of the apprentices spoke eloquently about their products, business plans, and implementation of their projects. The FPFC leadership also expressed gratitude to Julie Matos and Trevor McDonald of Golden Opportunity Communication Consulting for their help with coaching the apprentices and giving them feedback. The apprentices had two public speaking sessions to practice their presentations and receive feedback from their coaches. Improving their public speaking skills is one of the main goals of the FPFC Apprentice Program.

November included two more tours for the class. On Tuesday, November 10 they attended a tour with Pyramid Flowers in Oxnard, CA and on Tuesday, November 17 they virtually moved up the coast a bit to

tour Pete's/Hollandia Produce in Carpinteria. These two tours wrapped up the virtual tour part of the Apprentice Program.

Pyramid Flowers President Fred Van Wingerden took the group through their facilities and showed the growing processes from planting to flowering to bouquet making. The veteran flower grower spoke about the ideal conditions needed to ensure maximum production and quality. He also revealed that his son, Marcos, has joined him in the business utilizing his expertise in pest management. Van Wingerden said this has allowed the flower company to improve its systems, making them more sustainable. He noted that the company is now using both hydroponic methodology and outdoor growing techniques with beneficial insects to grow many flowers including Gerbera daisies and difficult-to-grow flowers like Matsumoto Asters.

At the final stop on the tour, the class was able to view the team members who assemble bouquets working in action. Van Wingerden spoke about the process of creating a bouquet and explained that all bouquet makers are very talented and often start out as flower "runners" eventually working their way up to achieve a bouquet maker position.

"It is wonderful to see the interest of young people in the industry and the more they learn about where their products come from, the better they can serve their respective companies," Van Wingerden said of the FPFC Apprentice Class of 2020.

At the second tour stop a week later, the group

was able to hear from Baltazar Garcia, director of sales for Pete's/Hollandia Produce and a graduate of Apprentice Class 2017. President Brian Cook, Head Grower Alex Tombelli, and Director of Marketing Corrie Hutchens also spoke to the apprentices. Cook, who is also the FPFC's 2020 chairman of the board, started the discussion off with a little bit of his history on how he was able to get involved in the produce industry. He explained how Hollandia started in the floral community and then transitioned to growing cucumbers and tomatoes, before adding hydroponically grown butter lettuce with roots attached, which is its signature crop today.

FPFC Apprentice Jennifer Miller of Zespri remarked how interesting the Pete's tour was. "I've never seen a hydroponic farm before and it was amazing to see how efficient and sustainable it is. The part I found the most interesting was how automated the system is – from seeding to harvest there was almost virtually no human contact as the plants moved through the growing system on a conveyer belt. It excites me for the future to see what new and innovated processes we can come up with to feed the world."

The FPFC expressed gratitude to its partners and members that made these tours possible including the support of program sponsor Dennis Gertmenian. The Apprentice Program will continue into early 2021 in a virtual setting and will have more educational sessions, networking opportunities and virtual events to attend. 🌱



The advertisement for Living Farms features a central image of a wooden platter filled with a variety of fresh foods, including sliced cheeses, bread, grapes, almonds, and meats, garnished with fresh herbs. To the left, a clear plastic package of Living Farms Rosemary is shown. The background is a light, neutral color.

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# 14<sup>th</sup> Annual NorCal FPFC Golf Tournament

Pleasanton, CA  
October 29, 2020

## Thank You Sponsors!

### Closest to Pin Winners

#### Hole 4:

Heath Shoup, West Pak Avocado

#### Hole 12:

Mike Casazza, FreshSource

#### Hole 17:

Chad Miller, FreshSource

### Longest Drive Winners

#### Men's

Kelley Lopez, Taylor Farms

#### Women's

Sydney Burlison, Taylor Farms

### Winners

#### First Place Team

Caitlin Tierney, 99 Cents Only Stores  
Kristyn Lawson, Chosen Foods  
Mike Casazza, FreshSource  
Chad Miller, FreshSource

#### Second Place Team

Frank Ratto, Ratto Bros.  
Geoff Ratto, Ratto Bros.  
Brian Arbini, General Produce  
Marvin Bargagliotti, Food 4 Less

#### Third Place Team

Shawn Dagen, HS & R Fresh  
Charlie Hunt, Raley's  
Scott Mercer, Nor-Cal Produce  
Todd Achondo, Nor-Cal Produce

#### Last Place Team

Tommy Iovenitti, Safeway  
Kristine Gaitlin, Litehouse  
Vince Ramos, Taylor Pacific  
Rick Toy, Marina Marketplace





The 1<sup>st</sup> Place Winners collecting their prizes, Chad Miller of FreshSource, Caitlin Tierney of 99 Cents Only Stores, Mike Casazza of FreshSource and Kristyn Lawson of Chosen Foods.



Progressive Produce Team: Sean Barganski, Dominic Defranco, Jordan Barta

Michael Schutt of Raley's catching up with Greg Kurkjian of Castellini Company.



Matt Modena of Windset Farms, Marvin Quebec of Quebec Distributing Co., Dan Rossi of Amor Organics and Tom Stenzel of United Fresh Produce Association.

Mac Riggan of Chelan Fresh, David Schoonmaker and Anjali Bonafante of Bolthouse Farms, and Dave Howald of USA Pear Bureau.



Last Place Team: Rick Toy of Marina Marketplace, Kristine Gaitlin of Litehouse, Tommy Iovenitti of Safeway and Vince Ramos of Taylor Pacific.





Brett Johnson of Limoniera  
with Alan Ediger of Cal Giant



Greg Corrigan of United  
Vegetable Growers Cooperative  
with Kristine Gatlin of Litehouse  
Foods



Jason Lathos of Church  
Brothers with Jesse Lopez  
of Ocean Mist Farms



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*Brady Matoian from OK Produce,  
Dave Parrish from North  
State Grocery, Scot Olson of  
FreshSource, and Eric Candelario  
from Mexi-Land (Jovy)*



*FPFC Board Member and Golf  
Committee Chair Dannie Timblin of  
Melissa's finishing up his round!*



*Pebbles Johnson of Grocery Outlet catching up over  
the lunch break with Micah Shea of Taylor Farms.*



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## THE FPFC WELCOMES THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS

AgTools

Fowler Packing

Fresh Directions International

Fresh Mex

Giddings Berries USA

Goodwin and Sons Market

Silo Tech

## FPFC MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Fresh Produce & Floral Council is to connect members to the information, education and professional network they need to increase knowledge, grow their businesses and collectively advance the industry.



Fresh Produce  
& Floral Council

## Thank you to our 2020 Webinar Sponsors!





## NEW MEMBERS EXPLAIN THEIR OPERATIONS

By Tim Linden

The following new members of the Fresh Produce & Floral Council submitted information about their companies and the services they provide to introduce themselves to the FPFC membership, or the information was culled from the internet.

### Agtools

Agtools is a worldwide SaaS (software as a service) platform gathering real-time government and institutional data helping suppliers and buyers decide how to manage their forecasting and purchase orders.

Founded in Orange, CA, Agtools provides daily commodity reports and 24x7 access to an online dashboard covering more than 500 commodities, with data on 76 variables that impact the supply chain and with more than 25 years of records. In addition to information on volume and prices, users have fast and efficient access from a single source on data that impacts their businesses, including exchange rates, weather patterns at destination, CO2 footprint, market demands, labor trends, transportation costs, and more.

Agtools CEO Martha Montoya says the company was created with a sense of information urgency by industry and information technology professionals with real-life experience in the development of crops, commodity programs for retailer and worldwide sourcing. The corporate offices are in Orange County, with the technology offices managed from Wenatchee, WA, and Los Reyes in Jalisco, Mexico.

Its products include the Agtools Dashboard, which is the 24x7 SaaS model, as well as agCapture, which is a digital streaming and display service for regularly updated commodity specific information provided by the system. Customers select the data variables to display on a rotating series of dashboards and define on which display device to send the information. agCapture provides a convenient visualization format and is



mostly presented via large display monitors. Reports are sent each day on the user's selected products. With these daily reports, Montoya said clients can see what happened up until the prior day.

AgTools also offers a "Price Analyzer and Freight Analyzer" that allows users to share their data with the system and Agtools will keep a scorecard of how you performed vs. the market.

The company's target market includes everyone on the supply chain in North America, Central America and South America.

Montoya said the company joined the FPFC "to connect with growers, shippers, wholesalers, brokers, distributors and retailers of produce and/or floral items to jointly improve the industry and the wellbeing of all the involved participants. We also seek to learn from the members to better understand shared challenges and look for ways in which Agtools can provide its knowledge and expertise for a stronger performance of all the association's members."

### Fowler Packing Company

Established in 1950, Fowler Packing Company was founded by Sam Parnagian after his return home from service in World War II. Known for his hard work and innovation, he was a pioneer in the fruit industry. With the help of his four sons, Sam was at the helm of the business until his passing in 1980.

Today, under the leadership and active management of the second and third generation family members, as well as hundreds of dedicated employees, Fowler



Packing has become one of the largest growers of fresh table grapes and citrus in the nation.

The company is headquartered in Fresno, CA

### **Fresh Directions International**

For 21 years, our family has been the largest grower/processor/packer of Hass Avocados in the Dominican Republic. We have now expanded our operations to distribute our products throughout North America from our offices in Miami, FL where we distribute avocados, guacamole, and avocado and other fruit pulps.



[www.freshdirections.com](http://www.freshdirections.com)

### **FreshMex USA Inc.**

FreshMex USA are grower distributors of fresh premium ethnic vegetables and fruit. Its product line includes Shishito peppers, many exotic eggplant varieties, bitter melon, long bean green, bok choy, Chinese broccoli, ethnic squashes, yu choy, jackfruit, rambutan, mangos and jicama.

The company is headquartered in Whittier, CA.



### **Goodwin and Son's Market**

In 1946, George Goodwin Sr., his son and his son-in-law opened a small general store in Crestline, CA, which is in the San Bernardino Mountains near Lake Arrowhead. Over the years, the footprint expanded, and the store is now a 42,500 square foot supermarket, serving as the flagship store of what will soon be a four-store operation.

Today, George's grandson David Goodwin serves as president of Goodwin & Son Inc, while great grandson Michael Johnstone is vice president. The group also operates Goodwin's Organic Foods and Drinks, a small format store near the University of California at Riv-



erside and will open another store under that banner in nearby Redlands in late January. In addition, the company owns Goodwin's General Store in the Northern California city of Chilcoot, near its angus beef ranch north of Lake Tahoe.

Johnstone said the flagship store is noted for its dry-aged beef and its produce while the smaller format stores feature organic and natural beef and produce with a heavy emphasis on prepared foods. The newest store is being open below a brand new 1500-unit apartment building as part of first floor retail space. Goodwin's has teamed up with a Southern California developer and has a vision to grow this concept to other developments in the region.

The company's vice president said it is a family-owned and operated retail group, with a Goodwin family member on site at each of the four locations.

Johnstone said the retailer is connected to the Fresh Produce & Floral Council through long time member Don Gann, who is now the FPFC's interim executive director. "Don (who is a Lake Arrowhead area resident) has been a great help to us advising us and helping us build our produce department. We love to be involved in organizations like the FPFC for the educational aspect," he said.

### **Silo Tech**

Silo Tech is a cloud-based business management system for produce distributors. We are based in San Francisco with locations in Los Angeles and New York. We offer additional services such as logistics and ecommerce. Our goal is to make it easy for distributors to manage their business and their supply chain partners on one platform. Silo works with produce distributors of all sizes. We are focused on supporting distributors in California and New York and have plans to expand to additional regions in 2021.

The FPFC offers Silo direct access to California based distributors. Our goal is to better understand the challenges facing distributors and evaluate how we can help.





# Produce Fair Soar to New Heights

By Tim Linden



Paul Villa and Bill Brooks

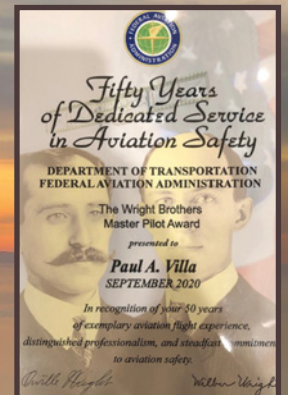
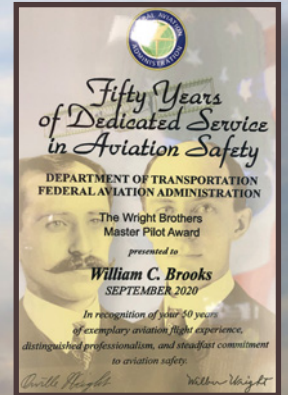
Bill Brooks and Paul Villa are longtime friends in the Los Angeles produce industry, and they have had their respective heads in the clouds for a very long time. Recently, they were honored for that.

Both men grew up in Southern California with a produce broker as a father. They both started in other work but soon followed in their fathers' footsteps and made very successful careers in the produce industry. Today, Villa is CEO of Great West Produce, while Bill Brooks wears the same title for Westlake Produce Company. They have been colleagues, friendly competitors and occasional buyers of each other's products for about 45 years.

But this isn't a story about their produce careers. Though their early produce careers and the proxim-

ity of their offices above Los Angeles' Seventh Street Market in the 1970s is what led them to discuss their mutual love of flying. Since then, they have flown together countless times, been partners in several different planes and borrowed each other's private aircrafts on many occasions for their own flying expeditions. And they have traveled to produce events together using their private planes as the mode of transportation.

And most importantly, the two men were recently honored with each receiving the Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award by the Federal Aviation Administration. The award was a surprise to each man as their wives – Barbara Villa and Kim Brooks – secretly applied for the respective awards and made the





presentation at a joint backyard gathering. “We had no idea they were doing that,” said Brooks. “I knew about the award but I never really thought about applying for it.”

“The Wright Brothers *Master Pilot Award* is the most prestigious award the FAA issues to pilots certified under Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) part 61,” is how the FAA describes it on its website. “This award is named after the Wright Brothers, the first US pilots, to recognize individuals who have exhibited professionalism, skill, and aviation expertise for at least 50 years while piloting aircraft as ‘Master Pilots.’”

The award itself is a distinctive certificate and lapel pin issued only after an application review and eligibility requirements have been met.

Villa is the more veteran airman as he began flying in 1968 when he was still in high school in Gardena, CA. A fellow student who had his pilot’s license introduced him to the hobby. “He took me with him once and I was hooked.” That flight took off from the Hawthorne Airport, which is where Villa took lessons, got a job as a “line boy” to pay for those lessons and earned his license that same year. At one point, he did take aeronautics courses at the local community college with the idea of launching a career in the aviation industry, but fate led him down a different path.

His father, Art Villa, worked at the Los Angeles produce market where he launched his own brokerage operation. Unfortunately, Mr. Villa passed away in 1974 at the relatively young age of 62. Paul’s older brother briefly took over the business before the younger sibling tried his hand at buying and selling produce. Initially, Villa worked out of an office on L.A.’s Ninth Street Market but soon he moved over to the long hall of offices that stands atop the vintage Seventh Street Market.

Brooks was working for a non-produce endeavor when his boss introduced him to flying, taking off that first time from the El Monte Airport, which is now called the San Gabriel Valley Airport. He also was immediately hooked and earned his pilot’s license in 1970. In the early ‘70s, he started skydiving and also got his commercial pilot’s license so he could fly other skydivers on jumps. By 1971, he had joined the Brooks & Sims produce brokerage, which was also housed above the Seventh Street Market. He continued to work as a pilot but only on weekends as his burgeoning produce career was a full-time commitment.

Villa and Brooks had offices across from each other in the mid-‘70s but neither can specifically remem-

ber when they first shared their passion and started flying together. “It must have been in the late 1970s,” said Villa, “but I don’t recall exactly. That was a long time ago.”

But their memories are much sharper when in separate interviews they were talking about the planes they have owned, both together and independently, and the many trips and flights they took over the years. Villa mentioned a Cessna 140 and Cessna 210, while Brooks talked about a Cessna 182, among others. Today, they share ownership of a Cessna with Villa also owning a more powerful Turbine Bonanza that they both fly on longer trips. Recently, Brooks acquired a World War II vintage plane from Roger Knutzen of Knutzen Farms, one of his potato growers in Washington, good friend and fellow pilot. The two flew the plane together many times in Washington and Brooks plans to continue flying it in Southern California.

Villa mentions that the planes have been a “handy tool” over the years. “I can leave in the morning, visit a couple of growers and be back home for dinner.” He said these many grower and customer visits over the years – made possible because of the ease of flying a private plane – have forged life-long business relationships and friendships.

Brooks tells the same story. In fact, he noted that his father – Bill Brooks Sr. – was a bit reticent to embrace his son’s preoccupation with flying at first. But shortly after joining the family firm in 1971, the two men took off one morning in a private plane with the younger Brooks in the pilot’s seat. “We flew to Klamath Falls, Oregon, saw three different growers and came back home the same day. My dad thought this wasn’t a bad way to do it.”

Brooks also remembers flying up to Alaska to pick up an airplane for another owner – the Cessna 182 – and flying it back. “I took a couple of weeks and had a great time,” he said.

The flying pair have often flown together for fun, traveled together to the Oshkosh, Wisconsin air show several times, and flown to produce luncheons in Northern California. And Villa remarked that Bill’s flight with his wife retracing Route 66 from the air in his little Cessna is a testament to their marriage. He noted that the plane hardly moves faster than a car. Brooks remembers the trip fondly, noting that Kim was an able navigator and planned the many stops.

Both men also noted independently what a great friendship they have created over the years and how the relationship is very important to each of them. Fifty years of flying is a noteworthy achievement but so is a friendship that has lasted just about as long. 🌱





## Giumarra Partners with Reliable Robotics

The Giumarra Companies recently announced a joint project with Mountain View, Calif.-based startup Reliable Robotics Corporation to test shipments of produce utilizing autonomous aircraft technology developed by the latter company. The test flight program, created to help address supply chain and delivery challenges within the fresh produce industry, had its inaugural flight during August.

“To call this project groundbreaking is an understatement. We believe autonomous aircraft will transform the future of the fresh produce industry,” said Tim Riley, president of the Giumarra Companies. “This test proved that the technology is viable and will evolve the way we bring products to market by enabling us to deliver fresher, riper fruit anywhere in the country, including remote food deserts, at speeds never before seen.”

An automated Cessna 172 Skyhawk, with an engineer and pilot on board for safety assurance, completed a 200-mile journey from Reedley Municipal Airport to Whiteman Airport in Los Angeles.

In 2019, Reliable Robotics achieved a fully autonomous flight on the Cessna 172 Skyhawk without an onboard pilot. The company has also demonstrated automated landing of the larger Cessna Caravan and is in the process of certifying its automation platform for use on the Caravan, a cargo plane ideal for air shipments of produce. 🌱

## Feeding Firefighters on the Front Lines

Protecting California land and communities from wildfires requires year-round diligence from dedicated firefighter teams. During fire seasons, these brave men and women work tirelessly, often putting in 24-hour shifts.

When a major incident occurs, fire personnel build entire makeshift camps to house all their resources — including an on-site mobile kitchen unit that serves breakfast and dinner daily. These fire camps support the firefighting teams for the duration of an incident and allow a fire agency to be completely self-sufficient, regardless of the location.

Fortunately, companies like Veg-Land Inc. are dedicated to delivering sack lunches to firefighters on the front lines. Based in Fullerton, Calif., Veg-Land is a grower, processor and distributor of organic and conventional produce, serving customers in the United States and Canada. The company also offers a fire/emergency lunch service to California’s wildland firefighters.

Melissa Herson takes care of the lunch delivery logistics and manages this key initiative for Veg-Land, which is a member of the Fresh Produce & Floral Council. She knows firsthand how vital it is for the company to deliver orders to its customers within the promised time frame.

“The number one rule of any fire camp is that you cannot run out of lunches,” she stated.

During a typical year, the company provides 30 to 40 fire camp deliveries. When you consider that a delivery truck may be loaded with up to 5,000 lunches — and can travel from Fullerton to the most rural northern regions of the state — quality control is imperative. Ensuring a successful delivery means keeping track of the location of these trucks and the temperature of each payload.

To better service California firefighters, Veg-Land needed a way to monitor these lunch deliveries from their office in Fullerton, in order to track the precise location of the trucks in route and validate the temperature of payloads. The company turned to Emerson for its expertise in temperature management and cargo tracking capabilities.

During the 2018 fire season, the company started attaching a GO Real-Time Tracker device onto each lunch truck. According to Herson, the change in process was quite simply a “lifesaver.”

Instead of trying to estimate when and where a specific driver would deliver their payload, Herson and her team can now literally see where that driver is at any given time. By using Emerson’s Oversight dashboard and mobile app to remotely monitor deliveries from the office or their smartphones, Veg-Land can more efficiently and precisely coordinate deliveries with firefighting teams. 🌱



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