

# Price knows value of berries

*'Colorful Harvest' official spreads word*

By **ROBERT WALCH**  
For The Salinas Californian

Bobby Price has spent much of his career in the berry business. Over the years, he has seen more and more Central Coast acreage switch not only over to strawberries, but all other types of berries as well.

"I think people are coming to realize that these berries not only taste good but offer real health benefits," said Price, business development manager for Colorful Harvest. "The eat fresh, eat healthy movement has increased the demand for all types of berries."

Even with a challenging economy in which consumers are watching every penny, he believes the popularity of all types of berries will remain fairly strong.

"We know we have to offer a good product for good value," he said. "But I think people recognize and understand the importance of eating fresh fruits and vegetables. As long as we offer good quality at a reasonable price, I believe people will continue to buy our product."

Price also noted that with improved packaging, all types of fruit have become popular, especially in value-added assortments that feature a variety of berries together with other fruits.

California's growers on the Central Coast and in

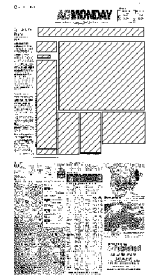
Southern California have just about become year-around berry producers.

With the added volume has come a growing export business to market in Asia. "These buyers want California products because of the reputation the state has for producing a superior product," Price said. "Shipped by air, the berries can get to just about anywhere around the Pacific Rim quickly."

Price grew up in Kansas but attended high school and college in San Jose. He moved to Salinas where he sold tractors for a while before he began working for Driscoll Strawberries. The company sent him to Florida for a couple of years where he oversaw the firm's new strawberry program. From Florida, Driscoll moved Price to British Columbia where he switched from strawberries to blueberries.

"I had a 540-mile loop I covered each week that took me from Oregon up into Canada," he said. "I lived from hotel to hotel during the season."

Back in Salinas in the early 1990s, Price got into sales with Growers Vegetable Express before he started his own brokerage firm along with two partners in 2000.



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"We now put together a full-year blueberry program," he said. "We have U.S. growers as well as people off-shore in South America."

About 5 years old, Colorful Harvest is a relatively new company whose initial niche was in purple artichokes, multi-hued carrots, red corn and purple broccoli and cauliflower.

They are also a partner with Green Giant and have the exclusive marketing/packing rights for a number of products under the Green Giant Fresh label.

The firm also packs under its own Colorful Harvest label.

Price said one of his goals for 2009 is to increase the company's presence with retailers who aren't presently working with the firm.

"We are in a growth mode right now, so it's important to attend trade shows and make contacts with more potential customers," he said. "Although we aren't really a small company, I think we have been flying under the radar, but that's going to change."

Elaborating on that idea, Price continued, "We don't want to be everything to everybody. The key for us is to continue to be very good at what we do, but that doesn't mean there isn't room for growth."

Although new technology has improved the communication process, Price firmly believes it is still important to personally interact with his clients on a regular basis, either on the phone or in person.

According to Price, a good salesperson not

only knows his or her product inside and out, but also the customers.

"It's important to build up a relationship with the person that goes beyond just selling produce to him," he said. "You have to know something about their interests, their families, and what they enjoy talking about."

He laughed and said, "You never know how that one-to-one contact will pay dividends."

A number of years ago, he noted, he had a daily telephone business dialogue with a young woman at one of the brokerage firms.

"We finally met one day at the cooler. I asked her out, and we eventually got married," Price said with a big grin. "You see, you never know where that personalized approach will take you!"

## **BOBBY PRICE**

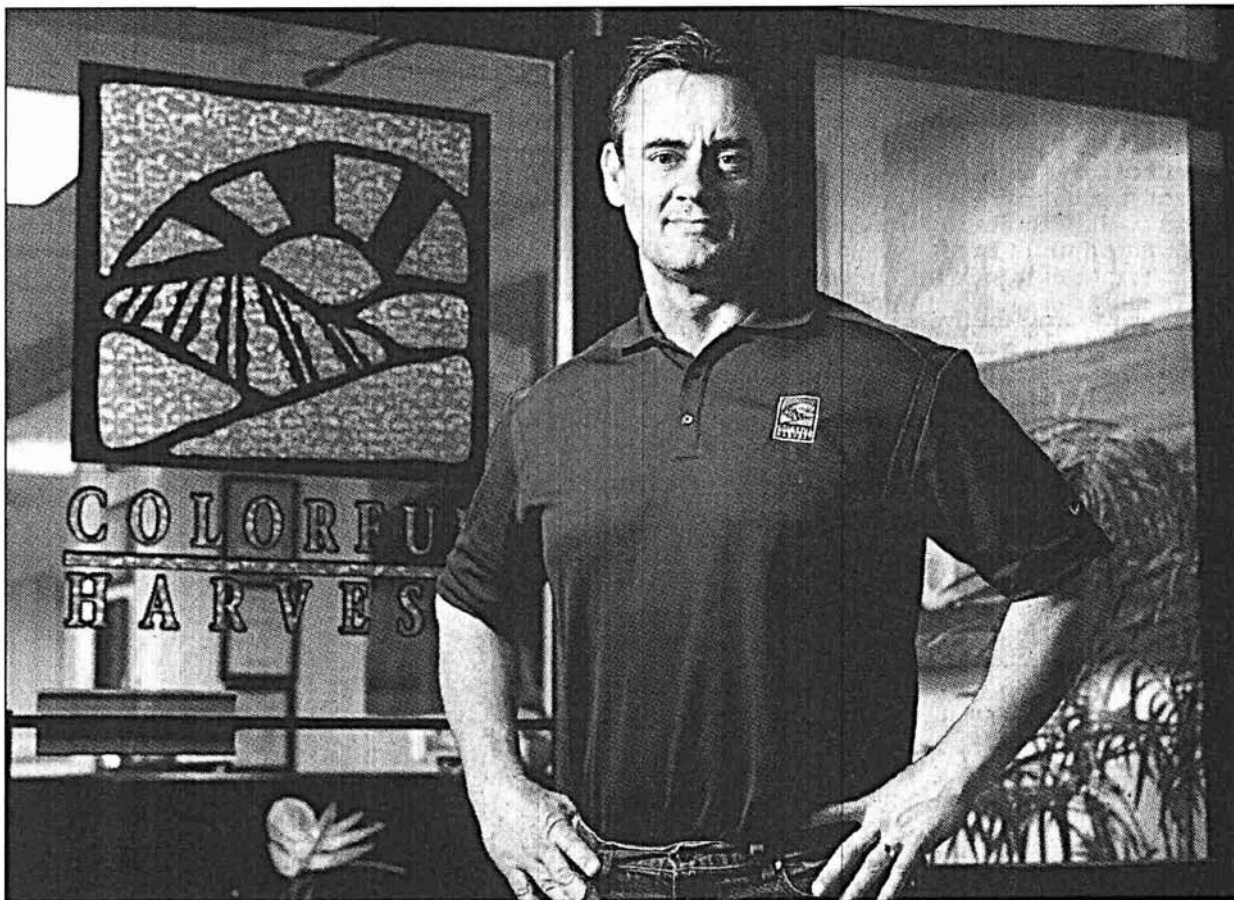
■ **AGE:** 49

■ **OCCUPATION:** Business development manager, Colorful Harvest, Salinas.

■ **WORK:** Farmers' Mercantile, 1981-89. Driscoll Strawberries, 1989-91. Growers' Vegetable Express, 1991-94. Started Regional Source Produce, 1994-2000. Naturipe Berry Growers, 2000-08. Colorful Harvest, September 2008-present.

■ **EDUCATION:** Graduated from San Jose State University in 1981 with a degree in business.

■ **PERSONAL:** Price and his wife, Corina, live in north Salinas. The couple have six children and four grandchildren.



SCOTT MACDONALD/THE SALINAS CALIFORNIAN

**Bobby Price, business development manager at Colorful Harvest, pictured Thursday at the company's Salinas headquarters.**