

Colorful Harvest takes on more Florida acreage

By Doug Ohlemeier
Eastern Editor

PLANT CITY, Fla. — Florida has become a big expansion area for Colorful Harvest LLC.

The Salinas, Calif.-based grower shipper has increased its Florida strawberry acreage. Booming volume has prompted the grower-shipper to also open a Plant City office.

The berries and melon grower and marketer began production in new strawberry fields south of Plant City.

"We continue to grow our berry program in Florida and nationally," said Doug Ranno, Colorful Harvest's chief operating officer and managing partner. "We are making a big commitment to Florida. What we have seen is our volume has continually grown in Florida."

Significant gains

Ranno declined to state Colorful Harvest's Florida acreage or volume but said the company's Florida additions should substantially increase Colorful Harvest's volume. He noted, however, that Colorful Harvest expects to increase its Florida strawberry volume by 35% this season.

"We are committed to Florida from a couple of perspectives," Ranno said. "We believe that Florida is strategic for strawberries and is critical in the deal. The quality of the strawberries that has evolved over the years has gotten to the point to where some of the fruit is just as good as — and even sometimes better than — some of the other growing regions."

The shipability of the newer varieties, Ranno said, provides mar-

keters much more opportunity.

Colorful Harvest has increased its overall volume from 600,000 cases to 1.2 million cases per year during the last five years.

The company opened its Florida satellite office this fall to better service and manage its Florida production, Ranno said.

Continued partnerships

The Florida expansions — which involve fields on the Trappnell Ranch Farm area — won't affect the supply relationship Colorful Harvest started with Wishnatzki Farms on strawberries and blueberries in 2005, Ranno said.

He said Colorful Harvest plans continue to supply Wishnatzki with California strawberries during Florida's spring, summer and fall off-seasons, but the new acreage should provide Colorful Harvest its own dedicated and controlled Florida production.

Carl Grooms, president of Fancy Farms, and a longtime Florida grower who grows through Wishnatzki Farms, said the Colorful Harvest change will be good for the Florida deal.

"He (Ranno) has a designated amount of production going out for the season," Grooms said.

Colorful Harvest packs under the Green Giant Fresh brand as well as its own labels.

In addition to a full line of berries, Colorful Harvest also ships melons and red corn.

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Colorful Harvest LLC

