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Media Contact:
Cindy Jewell
831-728-1773
cjewell@calgiant.com



California Giant Berry Farms Stands with Industry on Sustainable Packaging Resolutions

WATSONVILLE, Calif. (January 28, 2020) – In January 2019, California Giant Berry Farms partnered with *Measure to Improve* as part of a growing commitment to becoming a True Zero Waste Certified company, with an array of new sustainability initiatives set forth for the years to come. However, their sustainability journey didn't start there.

The berry company's sustainability initiatives have been led by California Giant Berry Farms VP of Operations, Lucky Westwood, long before 'sustainability' was an everyday word. Beginning in 2009, the company eliminated wax in all corrugated trays so they would become 100% recyclable. Four years later, they reduced the amount of paper used in their strawberry trays by 12%, and reduced paper by 22% in pallet stability tie sheets. Just two years later, they eliminated tray options that required more paper and plastic for larger pack sizes – again decreasing materials used. Today, their berry clamshells are made from post-consumer recycled materials and require 11% less plastic weight than three years ago.

With sustainable packaging top of mind for the industry, senior staff at California Giant have been collaborating with other industry members through the California Strawberry Commission to consider an industry-wide commitment to new packaging goals by adopting new label standards, encouraging consumer recycling and new purchasing specifications for raw materials needed to make sustainable clamshells in the future. We are confident that other berry associations from all over North America will join us in this effort.

"We have been actively working with the Alliance for Plastic Thermoform Recycling for the last 18-months to get ahead of impending legislation to maintain our position of using large amounts of post-consumer recycled PET," says California Giant Berry Farms VP of Operations, Lucky Westwood. "A resolution set forth by the California Strawberry Commission, California Giant, and several other various grower-shippers is to adopt ready-to-recycle clamshells and higher recycled thermoform content clamshells in the future, and I am happy to say we are making strides toward that change."

Berry containers (PET thermoform "clamshells") are typically made with high levels of recycled content, providing for enhanced food safety, reduce food waste, and are lightweight and highly efficient.

"We know we have more work to do to support sustainable packaging and reducing our carbon footprint, and we are excited about working with the industry to continue to make improvements for future generations," says Westwood.

Along with their resolution to maintain leadership in finding sustainable packaging solutions, California Giant has tackled their True Zero Waste Certification initiatives with stride by introducing recycle, food waste and landfill bins in its facilities to minimize cross-contamination, reduce plastic cups, cutlery, paper, and has even donated food and office supplies to local organizations for reuse as they make their way to becoming 100% Zero Waste Certified by June 2020.

“There is a lot of work left to do, and we accept the challenge,” says Westwood. “As an industry, we should be very proud of the work we have done with APTR and the California Strawberry Commission, as our group has now helped persuade dozens of shippers and hundreds of producers into following the path toward sustainable packaging that we have laid out.”

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