

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Guatemala Specialty Products on the Rise**

*For immediate release: August 2019* – For the past two decades, Guatemala has seen steady growth in demand for specialty vegetables and fruits. “There has been a consistent import increase of fresh fruits and vegetables from Guatemala,” says Priscilla Lleras-Bush, Coordinator for the Guatemala Produce Trade Association (GPTA). “According to the USDA, from 2014 to 2018 imports of fresh or frozen fruits from Guatemala have increased by 18 percent resulting in total imports of 5.8 billion pounds in 2018. The fresh vegetable category has remained consistent with an average of 147 million pounds per year over the five year span.”

Marketers and importers have been working with Guatemala for over 20 years, increasing the exportable offering in variety as well as seasonality. Crystal Valley grows French beans, English peas, baby corn, sugar snap peas, snow peas, blackberries, heirloom tomatoes, baby squash, and baby carrots in Guatemala. “We grow and import these items year-round,” says Katiana Valdes, Marketing Director at Crystal Valley Foods in Miami, Florida.

Southern Specialties’ diversified menu of products includes items sold in bulk for retail and foodservice as well as its Southern Selects value-added products that are packaged in a variety of pack sizes. “Among the items we grow and import currently are French beans, peas, baby vegetables, Brussels sprouts, radicchio, heirloom tomatoes, limes, mango, papaya, and more,” says Charlie Eagle, Vice President Business Development.

Eagle observes Brussels sprouts are particularly noteworthy right now. “We’ve been marketing them for a few years but they’re a hot item right now and especially for the holidays coming up,” he says.

AMS, Inc. in Doral, FL, handles a variety of specialty fruits and other products. “From Guatemala, we have available rambutan, plantain, ripe and green papaya and snow peas and snaps,” says Mike Sullivan, President.

Harvest Sensations’ product line includes snow peas, sugar peas and French beans as well as blackberries, blueberries, squash and baby carrots. “Harvest is focused on increasing our line of prepackaged products,” says Yosmany Gonzalez, Sourcing Manager. “We offer clients these products at fixed prices and thus can offer our growers a fixed return.”

CarbAmericas highlights opportunity in mangos, IQF tostones and maduros from Guatemala. “We are just beginning a private label plantain chip for a major retailer,” says Dan Pollak, Vice President. “We have been importing mangos for 25 plus years from Guatemala and a few snags and snaps as well.”

With its variety of microclimates and proximity to the U.S., Guatemala has emerged as an ideal place to grow specialty produce year-round. “The product mix from the country continues to expand as growers identify new crops and distinct production areas,” says Valdes. “The country is also a short ride away from U.S. ports so it helps to get product here faster and at lower costs.”

Demand for product from Guatemala continues to grow because of the year-round consistent availability on many items maintains Eagle. “We can offer year-round because Guatemala offers attractive growing conditions throughout the year. Additionally, its proximity to South Florida enables us to move product quickly and manage the cold chain efficiently.”

Collaboration and investment from U.S. marketers and continued advancement by Guatemalan growers has paid off in terms of quality. “One of the main reasons we continue to grow as a company and product line is our investments in Guatemala both in farms and infrastructure that enable us to offer the highest quality products and a high degree of quality assurance,” says Eagle.

CarbAmericas has a fulltime food safety person dedicated to all its offshore facilities. “This includes grower training and implementation of Good Agricultural Practices,” says Pollak.

Over the last several years, reports Valdes, Guatemala has seen incredible improvements in infrastructure. “Our growing partners all maintain rigid quality and food safety programs,” she says. “It’s with this focus on quality and food safety, the variety of production areas, and continuous advances in agriculture techniques that Guatemala’s specialty exports have been able to expand.”

For more information, please visit the Guatemala Produce Trade Association website: [www.GuatemalaProduceTradeAssociation.com](http://www.GuatemalaProduceTradeAssociation.com)

*Photos to follow in separate email.*

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