

Growers Express emphasizes Green Giant connection

By Tim Linden

SALINAS, CA — Though the company hasn't officially changed its name, Green Giant Fresh by Growers Express is the new moniker of this well-established Salinas grower-shipper.

The firm has been affiliated with Green Giant Fresh for the past several years, and it claims to currently pack and ship more than half of the volume of that brand, which now has more than a dozen different categories and scores of SKUs.

To highlight the new emphasis, Green Giant Fresh by Growers Express held an open house

Wednesday, Sept. 27, at its Salinas operation, where the company unveiled a new web site as well as new signage that graces its cooler in a very prominent position. The large signage includes the head of the Jolly Green Giant, so there is no mistaking the affiliation.

The web site also features the Jolly Green Giant prominently as well as "Green Giant" radio, which is a webcast touting various aspects of the company that will change on a bi-weekly basis.

Company President Jamie Strachan and Vice President of Sales and Marketing Woody Johnson told *The Produce News* that the new sig-

nage and web site are symbols of a new focus for the company.

"We are changing our focus to become very retailer-oriented," said Mr. Strachan.

He believes that having a brand that the consumer can trust in the fresh end of the business is a trend that is only getting stronger and will continue to do so. He added that retailers are looking for the assurances that they can get only with a brand. Branding has driven the vast majority of center-aisle sales in the supermarket for more than 100 years, and there is no doubt its importance is growing in the fresh produce department.

Mr. Johnson said that research has shown that the "Green Giant" brand is one of the top five brands in the produce department, so it is a natural for Growers Express to emphasize this aspect of its business. In fact, he said that the "Green Giant Fresh" brand is the only brand that the company will promote. Like other shippers, it will still have a number of other labels in its stable for various reasons, but the "Green Giant Fresh" banner is the one it is hanging its hat on.

The firm was the first packer of "Green Giant Fresh" vegetables, and it is the exclusive packer-shipper of that brand's lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower, celery, green onions, Romaine, spinach, asparagus and cabbage, as well as a number of minor vegetables.



On hand Sept. 27 in Salinas for the open house event were Growers Express officials Woody Johnson, vice president of sales and marketing; Mike Hitchcock, a partner in Growers Express LLC; Jamie Strachan, president; and Sam McKinsey, a partner in Growers Express LLC.