

THE PRODUCE NEWS

Vol. 112, No. 21

COVERING FRESH PRODUCE AROUND THE GLOBE SINCE 1897

Week of May 25, 2009

Houweling's greenhouse expansion billed as future of sustainable agriculture

By RAND GREEN

CAMARILLO, CA — A new state-of-the-art, technologically advanced greenhouse facility, which is being touted as the future of sustainable agriculture, was unveiled May 14 by Houweling Nurseries, here.

According to a media alert issued by The Oppenheimer Group, the facility was "built at a cost of over \$50 million, Houweling's has created a sustainable and controlled greenhouse growth environment that maximizes productivity, generates green/renewable energy, radically minimizes water consumption, recycles nutrients, allows no environmental runoff and generates over 450 full-time, year-round jobs."

The huge new facility is dedicated to the production of tomatoes-on-the-vine, which, like the products from Houweling's other greenhouses here and in Canada, are marketed by Vancouver, BC-based Oppenheimer.

The Houweling's Hot House Group, which is headquar-



A.G. Kawamura, secretary of the California Department of Food & Agriculture, Casey Houweling, president of Houweling Nurseries, and Dutch Ambassador Renee Jones-Bos in Houweling's new 44-acre, \$50 million greenhouse facility in Camarillo, CA. The facility, which incorporates a combination of technologies, was billed as the future of sustainable agriculture at a May 14 unveiling.

(Photo by Rand Green)

Cornelius Houweling, in 1974. The company built its first tomato greenhouses in Delta in 1985 and its first California greenhouses a decade later on the coastal plain south of Oxnard. The initial 20-acre project had grown to 80 acres under glass before the groundbreaking of the new 44-acre addition less than a year ago.

SAFF denied additional funds by lenders

By TIM LINDEN

The receiver for Salyer American Fresh Foods announced Tuesday, May 19, that no additional funds were being made available to continue growing or harvesting the crops in its growers' fields.

Steve Franson, the court-appointed receiver for substantially all of the company's assets, issued a press release stating that he had been informed by the primary lenders to SAFF that they would not advance any additional funds that would allow him to assume and perform SAFF grower contracts for crops currently under cultivation.

"While I feel sorry for the growers and employees who have been loyal to SAFF, I also understand the position of the lenders who stand to lose significant sums of money due to the defaults of SAFF," Mr. Franson said in the press release.

A COMPANY REPRESENTATIVE WHO WOULD

PEOPLE

BILL OLVEY, a sales veteran with 22 years of experience in the produce industry, has joined Dulcinea Farms in Ladera Ranch, CA, and will



Bill Olvey

spearhead market development of the "Dulcinea" brand on the East Coast. "My passion for delivering quality produce is one of the reasons I joined Dulcinea Farms," Mr. Olvey said in a press release. "I feel there is a huge opportunity to bring a year-round program

to the East with these unique and differentiated product offerings."

"The addition of Bill Olvey will contribute significantly to our sales and marketing efforts in 2009," John McGuigan, vice president of sales and marketing for Dulcinea, added in the press release. "As we work with the trade on the East Coast, there is much anticipation for the launch our Eastern program, and we believe Bill will deliver a tremendous amount of value for us in this area."

Dulcinea Farms, whose line includes original "PureHeart" mini-seedless watermelon, "Tuscan-Style" cantaloupe and "Rosso Bruno" vine-ripe tomatoes, said that it would continue to invest in current and new

market opportunities and explore premium product offerings.

Russet Potato Exchange, a year-round grower-shipper of potatoes and onions based in Bancroft, WI, has hired **RANDY SHELL** as vice president of marketing.

Mr. Shell has 33 years of experience in produce, both in retail and foodservice buying. Most recently, he was with Target, where he spent 10 years and held



Randy Shell

the position of senior buyer and was a major driver in new supply chain initiatives, merchandising prototypes and category-management programs. He has also worked for Supervalu, Scott's Foods and Gordon's Foodservice.

In his new position with RPE, Mr. Shell will be responsible for new business development, category programming and promotional planning as

"We are excited to have Randy join our team," Russell Wysocki, president and chief executive officer of RPE said in a May 11 press release. "Randy's previous experience in retail and his track record of success at Target helps us effectively meet the performance needs of all of our customers. This is core to our strategy to offer best-in-class service to our retail partners."

RYAN BITTER joined the sales and marketing team at Steinbeck Country Produce in Salinas, CA.

A native of Pacific Grove, CA, Mr. Bitter attended Siena College in Loudonville, NY, on a baseball scholarship and graduated with a bachelor's degree in marketing and management. Upon graduation, he was drafted by the Tampa Bay Rays and pitched in the minor leagues at the A level for nearly three years.

Following his stint in the minors, Mr. Bitter moved to New York and worked in the mortgage and real estate banking industry for several years. At Steinbeck, he is learning all aspects of growing and shipping, spending a lot of time in the field and cooler.

"I'm just taking it all in like a sponge," Mr. Bitter said. "I'm very interested in working in this industry for a long time so

work ethic necessary, and he's a proven competitor," said Mr. Ryan.

"We plan on having him really learn our operation from the ground



Ryan Bitter

up. We have a solid team of experienced sales people, and we look forward to having their experience, combined with Ryan's fresh eyes and ideas, carry us to the future."

Greg Beach, vice president of sales, added, "Steinbeck is truly excited to bring young talent into our industry. Ryan possesses a great work ethic and a dedication to excellence that makes him such a great fit for our firm. We are very pleased to have Ryan now as a member of our sales team."

ROY ROMAN joined King Farms LLC, headquartered in Lake Park, GA, as a sales representative May 1.

Mr. Roman said that he has been in the produce industry for the past six years "on and off." King Farms handles cantaloupes, peppers, cucumbers, zucchini, cabbage and beans, among other commodities, he said.

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