

Produce

 Peri & Sons Farms Enters Into 3-Year Flavor Certification With National Onion Labs

by National Onion Labs, Inc.
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Collins, Georgia - Much attention has been given to the issue of "mislabeled" sweet onions being offered to consumers. This challenge to onion buyers, to select appropriate product, can be most difficult during the transition from Vidalia® onions to imports and domestics. Peri & Sons is drawing attention to their domestic sweet onion, "Sweetie Sweet®" available mid-August through December. While some feel that an industry standard will reduce the amount of sweet onions available, Peri & Sons, a Yerington, NV-based farm, continues to meet consumer demand, and they have joined the fight against "mislabeled" sweet onions by entering into a three-year commitment with National Onion Labs for sweet onion flavor certification.

"Addressing the issue of non-qualified product, Peri & Sons' signing up for a three-year commitment to certification shows a dedication to strengthening consumer commitment and retailer sales in the sweet onion category," says Lauren Dees Mizelle, Consumer Products Advocate for National Onion Labs, (NOL) a commercial research and consulting company who has to date tested more than a million onions.

Since 2003, Peri & Sons has been growing and marketing Sweetie Sweet® a sweet onion that is tightly regulated and available as certified organic and commercially as certified pesticide residue free. These hand-harvested, hand-sorted onions are safely packed and shipped directly from their facility.

Not leaving any part of his operation to chance, owner David Peri oversees all aspects of the farming operation from seed selection and ecofriendly practices to the hand-harvesting and shipping. Peri & Sons also doesn't leave the consumer experience to chance when it comes to flavor. They have enlisted their Flavor Certification from NOL. All fields are mapped and samples are collected right before harvest. The onions are then sent to NOL where they are tested for the four characteristics consumers taste; heat, flavor strength, after-taste and sweetness.

Testing at the field level, Peri & Sons is able to provide complete transparency for all onions that are marketed as sweet. Looking at how their practices are affecting their onions, they can prove and improve the quality of onions available to their customers.

Having over thirty years of experience Peri & Sons grows a wide variety of onions from white, yellow, red, organic onions and sweet. Because of their attention to detail, demand continues to grow as they now sell over 350 million pounds annually. Initially onions were only grown to be harvested in the fall but as demand has grown so has their supply. Now growing in Firebaugh, California as well, Peri & Sons is able to meet customer's needs May through September thus creating their Onions Year Round® program.

"Sweet onion offerings from all over the place are popping up on shelves, however, the flavor of a sweet onion is based upon grower management, location and variety" says Mizelle. "The practice of simply deeming an onion sweet because of a sticker needs to stop; by testing at the field level Peri & Sons ensures that what they are selling matches the flavors consumers expect" she added.

NOL conducts a consumer product survey regularly on onions being sold commercially that are labeled or packaged as sweet. Results from the fourth quarter of 2010 showed over 58% of product tested would not meet consumer expectations.

"Retailers need to align their supply with consumer demand and only partner with those suppliers who can provide complete transparency," said Mizelle. "Whether or not an industry standard will be put into place, Peri & Sons is ahead of the game through their multi-year commitment which provides them with a solid information base for their continuous improvement. They do not want anything less than perfection to tarnish the Sweetie Sweet® sweet reputation!"

Source: National Onion Labs, Inc.