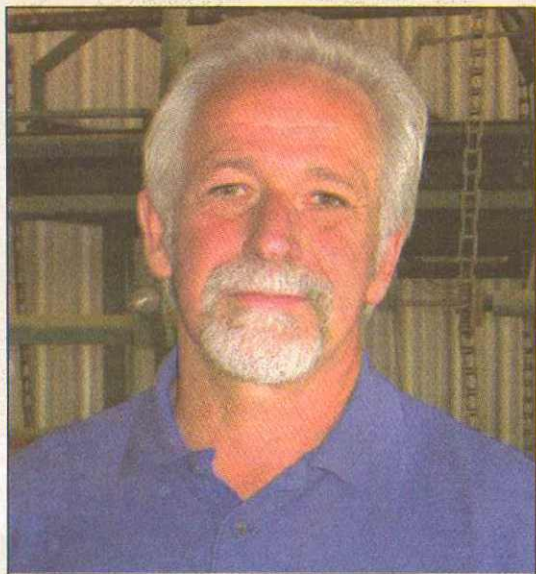


Peri & Sons invests in big changes at California onion facility

Over the last year, Yerington, NV-based Peri & Sons Farms has invested more than \$5 million in its onion-packing facility in Firebaugh, CA, adding a new cold storage shed, automated pallet-builder weigh station and other efficiency-driven improvements to handle anticipated growth in the coming years.

In a July 7 press release, Alex Barry, general manager of the Firebaugh site, said, "The improvements and additions we are making to the Firebaugh shed, which is our second and largest shed, will first and foremost enable us to better serve our existing customer base. We are



Alex Barry, general manager of Peri & Sons Farms' Firebaugh, CA, onion-packing facility.

also setting ourselves up to handle the robust growth we expect to see over the next few years." The new cold-storage shed

accommodates more than 4,000 bins of onions and brings to eight the total number of sheds within the facility. And, according to Teri Gibson, marketing and customer relations manager for Peri & Sons, the additional state-of-the-art automated pallet builder also adds to the facility's efficiency.

In addition, the new pack-and-weigh station handles 1,000 bags per hour and is the fourth station at the California operation. Ms. Gibson said that the facility also added two new return-

able plastic container and box fillers, and two new drawing stations to the shed's existing high-speed, 10-scale weighing machine.

The expansion is in keeping with Peri & Sons' "commitment to move toward more sustainable farming and packaging processes," Ms. Gibson said in the release, and she added that two additional improvements are particularly noteworthy.

One is new compressors that require less "firing-up," thereby using less energy. And the second is a new cooling system installation, which Mr. Barry said in the release is "capable of automatically adjusting to meet the demands of each area of the facility."

He added, "This 'smart' system is so technically advanced that we can now 'see' our energy use at any time, and we can monitor and adjust our settings remotely at any time from almost anywhere using a handheld mobile device. At peak

usage times, when Pacific Gas & Electric provides incentives to curtail energy use, we are able to take advantage of these incentives almost immediately through the use of the system's remote-control functionality."

In tandem with the facility expansion is a significant increase in onion acreage, which Ms. Gibson said in the release is "a key component of preparing for the overall growth that Peri & Sons Farms expects in the near future."

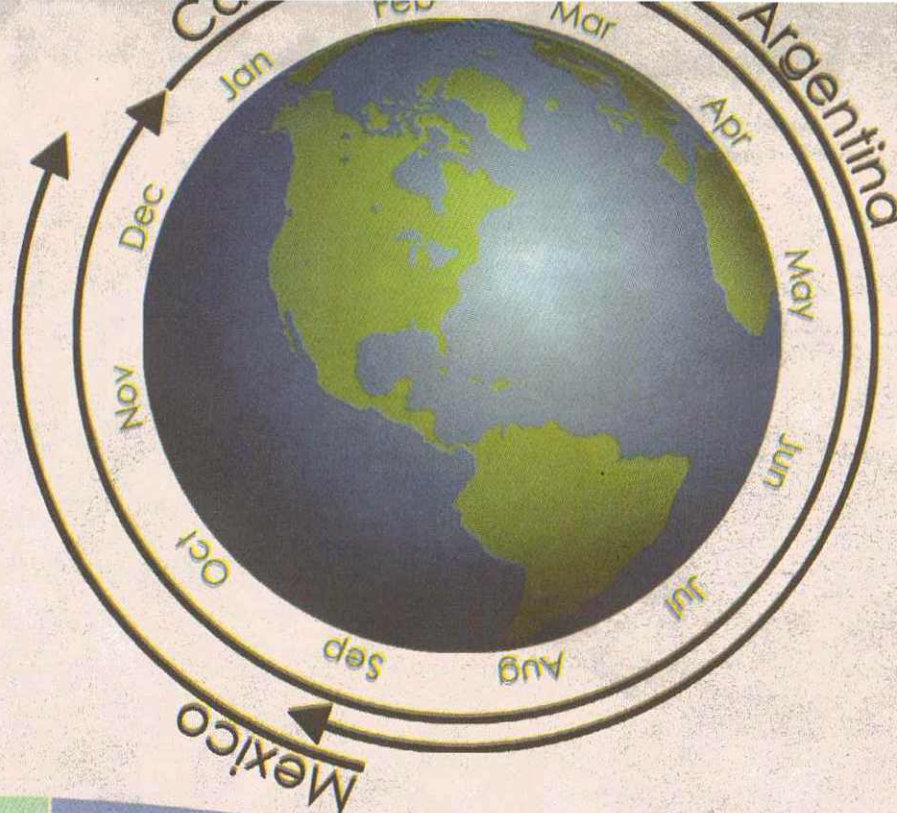
The expansion will "provide a more consistent year-round supply of the quality and the variety of onions our customers are looking for," she added in the release.

The company is also looking to expand its production of onions that meet the needs of the foodservice sector, an area Peri & Sons Farms says it has only begun to service in the last year or two. To that end, David Peri, president and chief executive officer of Peri & Sons Farms, said in the release, "We have added another five-lane sizing unit at Firebaugh, giving us a total of 15 lanes. Each lane is capable of processing onions at a speed of 150 pockets-per-second. We have added three more sizing-drops, giving us a total of 18. So, we now have the ability to sort onions more precisely and efficiently, which

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means we can more accurately pack the right-size onion to meet our customers' needs. In addition, we have improved our dust and loose-skin removal processes, so the facility is cleaner and safer than ever before."

"We believe that the major improvements we are making today will help give us an edge in the future," Ms. Gibson said in the release.

She added, "We continually look for opportunities to advance and improve everything we do. Looking ahead, we know we want to be in a good position to meet the demands of discerning food-service customers, who are looking for premium-quality white, yellow and red onions year-round, or looking for a specialty-sweet onion such as our proprietary Sweetie Sweet."

She said in the release, "We are working to let the foodservice sector know that our onions will consistently meet their tough quality standards. On top of that, we can assure customers that all of our onions are either certified, organically grown or are lab-tested and verified to be pesticide-residue free, and they all are packed and shipped right from the farm for optimal freshness. Our innovative spirit and commitment to continuous improvement makes us a good fit for discriminating produce-procurement specialists across all sectors. That's our real edge."