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Village Farms launching newly designed logo and labels

By CHRISTINA DiMARTINO

Village Farms, an Eatontown, NJ-based grower and marketer of high-quality greenhouse-grown hydroponic produce, has launched a rebranding effort that includes a new logo and labeling for its full line of tomatoes, sweet Bell peppers and cucumbers.

Helen Aquino, marketing manager for the publicly traded firm, told *The Produce News* that the new designs and packaging will be introduced at the the Produce Marketing Association's Fresh Summit convention in Atlanta.

"Village Farms has used the same logo for 22 years," said Ms. Aquino. "We felt that it had run its course and that now was the time to reconnect with our customers and consumers. We conducted extensive market-research methods that included on-line consumer panels and consumer focus groups. We updated our logo and labeling and are introducing the line to the trade with the tagline 'Fresh Just Got Fresher.'"

The rebranding effort focused on three primary objectives: consistency among all Village Farms' packaging that would bring the brand forward and increase brand equity; a focus on seeing more of the actual product in the packaging; and labeling language that would resonate with consumers.

"Recognizing that there is limited opportunity to evoke brand awareness in the produce section, we know it is important to make a labeling statement that stands out and that consumers can quickly identify as their brand of choice," said Ms. Aquino. "We realized that consistency in branding and product recognition is extremely important. We also learned in our research that people want to see more of the product when making purchasing decisions on fresh produce. Our previous labels had a photo of the product on the labels, as though to imply that it's what the product in the package should look like. We discovered that this is redundant. We grow 365 days a year in locations throughout North America, and we recently commenced operations in the Caribbean region with our first-of-its-kind packing and distribution facility in the Dominican Republic. This ensures that only the freshest possible produce is delivered to our customers. We want consumers to see our greenhouse vegetables, and so we decided to showcase them in all of our new packaging."

In its research, Village Farms learned what language resonates strongly with consumers, and that led to the new clear label with minimal text.

According to Ms. Aquino, people read a product label for two reasons: if they are unfamiliar with the brand and they are trying it for the first time; and if they see the label has changed on a product they consistently purchase.

Today's strong focus on nutrition, health and diet also contributes to an increase in people reading labels, Ms. Aquino noted, but she added that companies can say that a tomato, for example, has increased vitamin C, but they cannot make a health claim with that statement on the label due to labeling laws in the United States and Canada.

"To avoid that kind of sticky situation, we opted for language that resonates with consumers," she said. "They know that vegetables are healthy before they read the label. What they really want to know is what the tomato tastes like, and flavor profiling is what makes a tomato stand out among the competition. This is why we decided on 'Taste the Name' strategic wording on our new trademarked labels."

The result is a new logo and product labeling with expressive wording that brings the taste attribute of each product forward.

Village Farms' signature Campari tomatoes are now labeled "Sinfully Sweet Campari." Its Roma tomatoes are "Savory Roma," and tomatoes on the vine are "Delectable TOV."



Village Farms' new branding program features product category color coding.

Ms. Aquino explained that labeling laws in the United States and Canada are slightly different, and all products that are exported to Canada must have wording that is translated into French, with the only exception being trademarked names. The new labels will include both languages.

"Our research was extensive," said Ms. Aquino. "The panel study was conducted with a group of female consumers, age 20 to 50, who are the primary grocery shoppers in their households. They tested some of the names on the drawing board to determine which res-

onated most strongly. Once the packaging schemes were developed, we conducted focus groups with both male and female consumers who were asked to evaluate what wording was most important to them on the label and what they look for when buying tomatoes."

On sweet peppers, now named Sweet Bells, the logo is orange. Mini cucumbers, now named Scrumptious Minis, and long English cucumbers, now labeled with the company's trademarked, Luscious Seedless Long English, are in teal blue. The outer case boxes will use the green company logo. All the new labels follow the "Taste the Name" strategy.

"We also have new graphics of the logo and labels for our exhibition booth, which will be in place at the PMA Fresh Summit," said Ms. Aquino. "We will have Chef Vagn Nielsen from Proof in the Pudding restaurant in Atlanta at our PMA booth [5035]. He will be helping us to launch our new trademarked 'Mini San Marzano' tomatoes. The tomato profile is from the original San Marzanos from Naples, Italy. We have partnered with a world renowned seed company and have the exclusive North American rights and will be the first company to debut it here."

In keeping with its new "Taste the Name" strategy, the item will be labeled Heavenly Villaggio Marzano. Village Farms is a wholly owned subsidiary of Village Farms International Inc., based in Delta, BC.



Village Farms' new and exclusive Heavenly Villaggio Marzano tomato bag.

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Village Farms learned that consumers want very fresh product, and ideally they want it to be grown as close as possible to where they buy it.

"They like the idea of local," said Ms. Aquino. The groups also said that they want to be able to see

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