

Sustainability/Going Green

Special Report

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THE PACKER

July 11, 2011

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Greenhouse demand strong

By Andy Nelson
Markets Editor

Greenhouse vegetable growers say that sustainability, food safety and knowing where food comes from continue to be strong selling points for their products.

With increased emphasis on food safety and sustainability, more retailers are promoting greenhouse product because it's grown in a controlled environment with almost no pesticides and using cutting-edge recycling and energy conservation technologies, said Kevin Batt, sales director for BC Hot House, Langley, British Columbia.

A lot of growth in demand has to do with consumers' increasing

need to know the origin of their food, said Aaron Quon, greenhouse category director for the Vancouver, British Columbia-based Oppenheimer Group.

That might be a desire that's more often associated with the trend toward locally grown production of fresh fruits and vegetables.

However, Quon said the same holds true for greenhouse-grown.

"Consumers are still conscious of where their food comes from, how it's grown," he said.

Increasingly, consumers like knowing that their vegetables are grown in a controlled environment where pesticide use is low and food safety standards are high.

Consumers' concern for their health, on one hand, and for better

flavor on the other, continue to drive strong demand for greenhouse-grown vegetables, said Doug Kling, chief sales and marketing officer for Village Farms, Eatontown, N.J.

The more questions customers ask about where their food came from and how it was grown, the better for Village Farms and other greenhouse growers, said Helen Aquino, Village Farms's marketing manager.

On its labels, website and Facebook page and through other media, Village Farms is educating consumers about its integrated pest management system, reduced carbon footprint and other messages consumers are eager to hear, Aquino said.



Courtesy The Oppenheimer Group

Workers pack greenhouse bell peppers for The Oppenheimer Group, Vancouver, British Columbia, at Guadalajara, Mexico-based grower Dive-mex SA. Oppenheimer Group spokesman Aaron Quon says consumers increasingly want to know where their food comes from.