

NEW YORK FRUIT QUARTERLY

Editorial

Let's "Grow Sales and Create a Trend"

"**G**row Sales!"¹ Two simple words and everyone's goal in today's business world. That, of course is the bottom line, the ultimate purpose, the reason we exist, right? In the produce business, of course it is. The term best fits the produce business, as we *grow* food to *grow* sales.

Many factors weigh on our marketing decisions to grow sales – factors like supplies, quality, demand, and trends. Perhaps a major emerging factor in our industry today is trends. Who would have thought that one man's diet could have such an impact on the way people eat? Impact may not be the right word when you consider the changes being made daily at the fast food chains across the country. It's more of a revolution. Two years ago, a bun-less burger or sliced apples in a Happy Meal would have been a joke. Fortunately, most of the produce industry can benefit from this trend. High fiber with carbs can be justified and built upon. The apple industry has a similar case to make as it relates to carbs as well, but also needs to build upon the vast number of other nutritional attributes of fresh apples. The low carb trend is not going to go away, and it's growing sales in many categories. It's fun to be a chicken farmer or egg producer these days, and despite a list of mad reasons why not to eat red meat, the beef industry is getting fatter. At the same time, bread makers are closing and the wheat silos are bulging.

We continue to have opportunities in the produce business to grow sales or increase markets and at the same time we are tempted to only absorb market share. We make choices about how to increase our business by either replacing a competitor or by finding new consumers. Often the easy road is taken: buying your way into the market. While this may capture more sales at a predictably lower price, it does nothing to increase the market and to address the consumer trend. Trends are very powerful decision-makers for consumers. In many cases, a customer on a mission, or buying with a conviction, will only look for the product, and will not be deterred by price. Fresh produce that has been listed as "Atkins friendly" or identified as a sure way to allow consumers to "look good on the beach" can grow sales at a price that will certainly please the producers. Marketers should make every effort to increase the markets and increase the consumption of these products, without trying to carve up the market or weaken it. Take advantage of the trend to find new customers and to educate your consumers of the benefits of your products.

A greater challenge may lie ahead for fresh produce that isn't awarded the "friendly" status, and innovative marketing and consumer education will be necessary to grow sales. The future must include this approach, instead of the temptation to offer deep discounts to move the product. Consumer confidence in the value of these produce items, other than just a low carbohydrate classification, must be built. Our industries will have to continue to invest in this message and create a full spectrum, healthy approach to sensible dieting that includes fresh fruits and vegetables even if they are above the magical 25-carb rate. All produce, from apples to zucchini, has a good, healthy and nutritious message to convey. The more our industries focus on growing sales and increasing markets and consumption, the faster the trend will kick in.

Jim Allan
President of the New York Apple Association

¹ Mr. Lee Peters, VP of Marketing, Fowler Farms, Wolcott, NY, as quoted at the U.S. Apple Board of Trustees' Meeting, Washington, DC

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FRONT COVER: High quality Gala apples in the bin.

BACK COVER: Core browning of Empire apple caused by chilling injury.



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