

# THE PRODUCE NEWS

COVERING FRESH PRODUCE AROUND THE GLOBE SINCE 1897

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## National Mango Board moves ahead with ambitious program

By TIM LINDEN

Though the total volume of mango exports was down about 10 percent by the end of May, most of the losses were early in the season and mango importers are expecting good supplies for the next several months. In fact, May shipments were running ahead of last year, and the outlook is good for the foreseeable future, which includes June and July.

Gary Clevenger, co-owner of Freska Produce International in Oxnard, CA, said that the strong May helped close the volume gap, which saw deficits of more than 3 million cartons after just a couple of months of shipments.

Bill Vogel, president of Tavilla Sales Co. of Los Angeles, said that May shipments were as strong as they had been in several years, giving retailers ample opportunity for promotions as the summer weather heats up.

Chris Ciruli, chief operating officer for Ciruli Bros. in Nogales, AZ, said that six consecutive weeks of shipping at least 2 million cartons each week in April and May brought the volume closer to last year's numbers.

Looking ahead, Mr. Clevenger said that the northern districts of Mexico, where the harvest was just getting started, could see volume increase 20-30 percent over last year.

National Mango Board Director of Marketing Wendy McManus concurred, noting, "From what we are hearing, the volume is very strong and will continue to be very strong through June, into July and possibly even into August."

support the early spring mango season were dropped by retailers because supplies were tight and prices were high. The funds that were allocated to that period are being added to the promotional funds that were already in place to support the summer peak."

To help with those promotions, NMB has developed and is distributing new point-of-sale materials, which the board continues to use to hammer home one of its central themes: green-skinned and yellow-skinned mangos are ripe and ready to eat. The new p-o-s material educates consumers about these two types of mangos. Anglo consumers in the United States tend to prefer red mangos simply because of their color, but most in the industry agree that the green- and yellow-skinned varieties actually taste better. Each message is available in an 11-inch by seven-inch header card, or on a smaller tear pad that includes a recipe on the back.

"We have already shipped over 4,000 pieces of the yellow-skinned mango p.o.s. for the Atualfo mango season," said Ms. McManus. "We expect the



Mangos nearly ready for harvest. Supplies are expected to be strong throughout the summer, and handlers are hopeful that retailers will promote the fruit. (Photo courtesy of Splendid Products LLC)

orders for the green-skinned mango p.o.s. to sky-rocket in the late summer and fall when green-skinned varieties are prevalent in the stores."

NMB uses a variety of avenues to promote mangos to consumers including cable television, the Internet and its own web site. One of its more visible promotional outlets is the Food Network's "Simply Delicioso" show featuring NMB spokesperson Ingrid Hoffmann. Because of the board's sponsorship of the show,

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Ms. Hoffman will share some of her favorite summertime mango recipes for a TV segment during the summer. The segment will include a demonstration of mango recipes, and she will also teach viewers about selecting, ripening and cutting mangos. The segment will also appear on the "Health & Home Report" and on the iTV network of cable news station web sites throughout the summer.

The Internet has become an increasingly important vehicle for the board to preach its message both to consumers and the industry. "We have been using more and more webinar-virtual-meeting technology to educate and reach out to our industry audiences," said Ms. McManus.

NMB held one educational seminar for the industry June 3 and another is slated for June 8. The June 3 event was the Mango Best Handling Practices Webinar, held in conjunction with the University of California-Davis' Postharvest Technology Center. The event was geared to importers, wholesalers and retailers. An industry outreach virtual meeting was scheduled for June 8 for growers and shippers and others in the industry. This meeting is designed to replace the in-person meetings NMB has hosted in the largest mango port cities in previous years. The virtual meetings are held quarterly, and each follows a different theme. The June 8 meeting will explore NMB's research efforts.

The Mango Board also uses its own web site to interact directly with editors from national magazines, top newspapers and online publications across the country. The site has a "virtual kitchen" that has been designed to provide in-depth education to these editors and writers about mango varieties and using mangos at different levels of ripeness. Information and videos are available for each of the top six commercial varieties, plus one package focused on levels of mango ripeness and spice combinations. The first five of seven videos for this program are online at [www.mango.org/virtualtestkitchen](http://www.mango.org/virtualtestkitchen).

"We have already started seeing great coverage results from newspaper writers and bloggers, and we expect to see national magazine coverage starting next month," said Ms. McManus.