

Leger & Son to use per-item traceback system

By Doug Ohlemeier

(April 23, 3:30 p.m.) Southeast melon grower-shipper Leger & Son Inc., Cordele, Ga. has become the first fresh produce shipper to sign on to the YottaMark HarvestMark unit traceability system.

While YottaMark and other companies offer pallet, case and tray level traceability, YottaMark's HarvestMark system is the first to provide per-item traceback, said Mizuha Nakajima, YottaMark spokeswoman.

Though YottaMark has conducted trials with other produce items, watermelons represent the first fresh produce aisle item to use the HarvestMark program, Nakajima said. By the end of June, the Redwood City, Calif.-based company plans to announce the addition of other produce companies that ship tomatoes and berries in the program, she said.



Leger & Son Inc., Cordele, Ga., plans to begin delivering traceable watermelons to retailers May 5 when it starts shipping from its Arcadia, Fla., location. The labels use the YottaMark HarvestMark system.

Labels affixed to individual melons include information such as the company name, country of origin, a UPC code and the HarvestMark code. Consumers and retailers wanting to know where the produce item was harvested, its variety and other information can enter its HarvestMark code at Harvestmark.com.

Leger plans to begin delivering traceable watermelons to retailers May 5 when it starts shipping from its Arcadia, Fla., location. Leger isn't planning to use the program on its Immokalee melons during this season's pilot program, but plans to next season, said Greg Leger, president and partner.

Leger said he has always provided traceability to his melons by coded dating and dating his bins when they were packed. The new system should be valuable when supermarkets mix different melons in display bins, he said.

"I have been in stores here and have seen four different labels in one bin from four different shippers," Leger said. "Your stamp on your bin is no longer good. This will help chase that back when something happens. It all flows downhill."

Label Technique Southeast Inc., Pensacola, Fla., an authorized YottaMark reseller, provides price look-up labels carrying a unique HarvestMark code for traceability.

"This whole thing comes down to when all the food safety issues started to hit, consumer confidence in fresh foods dropped," Nakajima said. "Consumers wanted more information on

where their products were coming from. This technology really allows Leger to bring that information to the consumers as well as provide a new communications channel to their supply chain and their retail partners, so they can effectively communicate and speed up trace forward and traceback.”

YottaMark entered the product security business by providing traceable security codes on major consumer and electronic goods brands. HarvestMark represents YottaMark’s traceability solution for the fresh foods industry.

Leger packs watermelons from late April to early September from Immokalee, Arcadia, Ocala, Fla., and Cordele and Butler, Ga.

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