



Special sections

Red Jacket introduces sustainable innovations

Published on 07/10/2009 07:14pm By Ashley Bentley



Courtesy Red Jacket Orchards

Geneva, N.Y.-based Red Jacket Orchards is switching to polyethylene terephthalate clamshells made from 70% recycled water bottles, says Mark Nicholson, vice president of business development.

Red Jacket Orchards, a Geneva, N.Y.-based third-generation family farm, awaits approval of its Food Alliance certification for Japanese and European plums and apricots.

The company was inspected by Portland, Ore.-based Food Alliance the first week of July.

"In my understanding, we might be one of the first packinghouses on the East Coast to receive that," said Mark Nicholson, vice president of business development.

"They're celebrating a 50-year anniversary, and at the same time they're doing a lot of really innovative stuff," said Roberta Anderson, business development manager for Food Alliance.

The company turned 50 in 2008, and is ushering in its next 50 years with a slew of sustainable practices and products.

For one, Red Jacket Orchards is shifting to a polyethylene terephthalate clamshell made from 70% recycled water bottles.

"We were using a highly recyclable material, and thought it made sense to go to recycled content," Nicholson said.

The company packs strawberries, plums and prunes, apricots and small apples in the containers. Nicholson said plums were starting to harvest the week of July 13, so the new plastic packaging would be debuting the same week.

In a bigger project, the company broke ground in early July on a new juice processing facility. Red Jacket Orchards does 100% fruit juices made with whole fruit, no concentrate and no added sugar or water.

"We're on track with a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification for that facility," Nicholson said. "We're aiming to have it open January 2010."

Another part of the project involves taking apple pomace, currently spread in orchards, and putting it into a methane digester in a local dairy farm. The energy generated would be able to power the juice plant.