



San Joaquin Tomato Growers, Inc.
GROWERS - PACKERS - SHIPPERS

Sustainable Farming at Its Best

The following is the very definition of a sustainable farming company: the 85-year-old president has been farming nearly every day since 1936, and fourth-generation family members are now part of the business. Such is the case at San Joaquin Tomato Growers, one of the founding members of the California Tomato Farmers cooperative.

The company, which produces and packs fresh market tomatoes, started in 1912, when Juan Miguel Perez began farming in southern California. In 1936, when his son Tom was 12, the farming business moved up north to Westley in the central San Joaquin Valley.

Tom Perez went on to continue farming with his three brothers, eventually forming several farming and packing businesses. Today, Tom, along with his son Mark, continue to run the day-to-day operations of San Joaquin Tomato Growers.

Meanwhile, Tom's brothers — Daniel, Mike and Earl, all now in their 70s and 80s — tend to the farming end of things, producing a multitude of commodities including melons, beans, cotton, almonds and walnuts. The sons and grandsons of the founders are now also actively involved in several aspects of the business.

"We were always taught that work comes first and things should always been done right and honest," said Tom Perez, who recited the company's Mission Statement, which includes the following statement:

Perez Farms is dedicated to create a prosperous and good quality of life for its family members, its employees and its local community.

The Perez brothers have lived these words for decades, with each taking leadership roles in community organizations, school and hospital boards, and historical foundations. In 2003, the family was inducted into the Stanislaus County Ag Hall of Fame, joining other past notable honorees such as Ernest and Julio Gallo and Max and Verda Foster of Foster Farms.

The Perez brothers have seen a lot in their long history of farming, from the introduction of irrigation systems to the urbanization of California's farming communities. Today, their farm operations span from Westley to Firebaugh, located in Fresno County, and the company is headquartered in the town of Crows Landing.



The stories of the rich history connecting the Perez brothers with the area have been told not just by the brothers themselves, but also in the names they have given their company brands.

In the early days of fresh produce farming, crops were shipped to the East Coast and sold at live auctions, each box bearing a label printed in bright colors with names designed to call attention to the product inside and the farmers who grew it.

“Old produce labels really do tell the story of our farms in ways that are often difficult for us to do today,” Perez said. He added that it was common to name your company’s label after the place where you farm, or for the farmer himself.

“The first fresh tomato label we ever had was called King Crow. It was named for Crows Landing where we farmed back then and still do today,” Perez said. He added that another label, Oristimba, was used for both tomatoes and melons, and was named for an Indian tribe which once inhabited the area where these products are grown.

The main tomato label used by San Joaquin Tomato Growers is Baby Doll. This label is one the Perez’ adopted when they took over San Joaquin Tomato Growers from its previous owners in 1982. Other Perez Brothers labels include Smiling Tom, named for Tom Perez and Mission Bell, which was originally one of the oldest cattle brands in the state.

The labels of San Joaquin Tomato Growers are symbols of real people and places where tomatoes come from. Labels are still used today but sadly, consumers rarely get to know them. If only they could, for the stories of these labels would lead directly to people like Tom Perez and his family. And any questions about commitment, integrity and sustainability would be answered in an instant.