

By Frieda's Specialty Produce CEO Karen Caplan

✘ In the U.S.A., one of the prominent produce organizations, the Produce For Better Health Foundation (PBH), declares each September as "Fruits & Veggies - More Matters" month; a campaign that started a few years ago to help focus consumers' attention on eating more fruits and vegetables.

Why do we even need such a month?

You would think that with all the food messaging and healthy eating trends that you read about on the internet, hear on the news, and see in magazines, America should be one of the healthiest countries in the world. But it's not a secret that more than 90% of both American adults and children do not eat a sufficient amount of fruits and vegetables as recommended by the latest Dietary Guidelines for Americans, according to *PBH*, and that obesity is at crisis levels in many states.

Coincidentally, our company's mission is and always has been "to change the way America eats fruits and vegetables", and we are not alone in this crusade to promote produce consumption. As a matter of fact, we hope to enroll many companies, organizations, and people in our mission and hopefully, we can reduce obesity, increase education, and develop healthier eating habits all around.

During "More Matters" month, the campaign asks the public to challenge its fresh produce eating habits: "Add one more. Try something new. Educate yourself. Teach the kids. Try a new recipe."

Just how many fruits and vegetables one should eat each day? Instead of having to worry about the measurement of the portion - how many cups or grams? - MyPlate.gov, a government-sponsored website, lays out one easy guideline: half of your plate should be fruits and vegetables, the other half a combination of lean protein and whole grains with a little bit of dairy.

Trying something new and educating oneself is where family farms and specialty produce distributors like Frieda's come in. Exotic fruits and unusual vegetables add color pop and visual differentiation in the produce department, piquing curiosity and drawing the attention of shoppers who are looking for something new and different to add to their plates. It especially appeals to children, who are not afraid of weird-looking foods.

As part of our crusade, in late 2013, our company launched a new consumer messaging

campaign: "Eat One Fruit A Day That Scares You". We don't want consumers to be afraid of weird or unfamiliar produce items, so we challenge shoppers to try something new, and we hope retailers will stock their shelves with more specialty and exotic produce. As a part of this campaign, we provide product information, recipes, and short, quirky YouTube videos called Specialty Produce 101 on Friedas.com.

It's also timely and exciting that one of our industry's trade associations, the Produce Marketing Association (PMA) has launched the Eat Brighter program, a partnership with Sesame Street to help deliver messages about fresh fruits and vegetables to children. The program's goal is to utilize marketing, fresh produce, and brand trust as powerful instruments to inspire children aged 2 to 5, and their parents and caregivers, to choose fresh fruits and vegetables. In America, we know that the endorsement of a beloved cartoon character on a healthy fresh produce item can make sales take off.

If you'd like to join us with our crusade to "Change the Way America Eats Fruits and Vegetables", we'd love to hear from you. Frieda's is always looking to partner with like-minded growers, shippers, exporters, wholesalers, retailers, schools, restaurants, and everyone.

www.freshfruitportal.com