

Mission Produce and NatureSweet Tomatoes have announced a long-term third-party logistics (3PL) partnership leveraging the avocado company's state-of-the-art forward distribution center (FDC) in Laredo, Texas.

The move is anticipated to support the expansion of NatureSweet's greenhouse portfolio, which includes the industry's leading snacking tomatoes, medium/large tomatoes, cucumbers, and peppers.

In the partnership, Mission will provide NatureSweet with cold storage, cross docking, repacking, inventory management, access to quality inspections and other services. NatureSweet plans to consolidate about 70 percent of its total product volume coming from Mexico in Mission's Laredo FDC and distribute to U.S. customers located throughout the Southwest, Midwest, and East of the Mississippi.

"Given the size and scale of our business, Mission is uniquely positioned to offer 3PL services that streamline operations and create logistical efficiencies for complementary products," said Ben Barnard, Vice President of Business Operations at Mission.

"We designed our Laredo mega center to serve as a major hub for U.S. avocado imports, and we are leveraging the facility's size and advanced technology to drive volume and generate additional revenue through synergistic partnerships with produce importers.

While enabling those partners to benefit from economies of scale, this business model also allows us to maximize utilization of the facility, especially in times of lower avocado supply. We are confident in our ability to support NatureSweet's delivery and distribution needs and we look forward to partnering with them for many years to come."

Bruno Del Rio, NatureSweet's Vice President of Supply Chain, says: "We expect our partnership with Mission Produce to significantly improve the distribution of NatureSweet's top-selling produce.

"There is increased demand for NatureSweet tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers, and Mission's state-of-the-art consolidation center will allow us to expedite product in the U.S., keeping quality and freshness a top priority. Our commitment to improve NatureSweet's daily operations is directly linked to the purpose of our company, which is transforming the lives of agricultural workers in North America."

Mission's 261,000-square-foot Laredo distribution center opened in September of 2021 with



a goal to support the \$4.2 billion of produce imported through the Laredo World Trade Port of Entry.

The partnership is Mission's largest 3PL agreement to date and expands on the company's existing logistics partnerships across its other FDCs in New Jersey, California and Calgary.