

Fresno County Farm Bureau

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Horizon Nut Company: Processing Valley pistachios to meet worldwide demand

Pistachios have become one of the top crops in the Central Valley in the last decade, with demand for nuts rising around the world. Horizon Nut Company is a grower-owned pistachio huller, dryer and processor that was founded in 2008 by 20 local growers who wanted to have direct proprietorship in their product. This is the same reason the company decided to join Fresno County Farm Bureau as a *Friends of the Family Farm* sponsor.

“Horizon wanted to be a part of a group that is involved in the community and legislative issues facing the agriculture industry,” said Grower Relations Manager Kirk Squire.

Today, the company is made up of 40 growers, with their main processing plant located in Tulare. Horizon’s huller and dryer is located in Lost Hills, and in June, the company broke ground on a new Firebaugh facility. The company currently employs more than 200 people; with the addition of the Firebaugh plant, 200 more jobs will be added.

Horizon Nut Company sells their pistachios to large companies like Costco and Kraft Foods that will re-bag the product under a different label. Over 70 percent of their pistachios are exported around the world with continuously rising demand that has allowed the company to expand.

The new facility in Firebaugh is needed to keep up with the growing business. The plant is estimated to be completed by July 1, 2015, in order to be ready for the harvest that will begin in August 2015. Squire says that this will provide great opportunities for the Firebaugh and Mendota communities.

Squire has spent most of his life in agriculture, working through high school and college on his family’s farm in Stratford where they grew cotton and grains. He attended West Hills College and California State University, Fresno before running the quality control department at Keenan Farms, a pistachio processing plant.



After a few years with the company, Squire relocated to the Bay Area where he spent several years before returning home.

Once he returned to the Valley, Squire began working as the quality control manager for Horizon Nut Company, managing approximately 100 people. His position focused on the quality of the out-going product and maintaining the efficiency of plant operations. In December 2012, Squire became the grower relations manager, a position dedicated to building relationships with farmers. His territory covers from south of Bakersfield to north of Firebaugh.

Squire spends much of his time calculating return on investments for farmers, and once harvest begins in August, he becomes responsible for the logistics of getting the product to the huller and dryer plant.

Squire says that his goal is for growers to continue to develop with business. “Our farmers are vertically integrated with the company, which creates a better relationship between the two parties. The growers are able to control their own destinies, and they have shown their willingness to continue to grow with the company by purchasing 1,200 acres for the Firebaugh plant to meet product demand.”

For more information on Horizon Nut Company, visit www.horizonnut.com.