

# THE PACKER

## Van Groningen & Sons uses HarvestMark traceability

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By Bob Luder, The Packer

(Jan. 12, 4:05 p.m.) Traceability and food safety have long been part of the modus operandi at Manteca, Calif.-based Van Groningen & Sons, Inc., sales manager Ryan Van Groningen said.

But never like this.

Van Groningen & Sons will begin delivering traceable watermelons using HarvestMark, the fresh food traceability solution from YottaMark, Inc., Redwood City, Calif., for the 2009 harvest season. The traceable watermelons will begin hitting select retail locations across the U.S. in June.

Van Groningen & Sons, with more than 80 years in growing operations, should be the first watermelon grower and distributor in California to deploy HarvestMark.

"For us, we've already been doing traceability and food safety, but we've never taken it to the next level," Van Groningen said. "We've never tagged each unit.

"HarvestMark takes it to the next level. It's easy and simple."

### Fruit tagged with bar codes

The HarvestMark solution gives items, cases, trays and pallets a unique identity that links to harvest packing and supply chain information.

Each melon is tagged with a bar code and 12-digit number along with the address to a Web site that customers can go to, scan or enter the identification number and gain access to harvest, distribution, quality and food safety information about that specific product. Buyers, distributors and customers can provide feedback on product quality and time to market, which can be correlated to the farm, crew and date.

"We'd been seeing problems other companies have had with things like E. coli and the like," Van Groningen said. "Watermelons are low-risk, but low-risk or not you want to do all you can to make your product safe."

"The HarvestMark label provides a way for consumers to quickly check to see if the Van Groningen & Sons watermelon they just purchased at the store is fresh and safe, where it was grown," J. Scott Carr, president and chief executive officer of YottaMark, said in a news release. "Van Groningen & Sons' adoption of HarvestMark will extend the HarvestMark traceability to key produce buying communities on the West Coast."

Van Groningen & Sons is a family-owned business that dates back to 1922. The operation also grows sweet corn, pumpkins and squash.

"For this year we're going to just do watermelons, to see how this goes," Van Groningen said. "Then we'll see if we can expand it to some of our other commodities. hand."