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PRESS RELEASE

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Valuable Perspectives Gained by EPC Leadership Class at Philly Port and Wholesale Market

For Immediate Release: March 20, 2025. Members of the 2025 Eastern Produce Council (EPC) Leadership Class viewed the complexity of the supply chain first-hand during a tour of the Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market (PWPM) and Holt Logistics on March 18, 2025. “The wholesale market and the port represent critical links in the supply chain,” said Susan McAleavey Sarlund, EPC Executive Director. “For those in our Leadership Program, these are essential operations to experience.”

The immersive day began at the Philly wholesale market with a presentation by PWPM’s Marketing Coordinator Christine Hofmann on the market’s development and role in the produce business. The group walked the concourse of the 700,000 square-foot facility to meet with various merchants and had the opportunity to hear from next generation professionals including Joseph Procacci III of Procacci Brothers Sales Corp. and Dan Vena of John Vena Inc. The class also heard about the banana ripening process from Mark Levin at M. Levin & Co.

During the tour the new class members were introduced to previous EPC Leadership Class participants including Gabrielle Procacci of Procacci Brothers Sales Corp., Eric Smith of John Vena Inc. and Ryan Miller of M. Levin & Co.

"Visiting the terminal market was a meaningful experience," said Susie Alvarez, Account Manager at Dayka & Hackett in Reedley, CA. "It was my first time attending during my time with Dayka & Hackett, and it provided me with valuable insights—not only into what buyers at the terminal are looking for in products but also a deeper understanding of their competitive strategies."

The second stop of the day was a visit to Holt Logistics Corp. at the Gloucester Marine Terminal in Gloucester City, NJ, where Sam Ecker, Business Development, presented a

comprehensive summary of the various facilities of the Philadelphia area ports. “We are uniquely positioned in Philadelphia because we can reach more than 50% of the Canadian and U.S. population within a 48-hour drive,” he said. “The port’s location and our particular specialized facilities mean efficient handling of perishable cargo – a great benefit to the industry.”

The class was treated to a sampling of recently unloaded fruit, including interesting grape varieties, from Dayka + Hackett. After lunch, the group received a tour of the Gloucester Marine Terminal to learn about the processes for imported products and inspections.

“The tour really gave me a better overall understanding of these parts of the industry,” said Paul Williamson, Account Manager at Highline Mushrooms in Canada. “There are so many layers to our industry and to see first-hand the various aspects of the port taught me some things I wouldn’t have known without having been there.”

The EPC’s esteemed program provides a dual-medium learning environment and includes various tours and classroom learning activities throughout the year. “We are especially looking forward this year to some additional education and leadership development opportunities for this class along with the field experiences,” said McAleavey Sarlund.

Participants selected for the 2025 program include: Marcus Albinder of Hudson River Fruit Distributors; Susie Alvarez of Dayka + Hackett; Christine Consales of Dole Fresh Fruit; Geoffrey Gero of House Foods; Drew Hennemuth of Four Seasons Produce; Garrett Josephson of Farm-Wey Produce; Drew Koeppel of Katzman Distribution; Nathan Kreiser of Four Seasons Produce; Justin Leis of CJ Brothers Inc.; Michael Lovera Jr. of JOH; Emily Naples of JOH; Tyler Schneider of Cleveland Kitchen; Taylor Sears of LGS; Aleksander Skarzynski of Wakefern Food Corp.; Casey Spencer of John Vena, Inc.; Paul Williamson of Highline Mushrooms; and Matt Zapczynski of Idaho Potato Commission.

Also participating in the tour were: Theresa Lowden of JOH, current EPC President; Vic Savanello of Katzman Distribution, EPC Leadership Committee Chair and past EPC President; and Al Murray, EPC Board Member.

PHOTOS (4 Attached):

1. EPC Leadership Class by Ship
2. PWPM Touring M Levin banana room with Mark Levin and Ryan Miller
3. PWPM Group at Garden State (Procacci)
4. PWPM Tour John Vena

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