



By Rory Byrne

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Total Produce CEO praises industry unity



Rory Byrne is chief executive of Total Produce

In an open letter to colleagues, Rory Byrne says a "remarkable exercise in collaboration" will help overcome coronavirus

For our industry, our business, our people and for the communities in which we operate, these are challenging times. As the coronavirus continues to spread across the world, collectively we are facing unprecedented disruption, the impact of which is evident for all to see.

Amidst all of the upheaval, however, I want to take this moment to reflect on two reasons for optimism, reasons that fuel my conviction that this storm will be weathered and that our industry will rapidly and robustly rebound in its aftermath.

The first, is the striking sense of solidarity evident across our industry at this time, the second, the incredible contribution produce people are making to face down the adversity that confronts us.

I should begin by expressing my profound appreciation to my colleagues in Total Produce and our partners across the world. For each and every one of us,

this is a period of great uncertainty. It is also a period that has, in many ways, seen us challenged to reinvent the way we do our business. Total Produce people across the globe have met this challenge with dedication, determination, stoicism and no small measure of ingenuity. It has been inspiring to see.

Networks of remotely located, digitally linked colleagues have replaced centralised offices; staggered, improvised staffing arrangements are replacing conventional shifts in packhouses, ripening facilities, distribution centres and processing hubs right across the group as we endeavour to cover all eventualities.

This has required sacrifices, both professional and personal and flexibility on the part of our people. Each and every one of you have stepped up to the plate. By staying apart, we are standing together. And we're getting the job done. Thank you.

'True value'

And what a job it is that we have. The challenges associated with the spread of the coronavirus internationally have brought into sharp focus the true value of what it is that we do; securing the international supply chain, assuring the integrity and safety of the produce we sell and delivering to people everywhere the most nutritious, healthy fresh fruits & vegetables from every corner of the globe. Never has this been more important.

This is why it is so gratifying to see our industry as a whole exhibiting such unity of purpose at this critical moment. Disparate agenda have given way to the solitary, common goal of keeping supply channels open and in Total Produce we are hugely grateful to all of our partners in produce, from seed to store, for their support at this time.

Our international family of growers, global and local, we know, like our own people, are working tirelessly to keep shelves stocked. At a moment of marked volatility in demand, our customer base

across the world is engaging constructively and imaginatively; working with us to manage contingencies and circumvent obstacles.

Logistics partners, service providers and industry bodies too, are all playing their part in what is an extraordinary effort, while we are encouraged by the inclusive approach by legislators globally with whom we are in regular contact.

What we are witnessing, it seems to me, is a remarkable exercise in collaboration, one which augurs well for the prospects of our sector when this crisis passes, as it inevitably will, and one about which we should all be proud.

In the meantime, as an industry, as a company, as everyday people, we will continue to be tested. We have been tested before. In the past, we have always

summoned the resolve and resilience to pass such tests. We will do so again. In the days and weeks that lie ahead let's continue to look after one another, protect ourselves, our families, our colleagues, our communities and, of course, our business.