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By Maura Maxwell

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Fall Creek announces new shared leadership



Amelie Brazelton Aust and Cort Brazelton are named co-CEOs and Oscar Verges is new president and COO

Dave Brazelton is to step aside as CEO of Fall Creek Farm & Nursery after 40 years at the helm of the company that he co-founded and assume the new role of executive chairman of the privately-held global company's board of directors.

From 1 January 2019, Amelie Brazelton Aust and Cort Brazelton will assume the roles of co-CEOs. In addition, Oscar Verges, who joined Fall Creek as chief operating officer in 2016, has been promoted to president and COO of the blueberry breeding and nursery company.

The three executives will lead the company's strategy and growth, and the team of functional and regional directors will continue to report to Verges.

"We have experienced tremendous growth at Fall Creek during the past years. Our 'go where our customers grow' strategy has led us to new geographies

and has required us to continually reinvent the way we do things," said Dave Brazelton.

"This transition of leadership is really about commitment to our customers. It gives us a top-level leadership platform to launch the company's next chapter of growth and to serve the industry in the transformative way our mission calls on us to achieve."

The new, unique leadership model was recommended by Fall Creek's board of directors after assessing the company's growth plan, internal talents and team-based corporate culture.

"I'm looking forward to seeing each member of the new leadership team work together while they also develop their individual areas of focus: Cort, on global business development and key relationships; Amelie, on strategy and company culture; and Oscar, on the management of a growing global entity,"

said Roland Wolfram, the newest member of the Fall Creek board, and past vice president at Nike, where he worked under co-presidents.

"Their biggest challenges in the coming years are to continue to drive growth and build a global platform of people, culture and process, while also driving product innovation on the licensing side.

"They'll also need to develop strong regional teams to successfully manage at the global scale. There is a lot of added value with their three perspectives and diversity of talents, so the team is poised to meet these challenges."

Mark Frandsen, a member of Fall Creek's board of directors since 2013 and veteran executive of the food and beverage industry, emphasised the importance of a thoughtful approach to leadership succession.

"Dave's careful planning,

communications and guidance to the board, especially starting the process early,

Over the past decade, she broadened her focus to include product development and

fresh berries, and principal of Brazelton Ag Consulting.

<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

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were key to success.

"I've been on other boards – public, private and non-profit. This company is well positioned with these three individuals as its leaders. Cort and Amelie have exceptional business skills in addition to having been brought up in the company and the industry.

"They fully have the leadership capabilities to succeed. Oscar is highly respected by the industry, shareholders and company. The leadership he brings is fundamental to the company's aspirational growth plans."

Amelie Brazelton Aust joined Fall Creek in 2008 to manage the company's intellectual property and licensing.

global commercialisation as Fall Creek's own breeding programme began to release varieties.

More recently, she has served on the company's board of directors, and as the interim director of product development and commercialisation, responsible for re-shaping the company's licensing strategies to better position its genetics.

Cort Brazelton is currently the director of business development and interim director of sales for Fall Creek's European business.

Before joining Fall Creek in 2008, he was the blueberry business manager for Driscoll's, the global marketer of

Oscar Verges brings extensive executive international business and produce industry experience to Fall Creek. He was founder and managing director of two separate cell phone service providers in Spain before joining Fall Creek, as well as previously working for Chiquita Brands International.

In 2007, he helped develop some of the earliest blueberry plantations in Morocco with fruit producer and marketer Royal Natural of Barcelona, Spain.