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PMA and United Fresh to merge

Boards of directors of the Produce Marketing Association and the United Fresh Produce Association agree to combine forces

After three previous high-profile efforts to merge, the Produce Marketing Association (PMA) and United Fresh Produce Association (United Fresh) have announced they've reached an agreement in principle to combine forces by 1 January 2022.

The two national produce associations in the US had previously discussed merging in 1995, 2007 and 2012. In announcing the merger, the two associations acknowledged the role of the Covid-19 pandemic, stating:

"The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly led all businesses to think strategically about their future operations. PMA and United Fresh are no different in that both associations are committed to delivering the greatest possible member value despite the challenges brought by the pandemic. Coming together now is not driven by financial concerns, but by a true desire to maintain and build member value in the future."

Determining a new name for the combined association will be part of the branding process to be completed this year. The two associations will continue to operate as independent organisations through 2021.

The new association from the merger of United Fresh and PMA will combine resources and expertise to enhance member services, increase advocacy before government and the public, help members grow their businesses, and drive consumption of fresh produce and demand for floral products as a vital cornerstone of public health.

Board chairmen, Michael Muzyk of United Fresh, and Dwight Ferguson of PMA, said the agreement reflects the ongoing commitment of both associations to deliver the highest level of value to its members.

"Looking ahead, we believe we can accomplish that goal better together, building on the synergies and experience of our expert staffs, complementary

education programs and member services, and a stronger voice in advocating for our industries," they said.

Over the past several months, PMA chief executive Cathy Burns and United Fresh chief executive Tom Stenzel have worked with a group of board leaders from each association to develop the strategic commitments for the new association that serves as the core of the agreement in principle.

Those are reportedly set to include a range of commitments including serving all sectors of the global fresh produce and floral supply chains, growing global membership and participation.

Government advocacy and leadership to build and maintain a positive business climate in the US and the North American market. Global engagement with international bodies and allied organisations to promote free and fair trade. The provision of expertise and business solutions in food safety, new



technology, supply chain management, sustainability, leadership and talent development, business operations, marketing and more.

Also included is the commitment to bringing all sectors of the diverse produce and floral supply chains together to better understand their interconnections and support efficiency and profitability throughout the chain.

The new association will be led jointly by Burns and Stenzel as co-chief executives throughout 2022. After that time, Burns will become the sole chief executive.

“Through my 28 years of service to our industry, I have long recognized the potential synergies of our groups building something powerful together,” said Stenzel.

“It is gratifying to me several years before my retirement to find a strong and committed partner in Cathy who also believes in this shared vision. I’m looking forward to launching this new organization together, setting the stage to enhance member value while driving greater produce consumption in the years ahead.”

Burns commented that the two combined associations will have an even greater impact than they do now.

“Tom has been a great partner, and I truly appreciate his deep history, knowledge, and care for our industry,” she noted.

“We, along with our talented teams, look forward to leveraging our strengths to serve our diverse and complex supply chain. I am so proud and honoured

to serve the produce and floral community at such a pivotal time in our history.”

Over the coming months, Burns and Stenzel will work with their teams and board leaders to build out the new organisation. At the same time, the two associations will begin sharing their expertise and promoting participation in each other’s events and programmes.

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