

Prophet Brings Practical AI and Produce-Built Planning to the IFPA Global Produce & Floral Show; Bryan Barsness Comments

ORLANDO, FL - I like to think of IFPA's Global Produce & Floral Show as the most extensive runway in fresh produce. As companies build toward new program launches, solutions, and refreshed messaging for today's customers, the show creates opportunities for the industry as a whole to take off—to new horizons and more. As we quickly approach this year's event, October 14–16, I connected with Prophet North America, a software provider for the fresh food and horticultural industry with extensive experience in fresh and chilled perishable produce, to discuss what the runway looks like for them as we look to Orlando.

Bryan Barsness, Business Development Director—North America, did not just give me a sneak peek; he shared a mindset and a strategy...

1. I'm always curious what a team chooses to lead with at the Global Show, especially now that AI is part of so many conversations on the floor. What message is Prophet bringing to Orlando this year, and which programs are you most looking forward to sharing?

Our message this year is simple: practical AI and smarter planning that make every day easier for produce teams. Everyone has heard about AI by now. What our customers care about is whether it actually saves their people time on a Tuesday in the middle of a busy season, and everything we are bringing to the Global Show is built around that question.

The headline is Prophet Pulse, the industry's first CRM built specifically for produce. On a typical morning, a sales desk might receive orders by email, WhatsApp, text, and phone, and someone has to retype every one of them into the system. With Pulse, AI reads those messages and turns them into sales orders automatically, dropping into the same box as EDI orders, so the salesperson spends that time with customers instead of on data entry with multiple systems.

We are also launching Prophet Insights. Instead of waiting days for someone to build a report, a sales manager or controller can type a simple question, such as 'Which customers bought less from us this month than last month?', and get the answer back with a chart and real numbers from their actual data.

Visitors will also see our MRP built for produce, which helps a packing operation plan days and weeks ahead so the right fruit, packaging, and crew are ready when the orders arrive. Rounding things out are two tools that quietly take work off people's plates. AI purchase

matching checks every supplier invoice against what was ordered and what actually arrived at the dock, so the accounts payable team only reviews the ones that do not line up. Our dock scheduling tool lets drivers check in by text, so the warehouse knows who is on site and trucks spend less time waiting. It is a packed show for us.

2. Produce has some of the most innovative people I know, and it's exciting to see technology finally catching up to them. What makes Prophet stand out, and what do you think it opens up for the teams running a packhouse or a sales desk?

Produce companies have usually had to choose between software with decades of produce knowledge running on older technology and modern software that has never lived through a short crop or a rejected load. Prophet is the only produce-specific ERP in the U.S. and Canada that offers both. More than 35 years of produce experience is built into the product, which runs on cutting-edge Microsoft development technologies with powerful yet functional AI tools.

Our MRP is the clearest example of that depth, and no one else in our industry has an MRP built specifically for produce. MRP stands for material requirements planning. Put simply, it works backward from what your customers are going to need based on historical information and internal planning and tells you exactly what you need to have on hand, how much of it, and when. It is a lot like planning Thanksgiving dinner. Once you know how many people are coming, you can figure out how many potatoes to buy, how many pans you need, and when each dish has to go in the oven without having to guess. Yes, experience helps, but our industry is more data-driven than ever.

Most systems in our industry stop at the work order, which tells the packing line what to run today and tomorrow. That matters, but a work order is the last step of a plan, not the plan itself. Prophet's MRP looks ahead and includes contracts in the equation. If a retail program calls for 3,000 cases of

clamshell strawberries next week, Prophet works out how much fruit is needed from which growers, how many clamshells, labels, and cartons need to be in the building, and when each one has to arrive.

3. Tell me more. What are some other specific examples of how a produce-specific MRP anticipates the needs of today's perishables companies?

Because it was built for produce, it handles things a generic MRP was never designed for. It tracks more dates, including harvest, pack, and best-by dates, so the right product moves first. It forecasts both sides of the business, meaning what customers will order and what the fields will actually deliver. It allows more approved substitutions in the bill of materials, which is essentially the recipe for each finished product, so when a size or variety comes up short, the planner already knows the acceptable alternatives. It plans packaging right alongside the fruit, so a missing roll of film or a box of labels does not stop a line. And because every lot and date is connected from the field to the finished case, food safety and

traceability are tighter from the start.

4. This industry has always had a gift for rising to the moment, even with labor, margins, and new requirements asking more of everyone. When you talk with growers, packers, and shippers today, what are you hearing, and how are your tools helping their teams do their best work and grow?

For us, AI and better planning help a trusted team do more without working longer hours. Nobody wants to pay overtime if they don't have to. Three pressures come up in nearly every conversation we have with growers, packers, shippers, and distributors. Good people are hard to find and harder to keep. The work is demanding, with long days and seasonal peaks that do not let up. And margins are shrinking faster than ever as companies absorb new regulatory and food safety requirements and navigate trade negotiations that have made an already unpredictable business even less predictable.

Picture a production planner at a mid-sized citrus packer. It is Thursday afternoon, and a grower calls to say Saturday's navel harvest will come in about 20 percent light. That fruit is earmarked for a retail ad that ships Monday. In the past, she would have spent the evening on the phone and in spreadsheets, and the team might not have discovered until Monday morning that they were also short on cartons for the backup pack. With Prophet, she sees right away which orders are affected, that the retailer has already approved a larger size as an alternate, and that the cartons for that pack need to be on the dock by Saturday. She calls the buyer on Thursday with a solution instead of on Monday with an apology, and every case that ships still carries the right lot and pack date for traceability.

The result is a business that can grow faster without growing its headcount, and a trusted team with more time for customers, growers, and the decisions that protect margin.

5. Who from the Prophet team will be in Orlando, so people can come say hello? And for anyone stopping by the booth, what are you most hoping to show them?

Attendees will find Paul Stofberg, CEO of Prophet ERP North America; Tony Zuccato, COO; Bryan Barsness, Business Development Director; Caroline Valentine, Senior Implementation Manager; and Shannon Fauconnier, Project Coordinator, at the booth.

When stopping by, it helps to understand why a CRM built for produce is quickly becoming essential. For generations, customer relationships in this industry have lived in a salesperson's head, their cell phone, and their text messages. That worked when teams stayed together for decades, and buyers rarely changed suppliers. Today, buyers are consolidating; more business is awarded through RFPs and bid

cycles, and experienced salespeople are retiring or moving on. When a salesperson leaves, years of customer history, pricing commitments, and conversations can walk out the door with them.

Prophet Pulse keeps all of that in one place, including every customer conversation, order, contract price, and RFP response, and connects it to what Prophet ERP shows is actually available to sell, now and in the future (no Excel sheet needed). A new salesperson can pick up an account and understand its history on day one, and a sales manager can see which programs are coming up for bid well before the deadline, even on their mobile phone. Generic CRMs were designed for businesses where the product never spoils. Pulse was built for people who sell product with a shelf life measured in days.

Most salespeople in produce have avoided CRMs for a simple reason. They were one more screen to fill out at the end of a 12-hour day, and the information was usually out of date by the next morning. Pulse works the other way around. Orders and messages that arrive by email, WhatsApp, or text are read automatically, and when a salesperson wants to capture something from a phone call or a customer visit, they simply forward it or send a quick note, and AI files it to the right account. There is no extra data entry, so the salesperson's time stays on what they do best, which is selling.

Pulse also helps a good salesperson become even better. Before a meeting with a customer, it can pull together what that customer bought last season, which contract prices are coming up for renewal, and any open quality issues, so every conversation starts with the facts. It also notices patterns a busy person can easily miss, such as a customer who normally starts buying asparagus in March and has not placed an order yet. Newer salespeople come up to speed much faster, and veterans get back hours they can spend strengthening relationships and finding new business.

Picture a salesperson at a regional distributor who inherits 40 accounts from a colleague retiring after 25 years in the business. In years past, most of what that colleague knew would have lived in his cell phone and left with him. With Pulse, she can see every order, contract price, conversation, and upcoming RFP for each account from her first day. On Monday at 5:30 a.m., a dozen orders arrive by WhatsApp and email, and they are already in the system by the time she finishes her coffee. She then asks Prophet Insights which of her new accounts have slowed down and sees that a restaurant group has cut its romaine orders by a third. She calls that afternoon, learns they have been getting quotes elsewhere, and has the chance to keep the account before it ever goes out to bid.

The best way to see it is to tell us how orders reach your sales desk today, whether that is email, WhatsApp, text, phone, or EDI, and we will show you that same flow running through Pulse. Demos will run throughout the show, and anyone who wants dedicated time with our team can reach out ahead of time from our website www.prophetize.com.