

PRO\*ACT

CONNECTING FARMS | EMPOWERING KITCHENS™

FEBRUARY 2026

# FRESH TAKE NEWSLETTER

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Commodity of the Month:

*Strawberries*

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Partnering

with

PRO\*ACT

CONNECTING FARMS | EMPOWERING KITCHENS™

## Why Partner with PRO\*ACT?

PRO\*ACT isn't about forcing everyone into the same box. It's about building smart, flexible programs that actually work in the real world.

We partner with distributors, suppliers, and customers who want more than a price sheet. We help create solutions, custom sourcing strategies, creative contract structures, and practical ways to win and keep business without adding friction. If there's a better way to do it, we'll find it. If the traditional model doesn't fit, we'll help design one that does.

Our value comes from understanding the entire supply chain and connecting the dots, procurement, logistics, pricing, and people. We stay flexible, we think creatively, and we focus on long-term partnerships, not short-term wins.

If you're looking for a partner who listens, adapts, and helps you grow in a way that makes sense for your business, PRO\*ACT is built for that.



**Dan Krow**  
SR. Director of Sales Operator



# **RADIANTLY RIPE *NATURIFE STRAWBERRIES BRING IT!* REDNESS**

The fruits of innovation and the results of thoughtful, sustainable practices look a lot like a Naturipe strawberry. They taste a lot like one, too.



For industry color commentary...  
Follow us.



*Good  
Things  
are Coming*

GEM  PACK  
BERRIES

[gem-packberries.com](http://gem-packberries.com)



  
*Gargiulo  
Produce*



## **A Tradition of Freshness. A Legacy of Service.**

Since 1929, Gargiulo Produce has been a trusted, family-owned produce distributor committed to quality, value, and personalized service. Now in its third generation, the company serves foodservice, retail, and wholesale customers across the Eastern U.S., Canada, and the Caribbean.

With a mission rooted in delivering top-quality produce at competitive prices, Gargiulo Produce adapts to the evolving needs of today's customers while maintaining old-fashioned service. Their state-of-the-art refrigerated facility and strict food-safety standards ensure freshness and reliability from grower to delivery. Experience the difference that nearly a century of expertise makes.

# MEET OUR GUEST SPEAKERS

## PATRICK KELLY WITH DR. HANS FINZEL!



**Patrick Kelly** - The founder of *The Produce Industry Podcast*. Author, Entrepreneur, and citrus-enthusiast.



**Hans Finzel** - International Leadership Trainer with 20+ Years Experience, Author, and Speaker

**APRIL 13 - 15, 2026**  
ORLANDO, FLORIDA



**PRO\*ACT  
SUMMIT  
2026**

[WWW.PROACTSUMMIT.COM](http://WWW.PROACTSUMMIT.COM)

## A Fascinating Story Behind the History of the Modern-Day Strawberry. Happy Valentines Day!

In 1711, the War of the Spanish Succession was going badly for France, then ruled by Louis XIV, a monarch with an unexpected passion for strawberries. At first glance, the fate of an intercontinental war and the king's favorite fruit seem entirely unrelated. Yet the two were about to intersect in a surprising episode of botanical espionage.

Worried that France might be excluded from Pacific South America in an eventual peace treaty, Louis XIV dispatched a military engineer named Amedée François Frézier on a covert mission. Traveling across the Atlantic and around Cape Horn, Frézier was tasked with mapping Chile and Peru while quietly gathering intelligence. To avoid suspicion, he posed as a merchant, hoping "to better insinuate himself with the Spanish governors." In simpler terms, he was a spy.

At the time, European strawberries, despite centuries of cultivation, were still small, fragile delicacies. But along a narrow stretch of land between the Andes and the Pacific, nourished by seeds carried by migratory birds from North America, Indigenous peoples had been cultivating strawberries for perhaps a thousand years. Their varieties were astonishingly large compared to Europe's. In 1714, Frézier smuggled five living strawberry plants out of Chile.

Unfortunately for French growers, all the plants turned out to be dioecious, each was either male or female, and without opposite-sex plants of similar genetic makeup, they produced no fruit. Years of frustration followed.

The breakthrough came from a royal botanist, Antoine Duchesne, who discovered that crossing the Chilean strawberry with its close relative, the Virginia strawberry, produced vigorous hybrids. These new plants were hardy, fruitful, and bore large, aromatic berries—the earliest versions of the modern garden strawberry.

Botanists would later realize that these strawberries had once been a single ancient species, spreading across the Americas, enlarged through Indigenous cultivation in South America, and finally reunited in France through a twist of espionage and horticultural curiosity.

Every plastic clamshell of strawberries you've ever bought, and nearly every pint at a farmers' market, descends from that same hybrid lineage: a marriage of two American species brought together by a spy with an eye for opportunity.



**Mike Moreno**  
**Sourcing Specialist**

# SUPPLIER TRAINING WEBINAR



Take part in an exclusive **Naturipe** training designed to deepen your understanding of produce. Explore advanced growing methods, learn key quality benchmarks, and gain insights into maintaining peak freshness.



DATE:  
**FEBRUARY 18**



TIME:  
**10:00 AM PST**

[Register](#)

