

How Sun Fresh planted the seeds for success

A supplier diversity and sustainability story



Environmental Sustainability

The Opportunity

Help a 72-year-old, woman- and veteran-owned produce business meet the ever-increasing challenges involved in moving products through the supply chain and staying in compliance with stringent retailer requirements.

The Solution

Collaborate with CHEP on multiple offerings, including pallets, customer storage and managed recovery, to ensure continual availability, maintain safety and increase sustainability.

Watermelon runs deep in James and Penny Carlton's veins. James Carlton became a watermelon farmer in 1968, upon leaving the Marine Corp. Over the years, he learned how to manage the challenges not only in growing the popular fruit, but also getting it to the customer's table.

In 1996, James and his wife Penny launched [Sun Fresh Farms, Inc.](#), with Penny as President and James as Vice President, making the business a 51% woman-owned, 49% veteran-owned business. In addition, their daughter, son and son-in-law also manage different aspects of the operation, and the business serves as a job creator for the community of Wauchula, Florida – making Sun Fresh Farms a true family-owned, community-focused business.



“Whether it’s through the stronger build of the 48x40 pallet, the assurance of availability through the customer storage program or easy access to repairs through managed recovery, CHEP ensures we deliver watermelons safely and securely.”

– Penny Carlton
President
Sun Fresh Farms Inc.

Penny and James first turned to [CHEP](#) soon after launching the business, ensuring they had continual access to 48x40-inch pallets that could deliver watermelons securely. And 24 years later, Sun Fresh Farms still partners with CHEP to provide solutions for new hurdles in the produce supply chain. Penny and James know that competition has grown fiercer, and even the smallest error could lead to product rejection.

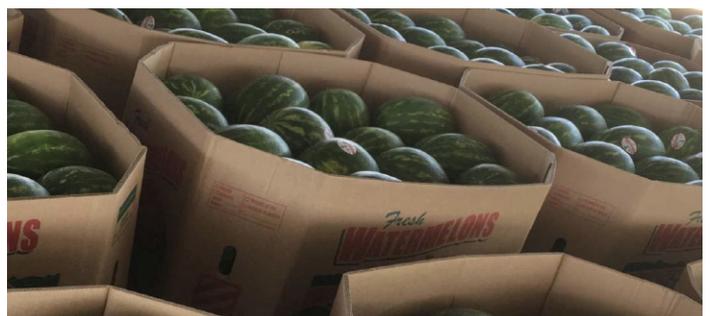
“You’re fighting from every direction with your product,” Penny says. “Retailers run scorecards for each supplier every year, and even using damaged pallets can earn you negative marks. If you don’t shine or catch the retailer’s eye, you’re going to lose the business.”

CHEP already offered the pallets Sun Fresh needed to reduce unpacking burdens on retailers. The 48x40-inch block pallet stacks well, minimizing the chance of pallet collapse in the distribution center, and true 4-way entry allows warehouse workers to easily maneuver pallets using a forklift.

Thinking beyond the pallet, CHEP also offered Sun Fresh two environmentally sustainable programs to confirm a high-quality pallet always reached the store "on time, in full:" customer storage and managed recovery. The customer storage program, which Sun Fresh joined in 2014, allows the business to become a pallet "landlord," keeping a supply of pallets on site during the off-season. Customer storage ensures Sun Fresh has the pallets to begin delivering as soon as a new season's first crop is ready, and reduces the empty miles used to move bare pallets.

The managed recovery program, which Sun Fresh joined in 2018, allows the business to receive shipments of pallets directly from retailers and distribution centers. Their team sorts through the pallets, keeps the pallets that meet CHEP's quality standards, and returns the rest to CHEP for repair. Managed recovery ensures Sun Fresh always has access to pallets that will meet retailer inspection, and because the damaged pallets aren't discarded, Sun Fresh reduces supply chain waste.

"Retailers have heightened expectations from produce farmers today – not only are we selling our watermelons, but we're also ensuring our logistical capabilities meet the retailers' needs, and that we're helping meet sustainability goals," says James Carlton. "CHEP's products and services help us succeed in all three of these arenas. We're pleased with results we've seen from customer storage and managed recovery so far, and we look to continue partnering with CHEP to solve our supply chain challenges."



To learn how CHEP's Sustainable Solutions can help you grow your business, please contact us at:

www.chep.com

1-800-243-7255

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By partnering with CHEP, Sun Fresh Farms has realized multiple benefits in their supply chain.

- + Stored more than 36,000 pallets on site in one year to ensure continual availability.
 - + In a 10-year period, Sun Fresh Farms achieved significant environmental savings by using more than 320,000 CHEP 48x40-inch block pallets.
 - Avoided more than 136,000 pounds of CO₂ from entering the atmosphere.
 - Eliminated more than 180,000 pounds of solid waste from landfill.
 - + Demonstrated verifiable results, beginning with CHEP's use of 100% certified timber (PEFC and FSC certifications) all the way to the eradication of empty miles.
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Learn how we are solving for common industry challenges.

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Benefits customers have received from CHEP's Environmental Sustainability Solutions:

Testing at CHEP's Innovation Center helped Grimmway Farms reduce its CO₂ emissions by more than 1.23 million pounds.

Storing nearly 100,000 CHEP pallets on site, allowed Bottomley Evergreens to reduce waste and create off-season jobs.

Wholesum Harvest used money saved on reduced carbon output to build stoves for 30,000 families in Mexico.