

O R G A N I C E N T R E P R E N E U R S

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—Keith Agoada, president, Sky Vegetable



and availability, but helps with price."

Caffe Sanora helps retailers convey the message that consumers can have a healthier cup of coffee clearly so they can become a destination for those customers. "We proudly display the USDA organic seal on our package. Additionally, we have marketing and point-of-sale materials that help the consumer understand the value of growing food organically," said Zapp.

Caffe Sanora is not only sold in health food stores, it also appears in over 3,000 mainstream grocery stores. But the company places particular value on the organic retailer. "Customers often discover our product for the first time in a local health food store. Many health food stores are smaller and have more staff available to talk to customers about health benefits of products," said Zapp. "We understand that many shoppers frequent both health food stores and mainstream grocery stores to satisfy their shopping needs. That choice can be dictated by a price decision, a convenience decision and /or a selection decision. It is important that our product is available to consumers wherever they choose to shop."

Organic for Everyone

Sky Vegetable (Madison, WI)

Keith Agoada, president
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www.skyvegetables.com

Keith Agoada took an introductory horticulture course his freshman year at University of Wisconsin-Madison and it changed his life. He began studying commercial organic food production intensively since September 2007. In addition, at his home in Boston, he and his brother tend their organic vegetable garden in their back yard.

"Through my research and interviews, I am quite confident that the future of fruit and vegetable production will be local and urban," said Agoada.

"Meaning rooftops, abandoned warehouses, on water, skyscrapers, basements, etc. There is plenty of time for independent retailers to adapt to this new future and take advantage of these opportunities for local sourcing."

Agoada incorporated Sky Vegetables, an urban agriculture firm that farms produce on rooftops using a fully sustainable model, in March of this year. It constructs and operates commercial, aquaponic greenhouses on the rooftops of super-

markets in the US and hopes to eventually take its business to all types of flat rooftops worldwide. Sky Vegetables is a separate entity from the supermarket and assumes full risk and liability.

"The greenhouses cultivate mostly vegetables, but also fruits, herbs and flowers, year round. Once matured, the produce is picked from the stem and immediately transported downstairs for retail sale," said Agoada. "In addition, the converted rooftops harvest rainwater and insolate the building below, reducing rainwater runoff, energy consumption and utility bills."

Sky Vegetables takes eating local to a whole new level, and seeks to preserve the integrity of "organic" in the eyes of consumers to the benefit of retailers.

"One can buy 'organic' spinach from a chain supermarket. While the growing methods used may be superior to the traditional, chemical intensive super farms, the spinach may have been shipped from China or Argentina. The produce is not fresh by the time it reaches the customer, thereby reducing its taste and nutritional value," said Agoada. "People are starting to realize that just being 'organic' is not enough. You need to be organic and local, hence the rise in the popularity of 'localvores,' as reported by *Time* magazine in addition to a handful of other major publications.

"Our strategy is to help spread the benefits of organic to mainstream consumers," he added.

Most importantly, Agoada's firm seeks to make organic accessible for everyone, and at a reasonable price.

"It is five times more expensive for a shopper to buy a bag of organic carrots than to buy a bag of potato chips. This represents a major problem," he said. "It is no coincidence that as the per capita income of the individual increases so does the consumption of fresh produce. And as the rates of fresh produce consumption increase and consumption of processed foods decreases, the rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease and cancer decrease as well. We must find ways to provide not just the wealthy, but everyone, with high-quality, organic produce," Agoada added.

For More Information

- Caffe Sanora Organic, (800) 345-9666
- Country Choice, (952) 829-8824
- Dakota Beef LLC, (605) 772-5339
- Sky Vegetables, (617) 406-8726
- Sweet Leaf Iced Teas, (512) 328-7775
- YummyEarth Inc., (201) 857-8489