


GUMZ FARMS EXPANDS PACKING SHED



A grower, shipper and packer of potatoes and onions, Gumz Farms of Endeavor, Wisconsin, has been undertaking a large expansion and remodel at its storage and packing facilities. The new storage is climate controlled and allows for a high-quality crop and extended season.



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Grower, packer, shipper also adds its fourth storage facility in the last five years

By Joe Kertzman, managing editor, Badger Common'Tater

Gumz Farms has been undertaking a large expansion and remodel at its Endeavor, Wisconsin, packaging facility to better serve customers and meet growing demand.

With an average increase of 10% in annual sales, the expansion increases existing capacity by approximately 40%.

Its packing facility, storage capabilities, and sustainable growing practices allow Gumz Farms to provide high-quality produce in a timely manner, year-round, to its customers.

Owners Richard and Roderick Gumz represent the fourth generation of family farmers. More recently, the fifth generation has come back to the farm to continue building the operation.

Specifically, Rod's son, Jason, and Richard's daughter, Jacalynn, have begun working full-time at the growing, packing and shipping operation.

Jacalynn has been concentrating on production and is responsible for precision agriculture and potato agronomy. Jason is working in the

shed and helping with systems and technology.

“Being 4th generation, there is a responsibility to carry on from the third and to leave it in better shape for the 5th generation,” Rod says. “We are excited to see what the future holds.”

POTATOES & ONIONS

Gumz Farms specializes in growing and packing potatoes and onions. Raising 40% of Wisconsin’s yellow onions and over 1,200 acres of potatoes, it is the largest producer of onions and red and yellow potatoes in the state.

“We have added some automation equipment to increase our pack capacity in the shed,” Rod says. “Over the years, we have increased our production of both potatoes and onions. This necessitated an increase in our storages and pack shed.”

“We have had multiple additions to our pack shed over the years to increase capacity and are guesstimating that the latest addition will give us the potential to add 40% to our production capacity,” he details.

In addition, Gumz Farms is constructing another storage building—its fourth in the last five years.

“The new storage is climate controlled and allows for a high-quality crop and extended season,” Rod stresses. “We pack both onions and potatoes year-round, and by having modern storages, we are able to provide quality more consistently.”

Over the years, Gumz Farms has improved its production practices using Integrated Pest Management (IPM) principles and participating in the Wisconsin Healthy Grown program, resulting in higher yields and more consistent production, besides increasing acreage.

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“It’s important to continue to make investments in buildings, equipment, technology, and people.”

– Roderick Gumz,
Gumz Farms LLC



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By having a supply on the farm, and produce in the pack shed, Gumz Farms is not relying on trucks for incoming product, according to Rod. “We can be more reliable and control the quality better,” he says.

IDEAL LOCATION

“We are in a great location to serve

a large part of the U.S.,” Rod adds. “We have seen sales increase, and by adding automation equipment, we can get more done without adding people or hours. Manual labor will get tired at the end of the day. Well-maintained equipment keeps going and going.”

Labor shortages have affected Gumz Farms like everywhere else, but the multi-generational family farm has been able to keep good people.

“Labor is always a priority. We have done some things on the farm to keep and attract people that have resulted in positive results,” Rod says. “We are only looking for a couple key people now.”

It seems like, with all the additions, that perhaps efforts to diversify and grow the Gumz Muck Farms operation have paid off.

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Adobe: Gumz Farms owners Roderick (second from left) and Richard Gumz (second from right) represent the fourth generation of family farmers. More recently, the fifth generation has come back to the farm to continue building the operation. Specifically, Rod’s son, Jason (left), and Richard’s daughter, Jacalynn (right), have begun working full-time at the growing, packing and shipping operation. Jacalynn has been concentrating on production and is responsible for precision agriculture and potato agronomy. Jason is working in the shed and helping with systems and technology.

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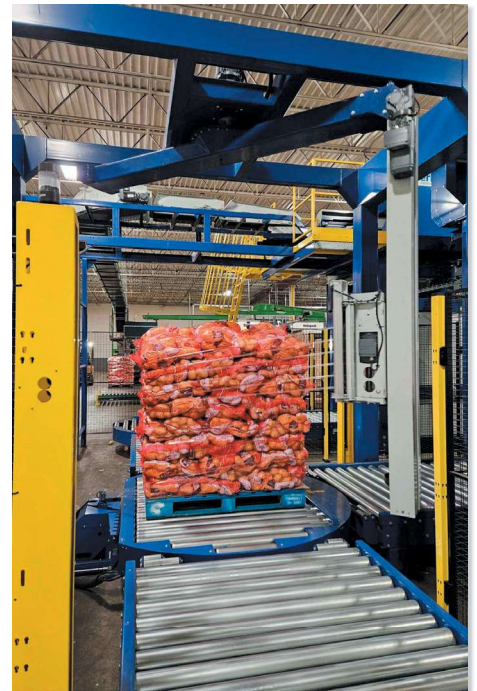
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Gumz Farms has added automation equipment like the Verbruggen VPM-10C palletizer to increase pack capacity in the shed.

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Above: In addition to growing and packing over 1,200 acres of Healthy Grown potatoes, Gumz Farms raises 40% of Wisconsin's yellow onions and is the largest producer of onions and red and yellow potatoes in the state.

"We feel that if we stop growing, we will go backwards," Rod says. "It's important to continue to make investments in buildings, equipment, technology, and people."

"It certainly has been a lot of work and risk," Rod allows, "but so far, so good. We are never complacent and always looking for ways to improve or to make it better. It's challenging at times but rewarding most of the time."

"We feel we have been given an opportunity and have been fortunate enough to work with great people," he concludes, "from suppliers to customers to employees." **BCT**



By adding automation equipment, Gumz Farms can get more done without adding people or hours.

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