



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**FORMER CHIQUITA BRAND LAUNCHES UNDER NEW NAME:  
*"Plain Jane" Greenhouse Vegetable Line Features Tomatoes, Peppers and  
Seedless Cucumbers; Produce Grown in Mexico's Vegetable Farming Region***

**NOGALES, Ariz. -- (October 12, 2007)** – Look for a new "face" in the fresh produce aisles -- a smiling iconic label that signifies the Plain Jane line of greenhouse vegetables grown in Mexico's storied vegetable farming region. Plain Jane vegetables, grown and produced by Melones Internacional of Nogales, Ariz. and Sinaloa, Mexico, were formerly carried under the Chiquita umbrella. Now, the naturally premium tomatoes, bell peppers and seedless cucumbers will become available to consumers throughout North America under the inaugural brand name.

"We have a history of bringing top-quality greenhouse vegetables to market through the well-known Chiquita label, and it worked well for us over the last 10 years," said Alejandro Canelos Jr., founding partner and COO of Melones Internacional and a Tucson, Ariz. resident. Canelos manages the company with founding partner J. Fife Symington IV of Phoenix, Ariz.

"During that time, our products ripened into a successful line that we've nurtured and expanded each year. Today's consumers are also savvier about produce, so we decided to break out with our own label to let people know who we are and what we provide. It's the next step for us and our products."

Melones Internacional officially split from Chiquita this summer. "We could not have asked for a more professional business partner," said Canelos Jr. regarding Chiquita. "Our relationship was always a great one."

Distributed by Apache Produce Co. of Nogales, Ariz., Plain Jane vegetables will sell at supermarkets across the country.

"We selected the name 'Plain Jane' to emphasize the pure and uncomplicated character of the vegetables," Canelos said. "We feel that it's important to powerfully convey the brand's superior quality through an identity that also reflects its simplicity."

### **Plain Jane Vegetables Grow Up in Greenhouses**

Melones Internacional operates mid-technology greenhouses in the farming region of Sinaloa, Mexico, where constant sunshine, optimal temperatures and limited rainfall co-mingle to create the heartiest and best-tasting vegetables around. The greenhouses provide the crops with protection from rain, white flies and other insects while allowing for natural ventilation.

The Plain Jane product line includes:

#### ***Seedless Cucumbers***

Seedless cukes (also known as "European cucumbers" or "Euros") must be raised in greenhouses, or they will be pollinated by insects and will form seeds. These cucumbers are defined by a thin, edible skin and are generally longer and narrower than ordinary cucumbers. Most of a cucumber's vitamins reside in its dark green skin, so there is a notable health benefit to the seedless variety. Euros, unlike ordinary cucumbers, are not waxed for a shiny appearance but instead are individually shrink-wrapped to protect their delicate skin and retain moisture.

#### ***Tomatoes***

Greenhouse-raised tomatoes are produced and sold throughout the winter and spring months. They are subject to higher appearance standards upon inspection and are packed stem-side-up in plastic trays inside single-layer cartons for shipping to retailers.

#### ***Colored Bell Peppers***

Colored bells grown in greenhouses are block-shaped, or as wide as they are tall. All bell peppers start out green and turn color during ripening. While green pepper varieties are engineered to stay green as long as possible, colored bell varieties are allowed to fully ripen naturally. Plain Jane offers red, yellow and orange bell peppers. Greenhouse bell peppers are not exposed to the rain spotting, bug marks and other problems that are typical for their field-grown counterparts and are therefore able to retain their natural beauty.

### **About Melones Internacional and Plain Jane**

Melones Internacional started in 1994 when Alejandro Canelos Jr. and J. Fife Symington IV partnered to build greenhouses for raising melons. They shipped their first crop of 40,000 cartons in the 1995-96 season. The company used its unique facilities to produce cantaloupes, honeydews and various specialty melons, and later expanded into seedless cucumbers. The success of the cucumbers prompted the company to shift its focus to vegetables, specifically seedless cumpers, tomatoes and colored bell peppers. Melones Internacional marketed its produce through Chiquita while expanding its greenhouse acreage annually, reaching 500 covered acres in 2006. The demand for greenhouse produce has been steadily growing, and Melones Internacional continues to provide top products as an established greenhouse vegetable company. In 2007, Melones Internacional took the next step and created its own label, Plain Jane. For more information, please visit [www.PlainJaneProduce.com](http://www.PlainJaneProduce.com).

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**FACT SHEET**

**PLAIN JANE  
GREENHOUSE VEGETABLES**

<b>WHAT</b>	Plain Jane vegetables are grown in greenhouses and include cucumbers, tomatoes and peppers. Plain Jane vegetables are sold and distributed throughout the United States	
<b>PRODUCE LOCATION</b>	Plain Jane vegetables are grown in Sinaloa, Mexico.	
<b>OWNERSHIP</b>	Melones Internacional launched Plain Jane in 2007. Prior to growing and marketing its vegetables under the Plain Jane brand, Melones Internacional marketed its vegetables under the Chiquita label.	
<b>CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS</b>	Culiacan, Sinaloa, Mexico and Phoenix, Arizona	
<b>OFFICIAL SPOKESPERSON</b>	Alejandro N. Canelos, Founder and Chief Operating Officer	
<b>DISTRIBUTOR</b>	Apache Produce Co., Inc. was incorporated in 1986, and is a privately owned corporation based in Nogales, Arizona. Apache began working with Chiquita Frupac in December of 2001, and will now distribute Plain Jane produce to outlets all over the U.S. and Canada.	
<b>DISTRIBUTION SPOKESPERSON</b>	Alberto Maldonado, General Manager Apache Produce Co., Inc.	
<b>DISTRIBUTION HEADQUARTERS</b>	Apache Produce Co. Inc. 123 Old Tucson Road Nogales, AZ 85621 (520) 281 2282	
<b>WEBSITE</b>	<a href="http://www.PlainJaneProduce.com">www.PlainJaneProduce.com</a>	
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THE FRESH FACE OF PURE TASTE

## HISTORY

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## **MELONES INTERNACIONAL: GENERATIONS OF FARMING LEAD TO GREENHOUSE VEGETABLE SUCCESS AND "PLAIN JANE" DEBUT**

Plain Jane owes her origins to a young Greek entrepreneur who left his small fishing village more than 80 years ago and journeyed through Cuba en route to Mexico, where he would begin a farming outfit that grew into a produce empire. Aristeo Canelos and his Mexican wife sowed the seeds for future generations to enter the industry, including their grandson Alejandro Canelos Jr., founding partner and principal of Melones Internacional.

### **ABC Produce**

Aristeo founded ABC Produce in Culiacan, Sinaloa with two other Greek immigrants in 1936, shipping fresh produce to the United States through the war years. ABC specialized in mature green tomatoes, bell peppers and green beans, all of which traveled on rail cars without cooling. The tomatoes were picked green and therefore individually wrapped to encourage the ripening process. In 1962, Aristeo's son Alejandro joined the business, followed by Alberto Maldonado, who served as head of distribution in Nogales and oversaw sales of ABC brand tomatoes for decades.

In 1969, the vine-ripened tomato (which ripens on the vine without getting soft) was introduced to Mexican growers, ushering in another period of skyrocketing growth and profitability.

Around the same time, Cuban farmers that had escaped Fidel Castro's communist regime in the 1960's were hired by Aristeo and other Mexican growers. The Cubans taught the Mexicans how to grow cucumbers, leading to yet more exponential expansion in Mexico's agricultural regions.

### **New Direction and Alliances**

When Aristeo passed away in 1972, Alejandro Sr. took over the business and entered into several notable alliances and expansions. He partnered with Dole through 1982, growing summer tomatoes in Baja California and melons in the Dominican Republic. During the 1970's and 80's,

Alejandro Sr.'s ABC Produce company also became a major exporter of rice, corn, strawberries, eggplant and more.

In 1974, Alejandro Sr. began experimenting with greenhouses, focusing on melons in Culiacan. He maintained his small experiment for two decades before determining that it was time for a new era in Mexican agriculture.

### **Melones Internacional**

In 1993, Alejandro Jr. and his friend J. Fife Symington IV met with Alejandro Sr. – whose business by then had joined the ranks of the largest wintertime growers of tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers in North America, planting nearly 2,000 acres annually and shipping nearly 10 million boxes of ABC brand vegetables to the United States and Canada each year.

The duo noticed a small trial of melon varieties growing in crude, early model greenhouses. Alejandro Sr. had learned basic greenhouse cultivation technology from visiting Japanese businessmen, and had started experimenting with popular U.S. varieties including cantaloupes and honeydews. In 1994, Alejandro Jr. and Symington agreed to partner to raise capital for more greenhouses, and Melones Internacional was born.

In 1995, Melones Internacional harvested its first crop of melons and shipped approximately 40,000 cartons of them to the United States, sold under the “Dulce” label. These high-quality greenhouse melons possessed superior taste and consistency. As the company grew its acreage, it moved into specialty melons such as galia, juan canary and horned varieties, along with the other more well-known types. At the same time, the team planted a tiny crop of trial seedless cucumbers – a decision that would soon redefine Melones and its vision.

When the cucumber crop financially outperformed all the melons combined, the team decided to change direction and focus on greenhouse vegetables. Consumer demand in North America for perfect-looking produce continues to fuel the greenhouse farming industry. This ever-increasing demand, paired with the ideal vegetable-growing conditions of Sinaloa, Mexico, has empowered Melones Internacional to thrive as a greenhouse vegetable provider.

### **Chiquita Partnership**

In 1996, Alejandro Sr. partnered with the internationally recognized Chiquita brand to market his produce under the hybrid Chiquita/ABC label. Melones Internacional decided to abandon its Dulce label and market its vegetables through Chiquita – including seedless cucumbers in the winter and tomatoes and colored bell peppers through both winter and spring. Over the next decade, Melones Internacional increased its acreage to its current 500 covered acres.

### **New Direction, Plain Jane Introduced**

In 2007, inspired by the success of their greenhouse vegetable business, Alejandro Jr. and Symington decided to take the next step and amicably split from Chiquita to create their own signature label. The “Plain Jane” brand name embodies the ideals of the Melones Internacional line of produce: pure, natural, wholesome and healthy.



## **Q&A SHEET**

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## **MELONES INTERNACIONAL CREATES ITS OWN LABEL: *Q&A WITH MELONES PRINCIPAL ALEJANDRO CANELOS JR.***

### **1. Why did you decide to split apart from Chiquita after a successful ten-year partnership?**

Since its inception 14 years ago, Melones Internacional has led the greenhouse vegetable industry from infancy to its current state of exponential expansion. During that time, we marketed our produce through Chiquita Frupac, Inc. and enjoyed a solid partnership with them. We feel that we're at a point where our interests have diverged, and our focus is to take our products to the next level by creating our own signature label.

### **2. How would you characterize the parting of ways?**

Amicable and not unexpected. Because our growth has been so steady and positive, we decided to reassess our long-term goals and how to achieve them. We discovered that in order to reach our full potential, we needed to create our own brand. Our strategy is to always seek ways toward greater efficiency and higher margins.

### **3. Will your products be affected by the transition?**

No, we will maintain our uncompromising level of quality for all of our produce, and we will continue to provide superior-quality greenhouse vegetables—albeit under a new brand name label.

### **4. Why 'Plain Jane?'**

We deliberated over names that best capture a wholesome simplicity and innocence, and we wanted to create a persona for these themes. The idea is that Plain Jane's beauty is in its uncomplicated, healthy character. Plus, we wanted a name that people would notice. So it's not such a "serious" name—it's more of a "wink."

### **5. What are the primary benefits to starting your own label?**

We will have the opportunity to connect to the consumer through our marketing efforts, and to create more awareness about our products and their benefits. We will have more control over our brand and can drive our own growth strategies, which is the ultimate prize for us.



## **FUN FACTS**

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## **DID YOU KNOW?**

### ***FACTS AND LORE ABOUT GREENHOUSE AGRICULTURE***

#### **History of Greenhouse Vegetables Abroad and in North America**

- Prior to the 1990's, the greenhouse industry was dominated by high-tech producers in Holland and Israel. These countries possessed the technology to supply the world with greenhouse tomatoes, cucumbers and bell peppers. Their expensive glass greenhouses had just the right temperature, humidity and environmental controls.
- The market grew along with the competition. Spain and Canada stepped in and took market share away from the Dutch and Israelis, especially in North America during the mid-1990's.
- Enter Mexico. Melones Internacional and others tapped into the country's optimal weather for greenhouse farming in Sinaloa, where climate issues such as snow load do not pose obstacles.
- Mexico has two notable advantages over Spain and Canada: Spain can grow in the winter months, but it must ship the produce by boat (two-week trips) or by expensive plane transport. Canada has shorter days in the winter months, and therefore insufficient light for effective photosynthesis – which means there is less production. Mexico can grow its greenhouse produce in the winter and spring, and ship it by truck anywhere in North America within days.

#### **Greenhouse Farming – Why It Works**

- It offers higher produce yields per acre resulting in lowered production costs.
- Protects from Mother Nature's "moods," including climate extremes, frost and rain variations.
- Protects produce against pests such as virus-spreading white flies, mites, crickets, rodents and more.

- Greenhouses range from basic plastic shelters to fully-automated, environmentally-controlled operations.
- Melones Internacional utilizes mid-tech greenhouses to keep out white flies and other pests while allowing for natural ventilation.
- Within its acreage Melones Internacional utilizes both hydroponic and non-hydroponic systems. In a non-hydroponic system, plants are grown directly in the soil, while in hydroponic systems plants' roots are suspended in other substances, such as volcanic rock.



## BIOGRAPHY

**Alejandro Canelos, Jr.**  
**Founding Partner**  
**Melones Internacional**

As founding partner, COO and official spokesperson for Melones Internacional, Alejandro Canelos Jr. oversees all aspects of the company and its Plain Jane line of vegetables. Canelos has spent the majority of his life learning about and working in the produce industry.

For Melones Internacional, he oversees communications between productions and sales teams; procurement of materials related to sales and marketing (packaging); crop and market forecasting for business planning purposes; the annual production plan including the volume and timing of each item; and more. He founded the company in 1994 along with his father, Alejandro Canelos Sr., and business partner J. Fife Symington IV.

Born in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico in 1970, Alejandro grew up in Tucson, Ariz. and worked weekends at G.A.C. Produce, his father's company. He graduated cum laude from Harvard in 1992, with a bachelor's degree in biology.

He has traveled the world extensively, including greenhouse agricultural tours of Israel and Morocco. What's more, Alejandro is a professional musician who plays the drums and has a passion for music.

Married with two children, Alejandro lives in Tucson, Arizona.



## **BIOGRAPHY**

**Alberto Maldonado**  
**President**  
**Apache Distribution**

As General Manager of Apache Distribution Co. Inc., Alberto ("Beto") Maldonado will oversee all distribution efforts for Plain Jane produce. Mr. Maldonado is a certifiable produce expert, with almost 50 years of experience in the industry. Mr. Maldonado began his career in the produce industry in 1958, working with Canelos, Gatzionis and Petrullas Produce Co. Mr. Maldonado later went on to work with G.A.C Produce Co., where he served as Corporate Secretary and General Manager. In 1983, Mr. Maldonado became General Manager of Apollo Produce, and in 2001, he became General Manager of Apache Produce Co., Inc.

Mr. Maldonado was a member of the Nogales-based Fresh Produce Association of the Americas (FPAA) for more than 25 years. During his tenure with the FPAA, Mr. Maldonado served as vice president for 10 years and president for three years.

Mr. Maldonado has also worked closely with notable Mexican organizations such as UNPH and CAADES, and has served on the Board of Directors for both United Fresh Fruit and Vegetables and the California Tomato Commission.