

Fresno produce company purchased by national firm

By Robert Rodriguez
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FreshKO, a Fresno-based produce company, has been purchased by C&S Wholesale Grocers Inc., one of the nation's leading wholesale grocery suppliers.

The deal gives the New Hampshire company a greater presence in the California market. Already, C&S supplies about 6,500 independent grocery stores, chain stores, military bases and institutions nationwide.

Randal Shepherd, co-founder of FreshKO, said his company will be a good fit for the national wholesaler. FreshKO distributes conventionally grown and organic fresh produce to 650 customers from Sacramento to Santa Barbara. FreshKO employs 142 people.

"We are committed to what we do, and we have the people who are good at it," Shepherd said.

Shepherd founded the company in 2002 with business partner Manny Robles. The two men have spent more than 35 years in the produce industry.

Shepherd, who served as the company chief executive officer, will remain with the company for now.

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Randal Shepherd, co-founder of FreshKO

The sale price of the company was not disclosed. The company will continue to operate as FreshKO, a wholly owned subsidiary of C&S Wholesale Grocers.

Rick Cohen, C&S chairman and chief executive officer, said in a news release: "FreshKO has built a highly successful service model that supports retailers in providing their customers with the best produce the region has to offer at competitive prices. The FreshKO team's deep customer relationships and level of expertise in this market make this partnership ideal."

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