

## **HARDIE'S FRUIT & VEGETABLE CO. ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIP WITH FIVE STAR PRODUCE**

*Affiliation Between Two Produce Leaders To Provide Signature Service to Almost 800 Food Service and Retail Customers From Dallas/Fort Worth to San Antonio*

**Dallas and Austin, TX (March 13, 2006)** – Hardie's Fruit & Vegetable Co., one of Dallas/Fort Worth's produce leaders, is pleased to announce today that it has joined forces with Five Star Produce to better supply food service and retail customers from the Red River to the Rio Grande. This partnership's impact is expected to resonate through most of Texas, with Hardie's chain business projected to expand throughout most of Central and South Texas thanks to its new presence in Austin.

"For years, many of our chain restaurants have asked us to provide the Hardie's service they love here in Dallas to their locations in other Texas markets," explained David Hardie, owner and president of Hardie's Fruit & Vegetable Co. "With this partnership, we look forward to providing the freshest produce, dairy, and specialty foods to the Central and South Texas locations of our chain restaurant clients, as well as new clients."

Hardie's Fruit & Vegetable Co. and Five Star Produce distribute approximately 190 million pounds of produce and specialty foods each year. This partnership is expected to result in a double-digit growth, providing job growth to each facility, including drivers, warehouse crews and account management teams. More than 800 food service and retail customers located from Dallas/Fort Worth to San Antonio will be serviced by the Hardie's/Five Star partnership.

"Like Hardie's, Five Star Produce has created a reputation for working harder for our customers," explained David McCoy, Vice President and Director of Operations of Five Star Produce. "As the produce business continues to become more and more competitive, this relationship will help both of our facilities grow, let us provide our customers with the freshest and best product, as well as allow us to meet our clients' needs, no matter how unique they may be."

Each company has built a solid reputation in its market by providing customers with the most complete line of farm fresh produce available, including special seasonal items such as gooseberries, gold raspberries, and imported French truffles, to staple items such as Idaho bakers, broccoli, and iceberg lettuce. Hardie's and Five Star Produce also provide specialty and domestic cheeses as well as complete lists of unique food products, some of which are exclusive to Hardie's and now Five Star Produce.

Currently, Hardie's has 148 employees at its 71,000 square foot facility in Dallas, while Five-Star Produce employs 52 in a 22,000 square foot facility in Austin.

Hardie's is a longstanding member of the Pro\*Act produce distribution group which sources produce for over 35 distribution companies across the country. Pro\*Act's direct grower sourcing, electronic order entry, and streamlined distribution system provides their national distribution network with combined buying leverage and sourcing

efficiencies allowing Hardie's to focus resources on servicing their local foodservice operators. Regional and national multi-unit Pro\*Act customers will enjoy the benefits of Hardie's expanded distribution capabilities.

### **About Hardie's Fruit & Vegetable Co.**

Started in 1943 by David Hardie's father, John T. Hardie, Hardie's ([www.hardies.com](http://www.hardies.com)) serves food service and retail accounts in Texas and Louisiana covering a 400-mile territory, serviced by 42 bobtail trucks. Hardie's moved into a brand new 71,000 square foot facility with top-of-the-line technology in 2004. Hardie's serves about 350 food service and retail accounts, making more than 3,300 deliveries a week from an inventory of more than 1,300 line items, including produce, dairy, cheeses, as well as specialty fruit and vegetables from all over the world.

### **About Five-Star Produce**

Five Star Produce ([www.fivestarproduce.com](http://www.fivestarproduce.com)) started in 1999 and has quickly built a reputation for service and quality. Five Star services over 200 customers including some to the finest white tablecloth, hotel and resort establishments in Central Texas. Five Star currently distributes fresh produce and gourmet food items from Waco to San Antonio. "We are very excited to partner with a company with the reputation that Hardie's has", said Greg Rowe, President of Five Star Produce. Rowe and David McCoy are both remaining with the company, serving as President and Vice President respectively.

### **About Pro\*Act**

PRO\*ACT, America's leading specialty distributor of fresh produce to the foodservice industry, offers produce category solutions and delivery service to foodservice operators across America. PRO\*ACT is headquartered in Monterey, CA and PRO\*ACT Specialties, a division of PRO\*ACT, is located in Los Angeles, CA and Miami, FL.