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The Gills Onions Newsletter Spring '09 No. 50
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Steven Gill Addresses ESC members during his presentation.



Award Recipients (l-r) Bill Deaton – Deaton & Associates, LLC, Steven Gill – Gills Onions, Hal Snyder – Sempra Energy Utilities, Cherif Youssef – Southern California Gas Company, David Carrell – Southern California Gas Company.

Gills Onions Recognized As Leader In Conservation

STEVEN GILL RECEIVES AWARD AND SPEAKS AT ESC CONFERENCE

Gills Onions was recognized for its energy-saving efforts, and Steven Gill was a featured speaker at a Technology and Market Assessment Forum in Pasadena, California on February 24. The forum was held by the Energy Solutions Center, a non-profit trade association of 43 gas utility companies and 40 equipment manufacturers that work together to bring improved, energy efficient natural gas solutions to residential, commercial, and industrial customers. The ESC develops an array of tools and resources to help utilities and their customers use natural gas more prudently. The forum was hosted by Southern California Gas Company.

Approximately 160 ESC members were gathered to hear presentations and honor

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Romain Bicheron joins Gills Onions for Research Project



**BUSINESS
STUDENT TO
EXPLORE
GROWTH
OPPORTUNITIES**

Gills Onions is excited about a unique research project that began in January. It is being conducted by Romain Bicheron, a 22-year-old Business School student from Lyon, France. He is acquainted with the Gills family through his father, who has worked with Steve on various projects.

Romain will be helping Gills to develop a retail business plan. He began his research at the field (*growing*) level, and then continued to the plant, and finally distribution to understand the entire process through which a Gills onion goes.

Romain will be examining the retail marketplace in the U.S. to look for growth opportunities for fresh cut product, specifically onions. He will then help build a five, ten and fifteen year marketing plan and strategy.

Romain inherited his father's passion for the United States and has traveled here numerous times, visiting New York, California, Florida and Maryland. He recently went to study abroad to New Delhi, India, but his visit was cut short because he was nearly killed during terrorist blasts. We trust his stay in California will be safer and will culminate in some exciting ideas for Gills Onions.



**A PARTNERSHIP
OF SUCCESS!**

Fresh Connect LLC, a partnership company with Gills Onions, is our Integrated sales execution team, focusing on national foodservice sales. Regionally located across the country, the Fresh Connect team includes nine seasoned produce veterans with a deep understanding of produce and the foodservice industry. "Our team of sales execution professionals works with end users and distributors to find solutions and new opportunities for agriculture products in foodservice," explains Andy Siegel, leader of the Fresh Connect team, and based in Chicago.

Fresh Connect provides in-the-market onion sales training, sales support, key account calls, culinary development, show representation and, most importantly, face to face service and care of Gills' customers.

"People buy from people they like. They like Fresh Connect because we invest the time and personal

effort to know Gills' customers and grow their business," says Andy.

Accelerating the move to a low carbon economy is paramount at Gills Onions. "A regionally based sales force improves our customer relations, while reducing our travel costs, emissions and over all carbon footprint. At Gills, we are always searching for new ways to build in environmentally conscious practices to our day-to-day business. Fresh Connect adds value, knowledge, sales and aligns with Gills 'go green' goals," says Steven Gill.

"Gills is the premier grower, shipper and processor of fresh cut onions, leading the produce industry in food safety, sustainable agricultural practices and social responsibility to the environment and the planet. We have a great story and products to share with the foodservice community," says Andy. "Fresh Connect is proud to represent only the best-in-the-business."

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Food Safety

**AUDITS GIVE GILLS A HELPFUL
PERSPECTIVE FOR IMPROVEMENT**

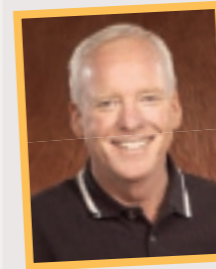
Gills Onions participates in several third party audits each year. We view the audits as being a new set of eyes examining our system to gather information and show us ways to improve. We are always making adjustments and are very open to change.

In November 2008, we had a NSF Cook & Thurber audit and received a 93.91%. The Categories that they review are: Administration and Regulatory Compliance, HACCP Management, Facilities Equipment, Sanitation, Housekeeping and Hygiene, Rodent and Pest Control Management, Receiving and Inventory Control, Process and Product Evaluation, Packaging and labeling, Storage and Shipping, Analytical Records and Laboratory Support and Food defense.

The web site for NSF Cook & Thurber is nsf.org and more information on the audits can be found under the Business section then Cook and Thurber.

In December 2008 we also participated in an audit to supply the United States Army. For the Army we have maintained our approved status since 2001. We will be listed in the Directory of Sanitarily Approved Food Establishments for Armed Forces Procurement.

For further information on audit results, please contact Nivia Santiago, Quality Assurance Manager at (805) 240-1983 ext.245, or nivasantiago@gillsonions.com.



Spring Crop Update

with Steve Gill

Q: What is the status of the spring onion crop?

A: Onion sets will be the first to come off around the 25th of March.

Q: How does the quality look?

A: To date we have good stands in all areas in Brawley. We have had a lot of rain in California but that hasn't affected the Imperial Valley....there are no issues with the crop.

Q: What areas do you harvest, and when?

A: We will be harvesting Imperial Valley late March through the end of May. Next, we start San Joaquin on the 25th of May. All our storage onions are coming out of cold storage and we will transition into the fresh crop around the first of April.

Q: How do you face the challenge of forecasting demand?

A: We base our acreage on previous years' sales trends along with other factors. This year we anticipate having plenty of onions to cover our customers' needs. With forecasting, it is also appreciated and helpful to have our customers' feedback when they experience any changes in volume.

Did You Know **GILLS OFFERS 1lb. DICED RED OR YELLOW ONIONS?**

Our featured item for this issue is a 1/4" diced red or yellow onion. The 20/1# bags are the ultimate in convenience for any foodservice customer, and perfect for topping hot dogs or chili. Ask your sales rep for more details on this versatile product!

Gills Onions Recognized

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companies' involvement in energy conservation, and Steven was invited to speak because of Gills Onions' interest and dedication to energy management. The focus of the presentation was what Gills has done over the years at its facility to manage its energy load. Gills Onions is in constant search of the most energy efficient technologies available.

Steven opened the presentation with a short video on Gills Onions' Oxnard processing facility and how energy efficiency is integrated throughout the entire processing operation, including the development of a proprietary process to convert our onion waste (200-300k pounds per day) to generate ultra-clean, 24/7 base load electricity for our processing operation on-site.

After Steven's presentation, the company was presented the tri-annual Partnership Award for the several energy saving projects at the Oxnard facility. This award is presented to customers and energy utilities that work together to deploy new energy-efficient gas solutions that increase comfort and reliability. Accepting the award during the event was Steve Gill of Gills Onions, Bill Deaton of the technology consulting firm Deaton & Associates, LLC and Southern California Gas Company representatives Cherif Youssef and David Carrell.

"It was an honor to be chosen to speak and be recognized at this conference," said Steven Gill. "The attendees are major players in the energy industry, and it is very gratifying for Gills Onions to be acknowledged as a leader in energy conservation after our years of research, and finally, success," he said.

For more information about Energy Solutions Center visit EnergySolutionsCenter.Org. 