

Floral factor

By LEN RICHARDSON

CUT-FLOWER growers in California employ more than 7,500 people, says Kasey Cronquist, California Cut Flower Commission executive director. "Overall, the industry [including wholesalers and retailers] in California employs approximately 14,580 people while generating billions in economic activity," he says. This is according to "The Flower Factor" economic study.

The research indicates that expenditures by growers, wholesalers, retailers and affiliated businesses create a ripple effect of economic activity that generates 121,950 full-time equivalent jobs in California, with a total of \$3.3 billion in gross wages. The report states that without these jobs, unemployment in California could grow as much as 12.5%.

Generates taxes

Additionally, in 2007 California received \$730.1 million in taxes and other business licenses and fees that were generated from the economic activity created by the cut-flower industry — funding that directly impacts the communities where flower growers live and work.

"The California flower industry is a vital part of our state and clearly has a significant impact on our local and state economies," says U.S. Rep. Lois Capps, who represents California's 23rd Congressional District and Santa Barbara County, the highest flower-producing county in the state. "This report details the importance of California's flower industry and will serve as a helpful point of reference in understanding the industry's contributions to the state for years to come."

The report points out that the achievements of California's cut-flower industry are particularly impressive because the market has become increasingly competitive due to aggressive pricing of imported flowers and wholesaler and retailer consolidation.

The study

The study was implemented by utilizing industry statistics, facilitating grower surveys and interviews, and analyzing the data through the IMPLAN model, which stands for "impact analysis for planning." IMPLAN examines economic relationships among businesses and between

Key Points

- Flower industry's ripple effect adds \$3.3 billion in gross wages.
- In 2007, state received \$730.1 million in taxes from flowers.
- Lane DeVries went from worker to large flower company owner.



IN BLOOM: CCFC's Kasey Cronquist commissioned "The Flower Factor," a study on the floral industry's effect on the economy.

business and consumers. This impact analysis then measures changes in economic variables on an entire economy.

"The goal of the study was to demonstrate the overall impact of the cut-flower industry and its ability to generate business activity, employment, personal income and taxes for other industries and the state overall," says Dennis H. Tootelian, director of the Center for Small Business at California State University, Sacramento.

Learn more at www.cfcf.org and www.californiagrown.org.

Sweet success

It is well established that state flower growers face stiff competition from Andean countries Colombia and Ecuador. California growers have answered with better growing, harvesting, storage and transportation techniques. Growers differentiate their products from imports. For example, they market their ability to respond to special orders quickly.

Consider the experience that fourth-generation grower Leendert "Lane" DeVries has in growing a business and responding to competition.

DeVries is a District 1 CCFC commissioner and president and chief executive officer of Sun Valley Group, Arcata. He was born in the Netherlands to a family with a long tradition of growing flowers. He received his bachelor's degree in horticulture in Holland and then immigrated to the U.S. in 1983 after his family sold their farm in Holland.

Securing a job at Sun Valley in Myrtle Point, Ore., with a former owner, DeVries came to Arcata and built the first Dutch glass greenhouse. He soon became the greenhouse man-



GROWING SUCCESS: A fourth-generation grower, Leendert "Lane" DeVries is president and CEO of Sun Valley Group, Arcata. He also is a District 1 commissioner for the California Cut Flower Commission. He started as a worker and now owns one of the largest flower operations in the U.S.



COLOR CHECK: Steven Popp (left), grower for Jim Rider Flowers in Watsonville, and ag engineer Tom Trout examine cut flowers.



ARS PHOTO BY PEGGY GREEB

GROWN IN CALIFORNIA:

Alstroemeria, snapdragons, mini calla lilies, red carnations and gerberas are some of the flowers in this arrangement. Purple liatris, lilac and heather offset the color of the Asian wooden box, which matches the bells of Ireland.

ager and in 1988 was promoted to general manager. Three years later, he partnered with two other Dutchmen, Jacob Rooyakkers and Jan van der Wereld, in a friendly purchase of Sun Valley. The partners have since built Sun Valley into one of the largest flower-growing operations in the U.S.

In 2001, Sun Valley acquired Pleasant Valley Flowers Inc.

and Golden Coast Nurseries, with farms in Oxnard. The Sun Valley Group, Oxnard Division, produces lilies, irises, gerberas, germinis, matsumoto asters and delphinium, as well as other seasonal crops.

In August 2003, Sun Valley Floral Farms, Pleasant Valley Flowers and Sun Pacific Bouquet became The Sun Valley Group Inc. The Sun Valley Group offers

a family of quality floral brands, including Sun Valley Floral Farms; Pleasant Valley Flowers; Sun Pacific Bouquet; the Orchid, Sonata, Love and Royal Lilies brands; and Redwood Grove French Tulips. The Sun Valley Group grows flowers year-round in six locations stretching 750 miles, from the Oregon border to the southern Central Coast of California.