

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

1/28/2013

Rocket Farms Acquires Cut Herb Business

Jennifer Zurko

Rocket Farms, the same potted plant folks who bought Nurserymen's Exchange last year, has announced they're now in the cut herb business, with the acquisition of HerbThyme Farms, said to be the largest cut herb producer in the United States.

HerbThyme Farms, based in Pico Rivera, California, southeast of Los Angeles, grows and ships more than 5 million pounds of fresh herbs annually. They've got 500 employees, and some 200 acres of conventional farmland and 150 acres dedicated to growing USDA-certified organic herbs.

Why would a potted plant grower venture into the world of fresh cut herbs? *GrowerTalks* called Charles Kosmont, CEO of Monterey Peninsula Horticulture (Rocket's parent company), to find out.

"We're already in the potted herb business," Charles said. "We've been doing potted herbs for years, and we like that business, and we felt there were great synergies. Now we have the complete spectrum, we've got potted herbs as well as cut herbs—complimentary product lines, which allows us to create new business opportunities; our customers get both from us. And the distribution is very similar.

"It's a one-stop solution ... we can offer our customers a full turn-key solution on the herb program. We think that's terrific—anytime you can do that, it really adds value."

Charles says there are also synergies between HerbThyme and Rocket's sister company, Growers Transplanting, which does production and automatic transplanting of vegetable young plants for the field crops market. Plus, they can possibly bring some technology from Rocket's greenhouse experience to HerbThyme.

He adds the cultures of both companies are similar: savvy management and good work ethics.

HerbThyme CEO Howard Roeder and his entire senior management team will remain in place and continue to oversee the day-to-day operations of the business. The HerbThyme, Herbal Garden and New England brand names will remain unchanged.

With more than 8 million sq. ft. of greenhouse space, Rocket Farms is the third largest greenhouse grower in the U.S. **GT**