**August Bean Harvest Season In Crisis**

*On the 15th Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, Camellia Brand in New Orleans,*

*experiences a similar demand for beans to fuel communities in crisis – but the 2020 harvest*

*brings a decrease in supply for the oldest dried bean company in America and consumers*

New Orleans food is like a religion, and after Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast - 15 years ago on August 29, 2020 – the city is oftentimes spoken of in Biblical terms, whether its “rising from the ashes” or “New Orleans has been resurrected.” Blessed are the hands that spent countless hours preparing the classic, affordable New Orleans dish of Red Beans & Rice to feed the displaced, the despondent, and the first responders in the challenging aftermath. New Orleans possesses the oldest regional cuisine in the country and Camellia Brand’s beans has remained a long-standing staple in its southern pantry. The New Orleans founded company, established in 1923 by the Hayward family, continues to be a critical part of the city’s culture and foodways.

On the cusp of Katrina’s 15th anniversary, Camellia Brand, and dried beans in general, have once again emerged as the ingredient of choice for communities in crisis. Since the onset of the public health emergency, the nation’s dried bean consumption has doubled, resulting in an unprecedented demand. The desire for this more affordable, shelf-stable protein has also only continued to increase with this new form of loss and uncertainty. Beyond the natives of New Orleans, others from across the country have embraced the customary foods and culinary rituals of the south, seeking not just nutrition, but nurturing from their food. The unexpected interest is compounded by a low-yield 2019 fall harvest, putting a severe strain on bean farmers and suppliers. As a result, and in anticipation of the upcoming August 2020 harvest season, many farmers are adopting new strategies and planting more crops than ever before. For Camellia Brand – the oldest dried bean company in America – the upcoming harvest requires the business to unexpectedly bring on new bean farmers and meet the demands of new markets.

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After the devastation of the 2005 storm, chefs and amateur cooks from all over the region embraced the versatility of Camellia’s beans - from Red Beans to Navy Beans - serving thousands upon thousands of pounds to those in need of a hot meal. The community tried to preserve a key ingredient of their culture and hold on to a piece of the New Orleans identity, after having lost everything. With so many displaced families, if one could have a taste of the life they once knew, it provided a sense of comfort and belonging.

Though Camellia Brand’s best-sellers fluctuate from year to year, its Pinto Beans, Red Kidney Beans, Lady Cream Peas, Black Beans, and Lentils are typically at the top. Whichever their preference, consumers turning to these tried-and-true options for economy, nutrition, and comfort in times of crisis can be assured that each one meets ‘The Hayward Standard’ – the company’s expectation of excellence, from the farmer all the way to the family table.

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