

Fall 2018 Central Coast AGRICULTURE

Cannabis Industry adds many local jobs

The California cannabis industry was anticipated to become one of the largest new job generators in California. That is becoming evident in the Salinas Valley as large cannabis employers including FLrish, LoudPak, Grupo Flor and Indus have collectively hired hundreds of employees. In addition, other independent cannabis farms, packagers, manufacturers and distributors are hiring throughout the region.

Grupo Flor, headquartered in Salinas, is one of the region's leading cannabis enterprises with operations touching all aspects of the cannabis supply chain. CEO, Paul Henderson, says Grupo Flor is expecting to increase its workforce across all affiliated

companies to well over 100 by the end of the 2nd Quarter 2019. Grupo Flor's Chief Branding Officer and co-founder, Gavin Kogan, adds that contrary to popular belief, most of these jobs aren't farm jobs; most are in the packaging and retail side of the cannabis industry. "There's never been a cannabis industry before; we are literally creating this from scratch. So, as pioneers, we look for equally ambitious and enthusiastic people, then match them with positions that are best aligned with their past experience."

One example is Ashley Palma, a 22-year-old Salinas native. Until six months ago, Palma earned \$13 an hour as a barista while juggling two-part time jobs on the side. She now works full time for FlorX, a local cannabis

brands distribution company. As a FlorX sales representative, Palma just hit the \$1,000,000 sales mark for a top cannabis brand, Smoke Stacks. "Not only is it exciting, but I'm also making more money in this position than my three past jobs combined," she said.

Like strawberries, cannabis has to be planted, cultivated, harvested, cleaned, cured, packaged, shipped and ultimately sold in retail stores. People with experience in some aspect of this supply chain may find working in the burgeoning cannabis industry an exciting and interesting new opportunity, while others may be reluctant to join the industry. It's clear that this new business segment will present opportunities for various types of employment as it expands locally.