UNITED NATURAL FOODS INC
Form 10-K
September 26, 2017
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UNITED STATES
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20549
FORM 10-K
X ANNUAL REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT
OF 1934
For the fiscal year ended July 29, 2017
or
TRANSITION REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT
— OF 1934
For the transition period from to
Commission File Number: 0-21531
UNITED NATURAL FOODS, INC.
(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)
Delaware 05-0376157
(State or other jurisdiction of (I.R.S. Employer
incorporation or organization) Identification No.)
313 Iron Horse Way, Providence, RI 02908
(Address of principal executive offices) (Zip
Code)
Registrant's telephone number, including area
code: (401) 528-8634
Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(b) of the Act:
Title of each class Name of each exchange on which registered
Common Stock, par value \$0.01 per share NASDAQ Global Select Market
Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(g) of the Act: None
Indicate by check mark if the registrant is a well-known seasoned issuer, as defined in Rule 405 of the Securities
Act. Yes X No
Indicate by check mark if the registrant is not required to file reports pursuant to Section 13 or Section 15(d) of the
Act. Yes No X
Indicate by check mark whether the registrant (1) has filed all reports required to be filed by Section 13 or 15(d) of the
Securities Exchange Act of 1934 during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was
required to file such reports), and (2) has been subject to such filing requirements for the past 90 days. Yes X No
Indicate by check mark whether the registrant has submitted electronically and posted on its corporate Web site, if
any, every Interactive Data File required to be submitted and posted pursuant to Rule 405 of Regulation S-T during
the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to submit and post such
files). Yes X No
Indicate by check mark if disclosure of delinquent filers pursuant to Item 405 of Regulation S-K is not contained
herein, and will not be contained, to the best of registrant's knowledge, in definitive proxy or information statements
incorporated by reference in Part III of this Form 10-K or any amendment to this Form 10-K X
Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a large accelerated filer, an accelerated filer, a non-accelerated filer,
smaller reporting company, or an emerging growth company. See the definitions of "large accelerated filer,"
"accelerated filer," "smaller reporting company" and "emerging growth company" in Rule 12b-2 of the Exchange Act.
Large Accelerated Filer X  Accelerated Filer X
Non-accelerated Filer (Do not check if a smaller reporting company) Smaller Reporting Company
Emerging growth company

If an emerging growth company, indicate by check mark if the registrant has elected not to use the extended transition period for complying with any new or revised financial accounting standards provided pursuant to Section 13(a) of the Exchange Act. \_\_\_

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a shell company (as defined in Rule 12b-2 of the Act). Yes \_\_\_ No X The aggregate market value of the common stock held by non-affiliates of the registrant was \$2,330,251,353 based upon the closing price of the registrant's common stock on the Nasdaq Global Select Market® on January 27, 2017. The number of shares of the registrant's common stock, par value \$0.01 per share, outstanding as of September 14, 2017 was 50,623,646.

### DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

Portions of the registrant's definitive Proxy Statement for the Annual Meeting of Stockholders to be held on December 13, 2017 are incorporated herein by reference into Part III of this Annual Report on Form 10-K.

UNITED	NATURAL FOODS, INC.	
FORM 10		
TABLE (	OF CONTENTS	
Section		Page
Part I		
<u>Item 1.</u>	<u>Business</u>	<u>1</u>
Item 1A.	Risk Factors	<u>11</u>
Item 1B.	<u>Unresolved Staff Comments</u>	<u>20</u>
Item 2.	<u>Properties</u>	<u>20</u>
Item 3.	<u>Legal Proceedings</u>	<u>21</u>
<u>Item 4.</u>	Mine Safety Disclosures	<u>21</u>
Part II		
<u>1 art 11</u>	Market for the Registrant's Common Equity, Related Stockholder Matters and Issuer Purchases of	
Item 5.	Equity Securities	<u>22</u>
Item 6.	Selected Financial Data	<u>23</u>
Item 7.	Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations	<u>24</u>
	Quantitative and Qualitative Disclosures About Market Risk	<u>38</u>
Item 8.	Financial Statements and Supplementary Data	<del>39</del>
Item 9.	Changes in and Disagreements With Accountants on Accounting and Financial Disclosure	<del>69</del>
	Controls and Procedures	<del>69</del>
	Other Information	<del>70</del>
D . III		
Part III		7.1
	Directors, Executive Officers and Corporate Governance	<u>71</u>
	Executive Compensation	<u>71</u>
<u>Item 12.</u>	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	<u>71</u>
	Certain Relationships and Related Transactions, and Director Independence	<u>71</u>
<u>Item 14.</u>	Principal Accountant Fees and Services	<u>72</u>
Part IV		
	Exhibits and Financial Statement Schedules	<u>73</u>
		<del>73</del>
	Signatures	<del>80</del>
		_

#### **Table of Contents**

#### PART I.

#### ITEM 1. BUSINESS

Unless otherwise specified, references to "United Natural Foods," "UNFI," "we," "us," "our" or "the Company" in this Annual Report on Form 10-K ("Annual Report" or "Report") mean United Natural Foods, Inc. and all entities included in our consolidated financial statements. See the consolidated financial statements and notes thereto included in "Item 8. Financial Statements and Supplementary Data" of this Report for information regarding our financial performance.

### Overview

We are a Delaware corporation based in Providence, Rhode Island, and we conduct business through our various wholly owned subsidiaries. We believe we are a leading distributor based on sales of natural, organic and specialty foods and non-food products in the United States and Canada, and that our thirty-three distribution centers, representing approximately 8.7 million square feet of warehouse space, provide us with the largest capacity of any North American-based distributor principally focused on the natural, organic and specialty products industry. We were the first organic food distribution network in the United States designated as a "Certified Organic Distributor" by Quality Assurance International, Inc. ("QAI"), an organic certifying agency accredited by the United States Department of Agriculture ("USDA"). This process involved a comprehensive review by QAI of our operating and purchasing systems and procedures. This certification covers all of our broadline distribution centers in the United States, except for facilities acquired in connection with the acquisitions of Tony's Fine Foods ("Tony's"), Haddon House Food Products Inc. ("Haddon"), Nor-Cal Produce, Inc. ("Nor-Cal") and Gourmet Guru Inc. ("Gourmet Guru"). Although not designated as a "Certified Organic Distributor" by OAI, the three Tony's California locations are certified as Organic by the State of California Department of Public Health Food and Drug Branch, and Nor-Cal is currently registered with the California Department of Food and Agriculture Organic Program as an organic handler. In addition, our Canadian distribution centers in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec all hold one of the following organic distributor certifications; QAI, EcoCert Canada or ProCert Canada. Our distribution center located in Ontario also offers a large selection of Kosher certified, non-organic products.

Since the formation of our predecessor in 1976, we have grown our business both organically and through acquisitions which have expanded our distribution network, product selection and customer base. Since fiscal 2007, our net sales have increased at a compounded annual growth rate of 12.9%. In recent years, our sales to existing and new customers have increased through the continued growth of the natural and organic products industry in general; increased market share through our high-quality service and broader product selection, including specialty products, the acquisition of, or merger with, natural, organic, conventional produce and specialty product distributors; our efforts to increase the number of conventional supermarket customers to whom we distribute products; the expansion of our existing distribution centers; the construction of new distribution centers; the introduction of new products and the development of our own line of natural and organic branded products. Through these efforts, we believe that we have broadened our geographic penetration, expanded our customer base, enhanced and diversified our product selection and increased our market share.

### Acquisitions

In July 2014, we completed the acquisition of all of the outstanding capital stock of Tony's, through our wholly-owned subsidiary UNFI West, Inc. ("UNFI West"). With the completion of the transaction, Tony's became a wholly-owned subsidiary and continues to operate as Tony's Fine Foods. Tony's is headquartered in West Sacramento, California and is a leading distributor of perishable food products, including a wide array of specialty protein, cheese, deli, food service and bakery goods to retail and specialty grocers, food service customers and other distribution companies principally located throughout the Western United States, as well as Alaska and Hawaii.

During fiscal 2015, we began shipping customers both center of the store products and an enhanced selection of fresh, perishable products. Our customers utilized both UNFI's broadline and Tony's offerings, including grocery, refrigerated, protein, specialty cheese and prepared foods. Our customers' broad utilization supports our belief that there is significant value in UNFI's position as a leading provider of logistics, distribution and category management

for both center store and perimeter products.

In March 2016, the Company acquired certain assets of Global Organic/Specialty Source, Inc. and related affiliates (collectively "Global Organic") through our wholly owned subsidiary Albert's Organics, Inc. ("Albert's"), in a cash transaction for approximately \$20.6 million. Global Organic is a distributor of organic fruits, vegetables, juices, milk, eggs, nuts, and coffee located in Sarasota, Florida serving customer locations (many of which are independent retailers) across the Southeastern United States. Global Organic's operations have been fully integrated into the existing Albert's business in the Southeastern United States.

#### **Table of Contents**

In March 2016, the Company acquired all of the outstanding equity securities of Nor-Cal and an affiliated entity as well as certain real estate, in a cash transaction for approximately \$67.8 million. Nor-Cal is a distributor of conventional and organic produce and other fresh products primarily to independent retailers in Northern California, with primary operations located in West Sacramento, California. Our acquisition of Nor-Cal has aided in our efforts to expand our fresh offering, particularly with conventional produce. Nor-Cal's operations have been combined with the existing Albert's business.

In May 2016, the Company completed its acquisition of all of the outstanding equity securities of Haddon and certain affiliated entities and real estate for total cash consideration of approximately \$217.5 million. Haddon is a distributor and merchandiser of natural and organic and gourmet ethnic products throughout the Eastern United States. Haddon has a history of providing quality high touch merchandising services to their customers. Haddon has a diverse, multi-channel customer base including conventional supermarkets, gourmet food stores and independently owned product retailers. Our acquisition of Haddon has expanded the product and service offering that we expect to play an important role in our ongoing strategy to build out our gourmet and ethnic product categories. Haddon's operations have been combined with the Company's existing broadline natural, organic and specialty distribution business in the United States.

In August 2016, the Company acquired all of the outstanding equity securities of Gourmet Guru in a cash transaction for approximately \$10.0 million, subject to customary post-closing adjustments. Gourmet Guru is a distributor and merchandiser of fresh and organic food focusing on new and emerging brands. We believe that our acquisition of Gourmet Guru enhances our strength in finding and cultivating emerging fresh and organic brands and further expands our presence in key urban markets. Gourmet Guru's operations have been combined with the Company's existing broadline natural, organic and specialty distribution business in the United States.

The ability to distribute specialty food items (including ethnic, kosher and gourmet products) has accelerated our expansion into a number of high-growth business markets and allowed us to establish immediate market share in the fast-growing specialty foods market. We have now integrated specialty food products and natural and organic specialty non-food items into all of our broadline distribution centers across the United States and Canada. Due to our expansion into specialty foods, over the past several fiscal years we have been awarded new business with a number of conventional supermarkets. We believe our acquisition of Haddon has expanded our capabilities in the specialty category and we have expanded our offerings of specialty products to include those products distributed by Haddon that we did not previously distribute to our customers. We believe that the distribution of these products enhanced our conventional supermarket business channel and that our complementary product lines continue to present opportunities for cross-selling.

### Our Industry

The natural products industry encompasses a wide range of products including organic and non-organic foods, nutritional, herbal and sports supplements, toiletries and personal care items, naturally-based cosmetics, natural/homeopathic medicines, pet products and cleaning agents. According to The Natural Foods Merchandiser, a leading natural products industry trade publication, sales for all types of natural products were \$140.9 billion in calendar 2016, representing growth of \$9.7 billion or approximately 7.4% from calendar 2015. According to The Specialty Food Association, a leading specialty food industry trade publication, sales in calendar 2016 were \$127.0 billion, representing growth of 15.0% from calendar 2014. We believe the growth of the natural and specialty products industries is a result of the increasing demand by consumers for a healthy lifestyle, food safety and environmental sustainability.

### Our Operating Structure

Our operations are generally comprised of three principal operating divisions. These operating divisions are: our wholesale division, which includes:

our broadline natural, organic and specialty distribution business in the United States, which includes our recent acquisitions of Haddon and Gourmet Guru;

Tony's, which is a leading distributor of a wide array of specialty protein, cheese, deli, foodservice and bakery goods, principally throughout the Western United States;

Albert's, which is a leading distributor of organically grown produce and non-produce perishable items within the United States, which includes the operations of Global Organic and Nor-Cal, a distributor of organic and conventional produce and non-produce perishable items principally in Northern California;

UNFI Canada, Inc. ("UNFI Canada"), which is our natural, organic and specialty distribution business in Canada; and Select Nutrition, which distributes vitamins, minerals and supplements;

#### **Table of Contents**

our retail division, consisting of Earth Origins, which operates our twelve natural products retail stores within the United States; and

our manufacturing and branded products divisions, consisting of:

Woodstock Farms Manufacturing, which specializes in importing, roasting, packaging and the distribution of nuts, dried fruit, seeds, trail mixes, granola, natural and organic snack items and confections; and our Blue Marble Brands branded product lines.

#### Wholesale Division

In August 2016, we launched an initiative to reorganize our sales structure in the United States. This new structure is regional and our broadline distribution business is now organized into three sales regions— our Atlantic Region, Central Region and Pacific Region. We believe this initiative has brought our teams closer to retail operators and has contributed to us providing an exemplary level of customer experience. Each region has a president responsible for all our products and services within the territory, including fresh, grocery, wellness, e-commerce, food services, and ethnic gourmet. Territory managers in these regions now sell across our complete lines of products. This change brings us to our customers more frequently with all of our service offerings and we anticipate identifying and taking advantage of sales opportunities that result from our customers having a single point of contact for all of our products and services. As of our 2017 fiscal year end, our Atlantic Region operated ten distribution centers, which provided approximately 3.4 million square feet of warehouse space, our Central Region operated six distribution centers, which provided approximately 2.2 million square feet of warehouse space, and our Pacific Region operated twelve distribution centers, which provided approximately 2.8 million square feet of warehouse space.

Tony's operates out of four distribution centers strategically located on the West coast in California and Washington, providing approximately 0.5 million square feet of warehouse space. In addition to the four Tony's facilities, the Company distributes Tony's perishable products from certain of its other broadline distribution centers, including our Aurora, Colorado facility.

Albert's operates out of four distribution centers strategically located throughout the United States, providing approximately 0.2 million square feet of warehouse space.

UNFI Canada distributes natural, organic and specialty products in all of our product categories to all of our customers in Canada. As of our 2017 fiscal year end, UNFI Canada operated four distribution centers, which provided approximately 0.3 million square feet of warehouse space.

Through Select Nutrition, we distribute more than 14,000 health and beauty aids, vitamins, minerals and supplements from distribution centers in Pennsylvania and California.

Certain of our distribution centers are shared by multiple operations within our wholesale division.

#### Retail Division

We operate twelve natural products retail stores within the United States, located primarily in Florida (with one location in each of Maryland, Massachusetts and Rhode Island), through our subsidiary doing business as Earth Origins Market ("Earth Origins"). We believe that our retail business serves as a natural complement to our distribution business because it enables us to develop new marketing programs and improve customer service. We believe our natural products retail stores have a number of advantages over their competitors, including our financial strength and marketing expertise, the purchasing power resulting from group purchasing by stores within Earth Origins and the breadth of our product selection.

We believe that we benefit from certain advantages in acting as a distributor to our natural products retail stores, including our ability to:

control the purchases made by these stores;

expand the number of high-growth, high-margin product categories, such as produce and prepared foods, within these stores; and

stay abreast of the trends in the retail marketplace, which enables us to better anticipate and serve the needs of our wholesale customers.

Additionally, as the primary natural products distributor to our retail locations, we realize significant economies of scale and operating and buying efficiencies. As an operator of natural products retail stores, we also have the ability to

test market select products prior to offering them nationally. We can then evaluate consumer reaction to the product without incurring significant inventory risk. We also are able to test new marketing and promotional programs within our stores prior to offering them to our wholesale customer base.

#### **Table of Contents**

Manufacturing and Branded Products Divisions

Our subsidiary doing business as Woodstock Farms Manufacturing specializes in importing, roasting, packaging and the distribution of nuts, dried fruit, seeds, trail mixes, granola, natural and organic snack items and confections for our customers and in branded products of our own. Woodstock Farms Manufacturing sells items manufactured in bulk and through private label packaging arrangements with large health food, supermarket and convenience store chains and independent owners.

We operate an organic (USDA and QAI) and kosher (Circle K) certified packaging, roasting, and processing facility in New Jersey that is SQF (Safety Quality Food) level 2 certified.

Our Blue Marble Brands portfolio is a collection of 18 organic, natural and specialty food brands representing more than 900 unique products, which includes six specialty food brands representing 300 unique products obtained through our acquisition of Haddon. We have a dedicated team of marketing, supply chain and sales professionals that have a passion to energize our retail partners and provide consumers with affordable Non-GMO foods. Our unique Blue Marble Brands products are sold through our wholesale division, third-party distributors and directly to retailers. Our Field Day® brand is primarily sold to customers in our independent natural products retailer channel ("independent retailers"), and is meant to serve as a private label brand for independent retailers to allow them to compete with conventional supermarkets and supernatural chains which often have their own private label store brands.

Our Competitive Strengths

We believe we distinguish ourselves from our competitors through the following strengths:

We are a market leader with a nationwide presence in the United States and Canada.

We believe that we are the largest distributor of natural, organic and specialty foods and non-food products by sales in the United States and Canada, and one of the few distributors capable of meeting the natural, organic and specialty product needs of regional and local independent retailer customers, conventional supermarket chains, and our supernatural chain customer. The acquisition of the Haddon facility in Howell Township, New Jersey, has provided additional space to serve the growing New York City metropolitan market. The addition of this facility has allowed our other facilities to be deployed to further penetrate our Northeastern, Mid-Atlantic and Southeastern markets. Also aiding in the Southeast is the acquisition of Haddon's facility in Richburg, South Carolina, which further increased our capacity in the Southeastern United States. We believe the opening of our facilities in Prescott, Wisconsin in April 2015, and Gilroy, California in February 2016, have allowed us to serve the markets in and around Twin Cities, Minnesota, and California, respectively, with greater operational efficiencies. We believe that our network of thirty-three distribution centers (including four in Canada) creates significant advantages over smaller national and regional distributors. Our presence across the United States and Canada in many instances positions us to have locations closer to our customers than our competitors, offer marketing and customer service programs across regions, offer a broader product selection and provide operational excellence with high service levels and same day or next day on-time deliveries.

We are an efficient distributor.

We believe that our scale affords us significant benefits within a highly fragmented industry including volume purchasing opportunities and warehouse and distribution efficiencies. Our continued growth has allowed us to expand our existing facilities and open new facilities as we seek to achieve maximum operating efficiencies, including reduced fuel and other transportation costs, and has created sufficient capacity for future growth. Some of the efficiency improvements we have instituted include the centralization of general and administrative functions, the consolidation of systems applications among physical locations and regions and the optimization of customer distribution routes. We have made significant investments in our people, facilities, equipment and technology to broaden our footprint and enhance the efficiency of our operations. Key examples in the last several years include the following:

In April 2015 we commenced operations at a new 300,000 square foot distribution center in Prescott, Wisconsin which services the Twin Cities market.

In February 2016 we commenced operations at a new 400,000 square foot distribution center in Gilroy, California.

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In connection with the acquisition of Global Organic in March 2016, we acquired additional distribution capacity adjacent to our existing Sarasota, Florida facility, which increased distribution space by approximately 80,000 square feet.

In connection with the acquisition of Nor-Cal in March 2016, we acquired an 80,000 square foot distribution center in West Sacramento, California.

In connection with the acquisition of Haddon in May 2016, we acquired a distribution center in each of New Jersey and South Carolina with approximately 700,000 square feet of combined distribution space.

#### **Table of Contents**

We have extensive and long-standing customer relationships and provide superior service.

Throughout the 41 years of our and our predecessors' operations, we have developed long-standing customer relationships, which we believe are among the strongest in our industry. We believe a key driver of our strong customer loyalty is our superior service levels, which include accurate fulfillment of orders, timely product delivery, competitive prices and a high level of product marketing support. Our average broadline distribution in-stock service level for fiscal 2017, measured as the percentage of items ordered by customers that are delivered by the requested delivery date (excluding manufacturer out-of-stocks and discontinued items), was approximately 98%. We believe that our high distribution service levels are attributable to our experienced inventory planning and replenishment department and sophisticated warehousing, inventory control and distribution systems. Furthermore, we offer next-day delivery service to a majority of our active customers and offer multiple deliveries each week to our largest customers, which we believe differentiates us from many of our competitors.

We have an experienced, motivated management team.

Our management team has extensive experience in the retail and distribution business, including the natural, organic and specialty product industries. On average, each of our ten executive officers has over twenty-eight years of experience in the retail, natural products or food distribution industry. Furthermore, a significant portion of our management-level employees' compensation is equity based or performance based, and, therefore management is incentivized to generate continued strong operating results in the future.

### Our Growth Strategy

We seek to maintain and enhance our position within the natural and organic industry in the United States and Canada and to increase our market share in the specialty products industry. Since our formation, we have grown our business organically and through the acquisition of a number of distributors and suppliers, which has expanded our distribution network, product selection and customer base.

Beginning with our acquisition of Tony's in July 2014, our strategy shifted to focus more heavily on the growing market of perishable food products and our "building out the store" strategy, which focuses on delivering more products sold in the perimeter of our customers' stores. Our acquisitions of Haddon, Nor-Cal, Global Organic and Gourmet Guru continue this current strategy, with the addition of gourmet ethnic products and conventional produce. Our strategic plan also includes the roll-out of new technology including a national warehouse management and procurement system and transportation management system upgrade. These steps and others are intended to promote operational efficiencies and further reduce our operating expenses to offset the lower gross margins we expect with increased sales to the conventional supermarket and supernatural channels and from sales of our fresh perishable products, some of which can sell for a lower gross margin than our other natural, organic and specialty products. To implement our growth strategy, we intend to continue increasing our market share of the growing natural and organic products industry by expanding our customer base, increasing our share of existing customers' business and continuing to expand and further penetrate new distribution territories. We have expanded our presence within the specialty industry by offering new and existing customers a single wholesale distributor capable of meeting their specialty and natural and organic product needs on a national or regional basis. Key elements of our strategy include: Expanding Our Customer Base

As of July 29, 2017, we served more than 43,000 customer locations primarily in the United States and Canada. We believe that our new sales reorganization initiative launched in fiscal 2017 will bring our teams closer to retail operators as region presidents are now responsible for all our products and services and territory managers are now able to sell across our product lines, providing an exemplary customer experience. We plan to expand our coverage of the natural and organic and specialty products industry by cultivating new customer relationships within the industry and by further developing our existing channels of distribution, such as independent natural products retailers, conventional supermarkets, mass market outlets, institutional foodservice providers, buying clubs, restaurants and gourmet stores. With the coordinated distribution of our specialty products with our natural and organic products, including our increased array of specialty protein, cheese, deli, food service and bakery offerings as a result of our acquisition of Tony's and gourmet ethnic products as a result of our acquisition of Haddon, we believe that we have the opportunity to increase the products we sell to existing customers and continue gaining market share in the conventional supermarket channel as the result of our ability to offer an integrated and efficient distribution solution

for our customers. In recent years, we have gained new business from a number of conventional supermarket customers, including Harris Teeter and Wegmans, partially as a result of our complementary product selection and acquisitions.

Increasing Our Market Share of Existing Customers' Business

#### **Table of Contents**

We believe that we are the primary distributor of natural and organic products to the majority of our natural products customer base, including to Whole Foods Market, Inc. ("Whole Foods Market"), our largest customer. We seek to maintain our position as the primary supplier for a majority of our customers, and to add to the number of customers for which we serve as primary supplier, by offering the broadest product selection in our industry at competitive prices. We believe our new sales reorganization initiative will help strengthen our relationships with new and existing customers and drive more customer touch points, demonstrating our range. With the expansion of fresh, perishable and specialty product offerings, including proteins, cheeses and deli items as a result of the Tony's acquisition, and ethnic and gourmet items as a result of the Haddon acquisition, we believe that we have the ability to further meet our existing customers' needs for specialty foods and non-food products, representing an opportunity to continue to grow within the conventional supermarket, supernatural and independent channels.

Continuing to Improve the Efficiency of Our Nationwide Distribution Network

We have invested significant capital in our distribution network and infrastructure over the past five fiscal years. In fiscal 2016, we completed our multi-year expansion plan, which included new distribution centers in Racine, Wisconsin, Hudson Valley, New York, Prescott, Wisconsin, and Gilroy, California from which we began operations in June 2014, September 2014, April 2015 and February 2016, respectively. Based on our current operations and customers, we believe that we are unlikely to open or commence construction on a new distribution center in the next twelve months.

We will strive to continue to maintain our focus on realizing efficiencies and economies of scale in purchasing, warehousing, transportation and general and administrative functions, which, combined with transportation expense savings and incremental fixed cost leverage, should lead to continued improvements in our operating performance. Expanding into Other Distribution Channels and Geographic Markets

We believe that we will be successful in continuing to expand into the foodservice and e-commerce channels and we will continue to seek to develop regional relationships and alliances with companies in the foodservice channel. Additionally, we will seek to further develop our presence outside of the United States and Canada through our relationships with brokers primarily in Asia and the Caribbean and seek other alliances in these regions. Within the e-commerce channel, we intend to continue to partner with existing customers and others to expand our offerings to primary and secondary e-commerce customers. We also plan to offer customers within our independent and conventional supermarket channels extended aisle assortment capabilities and expand our ability to sell products to customers that might not have the purchasing volumes to be serviced in a traditional manner.

Continuing to Selectively Pursue Opportunistic Acquisitions

Throughout our history, we have successfully identified, consummated and integrated multiple acquisitions. Since fiscal 2000, we have successfully completed nineteen acquisitions of distributors, manufacturers and suppliers, the most recent being the acquisitions of Haddon, Global Organic and Nor-Cal during fiscal 2016 and Gourmet Guru in the first quarter of fiscal 2017. We intend to continue to selectively pursue opportunistic acquisitions to expand the breadth of our distribution network, increase our efficiency, procure beneficial customer relationships or add additional products and capabilities.

Continuing to Provide the Leading Distribution Solution

We believe that we provide a leading distribution solution to the natural, organic and specialty products industry through our national presence, regional preferences, focus on customer service and breadth of product offerings. Our service levels, which we believe to be the highest in our industry, are attributable to our experienced inventory planning and replenishment department and our sophisticated warehousing, inventory control and distribution systems. See "Our Focus on Technology" below for more information regarding our use of technology in our warehousing, inventory control and distribution systems.

We also offer our customers a selection of inventory management, merchandising, marketing, promotional and event management services designed to increase sales and enhance customer satisfaction. These marketing services, which primarily are utilized by customers in our independently owned natural products retailers channel and many of which are co-sponsored with suppliers, include monthly and thematic circular programs, in-store signage and assistance in product display.

**Our Customers** 

We serve more than 43,000 customer locations primarily located across the United States and Canada which we classify into the following channels:

supernatural chains, which consist of chain accounts that are national in scope and carry greater than 90% natural products, and at this time currently consists solely of Whole Foods Market;

conventional supermarkets, which include accounts that also carry conventional products, and at this time currently include chain accounts, supermarket independents, and gourmet and ethnic specialty stores;

#### **Table of Contents**

independently owned natural products retailers, which include single store and chain accounts (excluding supernatural chains, as defined above), which carry more than 90% natural products and buying clubs of consumer groups joined to buy products; and

other, which includes foodservice, e-commerce and international customers outside of Canada.

We maintain long-standing customer relationships with independently-owned natural products retailers, supernatural chains and supermarket chains. In addition, we emphasize our relationships with new customers, such as conventional supermarkets, mass market outlets and gourmet stores, which are continually increasing their natural product offerings. The following were included among our wholesale customers for fiscal 2017:

Whole Foods Market, the largest supernatural chain in the United States and Canada; and

Other customers, including Natural Grocers, Wegmans, Kroger, Earth Fare, Sprouts Farmers Market, Giant-Carlisle, Stop & Shop, Giant-Landover, Giant Eagle, Hannaford, Harris Teeter, The Fresh Market, Market Basket, Shop-Rite, Publix, Raley's, Lucky's, and Loblaws.

We have been the primary distributor to Whole Foods Market for more than nineteen years. Under the terms of our agreement with Whole Foods Market, we serve as the primary distributor to Whole Foods Market in all of its regions in the United States. Our agreement with Whole Foods Market expires on September 28, 2025. Whole Foods Market is our only customer that represented more than 10% of total net sales in fiscal 2017, and accounted for approximately 33% of our net sales.

During fiscal 2017, our net sales by channel were adjusted to reflect changes in the classification of customer types from acquisitions we consummated in the third and fourth quarters of fiscal 2016 and the first quarter of fiscal 2017. There was no financial statement impact as a result of revising the classification of customer types. The following table lists the percentage of net sales by customer type for the fiscal years ended July 29, 2017, July 30, 2016 and August 1, 2015:

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	Percentage of	
	Net Sales	
Customer Type	2017 2016 2015	
Supernatural chains	33% 35% 34%	
Conventional supermarkets and mass market chains	30% 27% 29%	
Independently owned natural products retailers	26% 27% 27%	
Other	11% 11% 10%	

We distribute natural, organic and specialty foods and non-food products to customers located in the United States and Canada, as well as to customers located in other foreign countries. Our total international net sales, including those by UNFI Canada, represented approximately four percent of our net sales in fiscal 2017, fiscal 2016 and fiscal 2015. We believe that our sales outside the United States, as a percentage of our total sales, will expand as we seek to continue to grow our Canadian operations and our foodservice and e-commerce businesses, both of which include customers based outside of the United States.

#### Our Marketing Services

We offer a variety of marketing services designed to increase sales for our customers and suppliers, including consumer and trade marketing programs, as well as programs to support suppliers in understanding our markets. Trade and consumer marketing programs are supplier-sponsored programs that cater to a broad range of retail formats. These programs are designed to educate consumers, profile suppliers and increase sales for retailers, many of which do not have the resources necessary to conduct such marketing programs independently.

# Our consumer marketing programs include:

multiple monthly, region-specific, consumer circular programs, with the participating retailer's imprint featuring products sold by the retailer to its customers. The monthly circular programs are structured to pass through the benefit of our negotiated discounts and advertising allowances to the retailer, and also provide retailers with shelf tags corresponding to each month's promotions. We also offer a web-based tool which retailers can use to produce highly customized circulars and other marketing materials for their stores.

quarterly coupon programs featuring supplier sponsored coupons, for display and distribution by participating retailers.

- a truck advertising program that allows our suppliers to purchase advertising space on the sides of our hundreds of trailers traveling throughout the United States and Canada, increasing brand exposure to consumers.
- Our trade marketing programs include:
- wholesale biannual catalogs, which serve as a primary reference guide and ordering tool for retailers.
- a Customer Portal advertising program that allows our suppliers to advertise directly to retailers using the portal.

#### **Table of Contents**

a variety of programs with advertising focus on foodservice options designed to support accounts in that category. Programs designed to generate volume purchases and retail promotions.

monthly specials catalogs that highlight promotions and new product introductions.

specialized catalogs for holiday and seasonal products.

Our supplier marketing programs include:

ClearVue®, an information sharing program designed to improve the transparency of information and drive efficiency within the supply chain. With the availability of in-depth data and tailored reporting tools, participants are able to reduce inventory balances with the elimination of forward buys, while improving service levels.

Supply Chain by ClearVue®, an information sharing program designed to provide heightened transparency to suppliers through demand planning, forecasting and procurement insights. This program offers weekly and monthly reporting enabling suppliers to identify areas of sales growth while pinpointing specific focuses in which the supplier can become more profitable.

Supplier-In-Site (SIS), an information-sharing website that helps our suppliers better understand the independent natural channel in order to generate mutually beneficial incremental sales in an efficient manner.

Growth incentive programs, supplier-focused high-level sales and marketing support for selected brands, which foster our partnership by building incremental, mutually profitable sales for suppliers and us.

We keep current with the latest trends in the industry. Periodically, we conduct focus group sessions with certain key retailers and suppliers to ascertain their needs and allow us to better service them. We also provide our customers with:

quarterly reports of trends in the natural and organic industry;

product data information such as best seller lists, store usage reports and catalogs;

assistance with store layout designs; new store design and equipment procurement;

planogramming, shelf and category management support;

in-store signage and promotional materials assistance with planning and setting up product displays;

shelf tags for products; and

a robust customer portal with product information, search and ordering capabilities, reports and publications.

Our Products

Our extensive selection of high-quality natural, organic and specialty foods and non-food products enables us to provide a primary source of supply to a diverse base of customers whose product needs vary significantly. We offer more than 110,000 high-quality natural, organic and specialty foods and non-food products, consisting of national, regional and private label brands grouped into six product categories: grocery and general merchandise, produce, perishables and frozen foods, nutritional supplements and sports nutrition, bulk and foodservice products and personal care items. Our branded product lines address certain needs of our customers, including providing a lower-cost label known as Field Day®.

We continuously evaluate potential new products based on both existing and anticipated trends in consumer preferences and buying patterns. Our Retail Category Management and Supplier Relationship Management teams regularly attend regional and national natural, organic, specialty, ethnic and gourmet product shows to review the latest products that are likely to be of interest to retailers and consumers. We also utilize syndicated data as a compass to ensure that we are carrying the right mix of products in each of our distribution centers. We make the majority of our new product decisions at the regional level and look to carry those items through national distribution as we begin to spot an emerging trend or brand. We believe that our category review practices at the local distribution center level allow our supplier relationship managers to react quickly to changing consumer preferences and to evaluate new products and new product categories regionally. Additionally, as many of the new products that we offer are marketed on a regional basis or in our own natural products retail stores prior to being offered nationally, this enables us to evaluate consumer reaction to the products without incurring significant inventory risk. Furthermore, by exchanging regional product sales information between our regions, we are able to make more informed and timely new product decisions in each region.

We maintain a comprehensive quality assurance program. All of the products we sell that are represented as "organic" are required to be certified as such by an independent third-party agency. We maintain current certification affidavits on most organic commodities and produce in order to verify the authenticity of the product. Most potential suppliers of organic products are required to provide such third-party certifications to us before they are approved as suppliers. Our Suppliers

We purchase our products from more than 9,000 suppliers. The majority of our suppliers are based in the United States and Canada, but we also source products from suppliers throughout Europe, Asia, Central America, South America, Africa and Australia. We believe suppliers of natural and organic products seek to distribute their products through us because we provide access to a large customer base across the United States and Canada, distribute the majority of the suppliers' products and offer a wide variety

#### **Table of Contents**

of marketing programs to our customers to help sell the suppliers' products. Substantially all product categories that we distribute are available from a number of suppliers and, therefore, we are not dependent on any single source of supply for any product category. In addition, although we have exclusive distribution arrangements and vendor support programs with several suppliers, none of our suppliers account for more than 5% of our total purchases in fiscal 2017.

We have positioned ourselves as one of the largest purchasers of organically grown bulk products in the natural and organic products industry by centralizing our purchase of nuts, seeds, grains, flours and dried foods. As a result, we are able to negotiate purchases from suppliers on the basis of volume and other considerations that may include discounted pricing or prompt payment discounts. Furthermore, some of our purchase arrangements include the right of return to the supplier with respect to products that we do not sell in a certain period of time. As described under "Our Products" above, each region is responsible for placing its own orders and can select the products that it believes will most appeal to its customers, although each region is able to participate in our company-wide purchasing programs. Our outstanding commitments for the purchase of inventory were approximately \$16.3 million as of July 29, 2017. Our Distribution System

We have carefully chosen the sites for our distribution centers to provide direct access to our regional markets. This proximity allows us to reduce our transportation costs relative to those of our competitors that seek to service these customers from locations that are often several hundred miles away. We believe that we incur lower inbound freight expense than our regional competitors because our scale allows us to buy full and partial truckloads of products. Products are delivered to our distribution centers primarily by our fleet of leased trucks, contract carriers and the suppliers themselves. When financially advantageous, we backhaul between vendors or satellite, staging facilities and our distribution centers using our own trucks. Additionally, we generally can redistribute overstocks and inventory imbalances between our distribution centers if needed, which helps to reduce out of stocks and to sell perishable products prior to their expiration date.

The majority of our trucks are leased from a variety of national banks and are maintained by third party national leasing companies such as Ryder Truck Leasing and Penske Truck Leasing, which in some cases maintain facilities on our premises for the maintenance and service of these vehicles.

We ship certain orders for supplements or for items that are destined for areas outside of regular delivery routes through United States Postal Service, the United Parcel Service and other independent carriers. Deliveries to areas outside the continental United States and Canada are typically shipped by ocean-going containers on a weekly basis. Our Focus on Technology

We have made significant investments in distribution, financial, information and warehouse management systems. We continually evaluate and upgrade our management information systems at our regional operations in an effort to make the systems more efficient, cost-effective and responsive to customer needs. These systems include functionality in radio frequency inventory control, pick-to-voice systems, pick-to-light systems, computer-assisted order processing and slot locater/retrieval assignment systems. At most of our receiving docks, warehouse associates attach computer-generated, preprinted locater tags to inbound products. These tags contain the expiration date, locations, quantity, lot number and other information about the products in bar code format. Customer returns are processed by scanning the UPC bar codes. We also employ a management information system that enables us to lower our inbound transportation costs by making optimum use of our own fleet of trucks or by consolidating deliveries into full truckloads. Orders from multiple suppliers and multiple distribution centers are consolidated into single truckloads for efficient use of available vehicle capacity and return-haul trips. In addition, we utilize route efficiency software that assists us in developing the most efficient routes for our outbound trucks. As part of our "one company" approach, we are in the process of rolling out a national warehouse management and procurement system to convert our existing facilities into a single warehouse management and supply chain platform ("WMS"). WMS supports our effort to integrate and nationalize processes across the organization. We have successfully implemented the WMS system at fourteen of our facilities, most recently in Iowa City, Iowa, Greenwood, Indiana, Dayville, Connecticut, Gilroy, California, Richburg, South Carolina, Howell, New Jersey, and Atlanta, Georgia. We expect to complete the roll-out to all of our existing U.S. broadline facilities by the end of fiscal 2019. Intellectual Property

We do not own or have the right to use any patent, trademark, trade name, license, franchise, or concession the loss of which would have a material adverse effect on our results of operations or financial condition.

Competition

Our largest competition comes from direct distribution, whereby a customer reaches a product volume level that justifies distribution directly from the manufacturer in order to obtain a lower price. Our major wholesale distribution competitor in both the United States and Canada is KeHE Distributors, LLC ("Kehe"). In addition to its natural and organic products, Kehe distributes

#### **Table of Contents**

specialty food products and markets its own private label program. Kehe's subsidiary, Tree of Life, has also earned QAI certification. We also compete in the United States and Canada with numerous smaller regional and local distributors of natural, organic, ethnic, kosher, gourmet and other specialty foods that focus on niche or regional markets, and with national, regional and local distributors of conventional groceries who have significantly expanded their natural and organic product offerings in recent years and companies that distribute to their own retail facilities. Our customers also compete with online retailers and distributors of natural and organic products that seek to sell products directly to customers.

We believe that distributors in the natural and specialty products industries primarily compete on distribution service levels, product quality, depth of inventory selection, price and quality of customer service. We believe that we currently compete effectively with respect to each of these factors.

Our natural products retail stores compete against other natural products outlets, supernatural chains, conventional supermarkets, specialty stores and online retailers and distributors. We believe that retailers of natural products compete principally on product quality and selection, price, customer service, knowledge of personnel and convenience of location. We believe that we currently compete effectively with respect to each of these factors. Government Regulation

Our operations and many of the products that we distribute in the United States are subject to regulation by state and local health departments, the USDA and the United States Food and Drug Administration (the "FDA"), which generally impose standards for product quality and sanitation and are responsible for the administration of bioterrorism legislation. In the United States, our facilities generally are inspected at least once annually by state or federal authorities. For certain product lines, we are also subject to the Federal Meat Inspection Act, the Poultry Products Inspection Act, the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act, the Packers and Stockyard Act and regulations promulgated by the USDA to interpret and implement these statutory provisions. The USDA imposes standards for product safety, quality and sanitation through the federal meat and poultry inspection program.

In late 2010, the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act ("FSMA") was enacted. The FSMA represents a significant expansion of food safety requirements and FDA food safety authorities and, among other things, requires that the FDA impose comprehensive, prevention-based controls across the food supply chain, further regulates food products imported into the United States, and provides the FDA with mandatory recall authority. The FSMA requires the FDA to undertake numerous rulemakings and to issue numerous guidance documents, as well as reports, plans, standards, notices, and other tasks. As a result, implementation of the legislation is ongoing and likely to take several years. The Surface Transportation Board and the Federal Highway Administration regulate our trucking operations. In addition, interstate motor carrier operations are subject to safety requirements prescribed by the United States Department of Transportation and other relevant federal and state agencies. Such matters as weight and dimension of equipment are also subject to federal and state regulations.

Many of our facilities in the U.S. and in Canada are subject to various environmental protection statutes and regulations, including those relating to the use of water resources and the discharge of wastewater. Further, many of our distribution facilities have ammonia-based refrigeration systems and tanks for the storage of diesel fuel, hydrogen fuel and other petroleum products which are subject to laws regulating such systems and storage tanks. Moreover, in some of our facilities we, or third parties with whom we contract, perform vehicle maintenance. Our policy is to comply with all applicable environmental and safety legal requirements. We are subject to other federal, state, provincial and local provisions relating to the protection of the environment or the discharge of materials; however, these provisions do not materially impact the use or operation of our facilities.

The failure to comply with applicable regulatory requirements could result in, among other things, administrative, civil, or criminal penalties or fines, mandatory or voluntary product recalls, warning or untitled letters, cease and desist orders against operations that are not in compliance, closure of facilities or operations, the loss, revocation, or modification of any existing licenses, permits, registrations, or approvals, or the failure to obtain additional licenses, permits, registrations, or approvals in new jurisdictions where we intend to do business, any of which could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition, or results of operations. These laws and regulations may change in the future and we may incur material costs in our efforts to comply with current or future laws and regulations or in any required product recalls.

We believe that we are in material compliance with all federal, provincial, state and local laws applicable to our operations.

**Employees** 

As of July 29, 2017 we had approximately 9,700 full and part-time employees, 595 of whom (approximately 6.1%) are covered by collective bargaining agreements at our Moreno Valley, California, Dayville, Connecticut, West Sacramento, California, Auburn, Washington, Iowa City, Iowa and Concord, Ontario facilities. These agreements expire in March 2019, July 2019, March 2020, February 2021, July 2021, and February 2022, respectively. In addition, the employees at our Edison, New Jersey facility

#### **Table of Contents**

continue to be covered by a collective bargaining agreement that expired in June, 2017 while we negotiate a new collective bargaining agreement at this facility. We have in the past been the focus of union-organizing efforts, and we believe it is likely that we will be the focus of similar efforts in the future.

As of August 1, 2017, our drivers in our Hudson Valley, New York facility are covered by a collective bargaining agreement, expiring in July 2020.

In August 2017, the National Labor Relations Board certified the election results of our transportation employees in Moreno Valley, California to be represented by the Teamsters union. We are in the process of negotiating a collective bargaining agreement with these employees.

Seasonality

Generally, we do not experience any material seasonality. However, our sales and operating results may vary significantly from quarter to quarter due to factors such as changes in our operating expenses, management's ability to execute our operating and growth strategies, personnel changes, demand for our products, supply shortages and general economic conditions.

### **Available Information**

Our internet address is http://www.unfi.com. The contents of our website are not part of this Annual Report on Form 10-K, and our internet address is included in this document as an inactive textual reference only. We make our Annual Report on Form 10-K, Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q, Current Reports on Form 8-K and all amendments to those reports filed or furnished pursuant to Section 13(a) or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the "Exchange Act") available free of charge through our website as soon as reasonably practicable after we file such reports with, or furnish such reports to, the Securities and Exchange Commission.

We have adopted a code of conduct and ethics that applies to our Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer and employees within our finance operations and sales departments. Our code of conduct and ethics is publicly available on our website at www.unfi.com and is available free of charge by writing to United Natural Foods, Inc., 313 Iron Horse Way, Providence, Rhode Island 02908, Attn: Investor Relations. We intend to make any legally required disclosures regarding amendments to, or waivers of, the provisions of the code of conduct and ethics on our website at www.unfi.com.

# ITEM 1A. RISK FACTORS

Our business, financial condition and results of operations are subject to various risks and uncertainties, including those described below and elsewhere in this Annual Report on Form 10-K. This section discusses factors that, individually or in the aggregate, we think could cause our actual results to differ materially from expected and historical results. Our business, financial condition or results of operations could be materially adversely affected by any of these risks.

We note these factors for investors as permitted by the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. You should understand that it is not possible to predict or identify all such factors. Consequently, you should not consider the following to be a complete discussion of all potential risks or uncertainties applicable to our business. See "Item 7. Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations—Forward-Looking Statements."

We depend heavily on our principal customers and our success is heavily dependent on our principal customers' ability to grow their business.

Whole Foods Market accounted for approximately 33% of our net sales in fiscal 2017. We serve as the primary distributor of natural, organic and specialty non-perishable products, and also distribute certain specialty protein, cheese, and deli items to Whole Foods Market in all of its regions in the United States under the terms of our distribution agreement which expires on September 28, 2025. Our ability to maintain a close mutually beneficial relationship with Whole Foods Market, which was acquired by Amazon.com, Inc. in August 2017, is an important element to our continued growth.

The loss or cancellation of business from Whole Foods Market, including from increased distribution to their own facilities, closures of their stores, reductions in the amount of products that Whole Food Market sells to its customers, or our failure to comply with the terms of our distribution agreement with Whole Foods Market could materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition or results of operations. Similarly, if Whole Foods Market is not able

to grow its business, including as a result of a reduction in the level of discretionary spending by its customers or competition from other retailers or diverts purchases from us beyond minimum amounts it is required to purchase under our distribution agreement, our business, financial condition or results of operations may be materially and adversely affected.

In addition to our dependence on Whole Foods Market, we are also dependent upon sales to our conventional supermarket customers. Net sales to these customers accounted for approximately 30% of our total net sales in fiscal 2017. To the extent that

#### **Table of Contents**

customers in this group make decisions to utilize alternative sources of products, whether other distributors or through self distribution, our business, financial condition or results of operations may be materially and adversely affected. Our operations are sensitive to economic downturns.

The grocery industry is sensitive to national and regional economic conditions and the demand for the products that we distribute, particularly our specialty products, may be adversely affected from time to time by economic downturns that impact consumer spending, including discretionary spending. Future economic conditions such as employment levels, business conditions, housing starts, interest rates, inflation rates, energy and fuel costs and tax rates could reduce consumer spending or change consumer purchasing habits. Among these changes could be a reduction in the number of natural and organic products that consumers purchase where there are non-organic, which we refer to as conventional, alternatives, given that many natural and organic products, and particularly natural and organic foods, often have higher retail prices than do their conventional counterparts.

Our business is a low margin business and our profit margins may decrease due to consolidation in the grocery industry and our focus on sales to the conventional supermarket channel.

The grocery distribution industry generally is characterized by relatively high volume of sales with relatively low profit margins. The continuing consolidation of retailers in the natural products industry and the growth of supernatural chains may reduce our profit margins in the future as more customers qualify for greater volume discounts, and we experience pricing pressures from suppliers and retailers. Sales to customers within our supernatural chain and conventional supermarket channels generate a lower gross margin than do sales to our independent customers. Many of these customers, including our largest customer, have agreements with us that include volume discounts. As the amounts these customers purchase from us increase, the price that they pay for the products they purchase is reduced, putting downward pressure on our gross margins on these sales. To compensate for these lower gross margins, we must increase the amount of products we sell or reduce the expenses we incur to service these customers. If we are unable to reduce our expenses as a percentage of net sales, including our expenses related to servicing this lower gross margin business, our business, financial condition or results of operations could be materially and adversely impacted.

Our business may be sensitive to inflationary and deflationary pressures.

Many of our sales are at prices that are based on our product cost plus a percentage markup. As a result, volatile food costs have a direct impact upon our profitability. Prolonged periods of product cost inflation and periods of rapidly increasing inflation may have a negative impact on our profit margins and results of operations to the extent that we are unable to pass on all or a portion of such product cost increases to our customers. In addition, product cost inflation may negatively impact the consumer discretionary spending trends of our customers' customers, which could adversely affect our sales. Conversely, because many of our sales are at prices that are based upon product cost plus a percentage markup, our profit levels may be negatively impacted during periods of product cost deflation even though our gross profit as a percentage of net sales may remain relatively constant. To compensate for lower gross margins, we, in turn, must reduce expenses that we incur to service our customers. If we are unable to reduce our expenses as a percentage of net sales, our business, financial condition or results of operations could be materially and adversely impacted.

Our customers generally are not obligated to continue purchasing products from us and larger customers that do have multiyear contracts with us may terminate these contracts early in certain situations or choose not to renew or extend the contract at its expiration.

Many of our customers buy from us under purchase orders, and we generally do not have agreements with or long-term commitments from these customers for the purchase of products. We cannot assure you that these customers will maintain or increase their sales volumes or orders for the products supplied by us or that we will be able to maintain or add to our existing customer base. Decreases in our volumes or orders for products supplied by us for these customers with whom we do not have a long-term contract may have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition or results of operations.

We may have contracts with certain of our customers (as is the case with many of our conventional supermarket customers and our supernatural chain customer) that obligate the customer to buy products from us for a particular period of time. Even in this case, the contracts may not require the customer to purchase a minimum amount of

products from us or the contracts may afford the customer better pricing in the event that the volume of the customer's purchases exceeds certain levels. If these customers were to terminate these contracts prior to their scheduled termination, or if we or the customer elected not to renew or extend the term of the contract at its expiration at least historical purchase levels, it may have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition or results of operations, including additional operational expenses to transition out of the business or to adjust our staffing levels to account for the reduction in net sales.

#### **Table of Contents**

We have significant competition from a variety of sources.

We operate in competitive markets and our future success will be largely dependent on our ability to provide quality products and services at competitive prices. Bidding for contracts or arrangements with customers, particularly within the supernatural chain and conventional supermarket channels, is highly competitive and we may market our services to a particular customer over a long period of time before we are invited to bid. Our competition comes from a variety of sources, including other distributors of natural products as well as specialty grocery and mass market grocery distributors and retail customers that have their own distribution channels. Mass market grocery distributors in recent years have increased their emphasis on natural and organic products and are now competing more directly with us and many conventional supermarket chains have increased self-distribution of particular items that we sell or have increased their purchases of particular items that we sell directly from suppliers. New competitors are also entering our markets as barriers to entry for new competitors are relatively low. For instance, more natural and organic products are being sold in convenience stores and other big box retailers than was the case a few years ago and many of these customers are being serviced by conventional distributors or are self-distributing. Some of the mass market grocery distributors with whom we compete may have been in business longer than we have, may have substantially greater financial and other resources than we have and may be better established in their markets. We also face indirect competition as a result of the fact that our customers with physical locations face competition from online retailers and distributors that seek to sell certain of the type of products we sell to our customers directly to consumers. We cannot assure you that our current or potential competitors will not provide products or services comparable or superior to those provided by us or adapt more quickly than we do to evolving industry trends or changing market requirements. It is also possible that alliances among competitors may develop and rapidly acquire significant market share or that certain of our customers will increase distribution to their own retail facilities. Increased competition may result in price reductions, reduced gross margins, lost business and loss of market share, any of which could materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition or results of operations.

We cannot provide assurance that we will be able to compete effectively against current and future competitors. We may not realize the anticipated benefits from our acquisitions of Global Organic, Nor-Cal, Haddon and Gourmet Guru.

We cannot assure you that our acquisitions of Global Organic, Nor-Cal, Haddon or Gourmet Guru will enhance our financial performance. Our ability to achieve the expected benefits of these acquisitions will depend on, among other things, our ability to effectively translate our business strategies into a new set of products, our ability to retain and assimilate the acquired businesses' employees, our ability to retain customers and suppliers on terms similar to those in place with the acquired businesses, our ability to expand the products we offer in many of our markets to include the products distributed by these businesses, the adequacy of our implementation plans, our ability to maintain our financial and internal controls and systems as we expand our operations, the ability of our management to oversee and operate effectively the combined operations and our ability to achieve desired operating efficiencies and sales goals. The integration of the businesses that we acquired might also cause us to incur unforeseen costs, which would lower our future earnings and would prevent us from realizing the expected benefits of these acquisitions. Failure to achieve these anticipated benefits could result in a reduction in the price of our common stock as well as in increased costs, decreases in the amount of expected revenues and diversion of management's time and energy and could materially and adversely impact our business, financial condition and operating results.

Our investment in information technology may not result in the anticipated benefits.

In our attempt to reduce operating expenses and increase operating efficiencies, we have aggressively invested in the development and implementation of new information technology. Based on our currently anticipated timeline, we expect to complete the roll-out of our warehouse management system and transportation management system within our existing U.S. broadline facilities by the end of fiscal 2019. While we currently believe this timeline will be met, we may not be able to implement these technological changes in the time frame that we have planned and delays in implementation could negatively impact our business, financial condition or results of operations. In addition, the costs to make these changes may exceed our estimates and will exceed the benefits during the early stages of implementation. Even if we are able to implement the changes in accordance with our current plans, and within our current cost estimates, we may not be able to achieve the expected efficiencies and cost savings from this investment,

which could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition or results of operations. Moreover, as we implement information technology enhancements, disruptions in our business may be created (including disruption with our customers) which may have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition or results of operations.

Failure by us to develop and operate a reliable technology platform could negatively impact our business. Our ability to decrease costs and increase profits, as well as our ability to serve customers most effectively, depends on the reliability of our technology platform. We use software and other technology systems, among other things, to generate and select orders, to load and route trucks and to monitor and manage our business on a day-to-day basis. Any disruption to these computer systems could adversely impact our customer service, decrease the volume of our business and result in increased costs negatively affecting our business, financial condition or results of operations.

#### **Table of Contents**

We have experienced losses due to the uncollectability of accounts receivable in the past and could experience increases in such losses in the future if our customers are unable to timely pay their debts to us.

Certain of our customers have from time to time experienced bankruptcy, insolvency and/or an inability to pay their debts to us as they come due. If our customers suffer significant financial difficulty, they may be unable to pay their debts to us timely or at all, which could have a material adverse effect on our results of operations. It is possible that customers may reject their contractual obligations to us under bankruptcy laws or otherwise. Significant customer bankruptcies could further adversely affect our revenues and increase our operating expenses by requiring larger provisions for bad debt. In addition, even when our contracts with these customers are not rejected, if customers are unable to meet their obligations on a timely basis, it could adversely affect our ability to collect receivables. Further, we may have to negotiate significant discounts and/or extended financing terms with these customers in such a situation, each of which could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition, results of operations or cash flows. During periods of economic weakness, small to medium-sized businesses, like many of our independently owned natural products retailer customers, may be impacted more severely and more quickly than larger businesses. Similarly, these smaller businesses may be more likely to be more severely impacted by events outside of their control, like significant weather events. Consequently, the ability of such businesses to repay their obligations to us may deteriorate, and in some cases this deterioration may occur quickly, which could materially and adversely impact our business, financial condition or results of operations.

Our acquisition strategy may adversely affect our business.

A portion of our past growth has been achieved through acquisitions of, or mergers with, other distributors of natural, organic and specialty products. We also continually evaluate opportunities to acquire other companies. We believe that there are risks related to acquiring companies, including an inability to successfully identify suitable acquisition candidates or consummate such potential acquisitions. To the extent that our future growth includes acquisitions, we cannot assure you that we will not overpay for acquisitions, lose key employees of acquired companies, or fail to achieve potential synergies or expansion into new markets as a result of our acquisitions. Therefore, future acquisitions, if any, may have a material adverse effect on our results of operations, particularly in periods immediately following the consummation of those transactions while the operations of the acquired business are being integrated with our operations. Achieving the benefits of acquisitions depends on timely, efficient and successful execution of a number of post-acquisition events, including, among other things:

maintaining the customer and supplier base;

optimizing delivery routes;

coordinating administrative, distribution and finance functions; and

integrating management information systems and personnel.

The integration process could divert the attention of management and any difficulties or problems encountered in the transition process could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition or results of operations. In particular, the integration process may temporarily redirect resources previously focused on reducing product cost and operating expenses, resulting in lower gross profits in relation to sales. In addition, the process of combining companies could cause the interruption of, or a loss of momentum and operating profits in, the activities of the respective businesses, which could have an adverse effect on their combined operations.

In connection with acquisitions of businesses in the future, if any, we may decide to consolidate the operations of any acquired businesses with our existing operations or make other changes with respect to the acquired businesses, which could result in special charges or other expenses. Our results of operations also may be adversely affected by expenses we incur in making acquisitions, by amortization of acquisition-related intangible assets with definite lives and by additional depreciation and amortization attributable to acquired assets. Any of the businesses we acquire may also have liabilities or adverse operating issues, including some that we fail to discover before the acquisition, and our indemnity for such liabilities may also be limited. Additionally, our ability to make any future acquisitions may depend upon obtaining additional financing. We may not be able to obtain additional financing on acceptable terms or at all. To the extent that we seek to acquire other businesses in exchange for our common stock, fluctuations in our stock price could have a material adverse effect on our ability to complete acquisitions.

#### **Table of Contents**

Our business strategy of increasing our sales of fresh, perishable items, which we accelerated with our acquisitions of Tony's, Global Organic and Nor-Cal, may not produce the results that we expect.

A key element of our current growth strategy is to increase the amount of fresh, perishable products that we distribute. We believe that the ability to distribute these products that are typically found in the perimeter of our customers' stores, in addition to the products we have historically distributed, will differentiate us from our competitors and increase demand for our products. We accelerated this strategy with our acquisitions of Tony's, Global Organic and Nor-Cal. If we are unable to grow this portion of our business and manage that growth effectively, our business, financial condition and results of operations may be materially and adversely affected.

We may have difficulty managing our growth.

The growth in the size of our business and operations has placed, and is expected to continue to place, a significant strain on our management. Our future growth may be limited by our inability to retain existing customers, make acquisitions, successfully integrate acquired entities or significant new customers, implement information systems initiatives, acquire or timely construct new distribution centers or expand our existing distribution centers, or adequately manage our personnel. Our future growth is limited in part by the size and location of our distribution centers. As we near maximum utilization of a given facility or maximize our processing capacity, operations may be constrained and inefficiencies have been and may be created, which could adversely affect our results of operations unless the facility is expanded, volume is shifted to another facility or additional processing capacity is added. Conversely, if we add additional facilities, expand existing operations or facilities, or fail to retain existing business, excess capacity may be created. Any excess capacity may also create inefficiencies and adversely affect our results of operations, including as a result of incurring additional operating costs for these facilities before demand for products to be supplied from these facilities rises to a sufficient level. We cannot assure you that we will be able to successfully expand our existing distribution centers or open new distribution centers in new or existing markets if needed to accommodate or facilitate growth. Even if we are able to expand our distribution network, our ability to compete effectively and to manage future growth, if any, will depend on our ability to continue to implement and improve operational, financial and management information systems, including our warehouse management systems, on a timely basis and to expand, train, motivate and manage our work force. We cannot assure you that our existing personnel, systems, procedures and controls will be adequate to support the future growth of our operations. Our inability to manage our growth effectively could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition or results of operations.

Increased fuel costs may adversely affect our results of operations.

Increased fuel costs may have a negative impact on our results of operations. The high cost of diesel fuel can increase the price we pay for products as well as the costs we incur to deliver products to our customers. These factors, in turn, may negatively impact our net sales, margins, operating expenses and operating results. To manage this risk, we have in the past periodically entered, and may in the future periodically enter, into heating oil derivative contracts to hedge a portion of our projected diesel fuel requirements. Heating crude oil prices have a highly correlated relationship to diesel fuel prices, making these derivatives effective in offsetting changes in the cost of diesel fuel. We are not party to any commodity swap agreements and, as a result, our exposure to volatility in the price of diesel fuel has increased relative to our exposure to volatility in prior periods in which we had outstanding heating oil derivative contracts. We do not enter into fuel hedge contracts for speculative purposes. We have in the past, and may in the future, periodically enter into forward purchase commitments for a portion of our projected monthly diesel fuel requirements at fixed prices. As of July 29, 2017, we had no forward diesel fuel commitments. We also maintain a fuel surcharge program which allows us to pass some of our higher fuel costs through to our customers. We cannot guarantee that we will continue to be able to pass a comparable proportion or any of our higher fuel costs to our customers in the future, which may adversely affect our business, financial condition or results of operations.

Disruption of our distribution network could adversely affect our business.

Damage or disruption to our distribution capabilities due to weather, natural disaster, fire, terrorism, pandemic, strikes, the financial and/or operational instability of key suppliers, or other reasons could impair our ability to distribute our products. To the extent that we are unable, or it is not financially feasible, to mitigate the likelihood or potential impact of such events, or to manage effectively such events if they occur, there could be an adverse effect on our

business, financial condition or results of operations.

The cost of the capital available to us and limitations on our ability to access additional capital may have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition or results of operations.

Historically, acquisitions and capital expenditures have been a large component of our growth. We anticipate that acquisitions and capital expenditures will continue to be important to our growth in the future. As a result, increases in the cost of capital available to us, which could result from us not being in compliance with fixed charge coverage ratio covenants under our amended and restated revolving credit facility, or our inability to access additional capital to finance acquisitions and capital

### **Table of Contents**

expenditures through borrowed funds could restrict our ability to grow our business organically or through acquisitions, which could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition or results of operations.

In addition, our profit margins depend on strategic investment buying initiatives, such as discounted bulk purchases, which require spending significant amounts of working capital up-front to purchase products that we then sell over a multi-month time period. Therefore, increases in the cost of capital available to us or our inability to access additional capital through borrowed funds could restrict our ability to engage in strategic investment buying initiatives, which could reduce our profit margins and have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition or results of operations.

Our debt agreements contain restrictive covenants that may limit our operating flexibility.

Our debt agreements underlying our amended and restated revolving credit facility and Term Loan Agreement contain financial covenants and other restrictions that limit our operating flexibility, limit our flexibility in planning for or reacting to changes in our business and make us more vulnerable to economic downturns and competitive pressures.

Our indebtedness could have significant negative consequences, including:

increasing our vulnerability to general adverse economic and industry conditions;

4imiting our ability to obtain additional financing;

4imiting our ability to pursue certain acquisitions;

limiting our flexibility in planning for or reacting to changes in our business and the industry in which we compete; and

placing us at a competitive disadvantage compared to competitors with less leverage or better access to capital resources.

In addition, our amended and restated revolving credit facility and the Term Loan Agreement each require that we comply with various financial tests and impose certain restrictions on us, including among other things, restrictions on our ability to incur additional indebtedness, create liens on assets, make loans or investments or pay dividends. Failure to comply with these covenants could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition or results of operations.

Our operating results are subject to significant fluctuations.

Our operating results may vary significantly from period to period due to:

demand for our products, including as a result of seasonal fluctuations;

changes in our operating expenses, including fuel and insurance expenses;

management's ability to execute our business and growth strategies;

changes in customer preferences, including levels of enthusiasm for health, fitness and environmental issues;

public perception of the benefits of natural and organic products when compared to similar conventional products;

fluctuation of natural product prices due to competitive pressures;

the addition or loss of significant customers;

personnel changes;

general economic conditions, including inflation;

supply shortages, including a lack of an adequate supply of high-quality livestock or agricultural products due to poor growing conditions, water shortages, natural disasters or otherwise;

volatility in prices of high-quality livestock or agricultural products resulting from poor growing conditions, water shortages, natural disasters or otherwise; and

future acquisitions, particularly in periods immediately following the consummation of such acquisition transactions while the operations of the acquired businesses are being integrated into our operations.

Due to the foregoing factors, we believe that period-to-period comparisons of our operating results may not necessarily be meaningful and that such comparisons cannot be relied upon as indicators of future performance. Conditions beyond our control can interrupt our supplies and alter our product costs.

The majority of our suppliers are based in the United States and Canada, but we also source products from suppliers throughout Europe, Asia, Central America, South America, Africa and Australia. For the most part, we do not have long-term contracts with our suppliers committing them to provide products to us. Although our purchasing volume

can provide benefits when dealing with suppliers, suppliers may not provide the products needed by us in the quantities and at the prices requested. We are also subject to delays caused by interruption in production and increases in product costs based on conditions outside of our control. These conditions include work slowdowns, work interruptions, strikes or other job actions by employees of suppliers, short-term weather conditions or more prolonged climate change, crop conditions, product recalls, water shortages, transportation interruptions, unavailability of fuel or increases in fuel costs, competitive demands, raw material shortages and natural disasters or other catastrophic events (including, but not limited to food-borne illnesses). As demand for natural and organic products has increased and the distribution channels into which these products are sold have expanded, we have continued to experience higher levels of

#### **Table of Contents**

manufacturer out-of-stocks causing us to incur higher operating expenses as we moved products around our distribution facilities as we sought to keep our service level high, and we cannot be sure when this trend will end or whether it will recur during future years. As the consumer demand for natural and organic products has increased, certain retailers and other producers have entered the market and attempted to buy certain raw materials directly, limiting their availability to be used in certain vendor products. Further, increased frequency or duration of extreme weather conditions could also impair production capabilities, disrupt our supply chain or impact demand for our products, including the specialty protein and cheese products sold by Tony's. For example, until the last two years, weather patterns had resulted in lower than normal levels of precipitation in key agricultural states such as California, impacting the price of water and corresponding prices of food products grown in states facing drought conditions. The impact of sustained droughts is uncertain and could result in volatile input costs. Input costs could increase at any point in time for a large portion of the products that we sell for a prolonged period. Conversely, in years where rainfall levels are abundant product costs, particularly in our perishable and produce businesses, may decline and the results of this product cost deflation could negatively impact our results of operations. Our inability to obtain adequate products as a result of any of the foregoing factors or otherwise could mean that we could not fulfill our obligations to customers, and customers may turn to other distributors. In that case, our financial condition, results of operations and business could be materially and adversely affected.

Changes in relationships with our vendors may adversely affect our profitability.

We cooperatively engage in a variety of promotional programs with our vendors. We manage these programs to maintain or improve our margins and increase sales. A reduction or change in promotional spending by our vendors (including as a result of increased demand for natural and organic products) could have a significant impact on our profitability. We depend heavily on our ability to purchase merchandise in sufficient quantities at competitive prices. We have no assurances of continued supply, pricing, or access to new products and any vendor could at any time change the terms upon which it sells to us or discontinue selling to us.

We are subject to significant governmental regulation.

Our business is highly regulated at the federal, state and local levels and our products and distribution operations require various licenses, permits and approvals. In particular:

the products that we distribute in the United States are subject to inspection by the FDA;

our warehouse and distribution centers are subject to inspection by the USDA and state health authorities; and the United States Department of Transportation and the United States Federal Highway Administration regulate our United States trucking operations.

Our Canadian operations are similarly subject to extensive regulation, including the English and French dual labeling requirements applicable to products that we distribute in Canada. The loss or revocation of any existing licenses, permits or approvals or the failure to obtain any additional licenses, permits or approvals in new jurisdictions where we intend to do business could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition or results of operations. In addition, as a distributor and manufacturer of natural, organic, and specialty foods, we are subject to increasing governmental scrutiny of and public awareness regarding food safety and the sale, packaging and marketing of natural and organic products. Compliance with these laws may impose a significant burden on our operations. If we were to manufacture or distribute foods that are or are perceived to be contaminated, any resulting product recalls could have an adverse effect on our business, financial condition or results of operations. Additionally, concern over climate change, including the impact of global warming, has led to significant United States and international legislative and regulatory efforts to limit greenhouse gas emissions. Increased regulation regarding greenhouse gas emissions, especially diesel engine emissions, could impose substantial costs on us. These costs include an increase in the cost of the fuel and other energy we purchase and capital costs associated with updating or replacing our vehicles prematurely. Until the timing, scope and extent of such regulation becomes known, we cannot predict its effect on our results of operations. It is reasonably possible, however, that it could impose material costs on us which we may be unable to pass on to our customers.

If we fail to comply with applicable laws and regulations or encounter disagreements with respect to our contracts subject to governmental regulations, including those referred to above, we may be subject to investigations, criminal sanctions or civil remedies, including fines, injunctions, prohibitions on exporting, seizures or debarments from

contracting with the government. The cost of compliance or the consequences of non-compliance, including debarments, could have a material adverse effect on our business and results of operations. In addition, governmental units may make changes in the regulatory frameworks within which we operate that may require either the corporation as a whole or individual businesses to incur substantial increases in costs in order to comply with such laws and regulations.

Product liability claims could have an adverse effect on our business.

We face an inherent risk of exposure to product liability claims if the products we manufacture or sell cause injury or illness. In addition, meat, seafood, cheese, poultry and other products that we distribute could be subject to recall because they are, or are alleged to be, contaminated, spoiled or inappropriately labeled. Our meat and poultry products may be subject to contamination

#### **Table of Contents**

by disease-producing organisms, or pathogens, such as Listeria monocytogenes, Salmonella and generic E.coli. These pathogens are generally found in the environment, and as a result, there is a risk that they, as a result of food processing, could be present in the meat and poultry products we distribute. These pathogens can also be introduced as a result of improper handling at the consumer level. These risks may be controlled, although not eliminated, by adherence to good manufacturing practices and finished product testing. We have little, if any, control over proper handling before we receive the product or once the product has been shipped to our customers. We may be subject to liability, which could be substantial, because of actual or alleged contamination in products manufactured or sold by us, including products sold by companies before we acquired them. We have, and the companies we have acquired have had, liability insurance with respect to product liability claims. This insurance may not continue to be available at a reasonable cost or at all, and may not be adequate to cover product liability claims against us or against companies we have acquired. We generally seek contractual indemnification from manufacturers, but any such indemnification is limited, as a practical matter, to the creditworthiness of the indemnifying party. If we or any of our acquired companies do not have adequate insurance or contractual indemnification available, product liability claims and costs associated with product recalls, including a loss of business, could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition or results of operations.

A cybersecurity incident and other technology disruptions could negatively impact our business and our relationships with customers.

We use computers in substantially all aspects of our business operations. We also use mobile devices, social networking and other online activities to connect with our employees, suppliers, business partners and our customers. Such uses give rise to cybersecurity risks, including security breach, espionage, system disruption, theft and inadvertent release of information. Our business involves the storage and transmission of numerous classes of sensitive and/or confidential information and intellectual property, including customers' and suppliers' personal information, private information about employees, and financial and strategic information about the Company and its business partners. Further, as we pursue our strategy to grow through acquisitions and to pursue new initiatives that improve our operations and cost structure, we are also expanding and improving our information technologies, resulting in a larger technological presence and corresponding exposure to cybersecurity risk. If we fail to assess and identify cybersecurity risks associated with acquisitions and new initiatives, we may become increasingly vulnerable to such risks. Additionally, while we have implemented measures to prevent security breaches and cyber incidents, our preventative measures and incident response efforts may not be entirely effective. The theft, destruction, loss, misappropriation, or release of sensitive and/or confidential information or intellectual property, or interference with our information technology systems or the technology systems of third parties on which we rely, could result in business disruption, negative publicity, brand damage, violation of privacy laws, loss of customers, potential liability and competitive disadvantage all of which could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition or results of operations.

We are dependent on a number of key executives.

Management of our business is substantially dependent upon the services of certain key management employees. Loss of the services of any officers or any other key management employee could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition or results of operations.

Union-organizing activities could cause labor relations difficulties.

Refer to "Employees" in "Item 1. Business" for detail about our employees covered by collective bargaining agreements. If we are not able to renew these agreements or are required to make significant changes to these agreements, our relationship with these employees may become fractured or we may incur additional expenses which could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition, or results of operations. We have in the past been the focus of union-organizing efforts, and we believe it is likely that we will be the focus of similar efforts in the future.

As we increase our employee base and broaden our distribution operations to new geographic markets, our increased visibility could result in increased or expanded union-organizing efforts. In the event we are unable to negotiate contract renewals with our union associates, we could be subject to work stoppages. In that event, it would be necessary for us to hire replacement workers to continue to meet our obligations to our customers. The costs to hire

replacement workers and employ effective security measures could negatively impact the profitability of any such facility, and depending on the length of time that we are required to employ replacement workers and security measures these costs could be significant and could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition or results of operations.

In August 2017, the National Labor Relations Board certified the election results of our transportation employees in Moreno Valley, California to be represented by the Teamsters union. We are in the process of negotiating a collective bargaining agreement with these employees. The terms of this agreement could cause our expenses at this facility to increase, negatively impacting the results of operations at this facility.

We may fail to establish sufficient insurance reserves and adequately estimate for future workers' compensation and automobile liabilities.

#### **Table of Contents**

We are primarily self-insured for workers' compensation and general and automobile liability insurance. We believe that our workers' compensation and automobile insurance coverage is customary for businesses of our size and type. However, there are types of losses we may incur that cannot be insured against or that we believe are not commercially reasonable to insure. These losses, should they occur, could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition or results of operations. In addition, the cost of workers' compensation insurance and automobile insurance fluctuates based upon our historical trends, market conditions and availability.

Any projection of losses concerning workers' compensation and automobile insurance is subject to a considerable degree of variability. Among the causes of this variability are unpredictable external factors affecting litigation trends, benefit level changes and claim settlement patterns. If actual losses incurred are greater than those anticipated, our reserves may be insufficient and additional costs could be recorded in our consolidated financial statements. If we suffer a substantial loss that is not covered by our self-insurance reserves, the loss and attendant expenses could harm our business and operating results. We have purchased stop loss coverage from third parties, which limits our exposure above the amounts we have self-insured.

Adverse judgments or settlements resulting from legal proceedings in which we may be involved in the normal course of our business could reduce our profits or limit our ability to operate our business.

In the normal course of our business, we are involved in various legal proceedings. The outcome of these proceedings cannot be predicted. If any of these proceedings were to be determined adversely to us or a settlement involving a payment of a material sum of money were to occur, it could materially and adversely affect our results of operations or ability to operate our business. Additionally, we could become the subject of future claims by third parties, including our employees, our investors, or regulators. Any significant adverse judgments or settlements would reduce our profits and could limit our ability to operate our business. Further, we may incur costs related to claims for which we have appropriate third-party indemnity, but such third parties fail to fulfill their contractual obligations. The market price for our common stock may be volatile.

At times, there has been significant volatility in the market price of our common stock. In addition, the market price of our common stock could fluctuate substantially in the future in response to a number of factors, including the following:

our quarterly operating results or the operating results of other distributors of organic or natural food and non-food products and of supernatural chains and conventional supermarkets and other of our customers;

the addition or loss of significant customers or significant events affecting our significant customers;

changes in general conditions in the economy, the financial markets or the organic or natural food and non-food product distribution industries;

changes in financial estimates or recommendations by stock market analysts regarding us or our competitors;

announcements by us or our competitors of significant acquisitions;

increases in labor, energy, fuel costs or the costs of food products;

natural disasters, severe weather conditions or other developments affecting us or our competitors;

publication of research reports about us, the benefits of organic and natural products, or the organic or natural food and non-food product distribution industries generally;

changes in market valuations of similar companies;

additions or departures of key management personnel;

actions by institutional stockholders; and

speculation in the press or investment community.

In addition, in recent years the stock market has experienced extreme price and volume fluctuations. This volatility has had a significant effect on the market prices of securities issued by many companies for reasons unrelated to their operating performance. These broad market fluctuations may materially adversely affect our stock price, regardless of our operating results.

A failure of our internal control over financial reporting could materially impact our business or stock price.

Our management is responsible for establishing and maintaining adequate internal control over financial reporting. An internal control system, no matter how well designed and operated, can provide only reasonable, not absolute, assurance that the objectives of the control system are met. Further, the design of a control system must reflect the fact

that there are resource constraints, and the benefits of controls must be considered relative to their costs. Because of the inherent limitations in all internal control systems, internal control over financial reporting may not prevent or detect misstatements. Any failure to maintain an effective system of internal control over financial reporting could limit our ability to report our financial results accurately and timely or to detect and prevent fraud, and could expose us to litigation or adversely affect the market price of our common stock. See Part II, "Item 9A. Controls and Procedures - Management's Report on Internal Control over Financial Reporting," of this report for additional information regarding our internal control over financial reporting.

#### **Table of Contents**

#### ITEM 1B. UNRESOLVED STAFF COMMENTS

None.

#### ITEM 2. PROPERTIES

We maintained thirty-three distribution centers at July 29, 2017 which were utilized by our wholesale segment. These facilities, including offsite storage space, consisted of an aggregate of approximately 8.7 million square feet of storage space, which we believe represents the largest capacity of any distributor within the United States that is principally engaged in the distribution of natural, organic and specialty products.

Set forth below for each of our distribution centers is its location and the expiration of leases as of July 29, 2017 for those distribution centers that we do not own.

Location Lease Expiration

Atlanta, Georgia\*

Auburn, California\*

Auburn, Washington

Aurora, Colorado

Burnaby, British Columbia

Charlotte, North Carolina

Owned

August 2019

October 2033

December 2022

September 2019

Chesterfield, New Hampshire\* Owned Dayville, Connecticut\* Owned Gilroy, California Owned Greenwood, Indiana\* Owned Howell Township, New Jersey Owned Hudson Valley, New York\* Owned Iowa City, Iowa\* Owned Lancaster, Texas July 2020 Logan Township, New Jersey March 2028 Montreal, Quebec July 2022 Moreno Valley, California July 2018 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania January 2020 Prescott, Wisconsin Owned Racine, Wisconsin\* Owned Richburg, South Carolina Owned Richmond, British Columbia August 2022 Ridgefield, Washington September 2019

Ridgefield, Washington\*

Rocklin, California\*

Sarasota, Florida

Truckee, California

Vaughan, Ontario

Owned

Outled

Owned

August 2022

August 2020

November 2021

Vernon, California\* Owned
West Sacramento, California Owned
West Sacramento, California Owned
York, Pennsylvania May 2020
Yuba City, California September 2021

<sup>\*</sup>The properties noted above are mortgaged under and encumbered by our Term Loan Agreement initially entered into on August 14, 2014.

#### **Table of Contents**

We lease facilities to operate twelve natural products retail stores through our retail division, Earth Origins, in Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, each with various lease expiration dates. As of the end of our 2016 fiscal year, we decided to close two of these locations, one in Maryland and one in Florida, and we closed these stores during the first quarter of fiscal 2017. We also lease a processing and manufacturing facility in Edison, New Jersey for our manufacturing and branded products division with a lease expiration date of July 31, 2023.

We lease office space in Pleasanton, California, San Francisco, California, Santa Cruz, California, Chesterfield, New Hampshire, Uniondale, New York, Brooklyn, New York, Richmond, Virginia, Medford, New Jersey, Wayne, Pennsylvania, Lincoln, Rhode Island and Providence, Rhode Island, the site of our corporate headquarters. Our new shared services center will be located in Lincoln, Rhode Island and we will begin our transition into the new space in the first quarter of fiscal 2018. Our leases have been entered into upon terms that we believe to be reasonable and customary.

We lease warehouse facilities in West Sacramento, California that we acquired in connection with our acquisition of Tony's. This facility is currently being subleased under an agreement that expires concurrently with our lease termination in April 2018. We also lease offsite storage space near certain of our distribution facilities.

## ITEM 3. LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

From time to time, we are involved in routine litigation or other legal proceedings that arise in the ordinary course of our business. There are no pending material legal proceedings to which we are a party or to which our property is subject.

ITEM 4. MINE SAFETY DISCLOSURES Not applicable.

#### **Table of Contents**

#### PART II.

ITEM 5. MARKET FOR THE REGISTRANT'S COMMON EQUITY, RELATED STOCKHOLDER MATTERS AND ISSUER PURCHASES OF EQUITY SECURITIES

Our common stock is traded on the Nasdaq Global Select Market® under the symbol "UNFI." Our common stock began trading on the Nasdaq Stock Market® on November 1, 1996.

The following table sets forth, for the fiscal periods indicated, the high and low sale prices per share of our common stock on the Nasdaq Global Select Market®:

Fiscal 2017 High Low First Quarter \$50.06 \$38.55 Second Quarter 49.39 40.81 Third Quarter 45.99 39.47 Fourth Quarter 42.38 34.60

### Fiscal 2016

First Quarter \$55.69 \$44.05 Second Quarter 52.07 33.85 Third Quarter 43.02 29.75 Fourth Quarter 52.18 33.16

On July 29, 2017, we had 78 stockholders of record. The number of record holders may not be representative of the number of beneficial holders of our common stock because depositories, brokers or other nominees hold many shares. We have never declared or paid any cash dividends on our capital stock. We anticipate that all of our earnings in the foreseeable future will be retained to finance the continued growth and development of our business, and we have no current intention to pay cash dividends. Our future dividend policy will depend on our earnings, capital requirements and financial condition, requirements of the financing agreements to which we are then a party and other factors considered relevant by our Board of Directors. Additionally, the terms of our amended and restated revolving credit facility and Term Loan Agreement restrict us from making any cash dividends unless certain conditions and financial tests are met.

## Comparative Stock Performance

The graph below compares the cumulative total stockholder return on our common stock for the last five fiscal years with the cumulative total return on (i) an index of Food Distributors and Wholesalers and (ii) The NASDAQ Composite Index. The comparison assumes the investment of \$100 on July 28, 2012 in our common stock and in each of the indices and, in each case, assumes reinvestment of all dividends. The stock price performance shown below is not necessarily indicative of future performance.

The index of Food Distributors and Wholesalers includes SuperValu, Inc. and SYSCO Corporation.

This performance graph shall not be deemed "soliciting material" or be deemed to be "filed" for purposes of Section 18 of the Exchange Act or otherwise subject to the liabilities under that Section and shall not be deemed to be incorporated by reference into any of our filings under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the "Securities Act"), or the Exchange Act.

## **Table of Contents**

## COMPARISION OF 5 YEAR CUMULATIVE TOTAL RETURN\*

Among United Natural Foods, Inc., the NASDAQ Composite Index, and Index of Food Distributors and Wholesalers

\*\$100 invested on 7/28/12 in UNFI common stock or 7/28/12 in the relevant index, including reinvestment of dividends. Index calculated on a month-end basis.

# ITEM 6. SELECTED FINANCIAL DATA

The selected consolidated financial data presented below are derived from our consolidated financial statements, which have been audited by KPMG LLP, our independent registered public accounting firm. The historical results are not necessarily indicative of results to be expected for any future period. The following selected consolidated financial data should be read in conjunction with and is qualified by reference to "Item 7. Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations" and our Consolidated Financial Statements and Notes thereto included elsewhere in this Annual Report on Form 10-K.

#### **Table of Contents**

Consolidated Statement of Income Data: (1) (2)	July 29, 2017	July 30, 2016	August 1, 2015	August 2, 2014	August 3, 2013 (53 weeks)			
	(In thousands, except per share data)							
Net sales	\$9,274,471	\$8,470,286	\$8,184,978	\$6,794,447	\$6,064,355			
Cost of sales	7,845,550	7,190,935	6,924,463	5,666,802	5,040,323			
Gross profit	1,428,921	1,279,351	1,260,515	1,127,645	1,024,032			
Total operating expenses	1,202,896	1,055,242	1,018,558	916,857	839,582			
Operating income	226,025	224,109	241,957	210,788	184,450			
Income before income taxes	214,423	208,222	229,769	207,408	173,072			
Provision for income taxes	84,268	82,456	91,035	81,926	65,865			
Net income	\$130,155	\$125,766	\$138,734	\$125,482	\$107,207			
Basic per share data:								
Net income	\$2.57	\$2.50	\$2.77	\$2.53	\$2.18			
Diluted per share data:								
Net income	\$2.56	\$2.50	\$2.76	\$2.52	\$2.17			
Consolidated Balance Sheet Data: (2) (3)								
Working capital	\$958,683	\$991,468	\$1,018,437	\$850,006	\$712,506			
Total assets	2,886,563	2,852,155	2,540,994	2,284,446	1,725,463			
Total long-term debt and capital leases, excluding current portion	149,863	161,739	172,949	32,510	33,091			
Total stockholders' equity	\$1,681,921	\$1,519,504	\$1,381,088	\$1,238,919	\$1,094,701			

<sup>(1)</sup> Includes the effect of acquisitions from the respective dates of acquisition.

Amounts have been adjusted for the reclassification of debt issuance costs resulting from the Company's early (3) adoption of Accounting Standards Update No. 2015-03, Interest-Imputation of Interest (Subtopic 835-30), in the fourth quarter of fiscal 2016.

# ITEM 7. MANAGEMENT'S DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL CONDITION AND RESULTS **OF OPERATIONS**

The following discussion and analysis should be read in conjunction with our consolidated financial statements and the notes thereto appearing elsewhere in this Annual Report on Form 10-K. Forward-Looking Statements

This Annual Report on Form 10-K and the documents incorporated by reference in this Annual Report on Form 10-K contain forward-looking statements within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the "Securities Act"), and Section 21E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the "Exchange Act"), that involve substantial risks and uncertainties. In some cases you can identify these statements by forward-looking words such as "anticipate," "believe," "could," "estimate," "expect," "intend," "may," "plans," "seek," "should," "will," and "would," or similar words. Statements that contain these words should be read carefully because they discuss future expectations, contain projections of future results of operations or of financial positions or state other "forward-looking" information.

Forward-looking statements involve inherent uncertainty and may ultimately prove to be incorrect or false. You are cautioned not to place undue reliance on forward-looking statements. Except as otherwise may be required by law, we undertake no obligation to update or revise forward-looking statements to reflect changed assumptions, the occurrence of unanticipated events or actual operating results. Our actual results could differ materially from those anticipated in these forward-looking statements as a result of various factors, including, but not limited to:

Periods prior to the year ended July 30, 2016 have been restated for immaterial corrections for identified errors in accounting for early payment discounts on inventory purchases.

#### **Table of Contents**

our ability to retain customers of Haddon House Food Products, Inc. ("Haddon"), Nor-Cal Produce, Inc. ("Nor-Cal"), Global Organic/Specialty Source, Inc. ("Global Organic") and Gourmet Guru, Inc. ("Gourmet Guru") and their affiliated entities that we purchased on terms similar to those in place prior to our acquisition of these businesses; our dependence on principal customers;

our sensitivity to general economic conditions, including the current economic environment;

changes in disposable income levels and consumer spending trends;

our ability to reduce our expenses in amounts sufficient to offset our increased focus on sales to conventional supermarkets and the resulting lower gross margins on those sales;

our reliance on the continued growth in sales of natural and organic foods and non-food products in comparison to conventional products;

increased competition in our industry as a result of increased distribution of natural, organic and specialty products by conventional grocery distributors and direct distribution of those products by large retailers and online distributors; our ability to timely and successfully deploy our warehouse management system throughout our distribution centers and our transportation management system across the Company;

the addition or loss of significant customers or material changes to our relationships with these customers;

volatility in fuel costs;

volatility in foreign exchange rates;

our sensitivity to inflationary and deflationary pressures;

the relatively low margins and economic sensitivity of our business;

the potential for disruptions in our supply chain by circumstances beyond our control;

the risk of interruption of supplies due to lack of long-term contracts, severe weather, work stoppages or otherwise;

consumer demand for natural and organic products outpacing suppliers' ability to produce these products;

moderated supplier promotional activity, including decreased forward buying opportunities;

union-organizing activities that could cause labor relations difficulties and increased costs;

the ability to identify and successfully complete acquisitions of other natural, organic and specialty food and non-food products distributors;

management's allocation of capital and the timing of capital expenditures;

our ability to successfully integrate and deploy our operational initiatives to achieve synergies from the acquisitions of Global Organic, Nor-Cal, Haddon and Gourmet Guru;

our ability to realize the anticipated benefits from our restructuring program in conjunction with various cost saving and efficiency initiatives, including acquisition integration, severance and transition related costs, as well as the anticipated opening of the Company's shared services center, all within the cost estimates and timing currently contemplated; and

the potential for business disruptions in connection with the anticipated opening of the Company's shared services center.

This list of risks and uncertainties, however, is only a summary of some of the most important factors and is not intended to be exhaustive. You should carefully review the risks described under "Part I. Item 1A. Risk Factors," as well as any other cautionary language in this Annual Report on Form 10-K, as the occurrence of any of these events could have an adverse effect, which may be material, on our business, results of operations and financial condition. Overview

We believe we are a leading national distributor based on sales of natural, organic and specialty foods and non-food products in the United States and Canada and that our thirty-three distribution centers, representing approximately 8.7 million square feet of warehouse space, provide us with the largest capacity of any North American-based distributor in the natural, organic and specialty products industry. We offer more than 110,000 high-quality natural, organic and specialty foods and non-food products, consisting of national brands, regional brands, private label and master distribution products, in six product categories: grocery and general merchandise, produce, perishables and frozen foods, nutritional supplements and sports nutrition, bulk and food service products and personal care items. We serve more than 43,000 customer locations primarily located across the United States and Canada, the majority of which can be classified into one of the following categories: independently owned natural products retailers, which include

buying clubs; supernatural chains, which consist solely of Whole Foods Market; conventional supermarkets, which include mass market chains; and other which includes foodservice and international customers outside of Canada. Our operations are generally comprised of three principal operating divisions. These operating divisions are:

our wholesale division, which includes:

our broadline natural, organic and specialty distribution business in the United States, which includes our recent acquisitions of Haddon and Gourmet Guru;

Tony's, which is a leading distributor of a wide array of specialty protein, cheese, deli, foodservice and bakery goods, principally throughout the Western United States;

#### **Table of Contents**

Albert's, which is a leading distributor of organically grown produce and non-produce perishable items within the United States, which includes the operations of Global Organic and Nor-Cal, a distributor of organic and conventional produce and non-produce perishable items principally in Northern California;

UNFI Canada, Inc. ("UNFI Canada"), which is our natural, organic and specialty distribution business in Canada; and Select Nutrition, which distributes vitamins, minerals and supplements;

our retail division, consisting of Earth Origins, which operates our twelve natural products retail stores within the United States; and

our manufacturing and branded products divisions, consisting of:

Woodstock Farms Manufacturing, which specializes in importing, roasting, packaging and the distribution of nuts, dried fruit, seeds, trail mixes, granola, natural and organic snack items and confections; and our Blue Marble Brands branded product lines.

In recent years, our sales to existing and new customers have increased through the continued growth of the natural and organic products industry in general, increased market share as a result of our high quality service and a broader product selection, including specialty products, and the acquisition of, or merger with, natural and specialty products distributors, the expansion of our existing distribution centers; the construction of new distribution centers; the introduction of new products and the development of our own line of natural and organic branded products. Through these efforts, we believe that we have been able to broaden our geographic penetration, expand our customer base, enhance and diversify our product selections and increase our market share. Our strategic plan is focused on increasing the type of products we distribute to our customers, including perishable products and conventional produce. As part of our "one company" approach, we are in the process of rolling out a national warehouse management and procurement system to convert our existing facilities into a single warehouse management and supply chain platform ("WMS"). We have successfully implemented the WMS system at fourteen of our facilities including most recently in Iowa City, Iowa, Greenwood, Indiana, Dayville, Connecticut, Gilroy, California, Richburg, South Carolina, Howell, New Jersey, and Atlanta, Georgia. We expect to complete the roll-out to all of our existing U.S. broadline facilities by the end of fiscal 2019. These steps and others are intended to promote operational efficiencies and further reduce our operating expenses as a percentage of net sales as we attempt to offset the lower gross margins we expect to generate by increased sales to the supernatural and conventional supermarket channels and as a result of additional competition in our business.

We have been the primary distributor to Whole Foods Market for more than nineteen years. We have and continue to serve as the primary distributor to Whole Foods Market in all of its regions in the United States pursuant to a distribution agreement that expires on September 28, 2025. Whole Foods Market accounted for approximately 33% and 35% of our net sales for the years ended July 29, 2017 and July 30, 2016, respectively.

In March 2016, the Company acquired certain assets of Global Organic and related affiliates through our wholly owned subsidiary Albert's, in a cash transaction for approximately \$20.6 million. Global Organic is located in Sarasota, Florida serving customer locations (many of which are independent retailers) across the Southeastern United States. Global Organic's operations have been fully integrated into the existing Albert's business in the Southeastern United States.

In March 2016, the Company acquired all of the outstanding equity securities of Nor-Cal and an affiliated entity as well as certain real estate, in a cash transaction for approximately \$67.8 million. Nor-Cal is a distributor with primary operations located in West Sacramento, California. Our acquisition of Nor-Cal has aided us in our efforts to expand our fresh offering, particularly within conventional produce. Nor-Cal's operations have been combined with the existing Albert's business.

In May 2016, the Company completed its acquisition of all of the outstanding equity securities of Haddon and certain affiliated entities and real estate for total cash consideration of approximately \$217.5 million. Haddon is a distributor and merchandiser of natural and organic and gourmet ethnic products primarily throughout the Eastern United States. Haddon has a history of providing quality high touch merchandising services to their customers. Haddon has a

diverse, multi-channel customer base including conventional supermarkets, gourmet food stores and independently owned product retailers. Our acquisition of Haddon has expanded the product and service offering that we expect to play an important role in our ongoing strategy to build out our gourmet and ethnic product categories. Haddon's operations have been combined with the Company's existing broadline natural, organic and specialty distribution business in the United States.

In August 2016, the Company acquired all of the outstanding equity securities of Gourmet Guru in a cash transaction for approximately \$10.0 million, subject to customary post-closing adjustments. Gourmet Guru is a distributor and merchandiser of fresh and organic food focusing on new and emerging brands. We believe that our acquisition of Gourmet Guru enhances our strength in finding and cultivating emerging fresh and organic brands and further expands our presence in key urban markets.

#### **Table of Contents**

Gourmet Guru's operations have been combined with the Company's existing broadline natural, organic and specialty distribution business in the United States.

The ability to distribute specialty food items (including ethnic, kosher and gourmet) has accelerated our expansion into a number of high-growth business markets and allowed us to establish immediate market share in the fast-growing specialty foods market. We have now integrated specialty food products and natural and organic specialty non-food products into all of our broadline distribution centers across the United States and Canada. Due to our expansion into specialty foods, over the past several years we have been awarded new business with a number of conventional supermarkets that we previously had not done business with because we did not distribute specialty products. We believe our acquisition of Haddon has expanded our capabilities in the specialty category and we have expanded our offerings of specialty products to include those products distributed by Haddon that we did not previously distribute to our customers. We believe that distribution of these products enhances our conventional supermarket business channel and that our complementary product lines continue to present opportunities for cross-selling.

To maintain our market leadership and improve our operating efficiencies, we seek to continually:

- expand our marketing and customer service programs across regions;
- expand our national purchasing opportunities;
- offer a broader product selection than our competitors;
- offer operational excellence with high service levels and a higher percentage of on-time deliveries than our competitors;
- centralize general and administrative functions to reduce expenses;
- consolidate systems applications among physical locations and regions;
- increase our investment in people, facilities, equipment and technology;
- integrate administrative and accounting functions; and
- reduce the geographic overlap between regions.

Our continued growth has allowed us to expand our existing facilities and open new facilities in an effort to achieve increasing operating efficiencies. We have made significant capital expenditures and incurred considerable expenses in connection with the opening and expansion of our facilities. At July 29, 2017, our distribution capacity totaled approximately 8.7 million square feet. We have completed our multi-year expansion plan, which included new distribution centers in Racine, Wisconsin, Hudson Valley, New York, Prescott, Wisconsin, and Gilroy, California from which we began operations in June 2014, September 2014, April 2015 and February 2016, respectively. Based on our current operations and customers, we believe that we are unlikely to open or commence construction on a new distribution center in the next twelve months.

Our net sales consist primarily of sales of natural, organic and specialty products to retailers, adjusted for customer volume discounts, returns and allowances. Net sales also consist of amounts charged by us to customers for shipping and handling and fuel surcharges. The principal components of our cost of sales include the amounts paid to suppliers for product sold, plus the cost of transportation necessary to bring the product to our distribution centers, offset by consideration received from suppliers in connection with the purchase or promotion of the suppliers' products. Cost of sales also includes amounts incurred by us at our manufacturing subsidiary, Woodstock Farms Manufacturing, for inbound transportation costs and for depreciation for manufacturing equipment. Our gross margin may not be comparable to other similar companies within our industry that may include all costs related to their distribution network in their costs of sales rather than as operating expenses. We include purchasing, receiving, selecting and outbound transportation expenses within our operating expenses rather than in our cost of sales. Total operating expenses include salaries and wages, employee benefits, warehousing and delivery, selling, occupancy, insurance, administrative, share-based compensation, depreciation and amortization expense. Other expenses (income) include interest on our outstanding indebtedness, including the financing obligation related to our Aurora, Colorado distribution center and the lease for office space for our corporate headquarters in Providence, Rhode Island, interest income and miscellaneous income and expenses.

Results of Operations

The following table presents, for the periods indicated, certain income and expense items expressed as a percentage of net sales:

#### **Table of Contents**

	Fiscal year ended					
	July 29,		July 30,		August 1,	
	2017		2016		2015	
Net sales	100.0	%	100.0	%	100.0	%
Cost of sales	84.6	%	84.9	%	84.6	%
Gross profit	15.4	%	15.1	%	15.4	%
Operating expenses	12.9	%	12.4	%	12.4	%
Restructuring and asset impairment expenses	0.1	%	0.1	%		%
Total operating expenses	13.0	%	12.5	%	12.4	%
Operating income	2.4	%	2.6	%	3.0	%
Other expense (income):						
Interest expense	0.2	%	0.2	%	0.2	%
Interest income		%		%		%
Other, net	(0.1)	)%		%		%
Total other expense, net	0.1	%	0.2	%	0.1	% *
Income before income taxes	2.3	%	2.5	% *	<sup>*</sup> 2.8	% *
Provision for income taxes	0.9	%	1.0	%	1.1	%
Net income	1.4	%	1.5	%	1.7	%

<sup>\*</sup> Total reflects rounding

Fiscal year ended July 29, 2017 compared to fiscal year ended July 30, 2016

Net Sales

Our net sales for the fiscal year ended July 29, 2017 increased approximately 9.5%, or \$804.2 million, to \$9.27 billion from \$8.47 billion for the fiscal year ended July 30, 2016. The year-over-year increase in net sales was primarily due to growth in our wholesale segment of \$815.0 million. Net sales for fiscal 2017 were positively impacted by acquisitions we consummated in the third and fourth quarters of fiscal 2016 and the first quarter of fiscal 2017 but were negatively impacted by broad based food retail softness, the rationalization of business in conjunction with margin enhancement initiatives and a lack of inflation. Our net sales for the fiscal year ended July 30, 2016 were favorably impacted by moderate price inflation of approximately 1% during the year.

Our net sales by customer type for the fiscal years ended July 29, 2017 and July 30, 2016 were as follows (in millions):

Customer Type	2017 Net Sales	% of Total Net Sales	2016 Net Sales	% of Total Net Sales
Supernatural chains	\$3,096	33 %	\$2,951	35 %
Conventional supermarkets	2,747	30 %	2,288	27 %
Independently owned natural products retailers	2,427	26 %	2,291	27 %
Other	1,004	11 %	940	11 %
Total	\$			