



## MARKET UPDATE

**Tomatoes:** Florida's round tomato volume has been lighter this week, due to cool weather and weekend rains keeping harvesters out of fields for the first few days of the week. Quality is still nice on crown fruit, but there are some scarring concerns on later picks that have been hit with wind and weather. Roma numbers have been consistent but remain very light. Grape tomato production is mostly steady with adequate volumes available. Quality has been very nice, but we could see reduced packouts over the next week or so as farms work through the fruit that's experienced rain.

Mainland Mexico is in the thick of winter production of vine-ripe and mature green round tomatoes. Harvests are heavier to big sizes and quality has been good. Roma volumes out of West Mexico are also coming on strong and are projected to continue as we move into February. Grape tomatoes are readily available and are ripe for promotional opportunities.

**Bell Peppers:** Although there are still some challenges with bell pepper supply, the situation is improving. The weather is finally starting to cooperate in Mexico, bringing light increases and nicer quality to market. Most Florida producers had to stay out of fields at the early part of the week due to the weekend's rains, but are back harvesting both older and newer fields. Florida's overall quality is varied, with stronger fruit coming from new blocks.

**Cucumbers:** Honduras is still rolling with good volumes and quality on cucumbers with plenty of supers available for the Eastern market. Declining prices may begin to affect the amount of smaller and offgrade product available, as growers reach or fall below the break-even point for production. Meanwhile in the West, Sinaloa continues to offer a steady supply of fruit. Weather conditions have been favorable, allowing for strong quality and condition.

**Summer Squash:** Improved weather has brought on new fields and plantings of squash in Mexico, finally bringing better supply and quality to market. Florida's production is still very light and quality is affected by weather, but there's a reasonable amount of Honduran and Dominican product (more zucchini than yellow) coming in to help with demand.

**Green Beans:** Florida production continues to be in a lull as rain and cool weather slow production. Although quality usually suffers when it rains, so far there are no significant issues. Mainland Mexico's beans crops have also slowed a little due to some previous cold weather but should bounce back to provide steady supply for at least the next few weeks.

**Eggplant:** Although Florida's eggplant yields are still light and quality is less than perfect, Mexican farms are beginning to see better supplies and improved quality.

**Chili Peppers:** Mexico's chili pepper crop problems haven't resolved themselves yet, but there is a slight bit more supply this week. Jalapeno and serrano numbers continue to fall very short of demand but poblano and tomatillo supply has been a little easier, especially as demand has fallen off. Florida's chili production is extremely minimal, which is likely to continue until Spring crops come online.

**Hard Squash:** Mexico's hard squash producers are beginning to see challenges. Acorn and spaghetti are going into a 7-10 day production gap with minimal product on the immediate horizon. Quality is also a concern, as we're seeing stem end mold, dull color and now, mechanical damage. Look for things to improve in a few weeks as growers work through the gap and quality issues of current plantings. Honduran butternut and spaghetti available are still readily available in the East. Quality is nice on the butternut and mostly good on spaghetti despite some of the usual scarring issues.

## TRANSPORTATION FACTS

\*The national diesel average remained stable this week at \$2.97 per gallon.

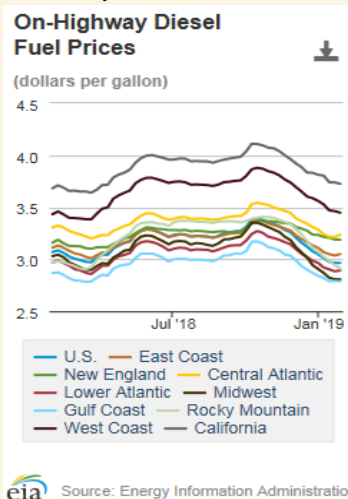
\* The average price for a gallon of diesel is \$.11 LOWER than the same time last year.

\* The East Coast, Central Atlantic, and Lower Atlantic areas reported increases of \$.02 per gallon or less, while all other areas came in with lower prices this week.

\*California continues to have the highest diesel prices in the country at \$3.73 per gallon while the Gulf Coast is the low-price leader at \$2.79 per gallon.

\*The WTI Crude Oil price rose 1% over the last seven days, moving from \$52.57 to \$53.31 per barrel.

\*Truck availability is adequate throughout the nation. Central and South Florida actually report a slight surplus of transportation availability.



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## NEWS IN THE GROCERY TRADE

### Grocery Labor Outlook: How to Overcome Recruitment, Retention, Training, and Diversity Challenges

By: Bridget Goldschmidt, [www.progressivegrocer.com](http://www.progressivegrocer.com), January 25, 2019

With labor a perennial headache for food retailers that's only grown worse in recent years – the issue topped the list of big issues keeping grocers up at night, according to *Progressive Grocer's* 2018 Annual Report of the Grocery Industry, chosen by 66.7 percent of survey respondents, up from second place in 2017 – it's more necessary than ever for the industry to figure out the best ways to recruit, retain, train and ensure the diversity of its employees. To that end, *Progressive Grocer* sought out several experts for their ideas on creating a happier, more efficient workforce in 2019 and beyond.

#### 'Moments That Matter'

"By investing in resources to enrich the workplace for employees, grocers have an incredible opportunity to attract and retain high-performing, reliable associates – a.k.a. the types of employees you want representing your brand – while also cultivating customer loyalty across all channels," asserts Amanda Nichols, senior manager, industry marketing, retail and hospitality at Lowell, Mass.-based Kronos Inc., a provider of workforce management and HCM cloud software solutions.

"Simple things like making it easy to check a schedule or swap a shift with a co-worker sound small, but when your son has just made the playoffs, knowing that your employer has invested in automated and easy-to-use tools for scheduling and shift swapping really makes a difference," Nichols goes on to explain. "We call these the 'moments that matter' to employees, and it's critical that grocers simplify and streamline these daily tasks. Essentially, you want to meet your employees' baseline expectations around work tasks – it's the first step in building a great relationship with your teams. Get those right, and the stage is set for attracting and retaining the highest-caliber talent in your industry."

To meet those expectations, she urges grocers: "Take action to simplify the employee experience. Consider the tasks that your employees are doing every week, or maybe every day: clocking in and out, checking schedules, swapping a shift. ... [I]t's critical that retailers simplify and streamline these daily tasks."

Continues Nichols: "For starters, tasks should be easy to complete using intelligent workplace apps or

technologies that are modern, intuitive and user-friendly. Think one-click actions, automatic shift swapping (without manager intervention), personalized employee dashboards, single sign-on across multiple employee apps, and more. Many employees – especially Gen Z and Millennials – expect a familiar, consumer-grade technology experience at work, and it's within reach for employers to deliver." What's more, according to Nichols, "Additional differentiators like flexible and predictable schedules ... and premium pay for hard-to-fill shifts help to maximize employee engagement."

"If you don't have a capable, connected and committed workforce, you can't focus on the rest of your business," points out Margi Prueitt, executive director of the Produce Marketing Association's Center for Growing Talent, in Newark, Del. "Companies can turn their talent crisis into a talent opportunity by focusing strategically on [their] 'people practices.'" Adds Prueitt: "The best way to fix your talent challenge and become a talent magnet is to shift from transactional HR – e.g., focusing on hiring, firing, labor law compliance – to transformational HR. By aligning your HR programs and practices with your business' goals and related talent needs, you can take your company – and [the food] industry – to the next competitive level and grow your business' bottom line."

Once you've attracted that superior talent, let them know from the first day that they're valued members of the team. "Onboarding ... can be a make-or-break moment to demonstrate your company's culture, values and your expectations for employees. It's important to show that you reward top performers and that you'll provide them with the tools they need to do their jobs well so that employees are armed with this knowledge from the start," notes Nichols.

#### Maintaining an Emotional Connection

Key to retaining a top-notch workforce is to make sure that associates remain personally invested in their jobs. "Supporting employees every day in a way that's easy, personalized and relevant means employees feel engaged at work," observes Leaman. "Feeling supported and engaged is directly impactful to the sector's increasing focus on customer experience (CX) as a point of differentiation. Disengaged associates aren't particularly invested in bringing the CX strategy to life." She adds: "Grocery retailers need to focus on increasing the

emotional connection employees have to the organization to keep them from leaving. Rather than recruit and select candidates just based on their existing knowledge or experience, grocers should be looking for candidates who are good fits for the culture."

Moreover, this commitment must come straight from the top. "Change starts at the corporate level," says Nichols. "Executive teams must not only believe that it is important to have a highly engaged workforce and a strong workplace culture, they need to understand that a focus on people, culture and work-life balance is a sound business strategy and the path to future success."

#### Change Management

One of the chief ways that a grocer can support employees is by "investing in ongoing development so associates feel confident and equipped with the knowledge to do the right things on the front lines every day," advises Leaman, who notes that once a grocer has hired those candidates who are a good cultural fit, "they must evolve their training strategy to quickly and efficiently help them learn not just the fundamentals of their role, but understand their larger significance to the organization's mission, vision and values. This training strategy should ... become part of everyday work, so associates can remain agile as the organization continues to evolve their business to meet customer needs."

Nichols agrees that, due to the changing nature of the business, "grocers need a nimble workforce that's willing and able to adapt. To have a strong change management practice in place to ensure success when implementing these changes." Once engaged, employees are poised to acquire various valuable skills. "Software solutions that involve microlearning, adaptive learning, enhanced communication and manager coaching capabilities are critical to making sure associates are ready to deliver a new type of grocery experience," says Leaman. "And, by focusing on the needs of each associate through these strategies, grocers can improve their retention and further strengthen their ability to deliver on their experience goals – for both employees and customers – over the long term."

*Continued on page 3*

## NEWS IN THE GROCERY TRADE...Continued

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By: Bridget Goldschmidt, [www.progressivegrocer.com](http://www.progressivegrocer.com), January 25, 2019

#### Everyone's Welcome

Along with the aforementioned strategies for improving the retail workforce, companies must enable underrepresented groups, such as women, to reach their full potential. A major obstacle to achieving this sort of inclusion, however, is that such traits as empathy, humility, vulnerability, a willingness to collaborate and strong communication skills, which enable "diverse teams [to] perform their best, ... aren't always valued in the workplace," explains Sarah Alter, CEO of Chicago-based Network of Executive Women, a leadership organization serving the retail, consumer goods, financial services and technology industries.

In response to this reality, the Network of Executive Women created a Blueprint for Gender Equality spotlighting five key areas that must be addressed to achieve gender parity in the workplace. "The first is leadership – it all starts at the top – from the makeup of your board or c-suite to the vocal advocacy of senior leaders and the commitment of resources to ensure the company is one in which everyone can succeed," notes Alter. "Second is corporate culture, and the elimination of conscious and unconscious bias, and practicing conscious inclusion. Third is accountability – what gets measured gets done. This means measuring the representation of underrepresented groups, goal setting, action planning, transparency and benchmarking. This includes the work it takes to reach pay parity. Continues Alter: "The fourth area is employee development – this includes inclusive recruiting and making sure everyone can thrive. For women especially, sponsorship is key, because they are less likely than men to have sponsors who put them in positions to succeed and advance to the next level. The final area of action [that] companies must take is work flexibility – always a struggle for retail jobs – but there is room for job-aligned and family-friendly policies, formal and informal, that help employees through life and career pivot points."

What will be the outcome of such radical changes? Pointing to "piles of research," Alter doesn't hesitate in her response: "Diverse thinking, experiences and perspectives drive innovation and profits." Prueitt wholeheartedly agrees, adding, "The best ideas happen when diverse perspectives come to the table."

And that's really what it's all about: enabling the grocery business to thrive, now and in the future. "In short, a well-trained, technology-enabled and engaged workforce can be an incredible differentiator to not only recruit and retain a highly effective workforce, but drive customer satisfaction and repeat business in grocery," observes Nichols. "After all, if workers are engaged, happy, empowered, trained and have the tools to do their job well, that sense of engagement and positivity will be reflected in the way they interact with customers and the experience they provide. It's a virtuous cycle."

*Due to space constraints, this article has been edited for content. To read the entire article, please see [www.progressivegrocer.com/grocery-labor-outlook-how-overcome-recruitment-retention-training-and-diversity-challenges](http://www.progressivegrocer.com/grocery-labor-outlook-how-overcome-recruitment-retention-training-and-diversity-challenges)*

## PRODUCE BAROMETER

ITEM	QUALITY	PRICING
Bell Pepper	Varied	Steady
Cucumber	Good	Lower
Eggplant	Varied	Lower
Green Beans	Good	Higher
Jalapenos	Fair to Good	Steady, but high
Onions	Good	Steady
Squash	Varied	Lower
Tomatoes	Good	Lower



## FEBRUARY CALENDAR

### February All Month

American Heart Month

### February 4<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>

Pride in Food Service Week

### February 3<sup>rd</sup>

Superbowl Sunday

### February 4<sup>th</sup>

National Homemade Soup Day

### February 9<sup>th</sup>

National Pizza Day

### Immokalee, FL Weather

Fri Feb 1	Sat Feb 2	Sun Feb 3	Mon Feb 4	Tue Feb 5
77°F	77°F	79°F	80°F	81°F
60°F	58°F	58°F	59°F	66°F
ENE 9 MPH	ENE 8 MPH	ENE 5 MPH	NE 5 MPH	E 7 MPH
Precip 30%	Precip 20%			

## KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE CONSUMER

### What Technologies Draw Customers to Stores?

By: Dan Berthiaume, [www.chainstoreage.com](http://www.chainstoreage.com), January 29, 2019

Retailers looking to create the “Store of the Future” should include a few key technology offerings.

That’s according to a new study from Boston Retail Partners (BRP) in which 55% of consumers are more likely to shop at a store with self-checkout and 57% will choose a store offering automated returns to avoid human interactions and speed the process.

The study, “Special Report: The Future Store,” also revealed that 32% of consumers are more likely to shop at a store offering an augmented reality (AR) experience and 29% would like a virtual reality (VR) experience as part of their shopping environment.

However, retailers are playing catch-up when it comes to in-store deployment of AR and VR solutions. Only 9% offer AR to their brick-and-mortar customers and another 29% plan to within three years. Even fewer (7%) currently offer VR capabilities to in-store customers and 23% plan to within three years.

Other notable findings include:

- 19% of retailers currently offer Internet of Things (IoT) capabilities in their stores and another 36% plan to within three years.

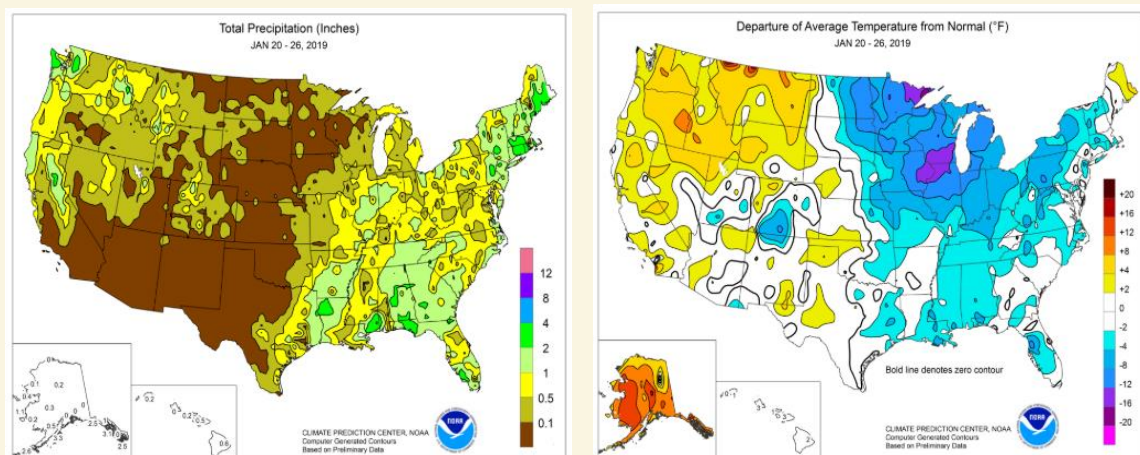
- 23% of retailers currently utilize artificial intelligence (AI) in physical stores and an additional 30% plan to within three years.

“While e-commerce and mobile continue to grow and garner attention, the store remains a key component of the brand experience and the central point of the customer’s shopping journey. In fact, nearly half of retailers plan to increase their number of brick-and-mortar stores,” said Ken Morris, principal at BRP. “However, the role of the store continues to change. The advent of the digital world offers consumers new ways and ‘places’ to research and shop. These digital possibilities, along with mobility, have modified consumer expectations and behaviors, and retailers must transform to succeed.”

Findings are taken from the BRP Consumer Study and the 20th Annual POS/Customer Engagement Survey.

## NATIONAL WEATHER SPOTLIGHT

### Last Week's Precipitation Totals and Average Temperature Deviations



## RESTAURANT NEWS & VIEWS

### Top Five Restaurant Marketing Trends for 2019

By: Paul Davidescu, [www.modernrestaurantmanagement.com](http://www.modernrestaurantmanagement.com), December 27, 2018

2018 presented some game-changing ways for restaurants to elevate their customer experiences both inside and outside of their four walls. Patron behaviors continued to trend more towards video, food delivery, conscious consumerism, and personalized one-to-one marketing. What's in store for 2019?

#### Instagram Bets it All on Video

"By 2021, mobile video will account for 78 percent of total mobile data traffic" – Instagram (2018). This was when IGTV was announced, a blatant attack on YouTube, their next victim after Snapchat. IGTV focuses on long-form content and it's a key tool for brands and restaurants with adequate resources – if you're not quite there, not to worry, the highly accessible Instagram Stories exploded with user adoption and feature improvements. Instagram solidified its dominance over Snapchat and others in the 24-hour-long video game by launching almost one dozen features to its Instagram Stories which now boast over 400 million daily active users. The new features weaponize businesses' ability to engage customers through polls, Q&A, live streaming, and Instagram highlights. In fact, Instagram Stories might be cannibalizing the permanent feed as more people scroll left to right on Instagram Stories before they scroll down.

#### Paid Facebook and Instagram Ads Become Non-Negotiables

Facebook's organic reach was 2.27 percent in 2015 (currently under 1 percent) and Instagram's last announced organic reach was 30 percent a couple years ago – this means that very little of your hard-earned followers are seeing your posts unless you pay to boost or you hit virality. If you're still just posting organically, note that the main value is to brand yourself when people cross reference you in their buyer journey, the effectiveness of those to gain you new customers has diminished drastically. If you want to be proactive about pushing a new menu item, new revenue opportunities like delivery/catering, or a hiring announcement, to reach a very targeted audience, paid ads are your answer.

#### Wi-Fi Marketing Goes Mainstream and Email Marketing Makes a Comeback

As social media platforms continue to steal all the spotlight, the highest conversion platform of all is being reinvigorated in a big way; email marketing. Sending low-value mass emails to your entire mailing list risks losing customers forever, however, when it's highly relevant to each patron, they actually look forward to your emails. Thanks to the flood of Wi-Fi marketing suppliers like Zenreach and Yelp-WiFi, more restaurants are giving away free Wi-Fi in exchange for basic customer data like their emails and phone numbers. Every time a patron comes back, this is automatically tracked by the software, allowing proprietors to send segmented emails with the highest precision of personalization based on the user's displayed behavior. For example, patrons who come back ten times can get an instant reward via email and on the contrary, patrons who haven't come back for an extended period of time can be lured back with incentives exclusive to them.

#### Food Delivery and Artificial Intelligence Begin to Converge

"\$200 billion — one-quarter of all restaurant industry sales — will shift to digital ordering and delivery over the next five years." Piper Jaffray, Restaurant Industry Expert. You've probably been keeping up with the rising trend of food delivery outlets but perhaps you weren't this aware of how fast it's actually growing. For proprietors that want to avoid commissions from the Uber Eats of the world, there are many white-label suppliers starting to pop up, providing you the software to both fulfill and deliver orders fairly inexpensively. A key caveat, however, is that you need to have a strong marketing program to make up for the marketing you would otherwise be having on Uber Eats and the rest of the platforms.

#### Conscious Consumers Prevail

75 percent of Millennials care about whether a company practices social responsibility instead of just making a profit. Purpose-driven marketing is a pivotal way to differentiate and contribute to a local community. This trend ranges anywhere from charity events, donating proceeds of meals to charity via companies like Mealshare, or banning plastic straws – a trend that exploded in mid-2018.

*\*This article's content has been edited for space. Please see the entire piece at [www.modernrestaurantmanagement.com](http://www.modernrestaurantmanagement.com)*

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### MARK YOUR CALENDAR PACK YOUR BAGS!

**March 7-9, 2019**  
Southeast Produce Council's Southern Exposure  
Walt Disney World Swan & Dolphin Resort  
Orlando, FL  
[www.seproducecouncil.com](http://www.seproducecouncil.com)  
Come join #TeamLipman at Booth #1125!

**April 14-16, 2019**  
PMA's Women's Fresh Perspectives Conference  
Hyatt Regency Hill Country Resort and Spa  
San Antonio, TX  
[www.centerforgrowingtalent.org](http://www.centerforgrowingtalent.org)

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