



## MARKET UPDATE

**Tomatoes:** Tomato volumes remain light in Florida as rains delayed harvests for a few days early in the week and farms continue to work through the transition into Spring crops. Look for round and roma numbers to build over the next few weeks as more new crops come to maturity. Quality has been strong from our farms, but there's been some softer fruit from others. It's still early to say if this week's rain event will impact quality in a significant way. Grape tomato production has been fairly steady as many growers are harvesting from both older and newer plantings. As for Puerto Rico tomatoes, they will finish up with scattered shipments next week.

Mexico's vine-ripe round and roma volumes are adequate and should gradually strengthen as we move toward April and new crops come into play. Grape tomato numbers will remain fairly steady through the end of the month, but we are beginning to see a few defects (soft, splits, shrivel) in lots from older fields that are winding down. Fortunately, there is good quality available from newer plantings but lots must be chosen with care.

**Bell Peppers:** Florida's bell pepper supply remains snug, particularly on XL sizing. Current harvests have spread out with jumbo and 2XL fruit from new fields and smaller and choice product from older ones. New acreage is coming in the next 10-14 days which should help ease the current situation. Mexico is finally seeing better weather which is helping to bring on the maturity and size that's been lacking for the past few weeks. Although supply is not yet "normal," size, shape and other quality factors are showing signs of improvement. Barring any erratic weather patterns, pepper availability should continue to improve this week and next, with adequate volumes coming in April.

**Cucumbers:** As Sonora comes back into the mix with Sinaloa, Mainland Mexico's cucumber production is

ramping up. With Baja also up and running and good quality from all areas, the immediate future looks bright for cucumbers. In the East, Florida farms got started last week and have been shipping nice quality. This week's rain could provide some quality concerns as we move into the weekend but major issues aren't expected. Honduras imports are wrapping up this week, leaving the Eastern deal to the Sunshine State.

**Summer Squash:** Florida's squash production is spread out this week, with fruit coming out of the Homestead, Immokalee and Plant City areas. Overall quality has been good, but farms are struggling with scarring issues on yellow. Look for new crops and acreage to start out of Plant City next week, which will hopefully provide a boost to the yellow squash quality. Availability has been solid out of Mexico despite a slight production dip due to a cold front. With Sonora now in the game too, there should be plenty of product available in the coming weeks. Zucchini has been really clean, but there are some wind-related scarring issues on yellow squash from some area/growers.

**Eggplant:** With new crops slow to start and not a lot of older acreage in production, eggs are short in the East. Weather cooperating, new crops should start in the next few weeks out of Plant City. Mexico's eggplant supply will remain steady for at least the next 10-14 days. Although volume is plentiful, demand is strengthening as we move further into Lent season.

**Green Beans:** Last week's cold front caused a short dip in bean production in Mexico but supply should rebound as the weather has warmed up. Quality is good but some farms are into older fields and have received some rain, so we could see the occasional quality blip. Florida's beans have been plentiful for the past several weeks and quality has been good. This week's rain event affected harvests and could cause a slight disruption over the weekend.

**Chili Peppers:** Escuinapa is in with good supply, Sonora's new sets have started, and a corridor of Sinaloa (Culiacan, Guasave, Los Mochis) is in full swing on chili peppers. Quality has been fantastic with good size, and good shaped peppers. Look for April to be a good month for hot pepper supply out of Mexico. South Florida farms have light volumes of most varieties available with no serious quality concerns. Look for more Eastern volume in 3-4 weeks as Plant City starts new crops.

**Hard Squash:** Mexico's hard squash production is trying to recover but new sets are lagging. The northern fields of Sonora (Guaymas, Obregon, Hermosillo, Caborca) have been tormented by weather patterns this season affecting the later season plantings. Volume will come back, however quality will likely become an issue with lots of grading and sorting required. To date we have been seeing excessive scarring and dull color on spaghetti, misshape on butternut, more than usual ground lay on acorn, and stem end pin mold on all. Eastern markets still have the Honduras butternut and spaghetti as an option for the next month or as long as quality holds out. New crops in Plant City are a month away.

**Organic Cucumbers:** Organic cucumber volumes and quality are strong this week and are expected to continue for at least the next three weeks.

**Organic Bell Pepper:** Lack of size has been an issue on organic bells for the past few weeks. We're seeing slight improvement in availability of XL and large fruit this week, but retail-preferred sizing remains short.

**Organic Squash:** Organic yellow squash volumes have actually been stronger than zucchini, but new zucchini crops are getting up and running so supply should balance out soon. Although quality is good from most farms, the ever-present scarring on yellow squash has reduced availability for retail pack.

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Look for  
Transportation Facts  
on Page 2 this week!



## TRACKING TRANSPORTATION

### Industry Petitions for Changes in Hours of Service, ELD Regulations

By: Tom Karst, [www.thepacker.com](http://www.thepacker.com), March 18, 2019

A broad coalition of fruit and vegetable industry groups have petitioned the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to modify the Hours of Service and Electronic Logging Device rules for perishable fruit and vegetable commodities.

The requested modifications to the hours of service and electronic logging device regulations will give increased flexibility to truck drivers for the delivery of perishable commodities, according to a news release.

The groups asked for the following changes to the hours of service rules:

- Add an allowance for drivers to rest at any point during their trip without counting this rest time against their HOS allotments;
- Exclude loading and unloading times from the 14-hour on-duty HOS calculations; and
- Allow drivers to complete their trip, regardless of HOS requirements, if they come within 150 air miles of their delivery point.

The petition, according to the release, takes into consideration the safety of both the driver and consumer to deliver produce while following U.S. Department of Agriculture requirements.

The groups said current hours of service and ELD regulations contribute to higher volumes of food waste resulting from delays in shipping and delivery.

"Modifying the HOS and ELD regulations for perishable commodities will better align FMCSA with the Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Rule, which spells out food safety requirements," the release said.

Hours of service rules do not allow a driver to turn off the ELD when stopping to rest along a route. The petition, according to the release, asks for driver ability to pause the ELD during rest periods and loading times.

The petition asks the FMCSA to consider excluding loading and unloading times from the 14-hour on-duty HOS calculations. To help address this, the petition asks for adding flexibility to the Split Sleeper Berth Provision that allows for splitting sleeper berth time, adding up to a 10-hour rest period, and allowing for more flexibility to take shorter breaks when drivers need them, according to the release.

"These modifications are necessary for the movement of perishable commodities and will give drivers the flexibility needed to complete deliveries of fresh fruit and vegetables that meet USDA regulations and enhance driver and public safety measures," the groups said in the release.

If the recommended changes aren't made, the groups asked the FMCSA to delay enforcement of current HOS and ELD rules for trucks hauling perishable fruits and vegetables for two to four years to allow for improvement in the regulations.

The nine-page petition was backed by numerous produce trade associations and groups throughout the country.

## TRANSPORTATION FACTS



\*The national diesel average dropped a penny this week, moving from \$3.08 to \$3.07 per gallon.

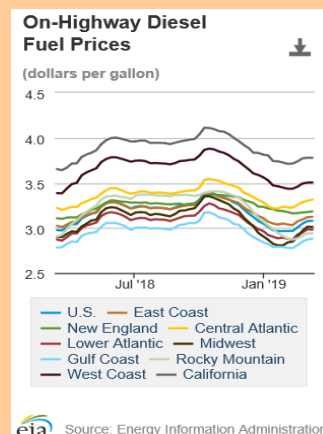
\* The average price for a gallon of diesel is \$.10 higher than the same time last year.

\* Price fluctuations by region were split, with 4 areas reporting increases, 5 areas with decreases, and one area (the Lower Atlantic) staying exactly the same.

\*California continues to have the highest diesel prices in the country at \$3.78 per gallon while the Gulf Coast is the low-price leader at \$2.87 per gallon.

\*The WTI Crude Oil price shot up 3.7% this week, moving from \$56.87 to \$59.03 per barrel.

\*Trucks are available in adequate or surplus levels at all shipping points in the country this week.



## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

**Mark Biglione- Sales Manager**  
**Lipman/Huron Produce Colorado**

**Years with Lipman/Huron:** 10 years

**What is your favorite aspect of working for Lipman/Huron:** The number 1 reason I enjoy working for Huron and in produce sales is the relationships I have developed over the years with both my coworkers and my customers. It is also a very challenging job that changes every day, a definite roller coaster of a ride! It's a job where you can be a hero and a zero in the same hour.



**Favorite vegetable:** Any kind of potato

**Favorite food:** Italian... "Biglione... hello"

**Family:** I have been married to Heidi for 3 years. Between us we have 4 great children- 2 boys and 2 girls.

**Likes when not working:** Fly fishing, concerts, and sporting events

**Ideal vacation spot:** BVI's or anywhere with warm blue water

**Where did you grow up?:** I was born and raised in Fresno, CA, located in the San Joaquin Valley which is known for its agriculture.

**Favorite movie:** Trading Places (just showed my age)

**Favorite sports teams:** Colorado Avalanche, Colorado Rockies, and Oakland Raiders

## PRODUCE BAROMETER

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



## MARCH CALENDAR

### March All Month

National Nutrition Month

National Sauce Month

### March 24<sup>th</sup>- 30<sup>th</sup>

National Cleaning Week

### March 23<sup>rd</sup>

National Chips and Dip Day

### March 28<sup>th</sup>

National Something on a Stick Day

### March 31<sup>st</sup>

National Tater Day

## Immokalee, FL Weather

Fri Mar 22	Sat Mar 23	Sun Mar 24	Mon Mar 25	Tue Mar 26
75°F	78°F	81°F	83°F	81°F
50°F	57°F	59°F	61°F	62°F
E 8 MPH	E 6 MPH	ENE 9 MPH	ENE 6 MPH	S 14 MPH
				Precip 30%

## MERCHANDISING MINUTE

### Everything in Produce is a 'Main Ingredient'

By: Armand Lobato, March 19, 2019

"Everybody plays the fool."

I was recently humming this 1972 song by the R&B group The Main Ingredient. Mostly because I was thinking of how, when marketing fresh produce, a manager is surrounded by items, all the ingredients that customers shop for every day.

The message every store manager drives home to the produce manager? Keep everything in stock. That's not always so easy to do. Produce inventory is affected by many factors outside a manager's control: weather issues, prorated supplies, late trucks, or loads rejected for less-than-desirable quality.

Nevertheless, produce managers faithfully order what they need, and in any well-run chain, can expect to receive the produce they need, in sellable condition, at a competitive price, to arrive just in time to keep the shelves stocked until the next order. Every item is a possible key or main ingredient.

Sometimes, it isn't the obvious high-volume item that helps drive sales and keeps customers happy. In fact, many times it's the lower-volume item that compels a customer to shop your store. I recently ordered lunch at a better-burger restaurant, selecting a spicy sandwich only to be told, "We can make it, but unfortunately, we're out of cilantro today."

No cilantro? I admit it was just a spattering among the toppings, but that's what set the burger apart from the others. It was "the" item, just as it is in so many other dishes.

Sometimes, it isn't the obvious high-volume item that helps drive sales and keeps customers happy.

When I purchased for a foodservice broadliner, one of my counterparts bought the herbs. He took it upon himself to carefully do a quality-control check of the category in the wee hours each morning, culling and adjusting the inventory so he could replenish the pick slots every day for the orders that followed.

His philosophy was simple. He said, "I figure if a chef can count on getting flawless herbs, in the quantity they need, then we'll earn the volume produce orders as well."

Using this example, the not-so-obvious-need indeed becomes the main ingredient. The garlic for the roast. The lemon for the libations. The cilantro for the pico (or for my burger).

That's why it's important to emphasize to produce managers that every item counts when ordering, when merchandising, when culling, rotating and replenishing fresh produce.

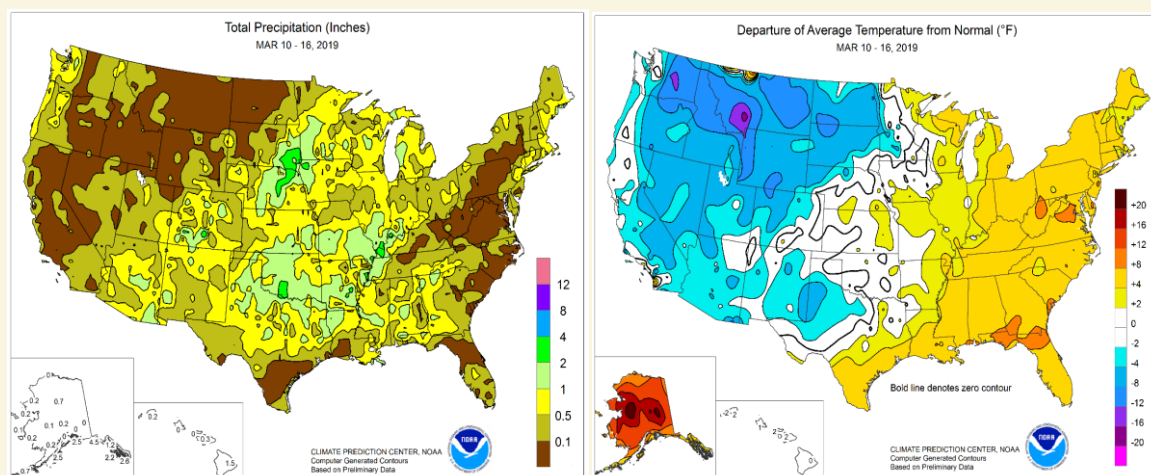
I've seen produce managers purposely omit "the little things" such as heirloom tomatoes, spicy radish sprouts, or a slower-moving apple variety, all because they think it's a shrink source.

That's foolish.

Customers are somewhat patient but will eventually stop scouring your store for the absent items and migrate elsewhere, where they can consistently find the fresh produce they're looking for.

## NATIONAL WEATHER SPOTLIGHT

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



## KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE CONSUMER

Industry Viewpoint: Reap Sales by Planting Suggestions Across Dayparts and Categories

By: Rick Stein, [www.producenews.com](http://www.producenews.com), March 15, 2019

The days of three squares are long gone, as is the dinner plate divided three ways into meat, starch and vegetable. While the numbers are changing, it's not as much of a problem to be solved as an opportunity to be explored, especially for those in the produce industry. As the newly released 2019 Power of Produce report shows, produce is well positioned to expand into many eating occasions, dayparts and, for that matter, parts of the plate, bowl or cup.

The produce category already tops \$60 billion in annual sales in traditional retail channels, and there is room for additional growth. Much of that growth potential comes from frequency: 97 percent of shoppers say that they eat fresh fruits and vegetables at least once a week, yet 41 percent say they eat fresh produce daily. People recognize that gap: an equally overwhelming 97 percent say they are trying to consume more fresh fruits and vegetables. The good news is that there are many ways to boost such frequency throughout the day and across a spectrum of products.

Starting with daypart, while produce for breakfast isn't new — who else grew up in a family that ate grapefruit as part of a morning meal? — there are inventive ideas for incorporating produce into the start of the day, whether it's a heat-and-serve burrito teeming with peppers and tomatoes or ever-trendy avocado toast. According to the 2019 Power of Produce report, 47 percent of shoppers are trying to eat more fresh produce with breakfast in 2019, compared to 36 percent in 2017. The numbers skew higher for millennials.

More than half — 54 percent — of shoppers say they are striving to add more fresh fruits and vegetables to their lunch meals. Here, too, there are ample opportunities to increase frequency with popular lunch dishes like bowls and salads. Things get interesting at dinner, as plant-based proteins continue to garner buzz. Vegetable proteins are being consumed as an occasional meat alternative among nearly three-fourths (73 percent) of shoppers. Popular plant proteins used in dinners include chickpeas, lentils, legumes, seeds and veggie burgers or similar plant-based meat alternatives.

One noteworthy way to get people to add more produce to their daily diet (and their shopping basket, whether in-store or online) is to leverage people's craving for snacks. Four in 10 shoppers are looking for snack-sized vegetables and fruit snack packs; according to the 2019 Power of Produce, snacking is the second eating occasion behind dinner in which consumers want to eat more fresh produce. The marketplace is bearing out this shift, with the growing availability of value-added packaged fresh produce snacks and in-store merchandising that touts fresh fruits and vegetables as ideal snacks.

Fresh produce is more drinkable than ever, too, thanks to a plethora of fruit- and vegetable-based beverages. Younger shoppers are especially keen on plant-based drinks, such as smoothies, produce-infused waters.

Beyond making fresh produce more appealing and available for different eating occasions, success in produce also hinges on making it easy for shoppers to buy and use. Merchandising is a key part of that, as people especially shop with their eyes in the produce section. Convenience is also pivotal in closing the gap between intention and daily consumption, with value-added and packaged products that are easy to buy, store, open, use and, if wanted, re-use.

Thinking outside the box is necessary in converting consumers' goal of eating more fresh fruits and vegetables into real sales and eating experiences. It can also be fun, with new products like sweet potato "fettuccine" and educational additions to the produce department, like plant butchery experts on hand or an in-store sampling event set up like farmers' market showcasing locally grown produce.

Regimented eating may have been predictable, but delivering on today's consumers' eating preferences can be both profitable and positive.

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR  
PACK YOUR BAGS!

April 25-27, 2019

Viva Fresh Expo  
JW Marriott  
San Antonio, TX  
[www.vivafreshexpo.com](http://www.vivafreshexpo.com)  
**Come see #TeamLipman at booth #64!**

May 9-10, 2019

West Coast Produce Expo  
JW Marriott Desert Springs Resort & Spa  
Palm Desert, CA  
[www.westcoastproduceexpo.com](http://www.westcoastproduceexpo.com)

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