



## MARKET UPDATE

**Round Tomatoes:** With great weather and Spring crops coming online, Florida's round tomato volume has increased. The fruit is beautiful and quality is excellent. However, the lack of demand has some growers walking away from ready-to-harvest fields and most picking to order. Mexico's volume is back into the swing of things finally but we're seeing more growers leave the fruit in Mexico due to lackluster demand.

**Roma Tomatoes:** Florida's roma volume continues at a steady but light pace. Look for a bit more volume to be available over the next few weeks as more Spring plantings come online. As with rounds, quality and shelf life have been great. Meanwhile, West Mexico farms are working both existing fields in the south and new fields in the north and there's plenty of product available.

**Grape Tomatoes:** Mexico's grape tomato production is more than adequate this week, as is Florida's. Quality is good as long as inventories aren't backed up.

**Bell Peppers:** Western bell pepper supply will continue to be light until the Coachella season starts, but availability from current crops has started to improve toward the end of this week as demand declined. Larger sizes are still snug but we should see that change as new crops come online over the next few weeks. Quality is varied, but there is nice fruit available. Florida's pepper production has been steady but will remain on the light side until Plant City gets going in another 10-14 days. Quality (scarring) has improved from recent weeks as farms have worked through the fruit that was affected by heavy winds.

**Cucumbers:** With nice weather in the growing areas, Mexico's cucumber numbers are showing signs of improvement. Growers expect to see volume gradually increase as they get into more new crops/plantings over the next few weeks. In the East, Honduras has been able to extend their season into this week as supply was light and demand was high. With Florida crops coming into better volumes, we'll likely

see the Honduran deal come to an end in the coming week. Now that Florida farms are further along into Spring crops, quality has improved significantly from early harvests.

**Green Beans:** With great weather and more plantings coming online all over the state, Florida has an abundant supply of green beans. Although there is still some occasional wind scarring, many farms are picking the product young and sacrificing yields so quality is top-notch. Mexico's bean numbers are also on the rise as growing weather has been excellent.

**Summer Squash:** We are finally seeing light in the squash deal! South Florida is in better production this week and Plant City has started in a light way. Quality has perked up, even on yellow, as these newer plantings haven't seen the weather that the previous harvests have. Mexico's supply is also improving as the new northern districts are finally online and have moved past the multitude of weather hurdles they faced in recent weeks/months.

**Eggplant:** Warmer weather in Mexico has brought more eggplant volume this week, which will be helpful to finish out the Lent season. Florida's numbers remain light but there's a few more around this week. Quality is improving from both areas.

**Hard Squash:** New crop hard squash is coming out of Mexico with a variety of sizing and quality by grower. Acorn, which has been the shortest for the past several weeks, now has adequate availability while butternut and spaghetti are coming up a little short. In the East, Honduran crops are down to butternut as their remaining spaghetti is too small for practical purposes. Look for a few hard squash in Florida over the next few weeks, but nothing significant until Georgia comes on in May.

**Hothouse English Cucumbers:** Canada's HH cucumber volume is coming on strong as favorable weather helps to spur the crops along. Mexico's production had lightened up last week, but we should see a decent shot of volume over the next week.

**Colored Bell Peppers:** Colored bell peppers have been challenging in the recent weeks with color and sizing issues, but new crops in Canada will pick up the pace next week and add the scarce-supply orange product to the mix. Mexico's production situation varies by area- some expect to struggle with sizing and color a little longer while others will be moving into new plantings with better quality and sizing soon.

**Mini Sweet Peppers:** Mainland Mexico's mini sweet production is on the lighter side this week and we expect the trend to continue for at least one more week. Some growers are short on color and are shipping a 2-color pack instead of the usual 3-color product.

**Conventional Tomato-On-The-Vine:** Mexico's supply has been light for several weeks and product has been snug. Canada has started now and should be coming on strong over the next few weeks. Domestic deals are also starting up and should begin to contribute to the market in the next week or so.

**Organic Cucumbers:** Organic cucumbers continue to be extremely short even though some new crops have started. Current volume is lower than projected due to overcast and cool weather but improved growing weather should bring on a little more product as early as next week.

**Organic Green Bells:** Volume continues to be very light on organic bells, especially on retail sizes. There is, however, a decent amount of choice product available.

**Organic Squash:** Volume is actually stronger on organic yellow squash than zucchini this week. Overall, supply remains snug in Mexico.

**Organic Romas:** There's a very limited amount of acreage in production and most of that is winding down so supply is super short on organic romas. This situation looks to remain challenging for another 4+ weeks or until new Spring crops get rolling.

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## CHANNEL STRATEGIES

### Coronavirus May Be Inflection Point for Online Grocery

By: Ashley Nickle, [www.produceretailer.com](http://www.produceretailer.com), March 25, 2020

Accelerated adoption of online grocery services will likely be one of the outcomes of measures implemented to contain the new coronavirus COVID-19.

With schools and dine-in restaurants closed, gatherings banned, and work-from-home policies implemented wherever possible, many shoppers are also worried about going to the grocery store, and so they're trying out pickup and delivery as a way to limit their exposure to other people.

Bill Bishop, architect of consulting firm Brick Meets Click, observed that Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba was formed during the SARS epidemic of 2002-2003. Brick Meets Click has been conducting research around online grocery adoption and has found so far that roughly 1 in 4 people who've ordered in the last 30 days were using the service for the first time.

What remains to be seen is how many of those new-to-the-platform shoppers will stick around based on their experience in likely the busiest extended period ever for U.S. grocers.

"The key to this is setting the right expectations," Bishop said. "People have to understand that these are difficult times, and they need to be reminded of that — what that means in terms of the service being less than what it might otherwise be ... And when they hear the new expectations, ideally those expectations can be set so that the retailer has a chance of meeting or maybe even exceeding them in these difficult times."

Setting quantity limits on certain items could also help improve experience through decreasing the likelihood of out-of-stocks, Bishop said. Another element retailers should consider is that many of their first-time online shoppers are likely older adults who may only use their cell phones for actual conversations with friends and family.

Brick Meets Click recently published a video of an older shopper trying out Instacart for the first time; her experience produced a list of ways retailers can improve the experience for that age group, which is also most likely to be worried about going to the store given their increased susceptibility to COVID-19.

When the crisis is past, it should be more clear than ever that online grocery shopping is something that will be a significant part of the business going forward.

"In my experience, a lot of operators have been hesitant to think that online grocery shopping is something that is going to be a really important aspect of their business in the future and for lots of reasons maybe not something they have to cope with as aggressively as they otherwise might," Bishop said. "I think one of the lessons here is this will be an integral part of the grocery business going forward. It'll probably be moving faster as a result of this crisis, and it's going to be critically important that grocers learn how to make it profitable, or more profitable than it is right now."

*This article has been edited for space & content. Please visit [www.produceretailer.com](http://www.produceretailer.com) for the entire selection.*



#### TRANSPORTATION FACTS

\*Continuing its downward descent for the 11<sup>th</sup> week in a row, the National Diesel Average fell another \$.07, which puts the price at \$2.66 per gallon.

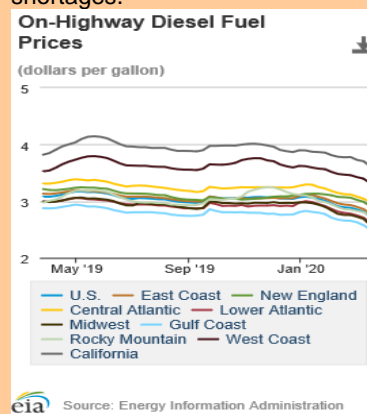
\*The average price for a gallon of diesel is \$.42 lower than the same time last year.

\*All regions of the country reported price declines ranging from \$.05-\$.09 per gallon. The Midwest's fuel price dropped the most, and is down \$.09.

\*California still tops the charts at \$3.55 per gallon while the Gulf Coast remains the low-price leader at \$2.44 per gallon.

\*The WTI Crude Oil price continues to drop but less dramatically than the past few weeks' double-digit percentage declines. This week's price is down 2.9%, moving from \$25.22 to \$24.49 per barrel.

\*There is a shortage of transportation for fresh produce in Central & South Florida, particularly for routes heading into major cities such as Atlanta, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, and New York. Potato and onion shipping areas are also experiencing slight to moderate shortages.





## CHEF'S CORNER

Contributed By: Wil Wilbur

Lipman's Manager of Culinary Development

### The New Normal

For now, restaurants have pivoted to a new normal if they are able to stay operational in the to-go, curbside or delivery-only service model. Along with food, restaurants are even going above and beyond with throwing in a roll of toilet paper for an order of food! With the impact that grocery stores have faced in the past couple weeks, this is an opportunity for restaurants to take on a bigger role and help households avoid the lines at the grocery checkout.

This time is an opportunity for foodservice establishments to not only feed the masses as always, but to also educate and expand people's knowledge of cooking. By providing an informational card with the meal to help explain where ingredients came from (if supporting local suppliers), how the meal was prepared and what unique components the dishes include to educate people on food and cooking, a restaurant can provide transparency to the customer on what is happening behind the scenes. Restaurants are struggling, and by sharing what they are doing to help the community and their employees, they can connect with and enlist the help of local communities to help support the food industry and keep their favorite local joints afloat.

If possible, providing take-home cooking kits with raw ingredients and a recipe card for a fun dish can be a way to deepen a relationship with customers. People can use cooking as a stress-reducing time of the day to unwind and do something they love. If they cook a meal with your fresh ingredients and your recipe that they love, it will leave an ever-lasting impression on their lives during a difficult time.

As much as restaurants and the food industry need the support of people in the community, the communities also need the support of the restaurant industry right now. Utilize the resources of fresh produce, meat, poultry, seafood and experienced industry workers that you have (with Lipman's help), to provide solutions during this challenging time. We are all in this together, and we will come out stronger than ever before! #WeAreInThisTogether

## PRODUCE BAROMETER

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



## APRIL CALENDAR

### All Month

Fresh Florida Tomato Month

Stress Awareness Month

### April 1<sup>st</sup>

National Fun at Work Day

National Walking Day

### April 2<sup>nd</sup>

National Burrito Day

Love Your Produce Manager Day

### April 3<sup>rd</sup>

National Walk to Work Day

## Estero, FL Weather

Sat Mar 28	Sun Mar 29	Mon Mar 30	Tue Mar 31	Wed Apr 1
89°F	88°F	89°F	87°F	84°F
68°F	69°F	70°F	71°F	70°F
ESE 10 MPH	E 7 MPH	E 5 MPH	ESE 9 MPH	SSW 13 MPH
				Precip 30%



## NEWS IN THE GROCERY TRADE

### More Retail Sales Data Show Significant Spike in Fresh Produce Sales

By: Ashley Nickle, [www.produceretailer.com](http://www.produceretailer.com), March 24, 2020

IRI and Nielsen numbers for the week ending March 14-15 indicate fresh produce sales continue to soar as cities and states imposed more restrictions to contain the spread of the new coronavirus COVID-19. Data for the previous week also showed significant growth for fresh, and the upward trend has only accelerated.

IRI reports that total produce sales jumped by 34% for the week ending March 15, compared with the same week in 2019, with vegetable sales increasing 41% and fruit sales growing 27%. As a result, vegetables added \$242.2 million in sales, and fruits added \$150.2 million. "We're seeing big gains for nearly all fresh fruits and vegetables, with incredible acceleration for items such as potatoes, yams, oranges and mandarins," Jonna Parker, team lead for fresh for IRI, said in a news release. "Additionally, shoppers' stock-up mindset is driving a huge surge in demand for frozen and shelf-stable fruits and vegetables that have longer shelf-life." Frozen fruit, frozen vegetables and shelf-stable fruit each saw sales more than double the week ending March 15, while shelf-stable vegetable sales skyrocketed more than 200%.

The fresh produce items that saw the biggest dollar increases for the week, per IRI, were the following:

- Potatoes –\$44.2 million (up 71.6%)
- Lettuce – \$42.8 million (up 29.1%)
- Berries – \$37.4 million (up 31.8%)
- Apples –\$29.4 million (up 36.9%)
- Tomatoes – \$27.6 million (up 43.2%)

Bananas also saw a 24.9% sales increase, tangerines a 34.6% jump, avocados a 27.4% boost, oranges a 60.9% spike and lemons a 33.8% increase.

"While stocking fridges and freezers are a big part of the sales surge, home cooking and snacking became much more prevalent as well," Anne-Marie Roerink, principal of 210 Analytics, said in the release. "The week of March 15 saw more school and office closures, increased working from home and some cities/states started mandating restaurant seating to be closed. Sales surges in apples, berries, oranges, etc., are without a doubt related to the desire to eat healthful snacks to build the immune system.

"On the fruit side, apples generated more than 15% of all fruit sales," Roerink said. "Oranges generated more than 5% of fruit sales and increased 60.9%, with another 50.2% increase for tangelos." On the vegetable side, onion sales grew 59.2%, peppers saw a 37.3% jump, carrots grew 40.6%, mushroom sales increased 35% and broccoli sales grew 33.5%. Cucumber sales also bounced up 32.4%, and squash sales grew 43.5%, according to IRI.

Roerink noted that the numbers show the first couple of weeks of sales growth related to the coronavirus crisis went mainly to paper goods, disinfectant, hand sanitizer and other such items, while the week ending March 15 was all about "edibles," the term IRI uses for food.

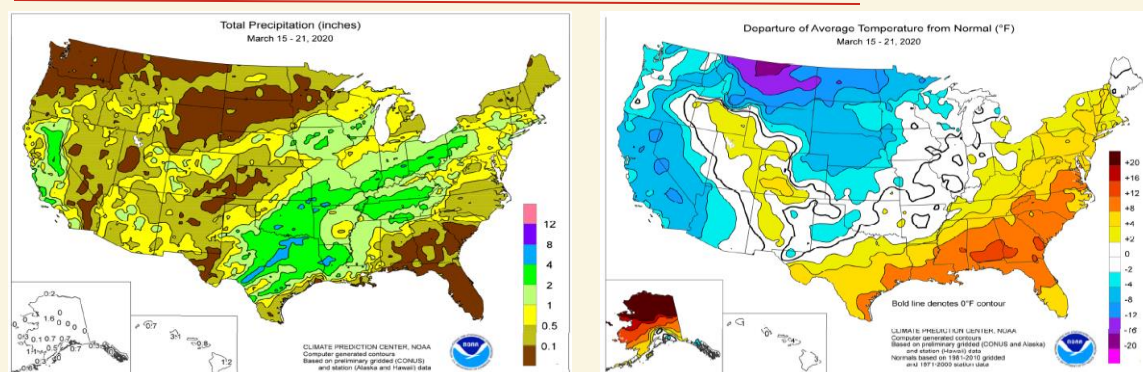
Nielsen found that produce department sales for the week ending March 14 jumped 23.2%, compared to 3.8% growth the previous week. Fruit sales were up 18.8%, and vegetable sales jumped 27.3%.

"It is no surprise, based on anecdotal reports, that the inflection in sales gains between the weeks ending March 7th and 14th was so dramatic," Steve Lutz, senior vice president of insights and innovation for Category Partners, said in a news release. "As we look across individual categories in fresh produce as well as departments outside produce, the patterns are beginning to emerge. "Highly perishable items are selling but experiencing smaller increases in sales," Lutz said. "In general, the more an item or category is considered storable and a staple, the greater the increases in year-over-year growth triggered by the COVID-19 crisis. Consumers are still picking up highly perishable items for the next week, but they are stocking up on more 'durable' food items for a longer time horizon."

This article has been edited for space and content. Please visit [www.produceretailer.com](http://www.produceretailer.com) for the full selection.

## NATIONAL WEATHER SPOTLIGHT

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



## KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE CONSUMER

### Study: COVID-19 Has Big Impact on Buyer Decisions

By: Dan Berthiaume, [www.chainstoreage.com](http://www.chainstoreage.com), March 24, 2020

Customers are shifting their preferences in which products they buy, and in what quantities, as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Shopper intelligence/digital media provider Catalina Marketing is releasing sales tracking information from its buyer intelligence database that indicates dramatic changes in consumer behavior since mid-February. According to Catalina Marketing, between Feb. 15 (when consumer awareness of COVID-19 became widespread) and March 14, sales of powdered milk rose 375%.

Other household items that demonstrated substantial sales increases in the same timeframe include chlorine bleach (340%), dry, hearty soups (235%), deodorant soap bars (218%), canned meat stews (185%), and aluminum foil (86%).

In addition, on Feb. 15, Catalina began reviewing sales data on 756 categories and identified 224 categories that had previously been in decline. Of these, 177 categories have experienced upswings in sales during the past month. Some of the most dramatic include books (42%), smoking accessories (29%), fire logs (25%), condoms (25%), games and puzzles (23%), toys (22%), educational development toys (11%), magazines (8%).






Furthermore, sales tracking data reveals that hoarding of toilet paper and tissue products has been a legitimate phenomenon:

- Premium toilet paper sales increased 379% for the week ending March 14 compared to the prior year and 376% compared to the six weeks ending Feb. 15, 2020.
- Value-brand toilet paper sales increased 326% for the week ending March 14 compared to the prior year and 321% compared to the six weeks ending Feb. 15, 2020.
- Folded flushable personal wipes surged 372% for the week ending March 14 compared to the prior year and 369% compared to the six weeks ending Feb. 15, 2020, which Catalina says was likely spurred by consumers stockpiling toilet paper nationwide.
- Perhaps also driven by the toilet paper shortage, baby wipe sales shot up 343% for the week ending March 14 compared to the prior year and 339% compared to the six weeks ending Feb. 15, 2020.

As more companies asked employees to work from home, there were noteworthy sales declines in several categories for the week ending March 14 compared to the prior year, all of which are tied to one's personal appearance:

- Cosmetics - lips, down 23%
- Cosmetics - applicators, down 20%
- Make-up gift sets, down 19%
- Grooming/trimming devices, down 18%
- Women's colognes/perfumes, down 12%

Other analysis from Catalina reveals store trips began growing around March 1 and really took off the week ending March 14, with visits peaking around March 13. For the week ending March 14, total dollar sales per store were up 60%, driven by 17% more shopping trips and basket sizes that increased an average of 37% versus the prior year.

	
<p><b>MARK YOUR CALENDAR &amp; PACK YOUR BAGS?</b></p> <p><b>April 26-28, 2020- postponed</b> Women's Fresh Perspectives-San Antonio, TX <a href="http://www.centerforgrowingtalent.org">www.centerforgrowingtalent.org</a></p> <p><b>April 30-May 2, 2020- cancelled</b> Viva Fresh- San Antonio, TX <a href="http://www.vivafreshexpo.com">www.vivafreshexpo.com</a></p> <p><b>June 16-19, 2020</b> United Fresh Convention &amp; Expo- San Diego, CA <a href="http://www.unitedfreshshow.org">www.unitedfreshshow.org</a></p>	<p><b>CREATED BY LIPMAN FOR OUR VALUED CUSTOMERS</b></p> <p>Learn more about us @ <a href="http://www.lipmanfamilyfarms.com">www.lipmanfamilyfarms.com</a> <a href="http://www.suntasticfresh.com">www.suntasticfresh.com</a></p> <p>Follow us on social media</p> <div>     </div> <p>Questions or comments about the newsletter? Contact: <a href="mailto:joanna.hazel@lipmanfamilyfarms.com">joanna.hazel@lipmanfamilyfarms.com</a></p>