



MARKET UPDATE

Round Tomatoes: Florida's round tomato volume has been lighter this week as cool temperatures slowed the transition between plantings. A few growers have started up in Palmetto/Ruskin in a light way, but the majority of Florida's fruit is still coming from southern areas. Most farms look to have steadier production and more volume as we move into next week. Good weather continues in Mexico which is helping to improve both production and quality. With most growers in crown picks, sizing is skewed toward the larger end for both Florida and Mexico's product.

Roma Tomatoes: Florida's roma volume should continue at a steady but light pace for the next few weeks until more acreage comes online in April. Quality has been very nice. Fortunately, West Mexico's crops continue to improve with better supplies and quality coming the further we move past the previous weather. New crops are coming online to help with supply as well. Although we're not back to "normal" levels yet, supply has improved considerably over recent weeks.

Grape Tomatoes: Mexico's grape tomato production seems to be on the rebound as additional shippers are back in the mix despite some recent rain in the growing areas. Florida farms are projecting light but steady volumes for the next few weeks. Demand has been light, so the current supply is adequate.

Bell Peppers: Bell pepper numbers have been shy out of Mexico this week, especially on retail sizes. Hot weather and prior plant damage brought crops on fast last month and now farms are waiting anxiously for new plantings to get started. Look for supply to gradually improve as farms work through the gap. There are also less peppers in FL this week, mostly because growers in the East Coast area are in a slight skip between Winter and Spring crops. As normal during transitions, there is a variety of quality in the market, with the better fruit coming from the new crop crown picks. Like Mexico, FL farms expect to have a bit more product next week.

Cucumbers: Although there was optimism about FL's start to the season last week, it looks like there won't be any significant volume for 2 weeks. Early crops have seen a good amount of wind and weather, so initial quality may not be top notch. Honduras is still bringing product to the US but the import deal is definitely winding down for the season. Some shippers will be done next week while others will try to bring in product for another 2-3 weeks but it will be mostly offgrades. Mexico's volume will also be light for another week but Spring crops are slowly coming on. Sonora will start up in 7-10 days and the first grower out of Baja will begin in 2 weeks. Current quality has been strong despite the weather issues in Mainland Mexico.

Green Beans: Florida bean growers moved into new crops with better yields and quality this week, ending the short supply situation. With Mexico also into new crops and enjoying better weather, the outlook for green beans looks good for the immediate future, barring any weather disturbances.

Summer Squash: Western squash supply will continue to be hit or miss for the next few weeks until production fully transitions north to Hermosillo, Mexico. Yellow squash has been extremely short with little or no product available some days. Zucchini is very snug also, but we should see relief a little sooner as many growers start zucchini before yellow. Florida supply is similar- limited on both but a bit more zucchini available. Quality is tough on yellow but a little better on zucchini. Increased acreage and more supply is on the way in the next few weeks, especially when Plant City starts harvesting later this month.

Eggplant: With less acreage, cool weather, etc, there's not a lot of eggplant in Florida or Mexico to meet the increased demand for Lent season. Although quality is generally pretty good, we expect supply to remain snug for the rest of the month.

Hothouse English Cucumbers: Production out of Canada has ramped up while Mainland Mexico houses have continued at a steady pace. Add the domestic supply to the mix, and there's an abundance of product this week.

Chili Peppers: Chili pepper markets are strong this week as robust demand from the Mexican national market and lighter production are keeping crossings light. Most of Sinaloa's product is staying in Mexico, leaving the new crops from Sonora for US export. Reports indicate that the Sonoran crops were hurt by weather and won't have the volume or quality that usually comes this time of the season. Pepper walls are a little thin, there are sizing issues and some misshapen fruit, so quality is just okay. Serranos are the tightest variety. There's not a lot of chilies in FL to help but we should see new crops come online in South FL in 2 weeks and in Plant City in 4 weeks.

Hard Squash: New blocks have started on acorn squash, somewhat easing the two-month shortage we've experienced. Butternut supply and quality remain pretty solid, but spaghetti looks to be the next challenge. Quality has started to decline and there are reports that newer blocks are projected to have reduced yields. The East still has a few butternut and spaghettis coming in from Honduras and will see a little fruit from FL over the next few months, but doesn't expect any major change until Georgia comes on in May.

TOVs: Heavy ad demand and lighter production from Central Mexico has contributed to the current snug and sporadic availability situation for TOV's. April should bring some normalcy to supply as more domestic and Canadian producers enter the market.

Mini Sweet Peppers: Mexico's production of mini sweets has been strong and solid but some growers anticipate a decrease in production on the current sets they are harvesting from over the next 7-10 days.

Colored Bell Peppers: Both McAllen and Nogales have had fairly steady availability on colored bells this week, although orange still remains a little snug. Light production has started in Canada now.

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RESTAURANT INDUSTRY NEWS

The Solo Diner Ranks Tops in U.S. Restaurant Visits

www.fastcasual.com, March 3, 2020

When it comes to who's dining out the single diner is tops when it comes to U.S. restaurant visits.

In 2019 solo diners represented 35% of visits compared to parties of two (27%), parties of three (14%), parties of four (12%) and parties of five or more (13%), according to data from The NPD Group.

Solo diners made 15.4 billion restaurant visits in the year, an increase of 1% compared to year ago, and with the exception of parties of four, visits from all other party sizes declined, according to NPD's ongoing foodservice market research, CREST.

When it comes to where solo diners are dining, the QSR ranks first with 89% of solo diner visits and 10% eating at full service restaurants, according to a press release.

The share of solo diners' QSR meals eaten at home is 9%, stated the release, and solo diners eat at the restaurant 8% of their visits, in a car 8% of visits, and 5% of solo diner's restaurant purchases are eaten at work.

"Not surprisingly, solo diners eat most of their meals at full service restaurants. As far as meal times, 48% of their visits are for lunch, 29% for breakfast and morning snack, and 22% of solo diner visits are at dinner," stated the release.

One factor driving more solo diner visits is technology — including digital ordering for delivery and pick-up, as well as self-service kiosks, noted the release. Another factor is that more people are living alone — 11% more than a decade ago.

"My best advice for restaurants is to acknowledge that they have more solo diners as customers and accommodate them," David Portalatin, NPD food industry advisor and author of Eating Patterns in America, said in the release. "They are looking for convenient and quick meal options and if eating on premise, they may want single seating areas. In other words, solo diners are a large customer group so make them feel welcome."



TRANSPORTATION FACTS

*For the 8th week in a row, the National Diesel Average fell. This week's decline was \$.03, which puts the price at \$2.85 per gallon.

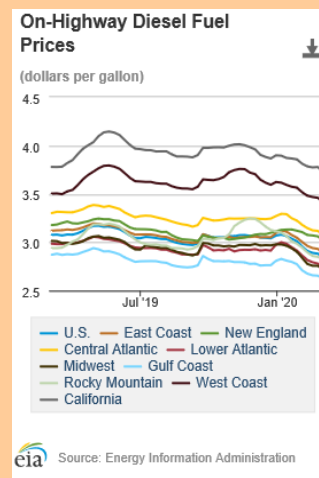
* The average price for a gallon of diesel is \$.23 lower than the same time last year.

* All regions of the country reported price declines ranging from \$.02-.05 per gallon. California's fuel price dropped the most, and is down \$.05.

*Despite its significant price decline, California still tops the charts at \$3.73 per gallon while the Gulf Coast remains the low-price leader at \$2.63 per gallon.

*The WTI Crude Oil price fell 8.0% this week, moving from \$49.90 to \$45.90 per barrel.

*Trucks are available in adequate supply throughout the country this week with a slight surplus in Central and South Florida.





CHEF'S CORNER

Contributed By: Wil Wilbur, Manager of Culinary Development

This month we'll focus on some new twists on flavors to keep everyone on track with healthier food choices and vegetable-heavy meals- from flavorful dips and veg-centric entrees all the way to dessert where vegetables aren't just savory! It's not hard to level up your snack times, evening meals or dinner parties with the added complexity of some fresh fruits and vegetables! Pops of color, added nutrients and some creativity to infuse new ingredients within every-day items is as easy as pie (or chocolate beet cake)!

Using Lipman's fresh cut product line provides you with the best of nature, cut fresh and packed for convenience year round. Our product-specific processing and patented packaging drives optimal shelf life – meaning you'll receive only the best product, every time. And this produce not only tastes good... it helps customers save valuable time in the kitchen, and the convenient packaging also reduces the risk of foodborne illness, by decreasing the opportunity for cross-contamination. For more information, please reach out to your usual Lipman contact or one of our fresh cut specialists: Johnathan Maldonado at 214.907.0695, Wil Wilbur at 214.213.0559, Chris Daulerio- East at 215.870.8956 or Brian Arbini- West at 209.402.5184.

Bulgogi Guacamole
Grilled marinated avocado, garlic, soy sauce, rice wine vinegar, brown sugar, topped with diced tomatoes, red onion, shiso pepper and green onion

Jalapeno Zucchini Greek Yogurt Dip with Cucumber Chips

Cowboy Caviar & Pita Chips
Diced tomatoes, green and red bell peppers, red onion, corn, black beans, black eyed peas, Fresno chilies tossed in olive oil and red wine vinegar dressing

North African Inspired Spicy Black Bean & Veggie Dip
Black beans, harissa paste, diced tomatoes, yellow onion, garlic, and serrano pepper, topped with melted smoked gouda

Dip Baby, Dip
Whether it's for ready-to-eat dips and bowls, at store-level, or new happy hour appetizer options, try these bold, unique flavors for any chip or veggie dip alternative.

Lipman Ingredients

Bulgogi Guacamole	
3/8" Diced Tomato	5lb, 10lb, 20lb
3/8" Diced Red Onion	8lb, 16lb
Jalapeno Zucchini Yogurt Dip	
3/8" Diced Zucchini Squash	8lb, 16lb
Sliced Jalapeno	
1/4" Coin-Cut Cucumber	5lb, 8lb
Cowboy Caviar	
3/8" Diced Tomato	5lb, 10lb, 20lb
1/4" Sliced Red Pepper	8lb, 16lb
1/4" Sliced Green Pepper	8lb, 16lb
1/4" Sliced Red Onion	8lb, 16lb
Spicy Black Bean & Veggie Dip	
3/8" Diced Tomato	5lb, 10lb, 20lb
3/8" Diced Yellow Onion	8lb, 16lb
Sliced Serrano Pepper	

PRODUCE BAROMETER

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



MARCH CALENDAR

All Month

Supply Management Month

National Sauce Month

March 8th

Daylight Savings Time Begins

March 9th

Fill Your Stapler Day

March 10th

National Pack Your Lunch Day

March 11th

National Nutritionist Day

Estero, FL Weather

Sat Mar 7	Sun Mar 8	Mon Mar 9	Tue Mar 10	Wed Mar 11
70°F	74°F	78°F	81°F	81°F
50°F	58°F	59°F	60°F	60°F
NNE 15 MPH	NNE 17 MPH	ENE 14 MPH	ENE 7 MPH	ENE 5 MPH

NEWS IN THE GROCERY TRADE

Fresh Perspective on Fresh

By: Gina Acosta, www.progressivegrocer.com, March 1, 2020

The \$61 billion produce category remains the No. 1 differentiator for grocers as they look for a competitive advantage in an increasingly tough retail market. That's the consensus from the food retailers and fresh produce growers who gathered at the Southeast Produce Council's 2020 show in Tampa, Fla., over the weekend.

The Food Industry Association (FMI) debuted its latest report, Power of Produce 2020, at the SEPC event, along with some other new findings about the category. "Produce is still one of the main ways a store can win or lose," said Anne-Marie Roerink, principal and founder of 210 Analytics, who moderated a panel featuring industry executives. "If you look at sales per labor hour, if you look at how produce boosts the basket, produce is the No. 1 way in which consumers decide on one store over another. For retailers, it's not just about getting produce right for the sake of produce, it's about getting produce right for the sake of the entire store."

But FMI's Power of Produce report tells us that even the mature and powerful produce category needs to find ways to inspire growth, said Rick Stein, vice president, fresh foods for FMI. "To that end, we've witnessed tremendous strides in recent years for how enhanced produce offerings can inspire consumer demand, as value-added produce alone has grown about 3% in both dollars and volume – three times higher than overall produce," Stein said.

This wave in convenience-driven merchandising plays directly into consumers' desire for more information and education regarding produce, whether that's information about growing practices, nutrition facts recipe ideas or specific medical and health benefits.

In addition to opportunities for health and convenience, the report demonstrates some divides among consumers when it comes to channel choice and packaging. Thirteen percent of shoppers say they buy produce in a different store than where they purchase most of their groceries, and for organic produce shoppers, 27% go elsewhere. Shoppers are also divided in the packaging debate between functionality mattering most (31%), the environment mattering most (35%), or striking a balance between the two (34%).

Other key takeaways from the report include:

- *Produce dollar growth increased 1.2% in 2019
- *Vegetables (up 1%) are outperforming fruit (down 1.3%)
- *Some fresh produce sales are shifting to frozen
- *43% of fresh produce is being sold on merchandising
- *Grocers should be looking to provide meal inspiration through Pinterest or recipe apps
- *In-store signage has dethroned the print circular as the most effective promotion vehicle

And Roerink presented some recommendations at the SEPC show for growing produce sales, including:

- *Drive impulse with great promotions (make sure they are relevant, differentiated and drive incrementality)
- *Drive impulse with seasonality (local and seasonal are closely related to same interest groups)
- *Drive impulse with eye-catching displays (help employees understand the importance of eye appeal)
- *Drive impulse with sampling (38% of sampled items are impulse buys, and sampling is something ecommerce can't do)
- *Drive impulse with recipe ideas (help shoppers change up their routine)

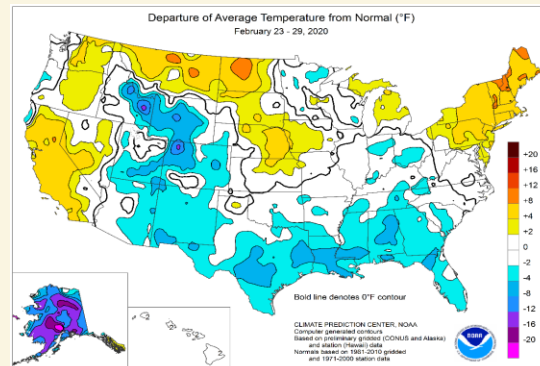
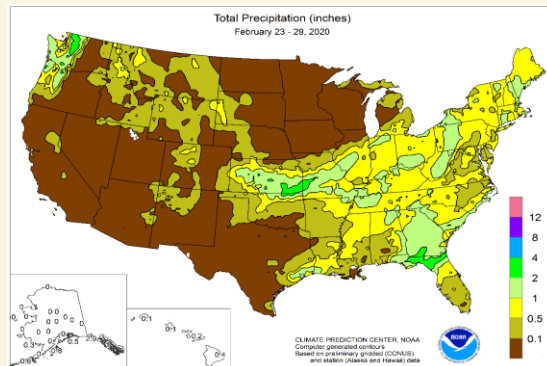
Sustainability

Now, grocery shoppers aren't just looking for a next-level, differentiated produce department. They are also looking for retailers to provide leadership on reducing food waste and plastic packaging in the produce department more than ever before. Kathy Lawrence, new business development director for Proseal, said more retailers and growers should be looking to reduce plastic (and food) waste by using tray sealing. "One way that we can help with plastic reduction is by replacing the clamshell lid on many fruits and vegetables with a top sealed film. You can reduce the amount of plastic used by up to 45% just by replacing the lid of a clamshell with a film seal," Lawrence said.

Note: This article has been edited for content and space. To view the entire selection, please go to www.progressivegrocer.com/fresh-perspective-fresh

NATIONAL WEATHER SPOTLIGHT

Last Week's Precipitation Totals and Average Temperature Deviations



MARKETING MINUTE

Make Your Business Buzz-Worthy with Location-Based Marketing

www.restaurant.org, March 6, 2020

Location-based marketing is no novelty, but it is growing and evolving. Asif Khan, founder and director of the Location Based Marketing Association, says 88% of retail and restaurant companies worldwide used local marketing in 2019, up 8% from 2018. Annual spending on technology — platforms, solutions and hardware — is expected to reach \$57.4 billion globally by 2021, with geotargeted advertising expenditures rising to \$39.4 billion. “That’s just under a \$100 billion market,” Khan notes. “This is a mature part of marketing.”

In the National Restaurant Association’s just-released 2020 State of the Restaurant Industry report, roughly nine in 10 consumers say they would pay attention to restaurant specials that are communicated via app. Three out of four say they’d likely pay attention to variable pricing if a restaurant offered it (for example, a reduced price during off-peak hours). These approaches might be even more compelling if the restaurant targeted customers nearby.

However, techniques of location-based marketing are now changing thanks to the European Union 2016 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA), which went into effect in January. Unless consumers in those areas have previously signed up to receive a brand’s messages on its app or a platform like Facebook or Twitter, it’s very difficult to approach them individually. Such regulations may spread in other jurisdictions in coming years.

These data privacy laws “now require very strict updated consent from consumers before you can do any targeted marketing — there are no unsolicited messages,” Khan explains. “In the early days, there were experiments around, ‘We see you’re walking by our restaurant, here’s a coupon to come in.’ Under the new regulatory framework, that’s not easily done.”

Instead, marketers have turned to data from website cookies, Facebook and other social media patterns to target audiences that follow common patterns. Geolocation data from GPS tracking of mobile phones allows “geofencing” of consumers within a small area.

These consumers “visit the same types of places or exhibit other common behaviors,” Khan says. “If we know they’re likely to be interested in what we’re offering, we can target an ad. The market has shifted and modernized; location-based marketing is now about audiences instead of individuals.”


Pointers for geotargeting

To keep your company ahead in today’s location-based marketing game:

- **Seek partnerships with social media companies**, from Facebook and Twitter to Google and Yelp, that know how to mine their vast trove of consumer data to benefit your brand.
- **Keep up to date on changes** in platforms and uses of social media. Millennials love the immediacy of Snapchat, posting photos that soon disappear. That makes it a perfect platform for restaurants offering 24-hour coupons. But Pinterest, where “pinned” images became a permanent record of the user’s interests, also is being exploited by marketers: the Kroger supermarket chain has joined the trend of posting recipes, offering its own on its Krogerco Pinterest page.
- **Consider teaming with organizations that offer adjacencies** to your products and services: retailers where your customers frequently shop; sports teams; music groups; local restaurant associations, chambers of commerce, colleges and universities. However, the depth of data that can boost such efforts is usually only available from the corporate level of these potential partners.
- **Call on franchisees to test ideas**. Experiments in location-based marketing can be tried selectively and regionally, then rolled out chain-wide if they prove successful

This article has been edited for space and content. Please visit www.restaurant.org to read the entire selection.

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TOMATOES



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March 16-18, 2020

Restaurant Franchising & Innovation Summit
The Westin Buckhead Atlanta
Atlanta, GA
www.franchisinginnovation.com

June 16-19, 2020


United Fresh Convention & Expo
San Diego Convention Center
San Diego, CA
www.unitedfreshshow.org

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