



## MARKET UPDATE

**Round Tomatoes:** Round tomato volumes have been steady and strong in Florida for the past several weeks, but look to lighten up next week as farms move into crops with lighter yields due to hot weather pushing crops ahead and the rain that occurred a few weeks ago. Most growers, including Lipman, are primarily harvesting crown pick fruit, so the sizing profile is skewed to the larger side and quality is mostly good. Availability will gradually decline throughout the month as growers head toward the end of the season in late May/early June. At that point, supply will migrate to the transitional crops in the Quincy, FL area and to Lipman's South Carolina season. Mexico's round tomato production has begun to decline as farms in West Mexico see less volume from the older, existing crops. There are a few growers that will have new acreage to help carry them into June, but much of Mexico's production will transition to Baja in about 3 weeks. We expect to see the first Baja fruit next week, with more growers onboarding each week until they get to seasonal volumes toward the end of May. East Mexico will also contribute light to moderate supply as Spring plantings get going in earnest. Quality varies depending on the age of the crop and growing area and overall sizing is down. The first of the West's domestic programs will start around May 10<sup>th</sup> in the California desert with the San Joaquin Valley planning to get rolling at the first of June. Growing weather has been excellent so we could see the valley begin a little sooner this year.

**Roma Tomatoes:** Eastern roma numbers are steady but limited this week. At Lipman, we're in the home stretch and expect lighter volume for the remaining 2-3 weeks of our season. Once Palmetto/Ruskin finishes up, Eastern production will be limited to relatively light volume in North

Florida/South Georgia until the local mountain season gets cranked up in July. Mexico's roma production is in transition with overall volume coming in lighter this week. In West Mexico a number of growers are winding down for the season while others are now starting late acreage. Expect overall supply from this area to be less than previous months. However, we will see more product coming out of East Mexico as Jalisco farms get started this week and San Luis Potosi follows in another 7-10 days. Baja farms will also gear up for the season over the next three weeks. Two growers are harvesting light volumes now, with more to come this week and next. With product coming from newer and older crops, there is a wide range of quality in the system.

**Grape Tomatoes:** Grape tomato production should continue at a mostly steady pace from the Ruskin/Palmetto area through May. Overall quality has been good (especially at Lipman), but there is some lesser quality fruit with age and color in the pipeline from growers that haven't moved their harvests as quickly. As for the West, Culiacan-area crops are winding down with average-quality fruit, while Baja has just gotten started with new crops for the season.

**Cherry Tomatoes:** The cherry tomato situation is a little less predictable. Lipman has been harvesting product daily but others are in a more hit-or-miss cycle, causing overall supply to be somewhat erratic in the East. New cherry crops have now started in Baja, providing some relief to the fair to poor quality that was coming from the Mainland Mexico area.

**Bell Peppers:** Pepper volume has fallen off this week as South Florida enters clean-up mode and East

Coast producers are also nearing the end of the season. Current harvests are showing the effects of heat and weather on quality and there's very little XL sizing available. Plant City has some pepper to help bridge the gap between South Florida and Georgia but acreage and volumes are on the light side. We should see Georgia fruit in about 2 weeks. Out West, the quality on Mainland Mexico's remaining pepper crops has dropped off significantly. Most of the availability is on large, mediums, and smalls and you are likely to find some shrivel and turning in lots. Bigger pepper is available from the California desert's new crops, which are in moderate, steady supply with nice quality.

**Cucumbers:** With some newer fields in South Florida, a few in Plant City and Georgia getting started for the season, cucumber availability has improved in the East. We expect the South Florida crops to go another week or so before finishing up and more fruit to come from Georgia as more growers enter the mix. Quality has been nice from the newer fields. Between Sonora and Baja, the West has good volumes and all sizes of cucumbers to offer this week. Quality out of both regions is strong.

**Yellow/Zucchini Squash:** Plant City and Georgia are the Eastern spots for yellow and zucchini squashes this week, although there are some lingering crops in South Florida. There's plenty of supply to meet market needs and quality has improved for most growers. We are seeing some quality issues on squash from the Sonora growing area as they have experienced heavy winds which caused scarring and pitted areas on the surface of the squash. So, it looks like we will play out the Mainland Mexico squash deal with fair quality and limited supplies for the next few

**Market update continues on page 2**

## CONTENTS

CROP UPDATE- PAGES 1 & 2

DID YOU KNOW- PAGE 3

INDUSTRY EVENT CALENDAR- PAGE 5

KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE CONSUMER- PAGE 5

MERCHANDISING MINUTE- PAGE 4

PRODUCE BAROMETER- PAGE 3

RESTAURANT ROUNDUP- PAGE 3

TRANSPORTATION FACTS- PAGE 2



## MARKET UPDATE Continued...

**Yellow/Zucchini Squash *continued*:** weeks. Baja has moderate supplies daily, but the next major production areas will be in California. Santa Maria and Fresno both expect to get started in the next 10-14 days.

**Eggplant:** With product available in South Florida and Plant City, there is good eggplant supply in the East. Quality has improved, although there may still be some hit or miss issues. Decent supplies continue in the northern Mexico region and could go through the month of May. However, we do expect to see a few growers drop off and finish as the market declines. The Coachella area has started in a light way. Expect to see volume pick up as we get into warmer weather. Please prepare for the difference in fruit – California’s fruit has large cannon ball/football type sizing.

**Green Beans:** With South Florida and the Lake area mostly done, bean harvests have migrated up to the North Florida/South Georgia region. Recent harvests have produced nice beans and volume is gradually increasing. We have a couple weeks of beans left from our Guasave ranch, where quality continues to be good. California’s Coachella Valley has started with light supply (pallet volumes so far) and will continue with production through May. We also expect Fresno to start in mid to late May. With the supply beginning to spread to multiple areas, we may see some volume dips during the next few weeks.

**Chili Peppers:** Chili pepper remains light in the East as South Florida winds down and Plant City’s start has been slow thus far. Plant City started harvesting a few more varieties this week and should have the full mix come online in the next 7-10 days. Mainland Mexico’s chili crops are nearing the end and so is quality. The remaining fruit doesn’t have traveling legs, so we have begun to transition to the Baja’s fresh, new crops that have much better quality. Tomatillos continue to be very limited during the transition.

**Colored Bell Peppers:** West Mexico’s colored bell numbers are lighter as many growers are finishing up or are in the latter part of the season. Quality is varied, but sizing is holding on with a good percentage of jumbo fruit. Central Mexico’s houses are in a lighter spot now, as they are winding down Spring crops and are still a few weeks from new plantings starting. Meanwhile, in Canada, production has been fairly steady despite a week’s worth of overcast skies. Quality has been superb from our own houses and is also good from other shippers.

**TOV:** Supply remains strong on this item, as Mexico continues to produce, a few domestic programs have gotten underway, and Canada has an abundance of product available.

**Beefsteak Tomatoes:** There are less beefsteak tomatoes coming out of Mexico as a number of growers have dropped out for the season. Fortunately, Canada’s production is steady and good, providing ample options for the market.

**Organic Grape Tomatoes:** Transition time has arrived with some growers pulling the plug on Mainland Mexico crops due to quality. Baja has started up in a light way and will bring more volume in the coming days.

**Organic Romas:** Older crops from the Mainland are seeing quality decline quickly. New crops are underway but so far, sizing is mostly jumbo, which won’t work for all. We should see more sizing options in 7-10 days as new crops move past the initial picks.

**Organic Squash:** Organic squash volumes are on the light side this week as they too are going through a production transition. Baja is just getting started and should be into more significant volumes by the end of next week.

**Organic Bell Peppers:** Older crops out of Mainland Mexico are winding down and quality is not good. California is going with good quality but this product is in high demand. Expect a tight market for the next 4-6 weeks until new crops in Baja start up.



### TRANSPORTATION FACTS

\*The National Diesel Average is up \$.02 this week, moving from \$3.12 to \$3.14.

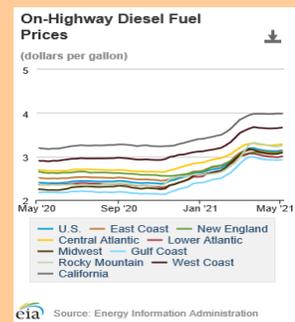
\*This year’s pricing is \$.74 higher than the same time period in 2020.

\*All areas except California reported higher pricing with the most significant hike coming from the West Coast (less California). Their pricing was up over \$.03 per gallon.

\*California has the highest fuel price at \$3.98 per gallon, while the Gulf Coast remains the low-price leader at \$2.92 per gallon.

\*The WTI Crude Oil price rose 2.8% this week, moving from \$63.86 to \$65.63.

\*Transportation remains slightly to moderately short in all active tomato and vegetable shipping areas.



**RESTAURANT ROUNDUP**

**Restaurants Continued to Add More Jobs Last Month**

By: Johnathan Maze, [www.restaurantbusinessonline.com](http://www.restaurantbusinessonline.com), May 7, 2021

Restaurant companies added 187,000 jobs in April, according to new federal data released on Friday, continuing their run of hiring this year as dining rooms reopened and customers flock to their doors. But the industry still employs far fewer people than it did before the pandemic, even as many restaurant companies see sales above their pre-pandemic levels. The industry employs 10.6 million people—4.3 million more workers than it employed a year ago—but still 1.7 million fewer people than it did in February 2020, before the pandemic led to widespread closures and shutdowns of dine-in service.

The greater economy also had a slower-than-expected rate of employment growth in April, which is bound to fuel concern that stimulus payments are keeping Americans from taking jobs. The economy added just 266,000 jobs in April and the unemployment rate ticked up to 6.1%, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Economists expected far more—the human resources firm ADP earlier in the week said private employers added 742,000 jobs in the month, for instance.

The labor participation rate in April was 61.7%, 1.6 percentage points lower than it was in February 2020. There were 6.6 million people not in the labor force who want a job but were not counted as unemployed because they were not actively looking for work over the past month.

Leisure and hospitality businesses, including restaurants, did add a robust level of growth. They added 330,000 jobs—more than the 237,000 said this week by ADP. Companies like hotels, performing arts centers and museums added jobs as people began emerging from the pandemic and states began easing restrictions that kept such facilities closed for more than a year.

Restaurants have been opening up, too. States have been easing restrictions on dine-in service and consumers have been going out, which has prompted a rush for employees that has generated a labor shortage. Restaurants have been raising pay for workers and using sign-on bonuses, upgraded benefits and even interview bonuses to get people into the door.

Yet the industry still apparently remains smaller overall than it was before the pandemic, at least based on employment numbers. One other interesting note for restaurants: Fewer people are working from home. The Bureau of Labor Statistics said that 18.3% of employees teleworked because of the pandemic, down from 21% the previous month.



**PRODUCE BAROMETER**

ITEM	QUALITY	PRICING
Bell Pepper	Varied	E-Higher; W-Steady
Cucumber	Varied	E-Lower; W-Lower
Eggplant	Varied	E-Steady; W-Steady
Green Beans	Varied	E-Steady; W-Steady
Jalapenos	Good	E-Steady W-Steady
Squash-Hard	Varied	E-Steady; W-Steady
Squash-Soft	Varied	E-Steady; W-Steady
Tomatoes	Good	E-Higher; W-Higher

***Did you know?***

\*There is one state in the USA that considers the tomato as both its state fruit and vegetable....Arkansas.



\*NASA left 12.5 million tomato seeds in space and they recollected them after 6 years. The seeds were given to school children for growing. The space-exposed seeds grew just as well as their earth-bound counterparts.

**Duette, FL Weather**

Fri May 7	Sat May 8	Sun May 9	Mon May 10	Tue May 11	Wed May 12
88° F	88° F	93° F	94° F	93° F	92° F
60° F	65° F	69° F	71° F	71° F	73° F
NW 14 MPH	N 10 MPH	ESE 10 MPH	SSE 9 MPH	SSW 8 MPH	E 7 MPH



## MERCHANDISING MINUTE

### Maintaining that Produce Reputaton- Part Deux

By: Armand Lobato, [www.producemarketguide.com](http://www.producemarketguide.com), May 3, 2021

---

In my last column I touched on some points that make (or break) a produce department's reputation. I actually think about the produce reputation of the stores near me every week.

Do I want to go to the store closest to my house, where the produce department almost always is in less-than-ideal condition, inconsistent with its variety, selection and service? Or do I venture the opposite direction to "my" store that takes longer to drive to, where I know the produce department (same chain) will be in far better condition, much better stocked not only in produce but in the entire store?

Guess which store has the better reputation among shoppers?

However, a store's reputation goes farther than stock conditions, cleanliness and knowledgeable clerks (and knowing they'll always have my guilty pleasure double-pepperoni pizza rolls in stock). A good reputation starts at the top, and that's the store manager. But equally yoked is the produce manager.

A well-managed produce department runs on a strict regimen of doing things correctly: ordering closely, following a regular daily rotation schedule. A well-managed produce department always seems to be clean because it is; it has posted duties that outline what needs to be cleaned daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly.

These tasks are built into a carefully thought-out labor schedule designed to not only cover daily stocking duties but to incorporate all other tasks so that the produce department is rarely in bad condition, rarely behind in stock levels, and rarely needs the deep-cleaning so many face following a quarterly visit from the white-gloved district manager.

Who manages this way? The produce manager with a good reputation.

What's more, once great habits are instilled as part of the routine, clerks are trained and buy into it (even if they grumble at first), and the produce manager's good habits become the clerk's good habits too. This helps build teamwork, a sense of pride and department ownership.

This is the kind of reputation that gets noticed around the chain — and around the company as well. That's when district managers, produce directors and supervisors gain confidence in the store and the produce manager. Good things tend to follow, including frequent visits from the chain's upper management when they visit locations with ride-along guests who want to see the flagship, "good" stores in the chain.

Or when it comes time to select someone for a special project, or an internal promotion, the "good reputation" managers are always the ones on the short list.

Even as a young clerk, I remember hearing about the superstar managers in the chain. They seemed to be the colorful characters in the most desirable stores and had everyone's respect.

I remember thinking, "What would it be like, someday, to be one of those managers?"

## KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE CONSUMER

### Survey: Three in 5 U.S. Consumers See Return to Normalcy by July 4<sup>th</sup>

[www.chainstoreage.com](http://www.chainstoreage.com), May 5, 2021

Nearly a quarter of consumers (24%) say they have already celebrated at least one 2021 holiday normally, and 59% expect a return to normalcy on or before the 4th of July.

Those are among the findings of a new holiday sentiment study by Numerator, a data and tech company serving the market research space. Readiness for holiday "normalcy" varies based on vaccination level. Consumers who do not plan to get the vaccine are twice as likely to say they are ready to celebrate holidays on a larger scale, and 57% say they are ready to celebrate holidays normally.

In contrast, fully-vaccinated consumers are the most cautious group, with 36% saying they will ease back into normal celebrations, and 16% planning to stick to small-scale celebrations for the foreseeable future, even after restrictions are lifted.

Holiday-specific findings include:

#### Mother's Day 2021:

- One in three (33%) expect to celebrate Mother's Day normally this year, but most (67%) still expect a COVID impact.
- Mother's Day gift-giving intentions are lower than previous years, with 43% of consumers planning to buy gifts in 2021, vs 53% in previous years. Of those planning to buy gifts, the top five gifting categories include: Flowers (49% of gift-givers), Gift Cards (42%), Food/Drinks (19%), Apparel (18%) and Jewelry (13%).
- Consumers are 55% less likely to go out for food or drinks to celebrate Mother's Day this year than in previous years, but 15% more likely to order food for takeout or delivery.

#### Memorial Day 2021:

- Nearly three in 10 (29%) expect their Memorial Day plans to be unaffected by the pandemic, though consumers are still 51% less likely to travel vs previous years.
- Grilling/barbecuing and gathering with family/friends are expected to remain the top celebration methods, though both are expected to see decreases in 2021 as consumers remain cautious regarding large gatherings. Consumers are 15% less likely to grill or barbecue in 2021 than previous years and 27% less likely to gather with family and friends.
- Consumers are 31% more likely to order food/drinks for takeout or delivery -- the only celebration method which saw an increase from previous years.

#### Father's Day 2021:

- Two in five consumers (40%) expect their Father's Day plan to be unaffected by COVID, the highest of any spring or summer holiday to date.
- Similar to Mother's Day gifting intentions, just over a third (36%) of consumers plan to give their father a Father's Day gift, down from nearly half of consumers (47%) in previous years. The top five Father's Day gifting categories include: Gift Cards (53% of gift-givers), Apparel (35%), Food/Drinks (22%), Electronics (11%), and Sporting Goods (10%).
- Also in line with Mother's Day findings, consumers are 25% less likely to see their fathers in-person this Father's Day and 21% more likely to call or video chat.
- Going out for food/drinks is expected to see the most significant decline among Father's Day celebration methods, with 15% of consumers expecting to do so in 2021, down from one-third of consumers (33%) in previous years.

### INDUSTRY EVENT CALENDAR

#### July 21-22, 2021

PMA Foodservice  
Monterey Conference Center/Portola Hotel and Spa  
Monterey, CA  
[www.pma.com/events/foodservice](http://www.pma.com/events/foodservice)

#### September 9-11, 2021

SEPC's Southern Innovations  
Savannah Convention Center  
Savannah, GA  
[www.seproducecouncil.com/events-networking](http://www.seproducecouncil.com/events-networking)

Learn more about us @  
[www.lipmanfamilyfarms.com](http://www.lipmanfamilyfarms.com)  
[www.suntasticfresh.com](http://www.suntasticfresh.com)



Follow us on  
social media



Questions or suggestions for the newsletter?

Contact: [joanna.hazel@lipmanfamilyfarms.com](mailto:joanna.hazel@lipmanfamilyfarms.com)