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INDUSTRY INFO





MARKET UPDATES

ROMA TOMATOES

FL's roma supply continues to be at very light levels and not enough to meet demand. Lipman is primarily harvesting in Naples now, doing what we can to work around the cool and every-other-day rain pattern that seems to have settled into south FL. Sizing and quality are somewhat split- crown picks with big size & nice quality and 2nd picks with smaller fruit and marginal quality. With rain in the forecast so frequently, farms are harvesting fruit at a lighter color to protect the quality but that's making the fruit take longer to color up. We anticipate similar production levels until weather conditions take a turn for the better. Everyone is anxiously awaiting the start of West MX's roma volume. A few Culiacan and Guasave growers have started with light numbers so far. Cool weather is projected and could slow things down, but more volume should become available in the next 10-14 days with seasonal numbers by the end of the month. Both Baja and East MX are seeing volume decline as most finish up for the season.

ROUND TOMATOES

Despite cool temperatures and frequent rain, round tomato volumes are on the lighter side, but steady. A couple of the growers that just finished in P/R will stay out for the Winter months, which will mean a little less volume in the industry until April. Lipman's just about finished in Labelle, but will carry on in Naples with steady volumes, weather permitting. There's some light rain check here and there but overall quality is solid, especially on crown picks. 2nd and later picks have more gradeouts. In the West, more Culiacan-area growers are getting started and crossings have been pretty consistent this week. We originally expected full volumes by the middle of the month, but cool weather may push that out a week or two. No major quality issues have been reported and sizing is heavier to big fruit. East MX and Baja are still hanging in there, but will finish up over the next couple of weeks.

GRAPE TOMATOES

There seems to be a few more grape tomatoes around than last week, but FL's numbers have been impacted by cool and rainy weather with one grower reporting crop failure on the plantings they should be harvesting at this time. Lipman has finished up in Labelle and is now harvesting in Naples where the fruit quality has been good. We have reduced the number of late picks (10th and later) due to quality and lack of yields. Supply is expected to

remain at similar levels for the next few weeks. In the West, there are a few more grapes coming into Nogales, but we are still not seeing the volume we'd hoped for at this time. With a cold snap in the forecast, it may be 2+ more weeks before we see the volumes we've come to expect out of West MX. However, there will be less volume overall this season as some growers opted not to grow this item.

TOV

It is that time of year where we see our shortest supplies from MX. Look for smaller-sized fruit and lighter color as we deal with low light levels and cooler winter temps. Availability will be snug through the month and ease back up as we move into February and March.

COLOR BELL PEPPERS

We're finally seeing West MX come in and product flow has been pretty steady this week. Yellows and oranges are a bit snug, but there's enough available to meet demand. Central MX houses continue to be in a lighter mode but also have nice-quality peppers available.

GREEN BELL PEPPERS

FL has light supplies of bell peppers as harvest schedules and rain come into play. Cool weather isn't helping the situation either. Weather pending, we should see things adjust up to lighter wintertime levels once the weather warms up a few notches and the rain subsides. Quality is still just okay/average as the frequent rain showers have made their mark. The Eastern shortage is putting a strain on the West's light to moderate supply out of Sinaloa. The current cooler weather pattern will slow West MX's supply down for the next two weeks but hopefully it will rebound shortly after that. There are some reports of bruising and stem decay, but overall quality is okay.

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GREEN BEANS

FL's green bean volume has been minimal thanks to persistent rains pushing off harvests and cool weather. Production is mostly in south FL where the cool weather pattern continues. Quality has been mixed, with some having rain-related troubles and others in pretty good shape. The Western situation is also still tough, feeling the effects of the hurricanes and heavy rains from September which ravaged the fields. They are not seeing the yields that were expected and it's feeling like supplies aren't going to increase to more reasonable levels for another few weeks. On a positive note, quality has been good on the fruit we've seen.

YELLOW & ZUCCHINI SQUASH

FL's soft squash supply remains limited due to prior weather impacting yields and quality on crops in Homestead/south FL. Quality is varied, particularly on yellows, as the wind and every-other-day rain have taken a toll. Looking to the West, Mainland MX is still feeling the effects of previous weather issues which is causing gaps and skips in production. Growers are also battling quality issues. Now, cool weather will keep things from ramping up as quickly as usual but we do expect some sort of normalcy by late January.

CUCUMBERS

Eastern supply is now a Honduran thing. Volume remains on the lighter side but should pick up gradually over the next 10-14 days. In the West, we've been seeing more production. Cooler weather that we have had has caused some skips in the fields and will cause some gaps over the next 10-12 days as we navigate through fields and production schedules. Our ranches expect to see this continue into January as cooler weather is expected to continue. Quality is not an issue as most fruit has nice color with limited cosmetic concerns.

HARD SQUASH

The East is waiting for the Honduran program to start late this month/ early next month. Until then, the East is looking West for supply where things have been pretty consistent. Acorn and butternut are available daily, but not in the volumes of spaghetti. We'll see that improve as new blocks come online in Sinaloa. Overall, quality is good, but there are still some hit or miss concerns with ground scar/color on acorn.

CHILI PEPPERS

South FL's chili pepper production has slowed down a little due to rain and cool weather but there are jalapenos, Cubanelles, Hungarians, and a handful of poblanos and serranos. In the West, more farms have gotten started, especially on tomatillos. Poblanos are still extremely short. With cool weather, that's likely to be the case for a few more weeks than expected. As the weather warms up, we should begin to see more volume on most all the varieties.

CALABACITA

Calabacita supply is adequate to meet demand but light, with the product coming out of Sinaloa now.

EGGPLANT

South FL's eggplant supply continues to be light due to limited acreage and cool/rainy weather. Look for supply to remain at similar levels for the near future. Mainland MX's supply has been pretty consistent at light to moderate levels. The expected increase in supply by mid-month looks to be pushed off at least a week due to cool weather.

ORGANIC GRAPE TOMATOES

Supply is slightly better this week, but volume is still limited on organic grapes. Quality has taken a positive turn and is looking much better this week. We do expect to see more volume as growers move further into new plantings and another few get started. With cold weather in the forecast, it may be closer to the end of the month before volumes reach seasonal levels.

ORGANIC ROMA

There are a few more organic romas coming to the border, but quality has been an issue and is keeping things snug. The fruit is coming in very green and a few issues are showing as the fruit colors up with spotting, skin check and puffiness. Both volume and quality should improve in the next 2-3 weeks.

ORGANIC MINI CUCUMBERS

Availability has been good on organic mini cucs, but seems to have tightened up a bit this week due to cooler weather.

ORGANIC MINI SWEET PEPPERS

Organic mini sweet volume has improved and become pretty consistent. We may see things lighten up temporarily due to the cool snap but that is yet to be determined. No quality, color or sizing issues have been reported.



GROWERS SPOTLIGHT TOP SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES TO KNOW FOR 2024

[THEPACKER.COM](https://thepacker.com)

BY [TINA CAPUTO](#)
DECEMBER 29, 2023

Adopting sustainable practices isn't only good for the planet; it also can be a boon for business.

The Packer's 2023 Sustainability Insights Survey found that over three-quarters of consumers consider sustainability a priority when making produce-purchasing decisions. Though that number is down slightly from the previous year, the decline is likely a short-term response to rising food costs rather than a permanent shift.

While most produce industry players recognize the benefits of operating sustainably, they also face numerous challenges in their related efforts — from complying with government regulations to choosing the right packaging to communicating clear sustainability messages to consumers. The Packer asked growers and allied businesses about sustainability issues they think will most impact the produce industry in 2024.

REDUCING PLASTIC

One of the produce industry's biggest challenges is the call to reduce plastics in packaging.

"Before COVID, we saw this rapid escalation to remove plastic off the shelves," said Rochelle Bohm, vice president of marketing for CMI Orchards in Wenatchee, Wash., a grower-packer-shipper of apples, pears and

cherries. "Then once COVID hit, everyone wanted that food security, and plastic was suddenly necessary."

This eased the pressure to phase out plastic packaging, she added, but the reprieve was only temporary. Now, CMI and other growers are looking at solutions such as fiber packaging.

The issue, Bohm said, is that nonplastic materials can negatively impact product visibility, and if shoppers can't see the quality of the fruit, they may not buy it.

Consumers aren't the only ones pushing for less plastic; policymakers across the country are increasingly looking to reduce plastics pollution through legislation.

"Regulatory pressure is coming," said Karen Reed, global director of marketing and communications for Kwik Lok in Yakima, Wash. "Everyone's watching what's happening in key states like California, Washington and Oregon, where there's a lot going on. There's also starting to be the reintroduction of some legislation at the federal level."



COLD SNAP AFFECTING TENDER LEAF QUALITY, YIELDS AND SHELF LIFE

THEPRODUCENEWS.COM

By Craig Levitt
January 5, 2024

The Arizona/California desert region experienced light lettuce ice this morning as temperatures dropped into the mid-30s to low 40s. According to Markon officials, harvesting delays of up to two hours are expected and will likely lead to loading delays for desert row crop items.

More light-moderate ice is expected tomorrow, Jan. 6, before a strong low-pressure system drops on Sunday, bringing gusty winds and a small chance for light rain. Morning temperatures are expected to drop to the low 30s on Monday, Jan. 8 with widespread heavy to severe lettuce ice expected through at least mid-week. Markon is working with its suppliers to pack orders ahead in order to minimize disruptions.

Markon said its inspectors will be monitoring lettuce and tender leaf items closely as this upcoming cold snap will have both short- and long-term effects on quality, yields and shelf life.

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