

FEBRUARY 9, 2024

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updates

CROP & MARKET

INDUSTRY INFO





MARKET UPDATES

ROMA TOMATOES

FL's roma volumes have been light and not as consistent for the past 2 weeks, but should be back to more steady harvests in a few more days. Lipman and others haven't had a lot of crown picks this week, so sizing has been smaller and quality lesser from the 2nd and 3rd picks. Look for more size to be available over the next 7 days. West MX growers have all come online now, providing much improvement to the supply situation. We could see production slow for a short-term as another cool weather pattern makes its way through the growing area but the plants are there for consistent and good supply for at least the next month. Quality has been very nice on this season's fruit so far.

ROUND TOMATOES

Between FL's active growers, round tomato volumes have been moderate this week. Lipman has had a few more than the previous week with a mix of crown, 2nd and 3rd picks. Sizing is a little smaller than preferred, with only about 1/3 in the 5x6 range due to prior cool temperatures. However, quality has been good, especially the further we move past the recent rainy period. In MX, Culiacan and Guasave growers have had steady supplies of mostly bigger fruit this week and quality is good. Supply is expected to be steady through February unless cooler temps have an impact. Quality has been solid on the new-crop MX fruit so far.

GRAPE TOMATOES

Lipman's grape tomato harvests have been a little less consistent over the last 7 days, as we were heavier at the front part of the week, but the total volume has been close to where we have been in recent weeks. Weather has been nice, so we could see slightly stronger numbers next week. Quality has been very good on earlier picks and a little less so from anything beyond the 8th-10th picks. In the West, there's been a little more product available this week. We may see lighter yields coming over the next two weeks though, as the predicted shot of cooler weather could impact growth and maturity.

TOV

TOV availability has gotten better this week as growers move past the darkest days of Winter. We should continue to see supply improve over the coming weeks.

COLOR BELL PEPPERS

R, O and Y bell pepper production have been on the lighter side out of Central MX due to cloudy weather and will likely remain so for the next 7 days. Over in West MX, some of the growers are coming up short on colored pepper as they harvested green to take advantage of the hot green bell markets. There were also some holiday and border issues that added to the situation this week. We look for supply to improve in a couple of weeks.

GREEN BELL PEPPERS

FL's pepper volume continues to be limited as we work through the transition between Winter and Spring crops. There are only a few new fields being harvested now, which really limits the amount of jumbo and XL fruit. Most harvests are coming from older fields which are yielding mostly large and smaller fruit with okay quality. Nice weather is in store, so we could see a small uptick in production in about a week, but it'll likely be early March before Spring crops start and volume picks up significantly. With the situation in FL, MX's green bells are in high demand. Volumes have been mostly steady but there are some growers that are experiencing lighter yields right now as a result of bloom drop from prior cool weather. Volumes could stay lighter for the next 10-14 days. Current quality is solid although there are occasional light issues with bruising and most sizing options are available.

CALABACITA

Like other soft squashes, calabacita has had ups and down in supply that follow the cooler weather. Calabacita is definitely a tender squash, so we are having to grade out more of the product than we'd like.

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GREEN BEANS

FL's green bean numbers have been a little better this week as yields have improved on the current harvests. Supply will most likely continue near current levels until we move past the cool weather of February and get into Spring plantings in March. Quality has been very good. Overall, MX has lighter supply than normal for this time of year. This is due to the somewhat irregular patterns of cooler weather. Some growers protect their crops to save them from cold weather and unfortunately, this can affect pollination and lower yields. The forecast has changed and we are now expecting more cool weather, which will likely impact bean numbers for the next 10-14 days. Quality has been good, but we'll be watching to see if next weekend's forecast for rain comes to fruition.

YELLOW & ZUCCHINI SQUASH

FL's squash supply is still limited but volume has improved a little bit this week. We're expecting some small increases over the next 2 weeks but no significant change until new Spring crops come online in early March. There's not quite as much planted in south FL, so the bigger uptick in volume will be in April when Plant City gets started. Quality has improved on zucchini, but there's not been enough yellow squash to truly assess the quality. MX's squash supply had improved, but it now looks like things will revert to lighter levels as newly-forecasted cooler weather hits the growing area and some of the southern fields run out of steam earlier than usual. The transition from Sinaloa to Sonora that usually occurs in early March could be delayed. Quality has improved, but we'll be looking out for the rain and wind that are projected for next weekend, as it could be a factor.

CUCUMBERS

Honduran cucumbers are coming in at a steady pace, but supply remains light to moderate and quality is hit or miss. Eastern supply should continue in this mode until FL's Spring crops get going in early to mid-March. MX's growers have been on the lighter side but finally began to see a little more volume this week. With a 20 degree drop in temperatures in the growing areas, we do expect things to lighten back up for the next 10-14 days unfortunately. Quality is good, but we continue to see product that doesn't have the preferred diameter due to the ups and downs in temperatures that the crops have experienced.

HARD SQUASH

We've finally started to see some Honduran butternut squash and hear there are some spaghettis coming. This will be the only significant amount of hard squash in the East until GA comes online in May/June. MX farms in Sinaloa are harvesting fresh crops and have had moderate to good supply and consistent availability. Acorn and butternut have been nice but there are some scarring issues on the spaghettis at times. We look for production to transition up to Sonora at the end March/beginning of April.

CHILI PEPPERS

Older fields in south FL are winding down, especially on any specialty options. Jalapenos are still being harvested regularly, but for most other varieties, we're now in between Winter and Spring crops with very limited volumes. We'll see Spring crops come online in south FL in a few weeks, with Plant City starting up in April. Western supply continues at moderate levels on a consistent basis. Cool weather may cause a dip in supply for the next 2 weeks and Lent demand will also have an impact on

availability. Quality has been good as long as the fruit is fresh. There have been a few dry husk issues on tomatillos, but it's not widespread.

EGGPLANT

There's really not much eggplant in FL at this time. Any fields in production are older and are yielding mostly choice fruit. We don't anticipate much change until Spring crops come online in April. In the meantime, we'll be looking to MX for supply of retail fruit. Supplies have been moderate, but have an overall lighter feel from previous seasons. Growers seeing lighter yields, coupled with cool weather for the next few days, will make a very tricky start to Lent. Good news - quality continues to be great.

ORGANIC ROMA

Organic roma supply is improving as more growers come online with fruit. Quality has also improved somewhat but is not quite at "good" levels. Color and skin check have been the primary concerns that we're watching closely.

ORGANIC GRAPE TOMATOES

Organic grape tomato supply is finally improving! There's now enough product to go around, possibly in part due to organic growers selling as conventional due to the super hot conventional markets of the past several weeks/months. Fruit quality has been very good with nice color and shelf life.

ORGANIC MINI SWEET PEPPERS

Now that Culiacan growers a bit deeper into their crops, availability has become consistent and quality and color have improved.

ORGANIC MINI CUCUMBERS

Production of organic mini cucumbers remains light but it has improved from the situation of 2-3 weeks ago. We should see volume improvement begin to come over the next few weeks. Quality has been good, especially for this sometimes challenging item.

ORGANIC COLOR PEPPERS

Organic colored bells are not quite as plentiful as they were last week, but there is adequate supply. Reds are the most plentiful with yellows and oranges about the same at lighter levels. Overall, quality has been good.



HOW MUCH ARE YOUR CUSTOMERS WORTH?

[PRODUCEMARKETGUIDE.COM](https://www.producemarketguide.com)

by Armand Lobato
February 02, 2024

"Can you approve this check?" a cashier once asked at our store.

It was April 1994, and the customer involved stood apprehensively in front of a heaping basket of freshly bagged groceries. As the assistant store manager on duty, I searched for a reason — any reason — to accept the customer's check, as they had offered just an expired driver's license. Our company engrained this philosophy into our management team. After going down the list of ID possibilities, I finally approved the check when the customer presented, of all things, a current library card.

You might say I was well read on the subject. Our company's philosophy was to search for ways to approve a transaction. And 99% of the time, it was a good check.

Beyond following reasonable due diligence, it was just sound business to do so. On another busy evening during the same period, a shopper was stuck at the video rental counter on her way out. The customer was turned down trying to rent a movie (Remember those days?), as our computer system showed that she already had two overdue, teen action movies, which she denied renting.

I spoke to her, reasoning how good a customer she obviously was, standing in front of the large grocery order in her cart. I approved the rental and suggested that the customer check around for the outstanding videos when she got home. (I also had teenagers at the time who had done the same, renting movies without mom and dad's knowledge.)

I got a call later that evening from the grateful customer; that's exactly what had happened.

I realize that this column seems like it's not about fresh produce, but in many ways, it is. Attracting and retaining customers is paramount in our industry. Ours is a business of seeking, nurturing and maintaining relationships at every level. You want to increase your business? Start by taking exceptional care of the customers you already have.

In an article from the Harvard Business Review in

2014, Amy Gallo wrote, "Depending on which study you believe in, and what industry you're in, acquiring a new customer is anywhere from five to 25 times more expensive than retaining an existing one."

Let that sink in for a moment.

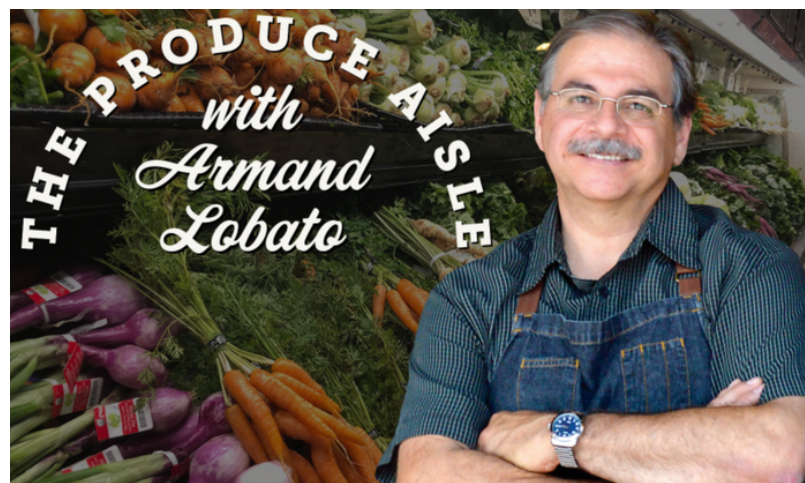
Losing an existing customer on the other hand, is always just a minor slip-up away, and the threats to any customer relationship abound: poor stock conditions, high prices, even the "little things" — the inconvenient-type obstacles that may not seem like much individually but add up. This includes things such as neglecting to fill bag dispensers, blocked aisles, untrained employees, poor quality on the shelf that should have been culled.

The big ones that loses customers? Rude or indifferent employees.

It happens on the larger stage, too, when something goes sideways between a supplier and their customer. Most lost customers, when compelled to admit, will say that they believed the supplier simply ceased to communicate, appreciate or value their business.

Be it at the supplier level or with the retail customer, most underserved customers vote with their feet and rarely return. If they do, well, think of the five to 25 times expense it will take to lure them back — if it's even possible. If anything, I suspect it costs considerably more.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



UPSIDE DEBUTS NEW DASHBOARD

BY THE PACKER STAFF,
JAN 10, 2024

[PRODUCEMARKETGUIDE.COM](https://www.producemarketguide.com)

Upside, a digital marketplace dedicated to empowering individuals and businesses financially, has unveiled the new Upside Dashboard. Developed based on extensive feedback from grocery, fuel and restaurant retailers, the product sets new standards for measurement and transparency from third-party platforms, providing retailers with greater access and detailed insights into top-to-bottom performance metrics, according to a news release.

"In an era of heightened competition, evolving consumer behavior and rising costs, retailers not only deserve but need to understand the tangible impact third-party solutions are having on their bottom line. It's the only way for brick-and-mortar commerce to thrive," Wayne Lin, co-founder and chief product officer for Upside, said in the release.

Upside says it provides retailers with complete visibility into the expected and incremental, net-new activity across all locations and across all customer segments without imposing charges for extended reach and can exactly isolate the program's impact within the dashboard.

"The Upside Dashboard really helps me keep a pulse on what Upside is doing for our business and what incremental sales the program is driving — week in and week out. Our business moves very quickly, and we need to respond very quickly," Sean Weiss, vice president of marketing for Price Chopper and Market 32, said in the release.

Since its founding in 2016, Upside has generated \$1.3 billion in profit for its retailer partners, returned \$575 million in cash to its users and allocated 1% of its revenue to support sustainability initiatives, according to the release. Upside says it gives 30 million consumers access to its offers via its app and partner apps at over 100 thousand grocery stores, restaurants, gas stations, convenience stores and home improvement stores nationwide.

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

March 7-9, 2024

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE SHOW

Booth #222

Tampa, Florida

PAST SHOW HIGHLIGHT:



What a successful GOPEX show, filled with familiar faces and exciting new connections!

Thank you for stopping by our booth, allowing us to share our passion for organic produce and connect with like-minded individuals in the industry.

SAY GOODBYE TO LENGTHY PREP TIME AND HELLO TO HASSLE-FREE COOKING! OUR FRESH CUT PRODUCT LINE IS DESIGNED TO MAKE YOUR CULINARY ADVENTURES EASIER THAN EVER.

WITH PRECISION AND CARE, WE'VE DONE THE CHOPPING, SLICING, AND DICING FOR YOU.

