

MARCH 15, 2024

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updates

CROP & MARKET

INDUSTRY INFO





MARKET UPDATES

ROMA TOMATOES

FL's roma production is still on the light side, but we are seeing a few more as we work through the week. Lipman will start new crops in Estero in another 5-7 days and we should see some additional production out of Ruskin/Palmetto shortly after that. Quality is average or better on crown fruit and a notch less on any 2nd or 3rd picks. West MX's roma growers will continue to work existing acreage as well as new fields for the next several weeks, providing adequate supply. Both Baja and Sonora are on tap to get going in early-mid April, although Baja's stronger volumes won't come until May/June. There are a lot of moving parts to MX's supply, but volume should remain pretty consistent with more jumbo and XL sizing as more new fields come into play.

ROUND TOMATOES

With most of the production still in south FL at this point, Eastern round tomato supply is holding fairly steady. Lipman has finished up crown picks in Naples, but will continue to harvest 2nd's and some 3rd's for the next few weeks. We will get into our first crown picks in Estero over the weekend and will continue there for 5-6 weeks before transitioning up to R/P. One grower has started in the R/P area and more will get going over the next 2 weeks. Current quality is average or better on crown picks and a little lesser on the later picks. West MX will continue to work existing acreage which will carry them into late May/early June. There is a possibility of the season ending early and/or volume dropping if water rations come into play. Overall supplies continue to be less than last year as multiple growers did not plant for this season, but supply is still moderate. Quality has been good although the fruit seems to have sized down slightly.

GRAPE TOMATOES

Lipman is harvesting grape tomatoes in both Naples and Estero this week. Yields have been a little lighter than we'd like, in part due to grading out more fruit on later picks than desired, but volumes are adequate. Yields are expected to pick up as we get into more new plantings in Estero over the next week or so. In the West, supply has been moderate out of Sinaloa and should continue up until May in a similar fashion. Quality has been mixed, depending on the grower, field, and picks of the product.

COLOR BELL PEPPERS

With production in both Western and Central MX down to much lighter than normal levels due to prior weather, crop issues, etc., R, Y, and O peppers are snug. As usual, when things are short, greening becomes an issue and there are some hit or miss quality concerns. Fortunately, CAN's new season crops should be coming online gradually with most growers online by the first week of April and steady supply shortly thereafter.

GREEN BELL PEPPERS

Between the remaining Winter crops and the few Spring plantings that have started, south FL has good supply on bell peppers. The majority of the volume is coming from the Winter crops and, unfortunately, there have been some quality issues (pitting, scarring, stem issues etc.) due to rain that require extra grading. We'll see quality improve as more new crops gradually come online over the next 3-4 weeks. Supply has gotten a bit snug in the West as the current crops in Sinaloa are past their peak and production is lighter. Harvests are skewed toward more choice, mediums and smalls, but all sizes are available and quality is good. We'll see some fresh supply once Sonora fields get started in the next few weeks.

GREEN BEANS

FL has good supplies of green beans to offer this week with the fruit coming out of the south and lake areas. Quality is solid, although there are some broken beans here and there due to mechanical harvesting. Western availability is also consistent out of Sinaloa. We expect much of the same for the next several weeks as long as markets and weather cooperate.

CALABACITA

Calabacita supply is steady and adequate this week with both newer and older fields in production. Overall quality has been nice.

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YELLOW & ZUCCHINI SQUASH

FL has good supply of both yellow and zucchini squashes, but there is an array of quality issues that vary by field/area. We've seen scarring, scuffing, stem issues and discoloration this week. Look for improvements in quality over the next week or so. With overlap during the transition from Sinaloa to Sonora, Western supply has improved to good levels on both colors. Sonora is just getting started and should be into stronger volumes by the 2nd week of April which will be when we start to see Sinaloa slow down a bit. Quality has been solid on both colors.

CUCUMBERS

The Honduran cucumber program looks to finish up this week for all practical purposes, which will leave Eastern supply in the hands of FL. So far, a handful of FL fields have started but we are a few weeks from having seasonal supply. As is the norm on earliest picks, there are a few issues with scarring and shape but that should clean up as growers move past the initial harvests. MX's volume is a little better out of Sinaloa this week. Quality and condition are mostly good and we should see improvement as the supply situation continues to improve. Sonora farms are on tap to start in the next few weeks and Baja won't be too far behind.

HARD SQUASH

Honduran butternut and spaghetti squashes are available in ample volumes in the East, but there's no acorn. MX continues to have moderate to good supply from the Sinaloa crops. Overall quality has been good, but we have seen the usual light scarring on spaghetti and a little color on the acorns. Sonora will come online in early to mid April with new crop fruit.

CHILI PEPPERS

While we wait for south FL and Plant City's Spring crops to come online, Eastern chili production remains light. There is a decent amount of jalapenos though, and quality has been quite nice. We have seen shrivel and pitting on the larger-cavities chilies (Cubanelles, poblanos and Anaheims) as current harvests are coming from older plants and the fruit has been through weather ups and downs. We continue to see shorter lengths on Cubanelles, an Eastern-only specialty, which can create challenges in meeting specs. All of this should improve as new south FL and Plant City crops come online over the next 2-3 weeks. Western supply continues at moderate levels out of primarily the Sinaloa area but demand is strong for the Lent season. Quality has been mostly good but we are still seeing some issues on tomatillo husks. Look for new crops to start in Sonora in a few weeks, while Sinaloa expects to continue until about mid-April.

EGGPLANT

There's really no significant eggplant volume in the East and most of what's available has been pulled from MX. The supply situation will change when new FL crops start in early to mid April. Meanwhile, MX continues to provide moderate levels of eggplant but demand is strong from both Lent and the East. Sinaloa will continue to be the primary production area until late April, which is when Sonora will come online. Good quality fruit is available, but we have seen a few trouble lots and some with less length than some retailers prefer.

MINI SWEET PEPPERS

Mini sweet availability is adequate at this time with no major quality concerns.

ORGANIC ROMA

Organic roma supply continues to be adequate out of Sinaloa as long as the quality works. Some of the fruit with higher color has been showing spotting and softness, which definitely requires repacking to meet customer specs. New crops with protected growing practices are on tap to come online by the end of the month and should bring significant quality improvements to the table.

ORGANIC GRAPE TOMATOES

Organic grape tomatoes are holding steady with adequate availability in Sinaloa. Most growers have good quality, but there have been some reports of high color, splits and shrivel from those harvesting later picks from older plantings.

ORGANIC MINI SWEET PEPPERS

There are slightly less organic mini sweets coming out of Sinaloa now, but supply remains adequate. Quality is just okay, as we've seen some sporadic issues with stems, blisters and poor color mix.

ORGANIC MINI CUCUMBERS

There have been a few more organic mini cucumbers around in the past week with product coming mostly out of Sinaloa. Quality is better than average, but not perfect. There is also some fruit available in Baja, but the volume is significantly less than what's in Sinaloa.

ORGANIC COLOR PEPPERS

Organic colored bell supply is limited out of Mainland MX and looks to continue that way for the next 4-6 weeks. With less planted in Central MX than in previous years, southern supply could stay snug into the Summer months. We do expect to see some Canadian fruit start to come online by the middle of April to help the supply situation.



LIPMAN FAMILY FARMS EXPANDS HORIZON, ACQUIRES NORTHEAST PRODUCE

WHERE THE FOOD COMES FROM.COM

BY WTF CF STAFF
MAR 3, 2024

Lipman Family Farms has made Northeast Produce its 12th acquisition in the last 20 years, reinforcing its commitment to continuous growth and innovation.

The acquisition underscores Lipman's dedication to creating fresh produce that is accessible to all. With farming as the root of the company's foundation, it is the source of Lipman's strength to provide fresh foods reliably, efficiently, and consistently every day of the year.

"We are thrilled to welcome Northeast Produce into our Lipman family," shared Elyse Lipman, CEO of Lipman Family Farms. "This acquisition represents our growth-focused strategy, allowing us to better serve our customers by providing high-quality fresh produce across an expanded geographical area."

Lipman continues, "With the global population now over 8 billion, the demand for fresh produce will continue to grow. The best we can do as suppliers of fresh vegetables is to meet the moment, invest in services, infrastructure, and partnerships that can make produce available and safe for everyone across our network to our network. We need to make sure that we're growing in a way that makes produce accessible, affordable, and attainable for generations to come."

As Lipman Family Farms continues to evolve and expand, special attention is being given to ensuring a smooth and integrated transition of company cultures. Emphasizing the importance of maintaining a cohesive and collaborative environment, Lipman aims to combine the strengths of both organizations to create a unified and stronger entity.

"We're honored to be working with an organization such as Lipman Family Farms," shared Mike Melninkaitis, previous Owner of Northeast Produce. "Our companies' cultural alignment and shared vision has us excited for the future as one team." Melninkaitis will be taking on the role as Business Development Manager for Lipman in the northeast.

"This new venture allows us to strengthen our relationships with our customers and bolsters Northeast Produce's strong roots in quality and service," Joe Ruffini, former owner of Northeast Produce, explains. Joe will continue to manage the sales out of the Plainville, CT facility. The Northeast Produce facility in Plainville will continue to operate and service customers under the Lipman umbrella. For Lipman and Northeast Produce customers, this acquisition signifies extended reach and enhanced service to supplying the northeast US.

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IMPORTS OF FRESH VEGETABLES RISE 6%

[THE PACKER.COM](https://www.thepacker.com)

By TOM KARST
March 5, 2024

U.S. imports of fresh vegetables increased in 2023, according to USDA trade numbers.

The total value of U.S. fresh vegetable imports totaled \$10.8 billion in 2023, up 6% from 2022.

U.S. imports of fresh vegetables showing double-digit increases in 2023 were tomatoes (up 10%), cucumbers (up 17%), beans (up 12%), carrots (up 23%), okra (up 11%), radishes (up 12%) and endive (up 15%).

U.S. imports of fresh vegetables showing declines include lettuce (down 12%), onions (down 7%) and cabbage (down 4%).

By commodity, 2023 imports of fresh vegetables — with the percentage change from 2022 — were:

- Cucumbers — \$1.32 billion, up 17%.
 - Asparagus — \$634.5 million, up 2%.
 - Lettuce — \$564.2 million, down 12%.
 - Onions — \$544.9 million, down 7%.
 - Cauliflower and broccoli — \$494.3 million, up 6%.
 - Potatoes — \$430.9 million, up 9%.
 - Squash — \$428 million, up 1%.
 - Garlic — \$259.2 million, up 6%.
 - Beans — \$226.8 million, up 12%.
 - Carrots — \$193 million, up 23%.
 - Peas — \$109.5 million, up 8%.
 - Eggplant — \$99.5 million, up 6%.
 - Cabbage — \$97.9 million, down 4%.
 - Celery — \$95.2 million, up 9%.
 - Okra — \$45.7 million, up 11%.
 - Radishes — \$40.9 million, up 12%.
 - Endive — \$6.8 million, up 15%.
- Tomatoes — \$3.2 billion, up 10%.
 - Peppers — \$2 billion, up 5%.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



UPCOMING EVENTS:

March 25 - 26, 2024

AWG INNOVATION SHOW

Booth #407B

Overland Park, KS

THIS LATE WINTER WEATHER HAS US
DREAMING OF BRIGHTER DAYS
AHEAD. ☁️☀️

WE ARE MANIFESTING WARMER DAYS
WITH THE FRESHNESS OF THIS
TOMATO SALAD 🍅🥗

