

MARCH 29, 2024

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updates

CROP & MARKET

INDUSTRY INFO





MARKET UPDATES

ROMA TOMATOES

FL's current roma production areas took a hit from heavy rains last weekend. We had over 6 inches at our southernmost farm with more reported toward the Immokalee region. This event has eliminated 60-70% of retail-quality roma tomatoes for the month of April. Our first harvests out of Estero will be ready to ship in the next few days, but we are expecting a high percentage of offgrades and lower packouts due to the weather. MX's supply is light this week as existing acreage is playing out and new fields aren't quite ready. West MX 's roma growers are harvesting mostly from older fields and sizing is down. Some new acreage in northern Sinaloa and Sonora should get going in the next 7-14 days, bringing a boost to both supply and quality. There will also be a few romas coming from Baja later in April.

ROUND TOMATOES

It has been a light week for round tomato production in FL. Lipman and other growers in south FL have had significantly lighter numbers (down 40-75%, varying by grower). Our volume has been higher than other growers as we've got more 2nd and 3rd picks than others. We've sorted out some misshapen fruit during the packing process, but overall quality is good. We expect to see volumes improve, especially in two weeks when we get into the heart of the Estero farm. R/P farms will start coming online in 2-3 weeks with Lipman following by the end of April/first of May. Early plantings have been through quite a bit of weather and are expected to have lighter yields but nice fruit quality. MX's round tomato supply is expected to be on the lighter side for the next 10-14 days as areas undergo transition between plantings. West MX will continue to work existing acreage that will carry them into late May/early June with smaller sizing as the crops get some age on them. East MX has very light supplies now, but should have more fruit around April 15th as new houses start. Looking ahead, Baja expects to come online in mid-late May.

GREEN BEANS

Green beans continue to be plentiful in FL with production centered in south FL and the lake areas. Most farms are still harvesting to order, so quality is good. We also look for the Plant City area to enter the mix in the next few weeks and GA to get started in the first week of May. Western supply is moderate and steady out of Sinaloa. Barring weather and quality issues, production should remain steady until mid-May.

GRAPE TOMATOES

Overall, FL has had steady grape tomato volumes this week. Once we got past last weekend's rain, Lipman has had a little flush in production as we moved deeper into the Estero crop. We're still harvesting in Naples, but much of that product is going into bulk material. Quality has improved, as we have now worked through the earliest Estero plantings, which were a little rougher. In the West, supply has been consistent with adequate volumes available. Production should continue in a similar fashion for the next several weeks. Quality has been mixed, depending on the grower, field, and picks of the product.

COLOR BELL PEPPERS

CAN production of red and yellow bells has started in Ontario and on the West Coast. Production will remain light for another 12-14 days, with orange being the last color to come online with any significant volume. As CAN and Holland imports pick up, the MX pipeline has filled up for the first time in several months. In Central MX, summer crops are beginning in a light way and we are seeing the transition as winter crops move into the final picks with fair quality. Recent sunny weather should help bring newer crops on in a steady way and provide quality improvements.

GREEN BELL PEPPERS

With both the East and West coast areas of south FL in production, bell pepper supply is sufficient in the East. There is a mix of older fields with mostly smaller and choice fruit and new fields with jumbo-heavy crown picks. This leaves XL sizing a little snug for the time being. Farms are negotiating some quality concerns due to prior weather, especially in the older fields, but nice-quality product is available. Look for Plant City to join the mix in mid-late April. MX's pepper production has been moderate and enough to go around, but not plentiful. Sinaloa is riding out the rest of the season with a smaller size profile. We will see some new fields come online in Sonora in the next few weeks, as well as the start of the CA desert's 6-8 week deal. Quality has been good, especially for this point of the season, but there are some occasional issues by grower/field.

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CALABACITA

Calabacita supply is adequate out of MX this week. There's less acreage in the northern areas and the southern areas are winding down so we could see volume lighten up once Sinaloa growers finish up.

YELLOW & ZUCCHINI SQUASH

Rain and markets have knocked out some of the older fields in south FL, which should help to clean up the quality issues we've seen over the last week. There will be some new fields still to go in the south, but Plant City is now online and will have the stronger volumes. Quality is looking good on their new crops. Hard to believe, but we're about a month away from seeing the first squash in GA as production makes its way north for the Summer. The West has strong supplies of yellow and zucchini as Sinaloa and Sonora production overlaps. Volume is increasing in Sonora and quality has been very nice. With depressed markets, we may see some of the older fields in Sinaloa drop out sooner rather than later, reducing the supply to more moderate levels. Looking ahead, we could see some production in CA at the end of the month.

CUCUMBERS

With the Honduran imports out of the way for all practical purposes, FL will be the spot for Eastern cucumbers in April. Farms are seeing lighter yields on the earlier plantings due to weather conditions during the growing cycle, but quality is good. Volume is moderate now, but will be better as we move further into April and more crops come online. GA is expected to start in the 2nd week of May. MX's cucumber supply has improved to moderate/good levels this week. Sinaloa is still the spot with the most volume, but Sonora has started in a light way. Quality has been good from both places, but Sonora's fruit doesn't have the same dark color as Sinaloa's due to the differences in growing conditions.

HARD SQUASH

Honduras is still providing consistent volumes of butternut and spaghetti, but no acorn. Although volume and quality are likely to decline, they should continue to have fruit through April and into May. In the West, there's still some Sinaloa fruit around, but the new butternut and spaghetti crops in Sonora have started with steady volumes and good quality. Acorn will get going in another 7-10 days, completing Sonora's product mix.

CHILI PEPPERS

Eastern chili supply is limited but we are starting to see a few more Cubanelles and poblanos as new fields come online in south FL. Right now, jalapeno and Hungarian wax pepper volumes are very limited, but we should see a few more over the coming weeks as those fields become ready for harvest. Plant City will start in mid-late April, bringing more consistent volumes and varieties to Eastern markets. Western supply is lighter this week as strong national demand for the holiday is keeping more product in MX and the Sinaloa crops are on the downhill side of the season. Jalapenos, poblanos, and serranos are the most impacted. There's good supply of tomatillos, but quality is just fair with some decay and brown husks causing receiving concerns.

EGGPLANT

We're finally seeing a few eggs in south FL again, but no significant volume. A few more fields may come online during April, but we don't expect a major change until Plant City comes online at the end of 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. Quality has been solid.

MINI SWEET PEPPERS

Supply continues to be mostly adequate on mini sweets. Production will continue in the Sinaloa and Sonora areas for the next few months. Looking ahead- Baja looks to have a smaller Summer and Fall season as there's less acreage in the ground.

ORGANIC ROMA

Organic roma availability is still challenging due to growers bowing out for the season due to insect pressure and poor quality from others. Sonora's shadehouses will start new crops in 2-3 weeks and we should see better volumes and quality once they get rolling.

ORGANIC GRAPE TOMATOES

Organic grape tomatoes are readily available out of MX this week. Quality has been good with only the occasional issue with splits or shrivel. Production will continue in Mainland MX and should overlap with Baja's start to the season in mid May.

ORGANIC MINI SWEET PEPPERS

Organic mini sweets are available in light supply. Mainland MX is expected to go another 4-6 weeks before production transitions to Baja for the Summer. Quality is okay, but there are issues with greening and a poor color mix (heavy to reds) from some growers.

ORGANIC MINI CUCUMBERS

Organic mini cucumbers experienced a bit of a flush out of Sinaloa this week. Overall, quality has been better than usual, with only an occasional issue on the blossom end. There is also some fruit available in Baja, but the volume is significantly less than what's in Sinaloa.

ORGANIC COLOR PEPPERS

Organic colored bells continue to be very limited in supply. Red is the tightest of the three colors as some growers only have yellows and oranges available this week. Quality has been good and counts have been in the jumbo range. The primary issue is with greening, particularly on reds. Most of the fruit colors up okay, as long as the greening isn't so much that the fruit gets age before color.



SKILLS SURVEY REVEALS U.S. AGRICULTURE WORKFORCE NEEDS AND GAPS

THEPACKER.COM

By TOM KARST
MARCH 27, 2024

A new agri-food employer survey from agcareers.com ranks “Problem-Solving and Decision-Making” as the most necessary skills for all employees.

The "AgCareers.com U.S. Skills Survey" sought insights on trends and data to help address skill development requirements within the agri-food industry. Besides problem-solving and decision-making, ag employers reported “Organization and Planning Skills” and “Teamwork” were the most necessary skills for employees, according to a news release.

Problem-solving and decision-making were also identified as areas with the most significant gap for both current employees and new graduate hires, the survey said. Only 18% of U.S. employers said that new graduate hires were adequately prepared with work-ready skills upon hire, whereas 76% said experienced new hires were equipped with these skills.

The survey revealed the significance of soft-skill development for employees at all levels, particularly for students and individuals entering the workforce for the first time, according to the release.

“Employers indicated that they are most inclined to seek out soft skills training when considering professional development opportunities for their staff; communication and verbal skills trainings were the most useful to employees and new hires,” a summary of the survey said.

Survey data also examined industry-specific skills required for employee success, such as sustainability, data science and food science. Results indicate the most extensive knowledge needs were in agronomy and precision agriculture, followed by animal sciences.

The survey report breaks down specific topics and knowledge for each subject area and outlines the skills necessary for various employment levels, such as skilled trades, production, managers and executives.

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LIPMAN FAMILY FARMS STRENGTHENS LEADERSHIP

[THEPRODUCENEWS.COM](https://www.theproducenews.com)

February 23, 2024

Lipman Family Farms has added four new board members, bringing a wealth of diverse expertise and perspectives to guide the company through its next phase of growth. The newly appointed board members are John Corso, Beth Newlands Campbell, Jorge Fenyvesi and Jared Lipman.

Corso, former CEO of The Coastal Cos., adds valuable experience in distribution, manufacturing, transportation and logistics. Under his leadership, Coastal grew revenue from \$85 million to over \$600 million and emerged as a leading produce distributor and processor in the mid-Atlantic. His strategic perspective and operations experience will be instrumental in supporting Lipman's growth trajectory. Newlands Campbell, a seasoned retail executive and former president of Giant Eagle, brings over 30 years of expertise in food, drug and apparel retail in the U.S. and Canada. With a strong background in creating brand and shareholder value, Newlands Campbell's leadership and purpose-driven approach will contribute significantly to Lipman's strategic goals.

"I am honored to join the Lipman family and board of directors and look forward to contributing during an exciting chapter for the company. Working alongside such a talented CEO, management team and fellow Board members is truly inspiring," said Newlands Campbell.

Fenyvesi, with a background in ag biotech and 44 years of experience in managerial and directive jobs with The Dow Chemical Co., DNA Plant Technology, Savia and PLENUS Groups, joins the board to provide insights into agricultural technology trends. Currently serving on multiple boards, including NSIP and AGROMOD, Fenyvesi's strategic perspective aligns with Lipman's commitment to innovation and sustainability.

Jared Lipman, a fourth-generation family member and vice president of business development and strategy at District Farms, brings a unique blend of family legacy and modern business acumen. His commitment to driving growth aligns with Lipman's generational progression and expansion strategy.

"These new board members bring a fresh set of perspectives to the table, stemming from their varied backgrounds and experiences," said Elyse Lipman, CEO of Lipman Family Farms. "Their diversity will offer a new lens to complement our long-term strategies for growth."



UPCOMING EVENTS:

JULY 10-11, 2024

ORGANIC PRODUCE SUMMIT

Monterey, California

OCTOBER 17-19, 2024

THE GLOBAL PRODUCE & FLORAL SHOW

ATLANTA, GA

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SALAD: SQUASH, GRAPE TOMATOES, GREEN BEANS, SWEET CORN AND CHICKPEAS

