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updates

CROP & MARKET INDUSTRY INFO





MARKET UPDATES

ROMA TOMATOES

Eastern roma tomato supply continues to be extremely light after heavy rains in south FL damaged crops that are currently in production. Quality has improved a bit this week, but the majority of what's being harvested won't make retail specs. The East won't see any significant volumes until the Ruskin/Palmetto crops begin at the end of April/early May. The R/P crops have also seen significant rains and look to have lighter fruit set and yields than usual, particularly on the earlier plantings. So we will see improvement in a few weeks, but not to "normal" production levels for this time of the season. In the West, MX's roma numbers are stronger this week. The older plantings in Sinaloa are winding down with smaller sizing and lesser quality, but new fields further north have started with nice fruit with more jumbo and XL sizing. East MX was on tap to start new Spring fields around April 15th, but it looks like that is being pushed off to the end of April.

ROUND TOMATOES

FL's round tomato volumes are mostly steady with last week at light to moderate levels. As Lipman has moved further into the Estero crops, we're seeing nice quality and a good mix of sizing. Supply should remain pretty consistent for the next 10-14 days until the R/P area gets started in earnest. MX's round tomato supply is moderate with fruit available in West and East MX. West MX will continue to work existing acreage that will carry them into late May/early June but this area is past its peak of supply so expect volume and quality to gradually decline for the remainder of the season. 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.

GRAPE TOMATOES

Grape tomato production has been steady and adequate in FL this week. Lipman is still harvesting in Estero, but we have dropped later picks from the rotation to ensure the best quality. We, and a few others, look to harvest our first R/P product next week. 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.

GREEN BEANS

There's still plenty of green beans in FL with most growers harvesting to order and shipping good quality. Production is focused in south FL and the Lake area, but we should see things begin to transition north by the end of April. MX's bean numbers continue to be adequate with most of the harvests taking place in the Sinaloa region. A lot of growers have hit the seasonal decline so volume may lighten up over the next few weeks. However, our bean program should remain steady through most of May.

COLOR BELL PEPPERS

With CAN production online in both the east and west, West MX in the latter stage of its season, and central MX seeing better production, supply of colored bells is good this week. Quality has been excellent on the CAN and new central MX fruit, but it's lacking from the remaining crops in West MX.

GREEN BELL PEPPERS

Despite south FL crops winding down, there's an adequate supply of bell peppers in the East. Production is transitioning from older fields to the last of the new fields so there is a mix of sizing and quality available. We expect the Plant City area to come online sometime next week, which will give a boost to supply, sizing and quality. Mainland MX is still producing moderate to good volumes of bells even though they are on the downhill side of the season. There are some of the typical quality issues of older fields- thinner walls, shrivel, color, etc.- and some growers' product won't travel well. Sonora has newer fields and better quality, but this is much lighter acreage than Sinaloa, so we don't expect much change in the West until the CA desert starts in 10-14 days.

CALABACITA

Calabacita supply is light this week as Sinaloa fields are finished and Sonora's only seen minimal volumes thus far. We should see a little more product next week as recent weather has been conducive for growth.

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YELLOW & ZUCCHINI SQUASH

As Plant City squash fields kick into gear, Homestead/south FL's volumes are lightening up. Overall, yellow squash volumes are adequate and there's almost an oversupply of zucchini. Quality is generally best from the newer Plant City crops, especially on yellows. Look for GA to enter the scene as well in late April/early May. Looking to the West- there's still some fruit in Sinaloa, but most of the volume is now coming out of Sonora. Supply levels are moderate and quality is good enough to make its way East as needed.

CUCUMBERS

South FL's cucumber crops are at the halfway point which is the peak of production. Supply and quality have both been good and steady. New crops will get started in central FL next week. With south FL expected to continue through April, Eastern supply looks to be favorable for the next few weeks. Western production continues to be a MX deal. Sinaloa farms are winding down, but Sonora and Baja are both up and running with moderate volumes. Fruit from older crops is showing a bit of yellowing and scarring, while the newer harvests are bringing nicer-looking cucumbers. However, Sonora's fruit doesn't have that deep green color that we're used to seeing out of Sinaloa.

HARD SQUASH

Honduras butternuts and spaghettis are making their way into the East and should continue to do so through April and into May. In the West, there's still some Sinaloa storage fruit around, but the new crops in Sonora have started with steady volumes and good quality. New crop fruit has nice quality, but we are seeing typical issues on the older production from Sinaloa.

CHILI PEPPERS

Eastern chili supply is limited to south FL, where there is light acreage of new Spring crops on jalapenos, poblanos, Cubanelles, long hots, and Hungarian wax varieties. Supply will remain light until Plant City gets started in 7-10 days, bringing more consistent volumes and varieties to Eastern markets. The MX chili pepper deal has turned the corner in just a week. We are definitely in the seasonal decline out of Sinaloa with the rest of April and May looking challenging. This year has been a bit abnormal as weather has definitely taken a toll on production. Many growers in the Guasave area are dealing with the lack of water and have called it quits, along with the national market being very strong. In a typical year most growers finish up in Mid-May. We will see some chilies coming out of Sonora in 7-10 days but it's lighter volumes than what we see out of Sinaloa. With Baja not on tap to start until June, the next month and a half could be challenging.

EGGPLANT

We're finally seeing few more eggs in south FL, but supply and acreage are light. Supply will continue at similar levels until Plant City gets started in early May. Culiacan continues to provide moderate to good supplies of eggplant with consistent quality. Although their cannonball-shaped fruit won't work for all retailers, the CA desert's crops are on tap to start in about 2 weeks.

MINI SWEET PEPPERS

Mini sweets have become super tight, selling out daily with quality declining rapidly as we get closer to the end of western MX deal. One larger grower will finish up next week (which is early) and another will call it quits the following week. We won't see anything out of Baja until July, so anticipate some challenges until then.

ORGANIC ROMA

Organic roma tomatoes are now back in good supply as more new crops have started in the Sonora area. Quality has improved significantly from the old Sinaloa crops we've seen lately, as most in the Sonora area grow in shadehouses.

ORGANIC GRAPE TOMATOES

Organic grape tomatoes are still readily available from the Culiacan area in MX. Quality has been nice from most growers, but there are a few with age/quality issues. Baja should join in on the fun sometime in May.

ORGANIC MINI SWEET PEPPERS

After a week-long almost gap, we're finally seeing a few organic mini sweets. Prior cooler weather seemed to have held back the color. With many of the same factors in play as conventional mini sweets, supply could be limited until Baja starts in 2-4 weeks. As is the norm when supply gets snug, we expect to see more greening and possibly color mix issues over the next few weeks.

ORGANIC MINI CUCUMBERS

Organic mini cucumbers continue to be plentiful out of Sinaloa. There is also some fruit available in Baja, but the volume is significantly less than what's in Sinaloa. Quality is good, although this item can be very fickle.

ORGANIC COLOR PEPPERS

Supply of organic colored bells is good this week, but quality is not so good. There are reports of insect pressure, stem issues and shrivel, especially from any inventoried product. Right now, yellows are the short suit, but that could become reds in a few weeks as growers have been picking reds as greens to capitalize on the high dollar markets for green bells.



THERE'S ALWAYS A PLACE FOR TEMPORARY PROJECT-FIXERS

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

by [Armand Lobato](#), Apr 04, 2024

I've run into a few of these people over the course of my career — seasoned produce managers who say, "I've never been a specialist, a buyer or a produce director, however, I've been frequently called upon as a 'floating' manager, tasked to fix a produce department or two."

I call these few rescue department leaders. They are produce people who have a knack for spending a few weeks to a couple of months in a special assignment — be it a store to cover absent managers or poor-performing stores with low sales, high shrink and bad morale — and in a short time can help stabilize or even turn around an operation. A few rare individuals have this talent.

Military historian and classicist professor Victor Davis Hanson tells a similar tale in his 2013 book, "The Savior Generals." He invokes military leaders from ancient Greece to modern-day times, describing his examples as individuals who may not have been socially welcomed at cocktail parties but were exactly those with the raw fortitude needed to intervene and straighten out messes, where more-polished heads of state dare not tread.

They're effective but, due to their often-unorthodox methods, are also short-lived.

Likewise, there is absolutely a place for the temporary savior produce managers. They're the type who can spend time in a disaster store, get the inventory under control, merchandise in a measured and methodical manner that may not be fancy, but is sensible for the time of year.

Roaming savior managers apply conventional (and sometimes unconventional) wisdom so that sales are brought up to snuff, excess shrink gets under control and the labor schedule is consistent. The crew may not always be happy with every move, but at least they understand what is expected. And like the savior generals, these folks don't stick around for long once the store gets a permanent manager in place. They move on to the next assignment.

Sometimes the rescue-savior managers aren't (or never were) managers themselves. Sometimes they're long-tenured clerks who never adopted the desire or protocol required of a manager for one reason or another, who are perhaps a bit uncouth, or their persona is introverted.

However, these savior individuals are very accomplished at what they do, and if you can assemble a small team of these together, they can even be an ideal setup team: a cluster of specialists who are particularly helpful during a whole-store produce reset or grand opening.



IFPA: EU PACKAGING RULES SPELL DISASTER FOR HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

[PRODUCEBLUEBOOK.COM](https://www.producebluebook.com)

April 5, 2024

They will almost certainly negatively impact global supply chains and food security at a time when more than 37 million Europeans cannot afford a quality meal every second day. Secondary impacts of these new rules will include fewer healthy food choices available to consumers.

The proposed Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) prohibits even those single-use packaging options that were scientifically designed to maintain quality, safety and freshness of perishable commodities, as fresh and ready-to-eat foods risk being spoiled, damaged or contaminated if not packaged appropriately. It would lead to an increase in food waste and, based on studies carried out in other jurisdictions, is likely to result in greater use of more durable types of plastics.

The current text of the PPWR favors recyclability over composting, and therefore limits options for fresh food manufacturers. Exemptions to the ban would be left to individual EU Member States leading to a patchwork of national regulations on food safety and allowable types of packaging for many perishable commodities.

Instead of creating harmonised rules, this will undermine the EU Single Market by creating obstacles to trade within, as well as with, the EU.

As EU regulators finalize these new rules over the coming months, the Alliance for Sustainable Packaging will continue to urge and engage with EU regulators and Member State governments to address these serious food safety and trade concerns. Enormous challenges lie ahead for the fresh food sector.

To successfully increase sustainability of the food supply chain, it is essential that evidence-based approaches are adopted that do not compromise on food safety, food quality, food availability and public health.

“The end result of the ban on single use packaging for foods like pre-made fresh salads, pre-cut vegetables, grapes and berries will be fewer options for consumers,” said ASPF Chair and IFPA [BB #:378962](#) Chief Science Officer, Dr. Max Teplistki.

“Quality will undoubtedly suffer. These bans will launch a continent-wide gamble with food safety. The fact that each of the 27 EU member states will have to put in place own regulations on food safety and consider whether or not to allow biodegradable packaging undermines a single EU market – as a consequence, consumers in smaller countries will simply not see the same diversity of healthy food options as growers simply cannot design 27 different types of packaging.”



UPCOMING EVENTS:

JULY 10-11, 2024

ORGANIC PRODUCE SUMMIT

Monterey, California

OCTOBER 17-19, 2024

THE GLOBAL PRODUCE & FLORAL SHOW

ATLANTA, GA

TODAY IS NATIONAL GRILLED
CHEESE DAY AND WE ARE TOTALLY
USING IT AS AN EXCUSE TO SHARE
OUR FAVORITE TOMATO SOUP
RECIPE! 🍷🍅🧀🍞

