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updates

# CROP & MARKET INDUSTRY INFO





# MARKET UPDATES

## ROMA TOMATOES

FL's roma harvests have been lighter this week, which means less availability for next week. Most growers, including Lipman, are finishing up harvests in the southern part of the state and are waiting for crops in the Ruskin/Palmetto area to start. Lipman is currently scheduled to harvest the first Duetto romas in the middle part of next week. Yields look to be light on the first plantings meaning there won't be as much volume as we expect out of R/P, especially at first. Quality has been good and there has been a mix of sizing. However, the crown pick fruit is on the bigger side with mostly jumbo and XL fruit. In the West, MX's roma production is fairly steady with last week. There are still romas in Sinaloa but we are seeing transition to Sonora, as new fields have started there. Production has been light so far, but warmer weather has moved in and should give a boost to the numbers in another 5-7 days. New crops have also started in a light way in Baja with East MX's spring crops to begin later this month. Current sizing is heavier to the big fruit. Quality is mixed with the best fruit coming from new crops.

## ROUND TOMATOES

FL round tomato production is down slightly this week as growers work through the transition between south FL and the R/P area. Lipman will harvest its last crown in Estero over the weekend and expects to move into the Duetto fields in 7-10 days. A few other growers have already started in the R/P area, but most have been delayed and will come online at about the same time as Lipman. This week's quality has been excellent, especially on crown picks. Although crown fruit is running big, there is a nice mix of sizes as 2nds and 3rds help to round out the mix. MX's round tomato supply is a bit more snug this week. Growers in Sinaloa are moving toward the finish line and expect to see volume and sizing decline gradually through the rest of the season (until June 1st). Current production is limited to just a few players now and we don't anticipate any big boost of volume from this area. East MX is in a semi-gap right now as they wait on the new spring crops to start late this month/early next month. Baja will also get going in mid May.

## GRAPE TOMATOES

The Sunshine State's grape tomato production has been steady this week. Lipman has another 2-3 weeks to go in Estero, but has already begun harvesting in Duetto. In general quality is good,

but it's much stronger on the early picks from new plants than later picks from older bushes. In the West, volumes have been moderate and ample out of Sinaloa. Quality is becoming a little suspect as the plants age. We are seeing shrivel, sunscald, and translucency on some lots, while others are just fine. Expect mostly the same until Baja gets going with new crops in mid-May.

## GREEN BEANS

With product available from Homestead to the Lake area, FL's green bean supply continues to be solid. Growers have been harvesting steadily and quality has been good. Some of the more southern areas will start to wind down over the next few weeks while new fields get started in north FL by the end of the month and in GA around mid-May. Looking to the West, growers in the Sinaloa area are still seeing moderate to good volumes. Quality has been good but we may see some effects of the warmer weather as they work toward the end of the season in mid-May. The next production area will be CA, where the desert has already started in a light way.

## COLOR BELL PEPPERS

Western Mainland MX's season is in its final days and you can tell by the quality. This fruit is no longer appropriate for retail which moves the focus to Central MX's summer crops and our northern neighbors in CAN. Central MX houses are in a light to moderate volume mode and will continue at this pace for the near future. CAN has production in both the east and west and has had solid numbers and great quality. We will see things lighten up in 5-7 days for a short term as houses work through transitions.

## GREEN BELL PEPPERS

Eastern bell pepper production has begun the transition from south FL to the Plant City area. There are still some newer fields in production down south, but older fields are also finishing up, which is providing a mix of quality and sizing. Plant City's new fruit has just gotten started and the early reports indicate that quality is very nice. Look for the bulk of production to transition to central FL over the next two weeks. Mainland MX still has decent volumes of bell peppers, but quality and sizing are declining as they draw closer to the end of the season. Repack is necessary as there are some shape, scarring, and wall issues popping up. The CA desert is on tap to start in the next 7-10 days to provide relief to the current quality concerns.

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## YELLOW & ZUCCHINI SQUASH

As south FL crops are starting to wind down, squash production has made its way north to the Plant City area where they have good volumes this week. Plant City's quality has been quite nice and is more consistent than south FL's. A few fields have actually started in GA as well, but their volume is still a week or two away. In the West, volume has come up a bit lighter this week as we continue to work through the transition from Sinaloa to Sonora. We do expect to see more volume from the newer crops in Sonora in the next 5-7 days. Overall, quality has been good with the better fruit coming out of Sonora.

## CUCUMBERS

South FL's cucumber crops have another 2-3 weeks to go, but we have already started seeing fruit in central FL this week. Despite the hot weather, quality has been good. GA is just a few weeks away, with some growers expected to start up in the first week of May. The West has moderate to good volumes of cucumbers available with fruit coming from several growing areas. It's gotten hot in Sinaloa and we are now seeing some related quality concerns but these growers will continue until mid-May as markets and quality allow. Sonora's product isn't quite as pretty as the dark green Sinaloa fruit, but quality has been sound. Baja is also in the mix in a light way and their cucumbers are very nice.

## HARD SQUASH

The East still has Honduran butternut and spaghetti available and are bringing in MX acorn to meet demand. The Honduran squash should be around for another 30 days before wrapping up for the season. In the West, supply is adequate on butternut and spaghetti but fairly strained on acorn. For many, the acorn fields are winding down, which will create a snug situation until CA gets up and running in mid-May. With acorn in a tight spot, we're on the lookout for quality concerns, particularly ground scar.

## CHILI PEPPERS

Chili peppers have been a tough category this week. FL's light, hit or miss supply hasn't been ample to cover the East. There is some relief on the way though, as Plant City will start in the next few days with Hungarians and jalapenos with other varieties to follow over the course of the next 10-14 days. The MX chili pepper deal is still very short this week. Sinaloa growers are finishing up early. What they do have available is suspect in quality, so it isn't working well for retail. There are some new crops expected to come online in Sonora in the next week, but the proration of water may have an impact on the season's production. With Baja and CA not on tap to start until mid-May, the next several weeks could prove to be challenging in terms of supply.

## EGGPLANT

Although there's not much eggplant in south FL, Plant City has started with light supply. We don't anticipate a lot of volume for another 10-14 days, as farms are just getting started. Mainland MX continues to provide adequate supplies, although the fruit is now beginning to size down with mostly 24 count fruit. Overall quality is good but we are starting to see a few more liver spots here and there.

## CALABACITA

Calabacita supply is still on the light side as we wait for Sonora's crops to get into rhythm. We should see some production increases over the next week as recent weather has been conducive for growth.

## MINI SWEET PEPPERS

Mini sweet supply is tight and looks to continue that way for another month or two. Mainland MX crops are finishing up and we won't see anything out of Baja until late June/July. CAN hasn't had any significant volume this week, so there's not been much help from the north. Inbound product is showing up to 40% greening, adding to the challenges of an already difficult situation.

## ORGANIC ROMA

With new crops underway, the organic roma supply situation is in good shape for the near future. Quality is great on the newer shadehouse crops, but there is still some older fruit around with poor quality.

## ORGANIC GRAPE TOMATOES

Organic grape tomatoes continue to be available daily out of Mainland MX but we are seeing some production inconsistencies from some farms. Quality remains strong as long as the product is lighter in color upon arrival. Up next is Baja where they are starting to harvest in a very light way.

## ORGANIC MINI SWEET PEPPERS

Organic mini sweet supply is a little better than it has been for the past two weeks, but is still limited. Supply looks to remain short until Baja's new crops get started in June. Current quality is okay but greening and poor color mix are consistent concerns to work with.

## ORGANIC MINI CUCUMBERS

There's moderate supply of organic mini cucumbers with a mix of older and newer crops in Mainland MX and Baja. Supply is expected to be fairly steady through the month of May. Quality is, of course, stronger from new crops.

## ORGANIC COLOR PEPPERS

There's very little volume of organic colored bells crossing into Nogales this week. The Sinaloa area's production has been very slow and light especially on #1 fruit with any size. There is some pricey Holland product available but they only have reds and yellows to offer. With East MX's Summer supply expected to be down even further this year, we'll be looking to CAN for fruit. They haven't really gotten started yet, but should come online by the middle of May.



## LIPMAN FAMILY FARMS HOSTS SUCCESSFUL 10TH ANNUAL 5K RUN FOR BACKPACKS

[PERISHABLENEWS.COM](http://PERISHABLENEWS.COM)

[April 11, 2024](#)

The Lipman 5K Run for Backpacks is a family-friendly event aimed at supporting local students in need. The annual event raised over \$115,000 in funds. All proceeds from the race will directly fund the purchase of backpacks, bicycles, shoes, and other essential school supplies for Lipman's Annual Backpack Giveaway, a cherished tradition hosted in Immokalee every August. This year marked the 10th consecutive year of the 5k Run for Backpacks, with a record-breaking number of 780 runners and walkers.

"This event has become as much about the community coming together as anything. Everyone is so eager to support their local students that it's helped make this 5K bigger than ever. They see the need here in Immokalee and want to do their part to help students get a leg up in school," Jaime Weisinger, 4th generation Lipman and Director of Community and Government Relations, explains. The event welcomed participants of all levels, including serious runners, weekend joggers, and families with children.

Trophies were awarded to the top male and female runners in various age categories, adding a competitive edge to the event while celebrating individual achievements.

As a family-owned business deeply rooted in Immokalee, we recognized the importance of education and the challenges many families face in providing essential school supplies for their children," said Elyse Lipman, CEO at Lipman Family Farms. "The Lipman 5K Run for Backpacks was not only a fun and healthy way to bring the community together but also an opportunity for participants to make a tangible difference in the lives of local students."

Over the last 10 years, Lipman has successfully distributed a total of 15,000 backpacks full of school supplies thanks to the support of our generous donors. The Lipman 5K Run for Backpacks was a resounding success, bringing the community together to enjoy the scenic course around the lakes at Ave Maria while supporting a worthy cause.



## NOW IS THE TIME TO ADDRESS SUMMER STAFFING NEED

[PRODUCEMARKETGUIDE.COM](http://PRODUCEMARKETGUIDE.COM)

by [Armand Lobato](#), Apr 12, 2024

It's difficult to drive down any main street without noticing billboards, banners, yard signs, or a handwritten note taped to a business door that reads, Now Hiring!  
The sign on the door is also a sign of the times. The U.S. is hiring.

The trouble is, as inflation is too many dollars chasing too few goods, there's not enough workers for all the jobs to fill. Many years ago, I learned in an economics course that when the unemployment rate is at 4%, this is considered full employment; the outstanding 4% are students and seniors — the groups of not yet or no longer in the workforce.

Unemployment rates in many parts of the country are well below 4%. Blame it on COVID-19 aftereffects and "The Great Resignation" period when boomers opted for early retirement. Blame the shortage on our flat birthrate, as fewer people are entering the workforce. Blame it on scores of other equally worthy factors and you will arrive at the same summary: Everyone needs help, especially in the service sector, as well as warehouses, transportation and retail.

Every business, including in the produce department. Supermarkets have adapted. As consumers, even we are recruited, so to speak, to help with self-checkout. Produce operations have evolved over the years so that things such as prepackaged produce, source-wrapped lettuce and ready-to-display bins of

commodities are commonplace. Each helps reduce the labor hours necessary to prep and stock fresh produce. However, as one director pointed out to me lately, "It ain't near enough. Produce is all about hands-on and constant stock maintenance if you want to succeed."

Indeed. So, this is the time of year when I drag out and stand upon my old, WGA wooden produce crate, and preach about how important it is to line up your extra summer help. Now. I know, it's mid-April. I can just hear the pushback: There's plenty of time to get ready.

Hardly. Most produce departments' busiest period is from Memorial Day, peaking during midsummer, with sales not slowing down until well past Labor Day. Consider for a moment the increased volume of stone fruit, cut fruit, watermelon, berries, grapes, melons, salad fixin's, corn for cookouts and spuds for summer potato salad.

And don't forget the summer superstar: cherries. All these commodities require training for proper prepping, handling, rotation, stocking, and more. This training will be imperative. As a mentor once told me, "Untrained people throw money away." Your regular clerks will systematically take well-deserved time off this summer. Their vacations, and in fact much of the produce department, occur during the busiest volume and highest shrink period of the year — which is handled with the least experienced hands.

Are you ready?



# UPCOMING EVENTS:

**JULY 10-11, 2024**

**ORGANIC PRODUCE SUMMIT**

**Monterey, California**

**OCTOBER 17-19, 2024**

**THE GLOBAL PRODUCE & FLORAL SHOW**

**ATLANTA, GA**



WE HAD AN AMAZING TIME AT THE INTERNATIONAL FRESH PRODUCE ASSOCIATION'S WOMEN'S FRESH PERSPECTIVES CONFERENCE.

OUR TEAM HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO GATHER WITH LIKE-MINDED STRONG WOMEN TO ENCOURAGE AND EMPOWER ONE ANOTHER. A TRULY TRANSFORMATIVE EVENT.

