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CROP & MARKET INDUSTRY INFO





MARKET UPDATES

ROMA TOMATOES

After last weekend's rain seriously damaged roma crops, FL has very limited volumes available. The majority of what's being harvested is not retail quality as wind and rain caused excessive scarring, shoulder issues, etc. Eastern supply will continue to be extremely light 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 were light at the beginning of the week, but have picked up some momentum as the week progressed. Some of the older fields in West MX are still in play, but new Spring plantings have now broken and are providing more volume, nice sizing, and better quality. 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 harvests have been very light this week due to rain delaying harvests and prior heavy rains reducing yields significantly. State-wide, FL was down 204 loads from the same week last year. Lipman and other growers are expecting availability to remain light until R/P farms get rolling in May. On a positive note, there's been a good mix of sizing and quality has been good on crown picks. 2nd and 3rd pick fruit is showing more rain check and scarring, which we are cleaning up at the packing level. 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 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

FL's southern and Lake growing regions have been harvesting strong and consistent volumes of green beans with no significant quality issues. South FL expects to continue production through the month of April, then we'll see harvests transition to north FL and GA. April is generally a rainy month, so we'll be watchful for quality and production changes that could occur. MX still has good supplies of beans coming out of Sinaloa.

FL's southern and LA few growers are finishing up relatively early, but yields for other growers are improving thanks to better weather. We anticipate supply to be relatively stable for at least the next few weeks.

GRAPE TOMATOES

Grape tomatoes were not as affected by the recent weather and have been available in good volumes this week. Lipman has now finished up in Naples and is harvesting in Estero exclusively for the next few weeks. As we and others have dropped older plantings, quality has improved and is quite nice. 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 is underway in Ontario and is just getting started in BC. Quality has been excellent thus far and sizing has been skewed toward jumbo fruit. Down to the south, West MX has moderate production, but we are seeing more quality issues in their fruit. In Central MX, Summer crops are getting started and Winter plantings are winding down. We're definitely seeing quality improvements from the newer crops.

GREEN BELL PEPPERS

South FL farms continue to provide good supply of bell peppers from new Spring crops. Sizing is heavy to jumbos, as both crown and 2nd picks are leaning that way, leaving XL availability pretty snug. We'll continue to see south FL fruit for another 3-4 weeks with Plant City coming online in 2 weeks. Quality has improved quite a bit, as most harvests are coming from newer, healthy crops. Despite being on the downhill side of the season, Mainland MX's pepper numbers are moderate this week. Quality is holding up pretty well for most, but we have seen some sporadic issues with shriveling, pitting, color and misshape from some of the oldest fields. Expect to see the size profile decrease as MX winds down its season and we wait for the CA desert to come online in 2 1/2 weeks

[CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE](#)



CALABACITA

Calabacita supply is adequate out of MX this week. Sinaloa is winding down but there's also fruit in Sonora. Once Sinaloa finishes, overall volume will be lower as there's less acreage in Sonora. No significant quality issues have been reported.

YELLOW & ZUCCHINI SQUASH

Squash volumes are dropping off in Homestead and other areas in south FL but Plant City is picking up the slack, keeping volume steady. Overall quality has improved and is nice from the new fields currently in production. We expect to see GA squash come online in 2-3 weeks as well. MX also has good supply as Sinaloa and Sonora production areas overlap during transition. Quality has been good on both yellows and zucchini. We could see Sinaloa's volume drop off from the older fields if market stay at depressed levels for much longer.

CUCUMBERS

South FL's cucumber production has picked up to more adequate levels since last week as more fields and growers have come online. Quality is good for typical FL product although there are still a few older fields in play with lesser quality. FL supply should continue at a steady pace through April before winding down in mid-May when production transitions to GA. In the West, there are cucumbers available from older crops in Sinaloa, as well as some new crops in Sonora and even in a very light way in Baja. Quality is varied as there's a mix of older and newer crops in production. However, the Sinaloa fruit has the nice dark green color that some prefer and Sonora's color is a bit lighter like most domestic fruit. Looking ahead, Baja will be more of a factor in late May/early June as the majority of farms come online then.

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 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 starts at the end of April, bringing more consistent volumes and varieties to Eastern markets. Western supply has lightened up as growers picked heavy for the holiday and are now on the downhill side of the season. Sinaloa's crops are older and less productive at this point. Unfortunately, new crops in Sonora haven't gotten in rhythm with consistent volumes yet. Jalapenos are one of the more affected chilies, but we should see improvements in 10-14 days as more new fields get started. Quality is average or better on most items, including tomatillos.

EGGPLANT

South FL has relatively light supply of eggplant from new Spring fields this week but volumes are best measured in pallets, not truckloads. We don't expect a major change until Plant City comes online at the end of April. Meanwhile, MX has moderate levels of eggplant out of the Culiacan area where they should continue into May. The central valley and desert areas of CA are expected to come online in another 2-3 weeks.

MINI SWEET PEPPERS

Supply has tightened up on mini sweets this week due to rain in the growing areas. Production should stabilize and 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

A few of the new shadehouse crops have started, giving a lift to organic roma supply and quality. More volume is coming, as there are still some growers to come online.

ORGANIC GRAPE TOMATOES

Organic grape tomatoes are still readily available from the Culiacan area in MX. Quality has been nice as long as there's not too much color/age on the fruit. Baja should join in on the fun sometime in May.

ORGANIC MINI SWEET PEPPERS

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ORGANIC MINI CUCUMBERS

Organic mini cucumbers have been plentiful this week and should continue at fairly steady levels for the next couple of weeks. 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

Organic colored bell supply has improved to mostly adequate levels since our last report. Reds are the shortest of the 3 colors, but there seems to be enough to meet demand right now. That could change in the next few weeks, as some growers are talking about harvesting red organic bells as greens due to the elevated market on organic green bells. Quality has been pretty good overall but we have seen a few stem issues and insect concerns on recent shipments.



STUDY: 70% OF RETAILERS LOSE AT LEAST 5% OPERATING MARGIN TO IN-STORE INEFFICIENCIES

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

by [Aaron Gonzalez](#),
Mar 29, 2024

[Simbe](#) has released a new study that reports the majority of retailers are investing, or planning to invest, in new in-store technology solutions to improve performance across inventory management, operations and planning.

"The State of In-Store Retailing: Opportunities To Redefine Operations" was done in collaboration with Coresight Research, an advisory firm specializing in retail and technology, according to a news release.

"Traditional tools like manual scans create inefficiencies and information gaps that impact retailer revenue, sustain shopper attrition and limit spend, and perpetuate labor challenges," Simbe CEO Brad Bogolea said in the release.

"Leading retailers — from global and national chains like SpartanNash and BJ's Wholesale Club to regional grocers known for technological innovation like Schnucks — are showcasing the business value of in-store automation."

"Simbe's technology provides the multiple value streams, chainwide proof points and critical technological and service capabilities required to support retailers' vision for resilient operations and stellar shopper and associate experiences," he continued. He report surveyed 150 retail decision-makers across the U.S. to assess industry pain points and technology adoption.

The findings revealed that retailers are experiencing significant challenges — and revenue losses — related to managing operations across the store, including out-of-stocks, price and promotion execution, planogram compliance, e-commerce fulfillment and assortment planning, the release said. Report details include:

- Everyday operational challenges were acknowledged across retail. Retailers reported challenges with core business functions, including managing out-of-stocks 92%, executing price and promotions 96%, planogram compliance 93% and assortment planning 93%.
- Retailers reported in-store inefficiencies costing at least 4.5% revenue. Over 70% of respondents lost at least 5% operating margin in each area of out-of-stocks, price and promotion execution, planogram compliance and allocation and assortment planning. On average, retailers lost 4.5% of revenue to these inefficiencies. Addressing these issues would drive an additional revenue opportunity for retailers of \$127.9 billion in 2024, growing to \$143.3 billion in 2027, Coresight Research estimates.

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CHANGES ARE COMING TO FOOD SAFETY AND TRACEABILITY REGULATIONS — ARE RETAILERS READY?

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

By [AARON GONZALEZ](#) March 29, 2024

As mandatory compliance with the Produce Traceability Initiative and the Food Safety Modernization Act 204 Final Rule looms, retailers and others across the fresh produce supply chain are readying for the Jan. 20, 2026, implementation deadline.

The Food and Drug Administration has designated critical tracking events and key data elements, or CTEs and KDEs, as essential benchmarks for compliance. CTEs serve as pivotal moments within the supply chain, requiring thorough traceability measures for food safety.

Under FSMA 204, manufacturers will need to create traceability lots, each with its own lot code assigned at distinct points in the supply chain and must link that code to other KDEs.

According to the final rule, these KDEs and several other data points must be kept and maintained for two years, with information able to be provided to the FDA within 24 hours or within a reasonable time to which the FDA has agreed.

The final rule establishes traceability record-keeping requirements for persons who manufacture, process, pack or hold foods included on the FDA's Food Traceability List or foods that contain those listed foods as ingredients.

These new requirements identified in the final rule assume faster identification and rapid removal of potentially contaminated food from

the market, resulting in fewer foodborne illnesses.

FMI, The Food Industry Association, says it has been collaborating with the FDA, as well as food and beverage trade associations and member companies, to pinpoint concerns and advocate for adjustments to make the rule more feasible for industry implementation and compliance. FMI shares information, resources and works with members to facilitate implementation and compliance with the rule.

Additionally, FMI has created a question portal to answer member traceability questions about the rule, has on-demand digital seminars and provides a FSMA resource center.

"Having a plentiful and safe supply of fresh produce is paramount not only for the health and well-being of customers, but also for the success of the store," said Hilary Thesmar, chief science officer and senior vice president of food safety for FMI.

But retailers can't do it alone.

"It's a collective responsibility across the entire supply chain," Thesmar said. "The produce department represents the final link in this chain, with significant interaction with consumers. We aim to ensure that every entity in the supply chain takes responsibility for food safety while the product is under their control, actively working to prevent contamination."



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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PLENTY OF VEGGIES!

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