

MAY 10, 2024

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CROP & MARKET

INDUSTRY INFO





MARKET UPDATES

ROMA TOMATOES

Ruskin/Palmetto's roma production is not quite adequate to meet demand but quality and sizing have been nice this week. Product is moving briskly from the field to the end user which has created some challenges keeping up with color. The heat has brought the R/P roma crops on quickly, which means they will start to wrap up a little earlier than usual. By Memorial Day, quality and sizing will create concerns in meeting retail specs. Quincy and GA should have a few romas available around that time, but volume will be limited in the East until the TN/NC area gets started around July 4th. MX's supply is light this week: quality isn't great in Sonora and Sinaloa's size has come down as we near the end of the season. New crops in East MX and Baja are just getting started and there's no volume to speak of from them yet. Looking ahead, we should begin to see domestic crops in CA add to the mix in June/July.

ROUND TOMATOES

Last week and this week have been the peak of the R/P round tomato season. By next week, overall volume will start to decline. Lipman will harvest crown picks for another 2 weeks, then continue with 2nds possibly into Memorial Day. Our SC crops and the Quincy area are on tap to start the last week of May/first week of June, depending on the weather between now and then. MX's round tomato supply is on the lighter side as growers work through the seasonal transition. West Mexico is dwindling in supply as their season plays out, with mostly mid-sized flats and some suspect quality at this point. Baja is now starting to see supplies increase as more growers join in the mix. Quality is nice and most of the fruit is on the larger end of the spectrum. Over in East MX, Jalisco is just getting started and supplies will gradually improve as we move through the month.

GRAPE TOMATOES

With some growers up and others down, the overall FL grape tomato numbers are pretty consistent. Lipman is harvesting in Duette (the R/P area), working across 6 plantings. Sizing is a little big on the 1st few picks, but our quality has been really nice. We will continue to harvest in Duette through Memorial Day if quality and yields allow. From there, we'll move to the SC farms for grapes, on or around May 25th. In the West, we're seeing the Sinaloa area wind down. The plants are getting tired and quality

and shelf life are less than desired. Baja is the next Western production area and they have started in a light way. Volume is minimal so far but will begin to pick up over the next few weeks.

GREEN BEANS

Although there are still some green beans in north FL, GA has started and looks to carry the load for the immediate future. Volumes are adequate and quality is good. In the West, Mainland MX has about one week left in the season but quality is marginal, pushing most to CA or the East for supply. Quality is much better on the new crops in CA (Coachella and Orange Co). Production will gradually migrate northward in CA, with additional areas coming into play over the next month or so.

COLOR BELL PEPPERS

As Western Mainland MX's crops finish up, we're seeing availability on mostly large and medium sizing, which moves the focus to Central MX's Summer crops and our northern neighbors in CAN for retail product. 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- both areas with good quality and sizing. CAN's numbers are down a little this week but should pick up in the next 3-5 days.

GREEN BELL PEPPERS

Bell peppers are in the midst of transition in the East. GA will get started in a light way over the weekend with volume to come 7-10 days after that. As usual at the beginning of a crop, we'll see bigger sizing at first. In the meantime, retail quality and sizing are coming from Plant City and a few newer fields in south FL. Most of what remains in the southern part of the state is smaller fruit and lesser quality. In the West, the Coachella, CA area is up and running with good quality, sizing and volumes. Mainland MX is hanging on to the season with mostly choice fruit with a few mediums and larges thrown in the mix. They'll be wrapping up shortly, leaving the deal to CA.

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YELLOW & ZUCCHINI SQUASH

There's plenty of squash available in the East with fruit still available in spots in south FL, Plant City and GA. Quality is varied, depending on the area and age of planting. As usual, quality is a little more challenging on yellows than their green counterparts, zucchini. We may start to see a little less volume in GA next week as growers turn their attention to bell peppers and cucumbers. Availability is a bit more snug in the West. Sonora's volumes have dropped, as several growers bowed out a few weeks early due to cheap market prices and declining quality. Overall quality is marginal, as it has been really hot in Sonora. Those who stayed on track with crop care are looking to go into June with supplies. On the domestic side of things, the Coachella valley is currently in production and we expect the Santa Maria area to get rolling in a few weeks.

CUCUMBERS

So far, GA has been slow to come with volume on their new crop cucumbers but we expect to see harvests pick up over the next 7-10 days. Quality has been pretty good, but not perfect, which is generally the norm for Eastern crops. The next area on deck is Eastern NC, which is tentatively set to start around the 1st of June. The West has good volume available with fruit coming from several growing areas- Sinaloa, Sonora, Baja and Central MX. Sinaloa is winding down, but we just started a new set so we have some nice fruit there. Sonora's been hot so volume is a little lighter and quality is a little lesser than from other areas. Baja and Central MX also have cucumbers available, with more volume to come, particularly in Baja. Overall, quality is dependent on the age of the field/crop that it is harvested from.

HARD SQUASH

There have been a few acorn squash in FL, but Honduras is still providing butternut and spaghetti to the East for another few weeks. GA will come online around the first of June, right about the time the imports finish. Mainland MX still has a few more weeks to go with hard squash. There have been a few new sets harvested as well as storage fruit out of the Sonora area. Quality has been really nice on butternut and mostly good on acorn and spaghetti with only occasional scarring and color concerns. Supply is starting the transition to CA with the desert already up and running in a light way. There's not a whole lot of volume in this area, but Bakersfield/Selma will have stronger numbers once they start in mid-June.

CHILI PEPPERS

FL has chili peppers available in Plant City and a few in south FL. Poblanos, serranos, and tomatillos are still very limited but there are good volumes of jalapenos and Cubanelles. Quality is mostly good except there are some color issues with Cubanelles due to the heat. Supply will start to work its way north in a few weeks as GA gets started. MX's chili pepper volumes have improved as Sonora crops have finally come online. Availability is still snug on poblanos and serranos, but is solid on jalapenos and tomatillos. Look for a few more poblanos and serranos next week, as these items are usually the last to get started. A few select chili items (jalapenos, Caribes, and red fresnos) are also beginning to show up in CA.

EGGPLANT

Eggplant is plentiful in the East, with the bulk of volume coming out of Plant City. Quality is varied, but there is some nice fruit available. Look for GA to get going in another 2-3 weeks. The Sinaloa season is heading quickly to the end with light volume and mostly sub-par quality. The CA desert has started with their cannonball varieties, and another grower will come online with the traditional teardrop-shaped option next week. We expect lighter supply than usual in this area, as several growers opted out this year.

CALABACITA

Calabacita supply is adequate with most of the fruit coming from the Sonora area. Quality seems to be holding on at the moment.

MINI SWEET PEPPERS

This is the last week of Sinaloa-grown fruit. There's a little high-tech product in Central MX, but supply looks to remain short until Baja starts in about 6 weeks. Quality is varied with greening and short shelf life cited as concerns.

ORGANIC ROMA

Now that Sonora's new crops are rolling, organic roma supply has been consistent and adequate. Quality is much better than the open-field crops that finished up in Sinaloa a few weeks ago. Next up will be Baja which will start in several weeks.

ORGANIC GRAPE TOMATOES

Mainland MX's organic grapes are on the way out in a few weeks, but Baja is now up and running. Quality is weak on the older crops, but the new Baja fruit is very nice and will travel well.

ORGANIC MINI SWEET PEPPERS

Organic mini sweet supply continues to be light and will remain so until Baja starts in July. Quality is good aside from color issues. We are seeing greening and a poor color mix at times.

ORGANIC MINI CUCUMBERS

Both Baja and Mainland MX have organic mini cucs available. There's adequate volume around, but quality has taken a downturn from what it was a few weeks ago. Baja's quality is a little nicer than the Mainland's, but both have had some issues with shriveling and reduced shelf life.

ORGANIC COLOR PEPPERS

With demand lightening up, there seems to be adequate supply on colored bell peppers this week. There is a lot of older, inventoried product around, but quality is good on fresh product. There are small pockets of product here and there in MX, but the Summer supply is expected to be lighter than usual. CAN should be getting started on organics in the next 7-10 days as well.



WHAT DATA SHOWS ABOUT SALAD TRENDS IN RETAIL AND FOODSERVICE

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

BY TOM BURFIELD MAY 3, 2024

With summer just around the corner, May is an ideal time to celebrate National Salad Month, an observance launched in 1992 by the Association for Dressing and Sauces.

Actually, it seems U.S. consumers already have a jump on enjoying these light, healthful treats. According to Chicago-based Circana's National Eating Trends, each U.S. consumer ate about 39 salads during the 12 months ending in February — a 4% increase from last year.

Most salads (56%) are consumed at dinner, followed by lunch (39%). Salads serve as a main dish 52% of the time and as a side dish or appetizer 47% of the time, Circana says.

Raw tomatoes, cucumbers and onions are the most common salad ingredients, along with avocado, shredded cheeses and croutons. Packaged offerings from some major produce suppliers make it easy and convenient for consumers to make their own salads.

"The lasting effects of COVID-19 continue to drive consumers to the packaged salad category versus bulk items," said Bob Spence, senior vice president of sales and marketing for Oxnard, Calif.-based Boskovich Farms.

"The perception is they are safer, convenient and a way to explore new flavors with little waste," he said. "Organics have added another dimension, as consumer are concerned with how their products are grown and processed, again supporting additional sales."

Boskovich Fresh Prep is introducing four new chef-inspired organic salad kits in the first clear, fully compostable film under the Fair Earth Farms brand, he said.

The four recipes developed by Andrew Hunter, Wolfgang Puck chef, "use new and interesting flavors that bring restaurant quality and taste to the supermarket shelves," Spence said.

The value-added salad category seems to have stabilized in 2024, with consumers showing a preference for convenient salad kits, said Dave Austin, vice president of product innovation for Monterey, Calif.-based Dole Fresh Vegetables.

Salad kits are the growth driver in the category, he said.

"As National Salad Month approaches, Dole is very excited to share its latest lineup of salad offerings, reinforcing the popularity of innovative salad kits with experiential flavors designed to captivate millennials and Gen Z consumers," he said.

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GROCERY INTELLIGENCE PROVIDER TO INCREASE CHAINWIDE RETAIL DEPLOYMENTS

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

by Aaron Gonzalez, May 07, 2024

Simbe Robotics says it has partnered with Plexus Corp. to bring its retail robotics-as-a-service to market quickly and at global scale.

Thus far in 2024, Simbe has introduced its intelligence platform to wholesalers, building on a chainwide deployment with BJ's Wholesale Club in four months; expanded its partnership with SpartanNash to an additional 60 locations; and added to its leadership team with the strategic hiring of several key executives.

"Today's most important consumer decisions are made at the shelf, and top retailers are turning to computer vision technology to capture true visibility into demand that they don't have anywhere else and power accuracy and execution across their entire business," Simbe Chief Operating Officer Gary Galensky told The Packer. "In fact, Coresight research recently found that over 80% of retailers are planning to invest in in-store technology in the next year.

Galensky said computer vision has been Simbe's core business for years, so the company understands that robot production requires sophisticated expertise across supply chain, manufacturing, testing and quality — for

powering top retail priorities and to capture the hearts and wallets of shoppers and shareholders.

"Our partnership with Plexus allows us to ensure faster deployments and maintain the highest-quality manufacturing standards on a global scale," Galensky said. "With Plexus, we're helping retailers stay ahead of the curve and deliver exceptional in-store experiences to their customers through technology."

Plexus partners with global health care and life sciences, industrial and aerospace and defense companies to provide design and development, supply chain, new product introduction, manufacturing and sustaining services solutions across its 26 facilities.

"Simbe is an innovative and respected leader in the retail robotics market, and we're delighted to aid in scaling their business through our industry-leading engineering and manufacturing solutions," said Brian Wilson, market sector vice president of industrial for Plexus. "Our partnership bolsters Simbe's state-of-the-art technology in support of Plexus' vision to help create products that build a better world."



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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