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CROP & MARKET

INDUSTRY INFO





MARKET UPDATES

ROMA TOMATOES

Ruskin/Palmetto's roma crops have been pushed by heat and growers are well ahead of their planned harvest schedules. This means that the season will wind down sooner than expected, most likely around Memorial Day. Quincy and GA will step in with some romas at the end of May/1st of June, but volume is limited and not enough to meet demand. The East will be waiting for the TN/NC area to get started around July 4th. Western supply is also on the light side this week. Aside from some newer fields in Hermosillo and Guasave that will run through June, the bulk of West MX's volume is winding down for the season. Quality has been fair. Both Baja and East MX are just getting started and so far the fruit is quite nice but volume is limited. We expect to see more crops come online and supply to gradually strengthen over the next 3-4 weeks.

ROUND TOMATOES

Round tomato supply from the R/P is strong this week as the heat has brought plantings together for all growers. Harvests are 7-10 days ahead of schedule which means things will end a little sooner than usual. By the middle of next week, everyone will be finished with crown picks and will carry on with 2nds as long as quality and sizing allow- most likely finishing up by the last week of May. From there, we'll be looking to Quincy and Lipman's SC crops for rounds, both of which should start right around June 1st. Currently, quality is good and there's a nice mix of sizing but those factors will decline as we move into the home stretch of the season. Western supply is in transition. West MX is winding down with smaller fruit and lesser quality, while Baja and East MX are in the early stage of the season with light supply, big fruit and nice quality. Volume should ramp up over the next few weeks as more growers come to the table with fruit. Also, of note, the CA desert has started this week, with the Valley on tap to get going in early June.

GRAPE TOMATOES

The R/P area is providing adequate volumes of grape tomatoes for the East this week. Production has been steady and quality is mostly good. Lipman's SC crops are on tap to start on or around May 25th and others will start in north FL and GA in the same time frame. In the West, we're seeing the Sinaloa area wind down, likely finishing at the end of the month. Quality has been

declining, along with harvest numbers. For the Summer season Western supply will transition primarily to Baja with a few greenhouse grapes in Eastern/Central MX. As with last year, Baja's acreage is expected to be less. But, they have started in a light way and should begin to see modest volume increases over the next few weeks.

GREEN BEANS

Although there are still some beans in north FL, GA has the bulk of the volume. Quality has been good, but we may see some impact from this week's rain for the short term. GA should carry on with bean production through June, then harvests will transition to TN and NC by July. In the West, supply is limited this week. Mainland MX is on the way out and will trickle with limited supplies for the next 7-10 days. In CA we expect to see a few get started in the Watsonville/Salinas valley and the Stockton/Brentwood area sometime around the 1st to 2nd week of June. Baja and Fresno should also get rolling within the next couple of weeks. In the meantime supply will be limited, coming from Mainland MX and a few in southern CA.

COLOR BELL PEPPERS

Colored bell pepper supply is a bit lighter this week, as most growers in CAN (East and West) are in an almost-gap between plantings. However, our crops are the opposite and are flushing so our supply is adequate. The next flush of CAN product is expected in late May/early June. Down south in MX, growers in the west are still cleaning up and Central MX houses have been fairly consistent. Reds have been a little shy this week and we could see oranges and yellows cycle in a similar way soon.

GREEN BELL PEPPERS

Eastern bell pepper production is transitioning out of south FL and into GA with some volume available in the Plant City area. GA has been a little slow to get kicked off and a rainy week hasn't helped, but we should see more significant volumes in the next 5-7 days. Most of the FL product is from older plantings, so we're watching quality closely. Our Eastern NC pepper crops are currently scheduled to start around June 15th. In the West, retail pepper is coming from the Coachella area where supply is adequate, sizing is bigger and quality is nice. Mainland MX will wrap up shortly, as they are down to mostly choice bells and smaller sizing. Up next is the Bakersfield, CA area.

[CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE](#)



YELLOW & ZUCCHINI SQUASH

Plant City and GA are the spots for yellow and zucchini squashes this week. Supply has been good, but we are likely to see less quality product available for 5-7 days as a result of this week's rainy days in GA. This may give Plant City some motivation to stay in the game a little longer as cheap markets were tempting some to drop out. Quality has not been great this week but we should see improvements as growers work past the rain-affected fruit. We'll also see new crops start in Eastern NC in the next 10-14 days. Availability is a bit more snug in the West. Sonora is on its way out for the season with most expecting to call the deal done in two weeks. CA has started with light production from the Selma / Fresno area. Santa Maria is on the verge of starting up and should have adequate supplies by the 1st week of June. Baja is also right around the corner.

CUCUMBERS

There are still a few cucumbers remaining in south and central FL, but the bulk of Eastern volume is in GA's hands this week. Volume has picked up since our last report, but this week's rain has caused a few hiccups. Quality has been good, but Eastern product is not quite as perfect as some of the MX fruit during its peak. Our Eastern NC program is set to kick off around June 1st. The West has consistent and adequate availability this week. Quality is starting to become a factor for some in Sonora and Sinaloa as we've heard reports that the product is not traveling well. We'll see these two areas finish up over the next 2-3 weeks. Baja is getting prepared to be the main show on cukes. They've already started and expect several more growers to get underway within the next 7-10 days. Baja should have strong volumes by the 2nd week of June. Quality is excellent out of Baja so far.

HARD SQUASH

The Eastern hard squash situation is much the same- a few local acorns in FL and butternut and spaghetti coming from Honduras. 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. Acorns will wrap up in 2 weeks, with butternut and spaghettis going another 3-4 weeks. Quality seems to be holding up well although we have seen a few lots with age issues. 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

South FL is finished up on all but jalapenos, leaving Plant City as the main area with chili peppers in the East. Poblanos and serranos are shy, but there are good volumes on the other varieties. The only peppers with quality issues are Cubanelles as quality and color have been impacted by hot weather. GA should get going within the next week, which will provide a welcome boost to Eastern supply. MX's chili pepper volumes have improved on most items, although poblanos and serranos are lagging behind. There are chilies available in Sonora, Central MX, Baja, and even a few that have started in the CA desert. The new fruit from Baja (tomatillos and poblanos) has been really nice so far.

EGGPLANT

Plant City has been the center for Eastern eggplant volume, but quality has become challenging. Some growers were dropping choice fruit in the field due to cheap markets and have now removed some acreage from production so supply has lightened up. GA is expected to get started around June 1st and will be followed by Eastern NC around June 20th. The Sinaloa season is heading quickly to the end with light volume and mostly #2 quality. The CA desert has started but there are only two active growers so supply will remain limited until more northern areas get started.

CALABACITA

Calabacita supply is a little snug this week as Mainland MX is headed toward the end of the season and there's not a lot in CA just yet.

MINI SWEET PEPPERS

With West MX's fruit pretty much finished, mini sweet pepper supply is limited. There's a little high-tech product in Central MX, but supply looks to remain short until Baja starts in July. Quality is varied with greening and short shelf life cited as concerns.

ORGANIC ROMA

Organic romas are available in adequate supply with the product coming out of the Sonora area. Quality is mostly good but varied by grower. Some have had color concerns- either too red or too green. Baja won't come online until July.

ORGANIC GRAPE TOMATOES

Organic grape tomato production is transitioning from West MX to Baja for the Summer. Growers in Culiacan and surrounding areas will wrap up any time now, as quality has declined and the fruit won't travel well. Baja is up and running in a light way with much nicer fruit. There's not a lot of volume available yet, but we should see improvements in availability in just a few weeks.

ORGANIC MINI SWEET PEPPERS

Organic mini sweet pepper supply remains limited, but seems to be slightly better this week. Fruit is coming out of Mainland MX right now, but will transition to Baja in July. There are no major quality complaints on the fruit, but there is still the occasional poor color mix. Greening concerns have improved.

ORGANIC MINI CUCUMBERS

Organic mini cucumber supply has been lighter but adequate this week. Both Baja and Mainland MX have product available, but neither have stellar quality. Baja's fruit is holding up a touch better so we're looking that direction.

ORGANIC COLOR PEPPERS

There are some new Summer crops coming out of Central MX that should run through the month of July. Quality is very nice and sizing options are available on jumbo-large fruit. There are also still some older crops remaining in West MX, but buyer beware on quality. CAN has just gotten started with a few reds so far. They expect to add orange and yellow fruit to the mix next week.



HOW TO CREATE A MORE SUSTAINABLE COMPANY

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

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK MAY 9, 2024

Founding board member of the Equitable Food Initiative and strategic adviser for Bon Appetit Management Co. Maisie Ganzler says many companies face challenges sharing the journey into sustainable practices.

In this episode of the "Tip of the Iceberg" podcast, Ganzler shared a personal anecdote during her time at Bon Appetit where she and the team wanted to discuss an important part of sustainable farming, but there wasn't an easy way to do it.

"The people listening have similar challenges, where there's some types of the sustainability story that are really complicated, or maybe not so appetizing, but we put great effort into it," she said. "We want to get market credit for it because we are doing the right thing to do the right thing. But we're also doing the right thing to build our brand."

Equitable Food Initiative's LeAnne Ruzzamenti mentioned that many produce retailers find it difficult to discuss sustainability efforts and positive stories as it opens the retailer up for criticism. This is where boldness comes in, Ganzler said.

"You are not going to be all things to all people," she said. "You are not going to make everybody happy. But you need to be honest and clear and brag about the things that you do well."

Transparency also is key, said Ganzler.

"A study just came out, from a group called Innova, of European and U.S. consumers, and it said that two-thirds of consumers would trust a company that is upfront about the struggle more than a company that does not share the details of their journey," she said. "People will trust you more if you are honest and open about the details and challenges of your journey."

She said those in the produce industry also should embrace a less-than-perfect picture of meeting sustainability goals.

"We want things that people will grab onto, remember and retell, and a good story with some wins, but with some losses, with some challenges, and then with success is more interesting," she said. "So, I urge companies to be bold, to be honest, to show their warts so that they can then show their triumphs."

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FOOD-AT-HOME INFLATION CONTINUES TO TAME, REPORT FINDS

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

[BY TOM KARST MAY 15, 2024](#)

Inflation slowed slightly in April, with annual inflation pegged at 3.4%, off slightly from the March reading of 3.5%, according to an [economic news release](#) from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

For April, the bureau said that prices for shelter and gasoline increased, accounting for more than 70% of the all-items inflation. While the food index was unchanged in April, with grocery food prices declining and restaurant food prices increasing, the fruits and vegetables price index declined 0.8%.

"The latest [Consumer Price Index] report demonstrates that the process of taming inflation continues, with food-at-home a particular bright spot in this month's data," Andy Harig, vice president of tax, trade, sustainability and policy development for FMI, the Food Industry Association, said in a news release. "On a month-over-month basis, inflation for food-at-home actually went negative at minus 0.2% and showed a strong reading of 1.1% on a year-over-year basis.

"The index for food away from home or restaurant food, rose 4.1% over the last year, with the index for limited-service meals rising 4.8% over the last 12 months, and the index for full-service meals rising 3.4%," Harig continued. "Several individual grocery categories also saw declines, including a decrease of 7.3% in the price of eggs. Food-at-home inflation is now running below both all-items inflation (3.4%) and 'core' CPI (3.6%). This is good news for both consumers and the food industry."

The overall food index increased 2.2% over the last year, according to the report.

The food at home (grocery) index rose 1.1% over the last 12 months, and the report said the price index for fruits and vegetables increased 1.7% over the year.

Harig said FMI is encouraged by its latest consumer trends report that found that food price inflation has done little to impact how consumers feel about their grocery shopping experience.

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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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WATCH AS OUR FARM-FRESH
TOMATOES JOURNEY FROM THE
VINE TO YOUR TABLE.

EXPERIENCE THE TRUE ESSENCE
OF FARM-TO-TABLE DINING AS
WE BRING YOU THE FRESHEST
FLAVORS STRAIGHT FROM OUR
FIELDS TO YOUR KITCHEN.

