

MAY 31, 2024

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updates

# CROP & MARKET

INDUSTRY INFO





# MARKET UPDATES

## ROMA TOMATOES

Eastern roma volumes are down about 40% this week as the R/P area finishes up. Most growers are completely finished harvesting now but Lipman will have some 2nds for the next few days. Despite the season winding down, quality has been good and sizing has been on the larger side. Neither Quincy nor south GA have any significant volumes yet, but we should see a few in the next 7-14 days. These plantings are light in comparison to R/P and south FL, so there won't be enough romas to fully support Eastern demand for the next month. The East will be waiting for the TN/NC area to get started in early July. Looking to the West, the Culiacan area is fast approaching the end of the season, while Sonora will continue for another 4-5 weeks. Baja and East MX supplies are improving as more growers get started and others get further into their acreage. On the domestic front, we look for growers in CA's Central Valley to start around June 10th with Lipman following about a week later.

## ROUND TOMATOES

Although round tomatoes are in transition, supply is holding steady in the East. The R/P area will likely finish up over the weekend, but there could be a few 2nds over the next 5-7 days if markets and quality allow. Quincy, FL and south GA just got started in a light way this week. We expect to see volume build over the coming days as more crops come online. Meanwhile, Lipman has started round harvests on our SC farms. Fruit size is a little smaller than what we saw out of our R/P crops with mostly 5x6's and only a few jumbos, but quality is good. Western supply is also in the middle of a transition. West MX has another 2-3 weeks to go, while Baja and East MX are seeing volume increases with big fruit and nice quality. Domestically, the CA desert will have mature greens for a few more weeks and growers in CA's Central Valley will start in the coming week. Lipman will begin CA harvests in the San Joaquin Valley around July 10th, a few weeks later than most.

## GRAPE TOMATOES

Heat has brought on grape tomatoes in the R/P area so there have been good volumes available this week. Most growers will finish up in the next few days and production will transition to Quincy, south GA, and SC. Lipman still has some fruit in the R/P area, but is well under way in SC where we will have production through June. Looking to the West, Baja will be the primary

source of volume during the Summer months with a few greenhouse grapes in Eastern/Central MX. So far, Baja's quality has been very nice.

## GREEN BEANS

GA's green bean crops were hurt from the prior weather event (heavy rain) and production has had some skips over the past week. There have been some quality issues to work through, which has served to further limit supply. We do expect both volume and quality to improve over the next 7-10 days, barring any other major weather. GA is expected to continue through June, then harvests will transition to TN and NC in late June/early July. There's a trickle of beans from Central MX, but for practical purposes, MX's season is over. The Watsonville/Salinas and Stockton/Brentwood CA areas are expected to start in the next week or so, and will carry the West until supply starts in the Santa Maria area a few weeks later.

## COLOR BELL PEPPERS

Although our production is on the lighter side for a short term, colored bell availability is solid in CAN this week. We are hearing that a significant amount of acreage will be pulled out over the next month due to disease, which will lighten things up for some by July. Central MX's production is a little lighter this week, but overall availability is adequate. West MX still has fruit available, but some lots have up to 40% defects, so they should finish any time now. For those that can use elongated varieties, there are now some field reds in the CA desert.

## GREEN BELL PEPPERS

Despite some ups and downs due to prior and present rains, GA is providing an adequate supply of bell peppers. All sizes/grades are available and quality has cleaned up as we have moved further past the major rain event of a few weeks ago. Most GA farms plan to have pepper through June, but we may see volume lighten up in a few weeks as a result of long-term effects of the prior weather. Lipman's Eastern NC program will get started around June 20th and should have good volume within a week or so of the start date. Then, things will begin to regionalize in late June/early July, with peppers popping up in multiple areas such

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as NJ, Western NC, TN, PA, KY, VA, etc. In the West, retail peppers are a CA deal. The Coachella/Thermal area has steady supply and very nice quality. Supply will start to transition to the Bakersfield area in about two weeks. Meanwhile, MX is almost at the end of season with mostly offgrades, aside from some very light volume to come out of Central MX.

## YELLOW & ZUCCHINI SQUASH

Weather and transitions have created a major shortage of soft squash this week. GA has been the source for Eastern squash, but their crops were adversely affected by the heavy rains and they've had very little to offer this week. They should see some new crops in about 2 weeks, but in the meantime we are on the verge of regional programs getting started. Eastern NC and NJ have just gotten started with light numbers and we're expecting a few other areas to get up and running over the next 7-14 days so supply should gradually improve. In the West, Sonora has pretty much wrapped up Spring crops and quality is suspect on anything remaining. Other than light volumes from Baja, production is transitioning to domestic programs in CA and WA state. Santa Maria has had a few squash so far, but cool weather has held back volume. We anticipate better supplies from this area in 7-10 days. Our WA state program is in a similar situation as CA...needing some warm days to make the fruit grow.

## CUCUMBERS

GA has enough to get the job done, but nothing extra on SS cucumbers. There are a lot of selects available, especially from the older crops in south GA that are winding down. New crops are starting in other GA areas, and our Eastern NC program will get going in the next few days. We anticipate good volumes to come shortly after the crops begin. Regional/local programs will also begin to pop up in the next few weeks. Steady, average volumes are available in the West, with fruit coming from West MX, Central MX, and Baja. There's a mix of quality with some of the older crops yielding fruit that won't travel and others with good solid cucumbers. Baja's product is some of the nicest but there's not a lot available yet. More growers are expected to get underway in the next 7-10 days and Baja's numbers should be strong by the 2nd week of June.

## HARD SQUASH

Eastern hard squash is still a hodge-podge of supply. There are some acorns in FL, light volumes in GA, and a few Honduran butternuts still around. Our KY partner, which is one of the bigger programs in the East, will get started in early to mid-July. There's less volume coming from MX as some of the Sonora growers are dropping out. With their season coming to an end in 2-3 weeks, quality is just okay at this point and is likely to decline. As with many other items, Western supply is transitioning to CA. The desert is going now with light volumes and acreage but there will be more volume in CA once the Selma/Fresno area gets started in 10-14 days.

## CHILI PEPPERS

Plant City's chili crops are still in the mix, but they are winding down, leaving production to GA's new crops. There are adequate volumes of all varieties except poblanos and serranos which are on the light side. Overall quality has been okay and seems to be improving with GA's newer plantings in play. In the West, chilies are available in CA and MX. CA has great quality but light volumes on most of the mainstream chilies. Sonora is winding down with decent volumes of jalapenos and a few tomatillos and serranos, while Baja is in the early stage of their season. So far, Baja has jalapenos, poblanos, tomatillos and Anaheims, with other options to come soon.

## EGGPLANT

FL eggplant crops are finishing up but GA has now started and should see volume increases over the next 7-10 days. Quality has been very nice in GA so far. Eastern NC is on tap to start eggplant in the latter part of June and other local programs will begin to show up in July. Looking to the West, there's still a trickle of product crossing from Mainland MX, but quality is not retail worthy. This leaves only the CA programs in production right now. Size and supply seem to be adequate but the majority of what's available is the cannonball-shaped varieties which are challenged to make retail specs. It could be a few weeks until we see ample supplies of the more retail-friendly teardrop-shaped fruit as new growing areas in CA come online.

## MINI SWEET PEPPERS

There's been a reasonable amount of mini sweets this week as the West MX crops go out with a flush. Quality is not super strong on this end-of-season fruit, causing some shrink in repacking. There's a little high-tech product in Central MX, but supply looks to remain very short until Baja starts possibly in late June. CAN does have some limited volumes available, but they are at a significant premium.

## ORGANIC ROMA

Organic romas are still coming out of the Sonora area. Quality has been pretty good as long as the fruit is on the lighter side of the color spectrum. Baja is expected to start in a light way in 10-14 days.

## ORGANIC GRAPE TOMATOES

Organic grape supply is limited this week as Sonora is close to the finish line and Baja doesn't have any volume yet. Quality is strong from Baja's new crops but there are some hit or miss issues in Sonora (high color, shrivel, etc.). Look for Sonora to wind down and Baja to come on with more volume in the next two weeks.

## ORGANIC MINI SWEET PEPPERS

As with conventional, organic mini sweets have had a slight flush this week. However, quality has been hit or miss with more shriveling and softness showing up in the end-of-season fruit. Baja's on schedule to start at the end of June/early July so supply may get a little dicey in the coming weeks if the Mainland crops can't hold on.

## ORGANIC MINI CUCUMBERS

Both Baja and Mainland MX have mini cucumbers, but quality has been challenged from both areas with dehydrated tips as the most frequent concern, especially if the product travels far. We're hoping to see stronger fruit out of Baja as they get deeper into the season.



## WATERMELON

Watermelon production is currently transitioning from central to north FL, where the early yields look about average and quality is good.



## CONSUMERS PRIORITIZE SUSTAINABILITY IN PRODUCE PURCHASE DECISIONS

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

BY JENNIFER STRAILEY, MAY 29, 2024

Sustainability remains an important concern for consumers into 2024, according to The Packer's Sustainability Insights 2024 survey, which found that more than three-quarters of consumers surveyed place at least some priority on sustainability in their buying decisions, up 4% from 2023. Thirty percent of consumers surveyed place primary priority on it. Fielded April 2-11, 2024, the web-based quantitative survey of 491 consumers from across the country found that younger consumers in particular prioritize sustainability and associate terms such as "eco," "climate," "energy" and "friendly" with the movement.

All respondents were age 18 or older, live in the U.S. and do most or all of their household grocery shopping.

The younger the respondent, the higher a priority sustainability is when making a purchase. Sustainability Insights 2024 found that 78% of 18-24-year-olds ranked sustainability as a primary or secondary priority versus 51% of those aged 65 or older. Meanwhile, 27% of those 65 and older said that sustainability was not a priority compared with just 4% of 18-24-year-olds.

Consumers polled also represented a range of income levels, with 22% of respondents reporting household incomes of \$25,000 to \$49,999, followed by 21% reporting household incomes of \$100,000 to \$149,000.

Forty-two percent of survey respondents indicated they're married, with 46% reporting two adults living in the household. Sixty-six percent reported no children living in the household, 17% reported one child in the household and 15% reported two children living in the household.

When survey respondents were asked who is most responsible to lead and promote sustainability practices and policies, they indicated consumers, government and farms/food processors/manufacturers share majority of responsibility. However, the percentage of consumer respondents who indicated the consumer was most responsible decreased in 2024 to 18%, compared with 22% in 2023.

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## HOW RETAILERS ARE PUTTING A SPOTLIGHT ON SUSTAINABILITY

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

[BY AMANDA BALTAZAR MAY 14, 2024](#)

Jimbo's has a system for ensuring as little of its produce as possible is sent to the landfill. First, any fruits and vegetables beyond the point of selling are sent to the stores' delis or juice bars to be repurposed. Bananas always go here, meaning the juice bars never buy them. Secondly, it boxes up produce for employees to take home and use, and finally, it donates anything else to 15 partners "which helps us reduce food waste," said Stephanie Morris, who at that time worked for the four-store San Diego chain, serving as the sustainability coordinator.

Anything beyond use for any of those causes is available for customers to pick up to add to their compost piles or feed to their animals.

In the U.S., 92 billion pounds of food is wasted annually, according to Feeding America, which accounts for more than a third of the country's food supply. Food waste accounts for 8% of global carbon emissions, and it aggravates water shortages and contributes to food insecurity and high food costs.

Retailers, like Jimbo's, are stepping up to the plate. They're taking steps to cut food waste and be more sustainable and responsible companies overall.

Portland, Ore.-based New Seasons Market, which has more than 20 stores, says it pairs up with local gleaning partners and educates customers on proper storage techniques to extend the life of produce at home.

It's also added a new dry misting process in one store, which decreases water use and keeps fruit and vegetables fresh for longer, ultimately reducing food waste.

"We have set ambitious goals to drive our progress in sustainability, aiming for a 70% landfill diversion rate, reducing our waste to 3.93% of sales and decreasing food waste by 50% by 2030," says Chris Harris, produce category director for New Seasons Market. "We are currently also exploring [artificial intelligence] to measure and reduce waste more effectively."

Scarborough, Maine-based Hannaford says it focuses on first preventing food waste through strategic product ordering and management at the store level. The company trains staff on how to responsibly handle food to avoid damage and exposure to temperature variations. It also donates food, including to farmers for animal feed and food-to-energy conversion efforts. Large grocery chains are making a difference, too, including the judicious use of technology.

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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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