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updates

CROP & MARKET

INDUSTRY INFO





MARKET UPDATES

ROMA TOMATOES

With Tennessee and Western North Carolina's crops lost to the previous hurricane (Helene), Eastern roma supply is basically a non-factor this week. There have been a few handfuls here and there but nothing of significance. Quincy should have some romas in about 2 weeks, but this is light acreage and is not adequate to handle Eastern demand. The Palmetto/Ruskin area generally provides supply for the month of November but has been impacted by Hurricane Milton. Once damage assessments are completed, we'll know more but anticipate this area to have significantly less fruit available this year, if any. As for the West, their light volumes are in extremely high demand at this time. California farms are edging up on the season's end with only a few growers having product available this week. They have another 2-3 weeks to go, but we don't expect any significant surge in volume. Baja's in the middle of transition from Summer to Fall plantings. Some new fields just started this week and we should see another grower come online in 7-10 days. Central Mexico growers have been battling weather for much of the season and received rain from the early stages of Milton so volumes and quality aren't what we normally expect. Romas look to be a challenging item for the next 4-6 weeks.

ROUND TOMATOES

Hurricane Helene devastated Tennessee and Western North Carolina crops, putting an end to all production in those areas and significantly impacting Eastern supply. Lipman's Virginia farm is still active but will finish up over the next two weeks, harvesting more 2nd and 3rd picks during this time. Fruit quality is good, but sizing will be smaller as we finish out the season. Quincy is on tap to start up in the next few weeks, but this area's acreage is limited. We are waiting for post-Milton assessments on the Palmetto/Ruskin area, which normally provides November's supply. Early reports indicate we should anticipate impacts on production. Eastern supply could be limited until south Florida is fully in season in December. Out West, California is closing in on the last few weeks of their season with light to moderate volumes and some growers with smaller sizing. Baja's production is light and fruit has sized down as current crops wind down. We will see some new Fall crops come online over the next few weeks but aren't likely to see a significant increase in volume. Overall, Mexico's quality is average at this time.

GRAPE TOMATOES

Eastern grape tomato supply is lighter this week, as most local deals in Tennessee and North Carolina have finished due to the impact of Hurricane Helene. Lipman continues harvesting at the Virginia farm, but with only about two weeks left in the season, volumes have declined, although quality remains good. In Florida, the Palmetto/Ruskin area was set to begin harvest within the next 7 days, but the full impact of Hurricane Milton is still being assessed, so timing and volumes are likely to be affected. Fortunately, Lipman's Labelle crops are expected to come online in the next 7-10 days, which should help improve supply. Mexico's volumes are also on the lighter side as we wait for Fall crops to come online in Baja. Central Mexico has lighter but relatively steady supplies which should continue through the month of October.

GREEN BEANS

Eastern green bean production is extremely limited, with only small volumes coming from the remaining active areas. Michigan has just finished its season, and both Eastern North Carolina and Georgia have seen significant crop damage from prior storms, sharply reducing their output. Virginia still has some supply, but it is expected to finish within the next few weeks. Central Florida was about to begin harvesting when Hurricane Milton struck, and though reports are still pending, it's likely that those crops have been lost. In the West, green bean production remains limited, with light volumes coming from Santa Maria and Santa Ana. Washington State continues harvesting, and our partner there is set to begin new fields in the next few days, which could extend the season through October, depending on the weather.

COLOR BELL PEPPERS

With 4-5 weeks remaining in the season (pending favorable weather), both Eastern and Western Canada are seeing volumes lighten up but remain at adequate levels. Quality is still good, although there are occasional issues reported likely due to aging crops. Central Mexico is rocking along with steady supply and new crops are coming online within the week. With the tightening green bell situation, some growers may be enticed to harvest fruit as greens to capitalize on markets which could change the mix of availability in the near future.

GREEN BELL PEPPERS

Eastern bell pepper production is limited. Light volumes are still coming from Michigan, New Jersey, and Canada, but all these areas are expected to wrap up within the next week. Georgia, which would typically be a key supply area this time of year, has seen its crops impacted by Hurricane Helene, leading to reduced supply and marginal quality. West Coast crops in south Florida are expected to begin in about two weeks, offering some relief, but supply looks to remain tight for several weeks. In the West, Fresno continues to be the strongest area for bell pepper supply, though volumes and sizes are beginning to decline as the season winds down at the end of October. Quality remains good, especially with fresh fruit. The Coachella area is expected to start around October 20th, with Sonoran production following in mid to late November. In Washington State, our local partner is still producing nice-quality peppers and expects to continue through the rest of the month.

YELLOW & ZUCCHINI SQUASH

Yellow squash is currently a bit snug in the East, with zucchini faring better in terms of both volume and quality. Supply is coming from Georgia, New Jersey, as well as our Eastern North Carolina and Immokalee farms. The shortage of retail-appropriate yellow squash is mainly due to quality issues but there is less acreage than zucchini. Zucchini, on the other hand, has ample supply and good quality, with no major concerns reported. We're expecting post-storm reports from Central Florida soon, which will provide insight into the condition of crops in that region. In the West, supply is now shifting to Sonora's new crops. While volumes aren't at full capacity yet, we expect to see gradual increases in the coming weeks, and the quality of the initial harvest has been very good.

CUCUMBERS

Cucumber harvests have concluded in Michigan and will wind down in New York over the next 5-7 days, as production transitions to the South. Georgia has been harvesting for about two weeks now, with average quality and lighter yields and reduced acreage due to Hurricane Helene. Our coastal Carolina farm has been steady, with good volumes, average quality and a recent flush as several plantings came together. Early harvests in the Immokalee area are set to begin next week. In the West, cucumber supplies are moderate to good, with Baja, Central Mexico, and Sonora all in production. The best quality is coming from Baja and Central Mexico, while Sonora's early picks have shown some quality issues, including light sunken areas, yellowing, and lighter coloring. However, we anticipate improvement as Sonoran farms move further into their crops.

HARD SQUASH

Hard squash production is beginning to wind down in Kentucky and Michigan, but it's ramping up in Pennsylvania, New York, and other Northeastern areas. Overall availability is currently adequate, though not excessive. Additional growers are expected to move into hard squash production in the coming weeks to help meet strong seasonal demand. In the West, the situation remains steady, with California and Washington State maintaining solid supply and good quality across all varieties.

EGGPLANT

Eggplant availability is mostly adequate in the East with light volumes from North Carolina, Georgia, New Jersey, and even a few in south Florida. No major quality issues have been reported from these areas. In the West, supply is primarily coming from the Fresno area. Some growers have nice quality while others are

struggling a bit. Fresno is expected to run through the rest of the month, then production will transition to the California desert. Washington state still has eggplant, but fruit is sizing down and crops are expected to finish up in the next two weeks.

CHILI PEPPERS

With most local chili pepper programs finishing up and Michigan nearing its season's end, the Eastern supply of chili peppers is quite limited. Although some crops were affected by Hurricane Helene, Georgia is expected to start producing in the next few weeks. We're still awaiting updates from the Plant City area, but production of the mainline chilies in South Florida should also begin in the coming weeks. In the West, jalapeno volumes are strong, with light to moderate availability of other chili varieties. Baja's crops are expected to continue for another 4-6 weeks, overlapping with the Nogales season, though quality from Baja is now average, with some items not holding up as well during transit. Nogales is already seeing some chilies from Sonora, with volumes set to improve as more growers come online. Washington State continues to provide excellent supply and quality, with no frost expected for at least 15 days, allowing this program to potentially extend through the remainder of the month.

ORGANIC ROMA

The organic roma tomato market has heated up significantly. Baja has slightly reduced availability, as some growers are between crops, while production in Central Mexico remains relatively steady. The shortage of conventional roma tomatoes has driven up both pricing and demand for romas of any type, further tightening supply. This impact on pricing and availability is likely to continue for at least the short term.

ORGANIC GRAPE TOMATOES

Baja's organic grape availability has become a little sporadic this week as growers work through transitions between plantings. Central Mexico also has fruit but the quality is not quite as nice as Baja's.

ORGANIC MINI CUCUMBERS

Supply has improved slightly on organic mini cucumbers with product coming from both Baja and Central Mexico. Quality is adequate.

ORGANIC MINI SWEET PEPPERS

With one grower in between plantings, organic minis are a little snug this week but supply is mostly adequate. We have been seeing a poor color mix on some lots, but the fruit quality is good.

ORGANIC COLORED PEPPERS

Organic colored bell supply is steady and strong out of Central Mexico this week. Things will begin to lighten up over the next few weeks, but quality, sizing, and supply are excellent at this time. Canada is in its final stages of the season and should be wrapping things up in the next few weeks.

WATERMELON

South Carolina's watermelon production is steady, with good quality reported across the board. This is expected to continue for the remaining 2-3 weeks of the season. As South Carolina winds down, attention shifts to Central Florida, the next major area for melon production. At this time, we are gathering information to fully assess impacts of Hurricane Milton.



CONSUMERS FRUSTRATED WITH RISING GROCERY PRICES, SURVEY FINDS

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

A recent survey conducted by R.R. Donnelley & Sons Co. found that grocery consumers across key demographic groups have reached a breaking point and are seeking out lower-cost goods.

RRD's annual "[2024 CPG + Grocery Consumer Report](#)" speaks to how inflation is continuing to influence consumer purchasing behavior, according to a news release. The report is based on a survey of more than 1,800 adults in the U.S.

According to the survey, 55% of shoppers said they'll stay loyal to the store they shop at most often — particularly baby boomers (61%) and affluent consumers (64%) — while 45% are open to changing stores for greater savings, particularly millennials (50%).

"Consumers are becoming more judicious with their purchasing decisions, in large part due to the continued impact of external factors including inflation," Beth Johnson, grocery industry expert and director of client strategy at RRD, said in the release. "These factors are testing the loyalty of shoppers, making it more important than ever for marketers to rethink how they engage with buyers. Brands will need to meet shoppers where they are by emphasizing value and savings to hold their attention."

Top findings from the survey include:

- 88% of consumers express frustration with rising prices across categories, including groceries, gas and restaurants. This sentiment was most associated with grocery shopping overall (86%), driven by the rising costs of food and beverages (80%).
- 87% of baby boomers and 79% of households with \$100,000 or more in income express concern or frustration over food and beverage prices.
- Consumers are adjusting their shopping behaviors by stocking up during sales (41%), purchasing fewer items (37%), switching to less-expensive name brands (37%), switching from name brands to private-label brands (35%), using more coupons and discounts (34%) and by sticking to their shopping lists (32%).
- Coupon redemption in mass and variety/discount stores increased by 9% and 37%, respectively, compared to the first half of 2023.
- Regarding store selection, 68% of consumers prioritize convenience and proximity to their homes, with baby boomers valuing close proximity the most (76%).
- Many shoppers (32%) also report prioritizing an engaging shopping experience, even if the store is farther away than others — particularly Generation Z (39%), millennials (37%) and parents (38%).



SURVEY FINDS GEN Z HUNGRY FOR TRANSPARENCY IN FOOD SUSTAINABILITY

[THEPACKER.COM](https://thePACKER.com)

BY JILL DUTTON SEPTEMBER 24, 2024

Generation Z consumers are placing an overwhelming emphasis on both sustainability and quality in their grocery products, and many are willing to spend more to support brands that reflect these values, according to a recent YouGov survey.

The findings are part of a survey examining Gen Z food, health and grocery shopping preferences, conducted independently by YouGov on behalf of Whole Foods Market, the company said in a news release. The national online survey sampled 1,032 adults between the ages of 18-27 in the U.S. from Aug. 30 to Sept. 6, 2024,

According to the study, 70% of Gen Z supports climate-smart agricultural practices. Additionally, 55% are willing to pay more for environmentally sustainable products, and over half of Gen Z consumers prefer brands that prioritize lower environmental impacts or locally sourced foods.

Quality is also important for this younger generation, the release said, as 80% of Gen Z agree food quality is important in purchasing decisions, and 70% are willing to spend more on high-quality food.

"Prioritizing a positive climate impact while continuing to meet our rigorous quality standards is part of our identity at Whole Foods Market. It's not just what we do, it's who we are as a company," Whole Foods Market CEO Jason Buechel said in the release. "As Gen Z generates a higher demand for environmentally conscious products, we have continued to increase our efforts toward climate-smart agriculture and responsible sourcing practices. This generation gives me great optimism as we continue to protect our food systems for future generations to come."

The study reinforces a growing demand among younger generations for clear information about sustainability to make informed purchasing decisions. Specifically, as climate change increasingly impacts consumer behavior, the release said, "the findings from this new study by YouGov reveal Gen Z is hungry for greater transparency regarding food sustainability and quality."



UPCOMING EVENTS:

OCTOBER 17-19, 2024

BOOTH #B2955

THE GLOBAL PRODUCE & FLORAL SHOW
ATLANTA, GA

FIRST DAY OF FALL MEANS IT'S
TIME TO COZY UP WITH SOME
LIPMAN FAVORITES! WE'RE BIG
SOUP ENTHUSIASTS HERE AND
JUST HAD TO SHARE THIS
DELIGHTFUL BELL PEPPER AND
TOMATO LENTIL SOUP RECIPE.

