



MEXICO FREEZE UPDATE

The effects of Mexico's record freezing temperatures in the NW growing areas will be felt for weeks to come. Our QA team (Francisco) has been on the ground the past couple of days doing first hand inspections of different growing areas. The reports indicate that, as a general statement, 85-90 percent of the "open field" crops have been lost in the Culiacan area. There is significant damage in many of the "shade house" and greenhouse operations as well, though as a rule these plants fared better. Some indoor crops were totally lost while others were damaged to a much lesser degree. Growers have gleaned whatever product they could salvage from the plants and packed it and shipped it across the border. There is a wide range of quality and some of the lots will not make it across the country in transit. In addition to literally freezing product on plants, the cold temperatures have also caused blooms to drop which eliminates the potential for fruit coming along behind. This creates shortages as far as several weeks into the future. We should expect supplies to become even shorter by the end of next week.

Green Beans

The beans in Mexico were severely damaged and growers lost most if not all of their crop. Most reports put the crop loss between 90-100%. For the next couple of weeks supplies will be tight but they should loosen up as Florida begins the harvest of new fields in 10-14 days. Florida will have some beans later this month. Volume will not completely return to normal until the middle or end of March.



Squash – Yellow & Zucchini

Squash, like beans, is grown almost exclusively in open fields and was therefore devastated by the freeze. With the exception of a few pockets, reports indicate that there is 80-90% overall crop loss. There are a few loads crossing in Nogales but quality varies from lot-to-lot. Supplies are not expected to return to normal for 6-8 weeks.

Cucumbers

The field cucumbers were damaged heavily and some of the shade house/greenhouse product was damaged as well. Total crop loss estimates range from 60-70%. The quality will vary by lot as growers stripped the plants and packed whatever they could salvage and sent it across. There should be some supplies but in a more limited way as greenhouses will provide some relief here. This situation will continue through the next 6-8 weeks as well.



Green Peppers

The majority of the green peppers are grown in the field so they were hit heavily. Estimates range from 65-80% crop loss. In the short term they have salvaged what they could from plants and have even begun picking some red bells grown in shade houses (in the green stage) to get green peppers to market. This crop will not be replanted so the tight supplies are expected to continue on into the first of April.

Red Peppers

Any red peppers grown in open fields were severely damaged but there is a significant portion of this grown "in doors". Crop damage estimates range from 40-60%. There is good news and bad news here. The red peppers grown in doors are being picked and shipped green due to the market price on green bells. This is expected to create a significant gap in the red pepper supply in a week to 10 days. The lack availability on this product will also be felt into the beginning of April.

Eggplant

Most of the eggplant are grown outdoors and were heavily damaged by the freeze. It is estimated that 80-90 percent of this crop was lost. Most suppliers don't feel this product will recover and shortages will continue through the beginning or middle of April.

Tomatoes

Growers are still currently assessing the damage, but most are fearing 50-100% loss. Growers began harvesting round and roma tomatoes mid-week and are currently assessing damage. Initial reports show 50 – 70% loss with an immediate impact to quality and supply. Salvage will continue for the next 2 – 3 weeks with almost total loss in the March and April time frames. This is likely a 4 – 6 week event, as the next major source of supply will be the spring crop coming from Florida in mid to late March. Barring inclement weather in Florida current crop assessment is good at this time, but currently only in the bloom stage. Cherry and Grape tomatoes were the hardest hit and those crops are estimated between 90-100% lost.





YUMA FREEZE UPDATE

Though the weather this week has improved; the damage from last weeks' freezes can be seen throughout the Desert growing region; and will be felt in the way of short supplies and be seen on marginal to fair quality on most products for the next few weeks. Issues such as blister and epidermal peel; which seemed to be subsiding prior to the freeze, are once again very prevalent on Iceberg, Romaine, green and red leaf lettuces. Spring Mix and Spinach fared even worse, as the ice basically burned a lot of the product. Availability of most products will likely remain low through the remainder of the desert growing season.

Iceberg Lettuce:

Quality is mostly just fair; with most product having to be heavily trimmed due to the epidermal peel and blistering. Because of small to medium size structure, as well as the additional trimming; a few shippers are and will be packing almost exclusively 30's instead of 24's. Weights range from 38 to 43 lbs gross pre-cooled, depending on shipper and field location. Some shippers continue to have occasional Sclerotinia issues on some of their fields, further affecting yields. Volumes are very low, and will continue low for a few weeks. Expect to see pale product.



Romaine:

The product is of poor to fair quality, with moderate to heavy blistering in most lots. Product Stands continue to be very uneven as far as sizing is concerned; which is affecting weights and yields. Product weight ranges from 31 to 35 lbs. Volumes are very low; and will likely continue that way through the next couple of weeks at least.



Green and Red leaf:

Quality ranges from fair to good on green leaf; with some ice related discoloration and occasional blistering; weights are around 19 to 21 lbs for most shippers. Product volumes are now lower due to the increased demand derived from the low romaine volumes. Red leaf volumes continue to be very low, with poor to fair quality and weights varying from 16 to 20lbs, depending on shipper.

Broccoli and Cauliflower:

Field Packed Broccoli quality is fair to good. Occasional; though minimal pin rot, purpling and or brown bead is still visible on some raw product lots. Supplies are lower this week, and will likely continue lower through next week. Cauliflower supplies are now lower as well; and should remain lower for the remainder of this week and through next; with fair to good quality; and occasional riciness.



Pre Cut Lettuce:

Precut Iceberg lettuce quality is fair to good; with continued freeze related issues affecting the whole industry, and necessitating heavy trimming for all raw product. Romaine quality is poor to fair, due to heavy blistering, and even some freeze related discoloration. Due to the very low availability of raw product; some defects which would normally get trimmed off under normal market circumstances may be left on the product as to not to affect the already low yields.

Spinach/Spring Mix:

Spring mix and Spinach availability is extremely low to non-existent all depending on shipper. Quality for available product is poor to fair on Spring Mix, and fair to good on Spinach. Some shippers are not harvesting or packing any spring mix at this point, and are looking to begin packing late this week, and possibly even wait until Monday to pack any.