



# fresh Directions

March 10th, 2011

*An informative weekly fact sheet for the produce procurement professional.*

**Apples** ↔ Washington Red delicious is still peaking on fruit with premium color and is still heavier to the smaller sizes. Strong demand & lower than normal storage supplies have kept red prices up on all grades. Many suppliers are rationing their reds out to ensure a year round supply. Gold's are still heavy to 88/100 and larger size fruit and they continue to produce more of the Washington extra-fancy grade. Galas continue to peak on 100/113's and have good color. Large Gala's are still very limited. Granny-Smiths are peaking on 88's & larger while anything smaller is very limited. Most shippers are subbing sizes and grades on smaller-count granny-smith orders. Fuji's are still high in color and continue to peak on 88's and larger. Small Fuji's remain short.

**Asparagus** ↔ This market is stable on all sizing. Mexican supplies continue to be light on extra large and jumbo sizing. Peruvian product is moderate in availability on standard and large sizes. The jumbo and extra large sizing is on the light side as well. California production has begun in a light way out of the Bakersfield region.

**Avocado** ↑ Avocado supplies crossing in from Mexico continue at 30% lighter rate than a few weeks ago. Supplies are very tight. Mexico has already packed over 60% of their crop, and has lightened their harvest to spread supplies out through the spring. The field price for the Mexican fruit

is rising. The California crop has started packing only light numbers of their new crop. This years California crop is less than half of last years. Chile is done, and has little fruit left on the market. From now through July, the industry will average only 16 to 17 million pounds in production per week. The average weekly demand runs 24 to 26 million pounds per week. The results of this shortage are and will continue to be a very strong market and much higher prices.

**Bell Peppers Western** ↑ Green bells out of Mexico will continue with very limited production with the tail end of their crop. Smaller size choice with a wide range in quality, with all showing signs of freeze damage. Supplies will continue to drop over the next couple of weeks. California's Desert crop will start around the first week of April. Colored bells are starting to lighten in production. We expect to see fair production is week and see volumes to really begin to drop next week as we start seeing the effects of the bloom drop from the freeze in early February. **Eastern** ↔ Demand on Florida pepper remains strong due to short supplies in Nogales. Off-grade pepper is loosening up a bit and the pepper market as a whole should remain steady into next week. Quality is good.

**Broccoli** ↔ This market is firm on bunched product as well as crowns. This week has started out a little slow in

demand. Very cold weather in past weeks slowed down the growth of this commodity. Many suppliers have small to moderate amounts of product to sell. Supplies are in Santa Maria and Yuma. Volume deals are no being offered like in the previous week. Mexico production is moderate in supplies to start the week. Salinas has started production.

**Cauliflower** ↓ The cauliflower market is softer as better supplies have become available, mainly on twelve counts. Santa Maria and Yuma volumes are sufficient to fill contract orders. A few shippers are looking to move large volume orders as supplies have picked up and demand has slowed down. Salinas has begun production as well and better deals can be made by loading in the Salinas valley.

**Celery** ↔ This market is steady. Deals can still be made on 24 counts. Currently, production is coming from Oxnard, Santa Maria and Yuma. The Oxnard production is stronger as is the Yuma production. Demand is lower and some suppliers are looking to deal. The quality has been much better compared to past weeks.

**Citrus Lemons** ↑ Fruit sizing is shifting to 115's and larger. The 165's and smaller are less abundant with the market showing some firming. **Oranges** ↔ We are seeing the size in the orange crop starting to size up as well. The percentage of small sizes being packed is starting to drop.

**Lettuce Leaf** ↔ This market on romaine is unusual. Although, there are some offers on quantities, there remains a gap in pricing that is significant. Supplies are light with many suppliers. Yields continue to be down due to blister, bottom rot and epidermal peel that all suppliers are dealing with. Romaine Hearts are extremely difficult to purchase as harvesting has been extremely light with all suppliers. The blister and peel has made this commodity rough in appearance upon arrival. This will continue likely for most of the Yuma deal so please let your customers be advised. Red leaf is tight. The green leaf market has firmed up. **Iceberg** ↔ This market is steady with most suppliers. Shippers are still seeing some epidermal peel, bottom rot, as well as blister for product being harvested. The weights and quality will vary amongst the different shippers. Yuma production has weights ranging from 32 to 36 pounds. Brown ribs, discoloration, blister and peel are a few common defects seen upon arrival. This will continue throughout the week so please be aware.

**Melons Cantaloupes** ↑ There is good availability sizes are peaking to 9's and larger. Smaller sizes will be limited this week. Volume is a little more limited but quality is excellent. **Honeydew** ↑ Dews are still extremely limited on both coasts with very little fruit coming in and mostly peaking to 5ct. We will see tighter markets for the next week with a little light at the end of the tunnel for next week loading. Quality is only fair.

**Onions** ↓ Washington, Idaho, and Oregon remain steady to lower on all sizes of yellows with flex for volume except on mediums. Storage quality on the yellows has been holding nicely. Mexican yellows continue to peak on jumbos and colossals and their market is slightly lower. The Mexican yellow quality is also very good

and they have good size this year. Texas has started packing a few yellows. Reds are steady to lower in the northwest and the volume deals are still available. Mexican reds are slightly lower. The red quality has been good in all areas. Northwest whites are steady to lower but supplies are still limited. Mexican Whites are lower and plentiful with volume deals available on jumbos. Nevada still has all colors available and they are steady to lower on everything except medium yellows.

**Potatoes** ↑ Idaho burbanks are up slightly on all counts, steady on number-tuos, and lower on poly. 70's and larger are up the most and will continue to climb, pulling all of the other counts up with them. Norkotah carton prices are mostly steady and are available in better numbers this week since more shippers are packing them. Idaho's quality has been mostly good although few lots of Burbanks have had some hollow-heart and internal black spotting. Washington Norkotahs continue to peak in the middle of the count range and that market is steady on all sizes. Most Idaho & Washington packers continue to pack on a limited basis to make their supplies stretch through the summer and avoid a gap. Colorado is also steady on all sizes this week. Colored potatoes continue from Bakersfield and the availability is good on reds, limited on golds, and even more limited on whites. Mount Vernon, Washington continues packing excellent quality reds but has finished with golds. Washington reds will be available for the next couple weeks and their market is steady. Minnesota & Wisconsin both continue to pack reds and the market is steady but availability is light as they are

nearly done. Florida continues packing limited supplies of all colors and is producing more reds than anything else.

**Tomatoes Eastern** ↑ The market continues to be high from the past freeze in Florida coinciding with the freeze in Mexico. Mostly US Combinations or #2 product in being shipped out of Florida. The end of this week should see the very beginnings of new crop out of Florida but supplies will be very light and coming only from a limited number of shippers. We can expect high markets, poor quality and low supplies for another 3 weeks. At this point, even the spring deal is in question as to how strong it will be.

**Western** ↑ We can expect high markets and poor quality crossing from Mexico for the next 2-3 weeks. Most of the fruit has greatly reduced shelf life due to the fruit coming off stressed or dying plants. Fruit is only holding up for 3-4 days then starts popping. With the "salvage" product from the freeze about finished, there will be more dramatic price increases – maybe not yet this week, but certainly by the tail end of next week.

