

Same Informative  
Report with a  
Fresh New Look!

# FRESH DIRECTIONS

WEST CREEK FRESH™

An informative weekly produce trend report.

December 2013



## APPLES ↔

The New York shippers are still packing Empires, Macs', Romes, Red Delicious, Galas, Fuji's, Macouns, and Courtland's. The New York fruit is larger than normal and most varieties are still peaking between 88's and 100's. The New York fruit is steady. Michigan is still packing Red Delicious, Fuji's, Golden Delicious, Gala's, McIntosh, Jonagolds, Jonathans, and Red Romes. Most of the Michigan fruit is peaking on 125/138's for all varieties but the smaller sizes are up due to lighter supplies. Washington Red Delicious is steady and is still peaking on 88's and larger in the Washington extra-fancy #1 grade. Smaller reds remain short esp. in the lower grades. Golden Delicious is steady and is still peaking on 80/88's in the Washington extra-fancy grade. Granny-Smith is also steady and is still heavy to 88/100's and extra-fancy fruit. Galas are producing mostly 88/100's and the market is steady to higher. Washington Fuji's are steady and most packers are still peaking on 80's and larger. Honeycrisp, Braeburns, Pink Ladies, Cameos, and Jonagolds, and the other varieties are available and they are mostly large.

## ASPARAGUS ↑

This market is extremely active as supplies are limited with all shippers. The cold front in the Mexico region the past weeks has slowed production way down. Supplies from Peru are also very limited, as demand exceeds supply. Extra Large and Jumbo asparagus is limited from either growing region.

## AVOCADO ↑

Demand is good and steady on all sizes. Mexico's supplies are steady, but we are now seeing a shift to peaking on 60's with 48's and larger fruit a little tighter. Market on 48's firming up a little this week. Chilean fruit is begging to arrive in better volumes. Market is steady to firming.

## BELL PEPPERS

**Western Bells:** ↑ Gold bells markets continue steady availability depends on growing district. Demand

exceeds as Mexican production has not yet started in earnest. We are starting to see some hot house product crossing but still light. Green bell market is steady on larger size bells. Crops are currently shipping from Southern California, Nogales, and from Baja. Most Mexican growers are harvesting more medium/smaller fruit than larger sizes. Mexican green bells are light in larger sizes due to hurricane Manuel. Market is becoming active in the choice and small bells as some lots in Nogales are not up to snuff. Coachella is currently in production. Nogales will see increased crossings in the next coming weeks. Open field colored Red bell market are beginning to settle slightly as Coachella is starting new lots. High FOBs will continue even though Coachella has started their volume will not offset the demand. Mexico has started with light crossings through Nogales. We ought to see relief on markets in the next couple of weeks as new lots start up. Demand still exceeds availability from Southern California. Tardiness in Coachella and Mexico startups will keep markets on the high end for the next couple of weeks.

**Eastern Bells:** ↔ The pepper market remains steady with good supplies and excellent quality.

## BERRIES

**Strawberries:** ↑ Supplies are getting better out of Florida and Mexico but are very limited out of California. The cold weather in the California growing area is the main cause which is not letting the fruit color up during the nights. Market will remain firm out of California as supplies will be light out these areas till the first of the year. From a quality aspect in Oxnard, expect to see some smaller sizing issues, which will continue to run with 22-25 count. Most shippers are switching to 8/1# berries and subbing for other packs in order to extend their ability to cover orders; as well as protect the quality of the fruit. The forecast is calling for slightly warming trend going into the first part of the week in all growing regions of California. All shippers are so limited that they are struggling to cover contracts. We are doing our best to cover all your orders and expect multiple

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picks, last minute loading changes as well as loading date changes are all possibilities. We are trying to moving as much orders over to load at McAllen, Texas or Florida, which will have better overall quality. Stem strawberries are very limited due to small sizing currently in all growing regions. Strawberries have hit the lowest production point of the year, which will remain tight until spring crop begins next couple weeks.

**Raspberries:** ↑ The raspberries market is firm as we hit the lowest production of the year. The main growing area currently is Central Mexico with some light supplies still being harvested in Oxnard. Most shippers are sold out throughout the week and will only cover regular business. We expect harvest volumes to remain relatively consistent through mid January before significant declines. Cut backs are expected to begin on the early varieties to return for the spring crop. Good quality being shipped currently.

**Blackberries:** ↓ Supplies have caught up with demand, which is driving this market down. The weather in Central Mexico has been nice past couple weeks, which has helped supplies. The crop is entering the peak production window and is expected to have strong volumes through January. The quality is fair to good depending on the lot.

**Blueberries:** ↑ Blueberries are transitioning from Argentina to Chile. The biggest issues are the delayed shipments coming into the U.S out of Chile. Better supplies are coming into the East coast; but shippers are only covering contracts and regular business out of West coast. The main pack size will be 6oz with very limited supplies of 4.4oz. Expect this market to remain slightly tight until middle of January until Chile is up and running. Quality is being reported as good.

## **BROCCOLI** ↑

The broccoli supplies continue to be produced in Santa Maria, Salinas, Scottsdale and Yuma. Supplies are short this week as this commodity has slowed growth due to the cold temperatures in all growing regions. Expect this market to be active this week.

## **CARROTS** ↔

Supplies of carrots are good, with good size on JBO's. Quality is good.

## **CAULIFLOWER** ↑

The cauliflower market is very active. Supplies in Salinas are finished and Yuma production is light to moderate. Demand has picked up. Santa Maria is in light production as well. Many shippers have caught up with the excess inventory supplies. Expect this market to get stronger next week.

## **CELERY** ↔

The celery market is continues on a steady path, overall. Oxnard and Santa Maria are the main growing regions. Shippers continue to ship product to Yuma for a transfer fee. Picking up directly in Oxnard produces the best fob. Supplies are expected to be moderate throughout the week on all sizing. The quality is reported to be good, with only slight bowing being reported.

## **CITRUS** ↑

**Lemons:** The freeze in the Central Valley has now started to affect this districts lemon crop. This is not a larger crop, but will have an impact on overall supplies as we move in to the late winter through summer months. Demand still remains very good on all sizes from all shippers. The Desert fruit supplies are good on 140's and larger. Smaller fruit 165's/200's/235's are just meeting daily demand.

**Oranges:** Seven days of freezing temperatures on the California Navel crop have growers' assessing damages. This Freeze may be over, but damage has been done. It could take growers several weeks before the full extent of the damages are known. Look for even tighter supplies on the smaller sizes, 113's & 138's and now moving into 88's. Market has firmed.

**Limes:** Look for supplies to tighten up as we move into the Holiday as harvesting crews in Mexico begin to take time off. Quality is good with some lots still showing weather related issues (Stylar, Brown spots and lighter color).

## **CUCUMBERS**

**Western Cucumber:** ↑ Market is creeping up. Crossings through Nogales are increasing but movement is still brisk. Quality is good and anyone with older inventories is cleaning up. Weather for the weekend may press markets higher as rain and cold weather are expected this weekend. The anticipated rain is expected to be enough to interrupted harvesting.



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**Eastern Cucumbers:** ↔ South Florida now has light volume in off shore cucumbers as well as domestic, creating a two-tiered market. However, neither market has much strength to it. Expect the markets on both to even out by the end of the week.

## EGGPLANT

**Western Eggplant:** ↔ Market is settling down and supplies are improving. As with other products, the cooler weather and expected rain for the weekend may interrupt production and press markets.

**Eastern Eggplant:** ↓ No real changes in the eggplant market. Demand, quality and supplies are all good.

## GRAPES ↑ ↔

Crimson are still the main varietal with some limited quantities of Vintage red and Scarlet Royals in California. The market continues to be a mixed bag depending on varietal and color. Several shippers are looking to make deals on reds in order to clean up their fruit and not get stuck with too much in storage. There are Peruvian and Brazilian grapes available on the East Coast but at a much higher price point. Chilean red are just started to come in on the east coast with the market in the low to mid 30's. Green grapes are becoming limited and should clean up this week on the west coast. Quality is fair at best. There are good quality Brazilian and Peruvian grapes on the east coast but the west coast will not be seeing any Chilean fruit until the very end of the month at the earliest. The market is higher with light demand mostly larger size fruit available. Black seedless grapes have excellent quality and dwindling availability. Seeded Globe grapes are available with excellent quality.

## GREEN ONIONS ↔

A steady market on this commodity continues with most shippers. The growing region for this crop has not been affected like others. Demand is off as well. Mexico and California are the major growing regions currently. Supplies will be good throughout the week with most suppliers.

## LEAF LETTUCE ↔

The romaine market is firm. Weights are generally 35-40 pounds. Yuma and Thermal are the main areas of production. The green and red leaf is averaging 18-24 pounds and availability is good. Blister and epidermal peel will be more prevalent with all leaf items due to freezing temperatures. The extent is undetermined for

now, but blister and peel will be issues all shippers will deal with. As yields decrease in the fields, the market will gain strength quickly.

## LETTUCE ↔

This market is steady. The weights are ranging from 38-46 pounds depending on the supplier. Yuma production will be strong throughout the week. Epidermal peel, cracking, misshapen heads and ribby appearance are characteristics of lettuce right now. With the heavy supplies currently, expect growing gaps coming in production in the next couple of weeks. Heavy rains in the growing regions, coupled with little demand created a plentiful amount of this commodity.

## MELONS ↔

**Cantaloupe:** Offshore fruit is coming in very large still. Extremely limited on 12's and smaller fruit is non-existent as shippers try and cover contracted fruit. Nogales and Yuma are done with cantaloupe. Trucks may be waiting on small fruit as there are so few containers with coming in and shippers are waiting for the ports to bring them over.

**Honeydew:** Nogales has good availability of all sizes with very good quality. Offshore dewes are available but they are having problems with a virus which is causing them to have some brown spotting. When they are loading on the boat they look good but are spotting up in transit. Shippers are doing their best to clean them up before shipping them out.

## ONIONS ↔

The northwest is steady on all yellows. Most of the Idaho/Oregon suppliers are still short on medium yellows. Reds are steady in all areas as well. Most suppliers remain short on medium reds. The White market is steady on jumbos and mediums but remains strong. Trucks are still the hardest thing to find in northwest but Christmas trees are about done so the truck demand will drop. The quality has been good in all areas and on all colors.

## POTATOES ↔

Both Burbanks and Norkotahs are steady in Idaho. The Idaho weather has warmed up enough that they can pack full days now. Burbanks are still spread evenly across the size spectrum while the Norkotahs are still heavier to 40-80's. Washington is steady on all sizes and they are still heavy to 80-count and larger. Nebraska



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and Colorado are also steady and they continue to peak on 70's and larger. Colorado & Nebraska is both steady on all cartons. Wisconsin russets are steady on all sizes. Bakersfield, California is shipping Reds & Golds from Washington. Their market is fairly steady on all sizes. Whites are very limited but they are starting to dig new-crop in Bakersfield this morning. Western Washington reds and Golds are both peaking on A-size and the markets for both are also steady. Wisconsin red potatoes are mostly steady on all sizes but some suppliers are stronger on A-size. Minnesota red potatoes are steady on all sizes but they also have some flex on volume orders of Red A's.

## SQUASH ↑

**Western Squash:** Market is heading up. Crops are sizing down as early crops are going through their paces. Current Nogales crossings are slowing down. Transitions taking place as Sonora crops start slowing down in production and sizing. New district crops will be at a premium. Quality is good but volume is slowing. Some light supplies of northern Sinaloa watermelons crossing through Nogales. First lots of Jalisco watermelons have begun. The Jalisco watermelons will be at premium compared to other districts.

**Eastern Squash:** Squash has tightened up a bit over the weekend. Weather throughout Florida has cooled down considerably, making for light volume.

## STONE FRUIT --

Domestic fruit is done for the season. Chilean cherries are available on both coasts mostly large fruit coming in. Chilean Peaches and Nectarines are now available as well. The sugars are very low in this fruit but quality is good.

## TOMATOES

**Western/Mexico:** ↑ Supplies of rounds, like that of Romas, are short again this week out of Mexico with demand in the west keeping prices elevated. In addition to volumes being low, quality issues are presenting in roma tomatoes from premature harvesting and failed attempts at gassing. Grape and cherry tomatoes are steady with sizing varying between growers. We can expect an active market through the holiday season with things calming down near the New Year when volumes are forecasted to be more consistent.

**Eastern:** ↔ Yields in Florida this week have grown along with demand on both coasts for domestic tomatoes with Florida becoming the main source of roma tomatoes for the entirety of the United States. Prices are slightly higher on larger sized rounds with discounts available on smaller sizes due to abundance in the market this week. Roma tomatoes remain tight and expect to stay elevated until Mexico begins importing from new fields near the New Year or buyers find alternatives allowing the market to soften. Grape and cherry tomatoes are widely available and expected to firm up going into the holiday. A strong cold front is expected to make its way across Florida Sunday through next week with a potentially strong storm coming in on Christmas bringing heavy rains. Poor weather and high demand leading into 2014 may cause prices to elevate once again in the weeks ahead.

## WATERMELON ↑

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