

FRESH DIRECTIONS

WEST CREEK FRESH

Weekly Produce Trend Report for Week Ending August 29, 2014

MARKET OVERVIEW

Prices are slightly decreasing for carton-packed romaine and romaine hearts, and demand is good. Availability is tightening for iceberg and romaine for late-week shipments. Pricing on larger size lemons are nearing historical highs with no relief in sight. Limes are back on the increase due to rains in Mexican growing area, and smaller sizes are more abundant. Many mixed vegetable items continue with excellent quality and pricing remains favorable. The Salinas Valley is entering a prolonged period of high lettuce prices. As a high tide raises all boats, high lettuce prices fuel the markets of the other major commodities. Mother nature is the primary factor behind the current market cycle. Over the past 30 days, the central coast has experienced high humidity and above normal temperatures. Overnight humidity has steadily been reaching 92% to 94% with temperatures near 60 degrees, which is seven to eight degrees above normal. One explanation is the temperature of the Pacific ocean is 5 to 7 degrees above normal. The mouth of the Salinas Valley meets the Pacific ocean along the Monterey Bay. Daily afternoon winds bring the moist marine air down the Salinas Valley and practically bathes the crops. This highly unusual and prolonged weather pattern is the catalyst to today's excessive mildew and above normal insect populations. Growers can attempt to fend off the mildew and insects, but their efforts can only go so far. This explains production yield decreases of 30% or more. The other factor is light summer plantings. Shippers always reduce their summertime acreage so they don't have to compete so aggressively with the regional summer growing areas of Michigan, the Ohio Valley and eastern Canada. A 30% reduction during a period of light plantings means central coast shippers have sparse supplies. Crops currently affected are iceberg lettuce, romaine lettuce, green leaf lettuce and broccoli. Cauliflower and celery have the potential to follow suit. Buyers are advised to inform their sales force and customer base that expensive prices and off quality will be the main story line over the next three to four weeks. Central coast shippers will offer heavier plantings beginning in mid to late September.

COMMODITY	PRICE	QUALITY	PRICE TREND
Avocados-Californian & Mexican	Moderate	Good	↕
Blueberries	Moderate to High	Good	↑
Blackberries	Moderate to High	Good	↑
Strawberries	Moderate to High	Good	↑
Raspberries	Moderate to Low	Good	↔
Grapefruit	Moderate	Good	↑
Lemons	Extreme	Good	↑
Oranges, Navels, Valencias	High	Good	↔ ↑
Limes	Moderate	Good	↑
Pineapples	Moderate	Good	↑
Green & Red Leaf Lettuces	Moderate	Very Good	↔
Iceberg Lettuce	Moderate	Good	↔
Romaine Lettuce	Moderate	Fair	↓
Romaine Hearts	Moderate to High	Good	↔
Cucumbers	High	Fair to Good	↑
Green Beans	Moderate to Extreme	Good	↔
Green Bell Peppers	Low	Good	↓
Red Bell Peppers	Moderate to High	Good	↑
Yellow Squash	Moderate to High	Good	↔
Zucchini	Low to Moderate	Good	↔
Green & Red Seedless Grapes	Moderate	Good	↔
Peaches, Nectarines, Plums	Moderate	Good	↔
Cantaloupes, Honeydews	Low	Good	↔
Artichokes	Moderate	Excellent	↑
Asparagus	Extreme	Good	↔
Arugula, Bok Choy, Carrots, Green Onions, Frisee, Mache, Napa, Spring Mix	Moderate	Good	↔
Baby Spinach	Moderate	Fair	↔
Cauliflower	Low to Moderate	Fair	↔
Broccoli	Moderate to High	Good	↑
Snow & Sugar Snap Peas	High	Good	↔
Cilantro	Moderate	Very Good	↔
Celery	Low to Moderate	Excellent	↔
Parsley (Curly & Italian), Red Cabbage	Moderate	Excellent	↔
Spinach (Bunched)	Moderate	Excellent	↑
Fennel/Anise	Moderate to High	Good	↓
Peeled Garlic	Extreme	Good	↑
Kale (Green)	Low	Excellent	↔
Red & Yellow Onions	Moderate	Good	↔
White Onions	Moderate to High	Good	↔
Potatoes	Low	Good	↔
Round, Roma, Plum, Grape Tomatoes	Low	Good	↔
Red & Golden Delicious, Bosc Pears	Moderate	Good	↑
Galas, Granny Smiths, Fujis	High	Good	↑



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APPLES & PEARS

The apple market remains active. The new crop is up and running, keeping growers busy with gala and several varieties of golds. The next to be picked will be reds, Fuji, and jonagolds. There is good size and quality. Plenty of volume will be available in the next few months. The new crop Bartletts are now available. The size profile is between 80 and 90. Most sheds should be up and running by next week. Organics will also be available in the next week or so.

ARTICHOKES

Good supplies available this week especially on the larger sizes. Quality is excellent with good color and compact head shape. Prices are advancing.

ARUGULA

Adequate supplies.

ASPARAGUS

Availability has tightened considerably as rain in Mexico, combined with hail, have resulted in damage to the crop. Prices continue to rise.

AVOCADOS

California volume is on the decline. Eating quality is prime; buttery, rich flavor and high oil content. Peak sizes on 48s and 60s. Mexico has finished with old crop and now harvesting Flor Loca crop. Eating quality and the maturity of the fruit is good; should be excellent as month progresses. Predominant sizes are 48s and 60s. New crop will start up in September. Pricing will continue a somewhat downward trend until domestic and Peru supplies have exhausted; will begin to trend upward afterwards. Peruvian volume is on the decline through August. Quality is improving and maturity levels are very good. Predominate sizes are 40s and 48s with some larger and some smaller. Even with the volume declines, prices should remain relatively stable for August.

BELL PEPPERS

The market for red and yellow bells in California is generally steady.

East: FOB prices remain relatively low but are stronger than last week. Western NC, NJ and MI are the major supply regions.

West: Good supplies continue causing FOB prices to remain generally steady in the West. Oxnard and Stockton continue to harvest.

BLACKBERRIES

Producing regions are Santa Maria, Watsonville, Salinas,

Baja, Oxnard, Oregon and Washington. Quality is improving week to week due to stronger quality assurance checks, slight weather changes and adjustment in the varietal mix. Both conventional and organic supplies are trending downward. Berry Valley production will increase over the next few weeks; expect substitutions for better order fulfillment.

BLUEBERRIES

Producing regions are California, Baja, Oregon, Washington and BC. Current rain in the PNW may affect volume and quality for the remainder of the week. Some reports of softer fruit however; strong QA measures will be taken to reduce issues. Unpredictable weather patterns in the PNW can impact availability and quality. Both conventional and organic supplies are declining. Berry Valley production will increase over the next few weeks; expect substitutions for better order fulfillment.

BOK CHOY

Steady availability.

BROCCOLI

Industry supplies are lighter than expected along with other growing regions stating limited supplies. Consistent demand should remain for the next several week. Overall appearance of supplies are showing a good green color, small to medium bead size and nice uniform dome shape. However, issues have been challenging as in hollow stem, brown bead and insects. Crews are being diligent to what is harvested and put into the final product.

CANTALOUPE

Market is steady to strengthening as production is leveling off and demand is very good. The overall quality of the fruit is very good with a nice clean net and excellent sugars. We will be going strong here on the Westside through mid-October.

CARROTS

Steady availability in California and Mexico.

CAULIFLOWER

Good supplies available this week. Quality remains fairly good; off white curds, well-trimmed jacket leaves and tight pack with weights of 28-30 lbs.

CELERY

Very nice quality with good color, meaty shanks and weights (58-60 lbs). West coast demand is fair while competing with home grown areas in Michigan and Canada.



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CILANTRO

Supplies have somewhat decreased from last week, but are expected to remain steady for the next few weeks. Quality and appearance continue to be very nice with bunches averaging 9-11 inches in length with good green color.

CUCUMBERS

East: MI continues to be the major growing region. Quality is variable but improving. Limited supplies in the west is causing the west to continue to come to MI to meet demand. This is causing slight upward pressure on FOB prices.

West: Baja crossings continue. The Northwest region continues but we are seeing quality issues from this region. These quality issues may cause this region to wrap-up harvesting a week or two earlier than normal. Supplies are tight and the west is going to MI to meet all of its demand.

EGGPLANT

Harvesting in NC now. FOB prices are stronger due to cooler weather. Quality is very good.

FENNEL/ANISE

Fennel supplies are in line with demand for this week. Demand continues to be decent so the market is expected to remain strong and prices steady.

GARLIC

Volume from China is down substantially due to tariff increases for the majority of importers. This has resulted in a large increase in demand for California and Mexican growers. Although a few containers from China have arrived on the West coast recently, demand will continue to exceed supply. In addition to the shortage of Chinese garlic, there are fewer planted acres in California, further contributing to the shortage.

GRAPES

Market is steady as we are packing in a good way here in the valley on all colors and will continue to do so through November. The overall quality is excellent with very high sugars and very good eating quality.

GREEN BEANS

Adequate supplies in the East, tight availability and high prices in the West.

GREEN CABBAGE

Demand has improved this week over last. Supplies are steady, though supplies from Oxnard growing areas have been slightly slowing down due to cooler weather.

GREEN ONIONS

Plentiful supplies with moderate prices on iced and ice-less products.

HONEYDEW

Market steady with excellent quality a nice green to cream cast and excellent green internal color and excellent sugars. Expect good volume out of the Westside through mid-October and then we will transition to the desert.

ICEBERG LETTUCE

Steady supplies for the next few weeks. Demand is fairly strong. Quality is good (aside from sclerotinia and mildew issues which are normal for this time of year), with a higher than average amount of 30's. Weights are 41-43 lbs.

JALAPEÑOS

East: Good supplies and good quality continue in the east with most supplies coming from NC, MI and NJ. FOB prices generally steady. Quality is very good.

West: Supplies out of Baja and San Maria continue. Quality is very good. FOB prices are stronger.

KALE (GREEN)

Plentiful supplies this week. Overall quality and appearance is outstanding with bunches and lengths measuring 14-16" and dark green color.

KIWI

Tight availability on Chilean kiwi, which will continue through the season.

LEMONS

DEMAND EXCEEDS SUPPLY. We will be in this situation for the next 1-2 months as we are packing both Dist. 2 and a few Mexican. The overall quality is fair with some clear rot and brown rot showing up on the higher maturity fruit. We are doing all we can to try and cover orders. We will keep you posted on grades as there will be more standards being packed and much lighter on Fancy and choice due to the overall quality.

LETTUCE (GREEN & RED LEAF)

Average supplies on all the mix leaf. Quality is very good with green and red leaf. Cartons are 22-24 lbs. while each head is 9-11" long.

LIMES (PERSIAN)

Pricing is on an upward trend due to rains. With more new crop limes, smaller sizes are more abundant.



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NAPA

Good availability and favorable prices from selected shippers.

ONIONS

Prices have begun to soften on yellow onions as Washington is shipping heavier volumes and are overlapping with California and New Mexico. Larger size onions remain at a premium as size are more plentiful to medium yellows. The market is expected to experience some instability for the next few weeks as Idaho will begin to ship and a surplus of supply is possible.

ORANGES

Market very strong as there are some houses that are finished for the season. The 88's and smaller continue to be the tightest and are as demand exceeds supply, and will continue to be so through the rest of the season. We will start navels around the end of October, so we have a ways to go and things will continue to be very tight. The overall quality is fair with some fruit breaking down due to weakness contributed from lack of water and stress on the trees holding on to next year's crop as well.

PARSLEY (CURLY)

Plentiful supplies this week. Quality continues to be superb. Bunches are measuring 8-10" in length with good dark green color.

PARSLEY (ITALIAN)

Plentiful supplies this week. Quality is excellent and bunches are averaging 9-11" in length with a rich, dark green color.

PINEAPPLES

Currently, 5s are the tight sizes with better availability on 6s, and 8s. Pricing has increased on 7s, now in short supply.

POTATOES (IDAHO)

Storage crop is all but finished. New crop Norkotah Russets profile is on the small side. Many sheds are looking for orders on smaller sizes and consumer packs. There are no calls from sheds looking for carton business which indicates tighter supplies of counts. We will know more in the next couple of weeks as harvest continues. FOB's appear to be firm. Rain is forecasted for Idaho.

RASPBERRIES

Producing regions are Baja, Oxnard, Watsonville, Santa Maria and Salinas. Warmer temperature are expected to continue throughout the week resulting in softer fruit. Action is being taken at the dock and field level to

reduce quality issues. Expect quality to improve due to a change in plant variety coming into heavier production. Strong availability on both conventional and organic supplies. Goldens will be light in August.

RED CABBAGE

Steady supplies, great quality and sizing should continue to be steady for the next week to 10 days.

ROMAINE HEARTS

Good supplies with strong demand. Fringe burn continues to be an issue in the fields. Crews are being diligent to what is harvested and put into the final product. Expect issue to continue for another few weeks. Otherwise, quality is steady with light green color and a nice amount of cupping.

ROMAINE LETTUCE

Good supplies and steady demand. Due to weather, 1-2 inch seeder in many heads is being seen. Otherwise, good dark green color, each head is 10-12" in length and weights are 34-35 lbs.

SNOW AND SUGAR SNAP PEAS

Adequate supplies on snow peas; tight availability, poor quality and high prices for sugar snap peas.

SPINACH (BABY)

Demand exceeds supply; production has dropped significantly due to growing conditions during August; growers are fighting issues with mildew.

SPINACH (BUNCHED)

Steady supplies with strong demand. Overall quality is excellent (bunch sizing is large and full with lengths 11-12" in length and weights of 22-23 lbs.

SPRING MIX

Prices are unchanged, although stocks are tightening. Recent hot weather and humidity continue to cause quality issues like aphids, heat-related defects, and mildew. Maintaining the cold chain is critical to shelf-life, especially in the summer.

SQUASH (YELLOW)

East: Continue harvesting out of SC and NC with light volume. NJ and MI continue to be the major suppliers. Demand is weak. Quality is improving. FOB prices are generally steady.

West: Supplies are light and quality is fair to good due primarily to scaring. Harvesting is primarily from the Santa Maria area.



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SQUASH (ZUCCHINI)

East: Limited supplies available from SC and NC. NJ and MI are major providers. Quality is good and demand is weak.

West: Supplies continue from Baja. Santa Maria region is harvesting. Quality dictates FOB pricing.

STRAWBERRIES

Producing regions are Santa Maria, Watsonville and Salinas. Warmer temperature are expected to continue throughout the week resulting in softer fruit. Action is being taken at the dock and field level to reduce quality issues. Conventional supplies are diminishing and organic availability is tightening. Efforts are being made to fill quantity and substitutions may be necessary to improve order fulfillment.

TOMATOES

EAST

Rounds: Ample supplies continue from several growing regions. Western NC and SC, TN, Eastern Shore of VA, NJ, MI, and AL (vine ripens) are all still producing. Demand nationwide continues weak. FOB prices for all sizes are generally steady from last week. Quality is still generally very good but rains may affect shelf-lives out of some fields. We see good volume in the East through August unless rains interrupt.

Romas: Primary harvesting areas continue to be Western NC, the Eastern Shore of VA and MI. Demand is weak. FOB prices are steady. Quality remains very good.

Grapes: Supplies from VA, TN, NC, SC and AL continue strong enough to cause FOB prices to be steady to slightly lower. Quality remains very good. Demand is weak.

Cherries: Supplies continue to be relatively tight. FOB prices are steady from last week. Quality remains very good. The Eastern Shore of VA is the primary sourcing area.

WEST/MEXICO

Rounds: Supplies are improving as demand continues to be weak. FOB prices are down on all sizes. Mexican crossings of vine ripens continue at Otay Mesa and McAllen. Fewer crossings are putting slight upward pressure on pricing. Quality is variable and so are FOB prices depending on quality.

Romas: Crossings continue at McAllen and Baja. CA growers continue this week. Quality remains good but variable. Demand is weak. FOB prices are stable on all sizes.

Grapes: Crossings from Baja and McAllen continue. We see no major gaps in grape supplies for the foreseeable future. Quality is good to very good.

TREE FRUIT (PEACHES, NECTARINES, PLUMS, CHERRIES)

The current size profile for white peaches is heavy to large sizes, not the smaller fruit that is preferred by foodservice customers. We are in peak season production for California yellow peaches, and red and black plums. Yellow nectarines are in good supply. Cherries are finished.

WATERMELON

The market is level. Although California stocks are becoming more plentiful, fewer overall acres were planted due to water shortages. Fruit is deep red, firm, and sweet. Sugar levels range from 12 to 14 Brix.