

FRESH DIRECTIONS

WEST CREEK FRESH

Weekly Produce Trend Report for Week Ending November 7, 2014

MARKET OVERVIEW

Iceberg lettuce prices continue to push higher. It is speculated that the lettuce market will reach \$30.00 FOB early to mid-next week. Romaine is riding the coattails of iceberg lettuce and following close behind. Rain is slated along the central coast Friday, 10/31 into Saturday, 11/01. More and more Salinas lettuce shippers are choosing to bypass Huron during their autumn transition 575 miles south to Yuma. The formula for success requires two things to happen in sequence: 1) the Salinas season stretches into late October, and 2) Yuma has an early start the first week in November. The second half of the Salinas Valley season experienced chronic nighttime temperatures and humidity both well above normal. Iceberg lettuce requires cool night temperatures—50 to 52 degrees—so the plants stop growing overnight and form a tight, solid head. The unusually warm nights allowed the plants to grow continuously which produced several undesirable side effects including accelerated maturity rates. The net effect is Salinas lettuce fields advanced 7 to 10 days leaving very few acres available in late October. The desert endured a heavy monsoon season in September. Desert growers report some of their first plantings were damaged by the heavy rainfall and had to be replanted. The first desert lettuce fields are uneven and will have a unusually high degree of 30 count. Initial lettuce yields will range from 500 to 800 cases per acre instead of the historical average of 900 to 1,000. Salinas is finishing early and Yuma is not in position to pick up the slack. In fact, Yuma production will stutter-start through the majority of November. A normal level of consistent production in Yuma is not expected until Thanksgiving or the first week of December. Lettuce shippers are bullish and the market has a tremendous amount of momentum. Lettuce prices will continue to climb into the week of November 10. Modest market relief will begin the week of November 17 and gradually increase into early December. The romaine market will follow close behind.

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



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APPLES & PEARS

The Washington market is steady; this year's crop is one of the largest on record. Sugar levels are high, measuring 14 to 18 Brix (sugar to acid ratio). Texture is firm, crunchy, and juicy. Low prices dominate the Washington Bartlett and D'Anjou markets. Quality is excellent: fruit is crisp and sweet, yet slightly spicy.

ARTICHOKES

Available supplies are fair this week. Quality is excellent, and prices are steady. Supplies of large loose and small loose continue to be very limited. Small sizes are unavailable. Availability is best on 12s and 18s.

ARUGULA

Steady availability.

ASPARAGUS

Prices are stable. Supplies are increasing in Baja, Mexico. Peruvian stocks are abundant, but size is inconsistent. Flavor is grassy and stalks are straight.

AVOCADOS

Prices are unchanged. Chilean stocks are tight. Mexican fruit dominates the market. New crop supplies may take longer to mature at this stage of the season; expect skins to be greener than normal when ripe.

BLACKBERRIES

The market is starting to inch down as new crop Mexican supplies increase. The Pacific Northwest season is ending. Quality is very good in California and Mexico; sugar levels range from 12 to 13 Brix.

BLUEBERRIES

Prices have eased slightly. The Pacific Northwest season has ended. New crop fruit is beginning to become more plentiful in Argentina, California, and Mexico. Flavor is sweet: sugar levels range from 14 to 18 Brix.

BOK CHOY

Tight supplies, high prices.

BROCCOLI

The market is level. Stocks are ample even though California harvesting is shifting south to Yuma, Arizona soon. Quality is excellent: buds are tightly packed, color is dark green, and texture is crisp.

CANTALOUPE

Market has eased a bit as production out of Arizona has picked up and will start to taper off and strengthen back up next week. The overall quality is fair with some ground scar and some ground scar showing up. The netting is a little thin and mostly a green cast, internal color is very good and sugars are fairly good. We expect to go through November and then we will transition to offshore fruit. Sugar levels are average (9 to 10 Brix).

CARROTS

Availability has tightened for jumbo carrots in California as size and yield have declined, the result of a slower growth cycle during the late season fall harvest at higher elevation (2,150 ft.) in the Cuyama Valley of Southern California. Prices will trend higher until the harvest returns to the Southern San Joaquin Valley (Bakersfield).

CAULIFLOWER

Prices have jumped. Limited supplies and strong demand have caused the market to spike. Most growers are preparing to transition to Yuma. Quality is very good: texture is firm.

CELERY

The market is near the bottom; volume is high. Quality is excellent: texture is crunchy and flavor is peppery with a hint of apple.

CILANTRO

Availability from California and Mexico is generally steady.

CUCUMBERS

EAST: Upward pressure on FOB prices as the GA crop is over and the FL growing regions starting up slowly. We do expect better volume by the end of this week. Quality is variable.

WEST: A split market has occurred due to wide variance in quality. The better quality is coming through Nogales, but that quality is also variable.

EGGPLANT

EAST: Most supplies are coming from GA. Market is steady with slight upward pressure. However, we predict more supplies will be coming online later this week or weekend.

WEST: Market is generally steady with supplies available from Nogales and the desert.



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FENNEL/ANISE

Steady availability for most sizes with reasonable prices.

GARLIC

Not much has changed. 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 exceeds supply. A limited supply of Chinese garlic is currently available; however volume is much less than normal. A judicial ruling is expected next week regarding the release into the market of Chinese garlic that is being held in port. The current shortage will not be relieved until more Chinese garlic becomes available.

GINGER

There is a supply and demand situation that happens from time to time with ginger. The crop in storage is tight, and the new crop will be in the U.S. around mid-January. This is causing a lack of supply and very high prices.

GRAPES

Market is steady to strengthening as we are finishing up our harvest season and should be finished packing in about 2-3 weeks depending on weather and fruit condition. The overall quality is good with excellent sugar and some lighter colored fruit on the reds but overall condition is excellent. We are packing snack packs and will have supplies through December on California fruit and the first Chilean arrivals will be about mid-December. Fruit is sweet and firm. Green seedless sugar levels range from 17 to 18 Brix; red seedless sugar levels are even higher at 18 to 19 Brix.

GREEN BEANS

Prices have eased slightly in the West (Coachella), however remain near the extreme. Plentiful supplies in Florida and Georgia. Mexican beans will become available in Nogales by mid-November.

GREEN CABBAGE

Good supplies with various regions in production, including Colorado, Michigan, North Carolina and California.

GREEN ONIONS

Growers in Mexico are in the recovery phase following the hurricanes of September and early October; production volume is on the increase, and prices are trending

lower. Green onions are expected to be in good supply for Thanksgiving.

HONEYDEW

Market is strong as Arizona and California production is light and Mexico has not been crossing any big numbers. The overall quality is good with a mostly green to cream cast and some ground scar showing up as well, but overall strong condition. We will continue with California and Arizona fruit through mid-November then Mexico will be the main growing region until we acquire some fruit from South America around the middle part of December. Sugar levels are average (9 to 10 Brix).

KALE (GREEN)

Plentiful supplies continue this week. Overall quality and appearance continues to be very nice. Bunches are averaging 14-16" in length and showing good texture and color.

KIWI

New crop of California kiwi is now available. The crop size is expected to be somewhat normal this year; however ongoing drought conditions will continue to play a role in the size profile, yield and over-all production.

LEMONS

Market is steady and has settled some as we are going strong out of dist. 3 with some good overall quality. There is some staining showing up and some checkerboard color as well due to gassing. There is still some fruit crossing from Mexico and a few loads of Chilean still arriving which is causing a split market. The Mexico fruit is getting tired and showing a fair amount of issues, the Chilean fruit for the most part is looking pretty good. We will continue out of dist. 3 and start dist. 1 in about 2 weeks with good supplies and nice quality.

LETTUCE (GREEN & RED LEAF)

The market is stable; supplies are ample, but will decrease once growers make the full transition to Arizona in early November.

LETTUCE (ICEBERG)

The market is high; supplies are tight. Harvesting will move from Huron to Arizona in mid-November. Quality issues to look for during the transition include light weights, twisting, seeders, and internal burn.



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LETTUCE (ROMAINE)

Prices have jumped; stocks have diminished. Most growers are preparing for the transition to Yuma in mid- to late November. Quality is fair: problems include internal burn, fringe burn, and seeders.

LETTUCE (ROMAINE HEARTS)

A moderate gap in supply has developed, as the late-season harvest in Salinas is 7-10 days ahead of schedule. Tight supplies will continue through mid-November.

LIMES

Expect the market to remain stable for two to three weeks, then start climbing due to strong holiday demand and light winter plantings.

ONIONS

The market is low and supplies are plentiful. Pacific Northwest onions are crunchy, well formed, and have bold flavor.

ORANGES

Market is steady as we have switched to new California crop navels, the overall quality is good with some checkerboard color showing up as well as some spotting due to gassing the fruit to bring on color. The interior color and juice is good for this time of year and sugars are a bit higher than normal with less acid which makes for a descent eating piece of fruit. Expect to see good quality and plenty of volume in the coming weeks as we should be fully ramped up by the middle of next week barring any major weather. Texas stocks are also available; this fruit is not as visually appealing, but flavor is sweet. Sugar levels range from 11 to 13 Brix.

PARSLEY (CURLY)

Supplies are on the decline. Prices are moving higher.

PARSLEY (ITALIAN)

Availability is generally stable. Prices are firming with the approach of the Thanksgiving holiday.

PEPPER (GREEN BELL)

EAST: FOB prices are generally down slightly on all sizes and grades. Good volume out of GA and Central and South Florida. Good quality from all regions.

WEST: More supply available from Nogales. Northern CA will finish up this week. FOB prices are lower. **Note:**

We predict a severe shortage of red bells occurring in November due to delayed and damaged plantings as a result of the earlier hurricanes.

PEPPER (JALAPEÑOS)

EAST: Supplies are down slightly and FOB prices are slightly higher. Quality is good. Sourcing from GA.

WEST: Experiencing a small gap situation which is causing quality to fall and FOB prices to rise.

PEPPER (RED AND YELLOW BELL)

Prices are unchanged; California stocks are abundant. Harvesting will begin in Mexico in approximately two weeks, increasing supplies and easing the overall market. Quality is excellent: shape is elongated and flavor is slightly sweet.

PINEAPPLE

The market is unchanged; supplies are adequate in Costa Rica and Mexico (into South Texas). Quality is excellent: fruit is firm, sweet, and juicy. Sugar levels range from 13 to 14 Brix.

POTATOES (IDAHO)

Continued tight availability on carton-packed Idaho Russets (large sizes 40s thru 70s). Cool, wet growing conditions that occurred during August have caused a reduction in yield for the large sizes during the early harvest. Growers are hoping for increasing size from later fields. Other growing regions offer better alternatives for large sizes, including Washington, Oregon, Nebraska and Wisconsin. Most new crop supplies will complete the sweat process in the next week or two. At that stage, solids will rise, making potato texture fluffier and better for baking.

RASPBERRIES

The market is stable; supplies are sufficient. Better weather is improving quality. Sugar levels are high, ranging from 13 to 14 Brix. New crop berries from Mexico will be available in late November/early December.

RED CABBAGE

The market remains strong with light supplies and very good demand. Quality is excellent with great color and medium head size. Prices remain high.

SALADS & BLENDS

The market is level. Heat-related quality problems such as pinking, creasing, light color, and shortened shelf-life



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persist. Inspectors are working closely to ensure only the best quality is packed.

SNOW AND SUGAR SNAP PEAS

Snow peas and sugar snaps are in tight supply (Peru, Mexico, and California). Prices remain at the highs for both. Quality is poor, and limited availability will continue through next week.

SPINACH (BABY)

Adequate supplies.

SPINACH (BUNCHED)

Supplies are below average, as growers are ahead of production schedule. Hot weather has caused occasional light wilt and occasional light yellowing.

SPRING MIX

Prices are steady. Overall quality is very good, but problems with dehydration and erratic shelf-life are expected to persist until growers move south to Yuma. Maintaining the cold chain is critical; higher respiration rates are causing moisture in some bags.

SQUASH (GREEN)

EAST: Supplies continue to be strong this week with GA and FL the major producers. Demand is also good. FOB prices are experiencing upward pressure.

WEST: More supplies crossing at Nogales. FOB prices are down slightly. Quality is good.

SQUASH (YELLOW)

EAST: Supplies continue to be good this week with downward pressure on FOB prices. GA and Plant City are the major growing areas. Increased volume in the west is also depressing FOB prices. Quality continues to improve.

WEST: Good volume and quality is now crossing at Nogales. FOB prices are seeing downward pressure.

STRAWBERRIES

Prices are slightly lower than last week. Although supplies are ample, quality continues to suffer in Oxnard and Santa Maria due to last month's extremely high temperatures; many berries are small, soft, and light in color. Fruit is not as sweet as normal, but sugar levels will increase over the next several weeks.

TOMATOES

EAST

ROUNDS: Supplies continue to be critically short this week due to weather events that have affected all tomato growing regions. These weather events have been chronicled in previous weekly reports. This is the time of year we always expect a supply gap but the situation has been exacerbated this year. The Quincy region is very near the end of their crop. However, there is also good news to report: we are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel. In fact, even though FOB prices remain high, there is downward pressure on those prices compared to last week. Very light volume has started this week out of the Ruskin/Palmetto growing region. We expect volume to increase at a very slow rate until around Thanksgiving at which time full production should be reached. Demand has become very weak as a result of the higher FOB prices. Both supply and how demand reacts to changing FOB prices will affect FOB prices in the near future. Ultimately, we feel that this week will prove to be the high water mark as far as FOB prices are concerned and that FOB prices will decline through Thanksgiving. Of course, any adverse weather event could alter this prediction. Also, how severe the gap in the west proves to be may have an effect on the eastern FOB market if the west is forced to look east to meet all of its demand. Quality of the available fruit remains better than one would expect in such a high market.

ROMAS: Supplies continue to be tight in the east and demand is very weak. This weak demand and the light volume that has started out of the Palmetto region have caused FOB prices to slide lower compared to last week. Quality continues to be good.

GRAPES: Supplies continue to be extremely short and demand is steady, causing FOB prices to remain relatively steady with slight downward pressure. Quality remains good.

CHERRIES: Demand weak, supplies tight. FOB prices are steady with downward pressure. Quality remains good.

WEST/MEXICO

ROUNDS: Supplies continue to be critically short in the west also both in CA and MX. CA is cleaning up and will completely finish up this Thursday. Rain and much cooler temperatures are expected this Friday. Larger sizes are particularly short and all sizes are running on



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the minimum side. FOB prices are steady on the 5x6's and are down slightly on 6x6s and 6x7s. Quality is very variable. Mexican crossings of vine ripers continue with light volume at Otay Mesa, Nogales and McAllen. Quality is variable.

ROMAS: Like the rounds, Thursday will be the last day for CA growers. Volume is light. FOB market is unsettled but generally lower with a large variance in prices and quality. Romas continue to cross at Baja but quality is only fair. A few romas continue to cross at Nogales as that region ramps up. The Nogales crop remains late due to earlier storms.

GRAPES: Supplies are tight. Limited crossings from Baja, McAllen and Nogales. Three growers have started in Nogales and we expect a good supply from there by Thanksgiving. CA also continues with very light volume but will be finished on Thursday. FOB prices down slightly from last week. Quality is variable.

TREE FRUIT

Peaches and nectarines are finished. There are very few plums left, mostly 35VF & larger of red plums and 45VF and larger of black plums. There are good supplies of pomegranates, persimmons, kiwi and pears (Oregon Bartlett's).

WATERMELON

The market is up; supplies are limited in mainland Mexico (into Nogales and South Texas). Last month's hurricanes destroyed many crops. Expect prices to ease later this month. Quality is very good: melons are deep red, firm, juicy, and sweet. Sugar levels are high, ranging from 12 to 14 Brix.