

FRESH DIRECTIONS

WEST CREEK FRESH

Weekly Produce Trend Report for Week Ending January 30, 2015

MARKET OVERVIEW

Though many supplies of fruits and vegetables remain short, supplies are beginning to increase as a result of the warm weather pattern. Prices are starting to decrease. Lettuce and leaf growers in Western Arizona (Yuma), the Imperial Valley of California continue to deal with the effects of the week-long freeze that occurred in late December and early January. Although ideal growing conditions have returned to the growing areas during the past two weeks, the damage to the crop is irreversible. Growers report seeing the worst of the damage this week, which is expected to continue well into next week. Damage includes: blister and epidermal peel, extending 6-7 leaves into the head in iceberg and leaf, with romaine showing as many as 13-14 leaves (note that this blistering turns to brown or black discoloration, materially affecting the appearance of the product). Harvest crews are attempting to minimize the damage from the epidermal peeling, removing as many outer leaves as possible, resulting in small heads and lightweight cartons (mainly in iceberg, where various lots weigh as low as 36-38 lbs., compared to 44-46 lbs.). Looking ahead, winter harvest cycles have been greatly accelerated this season in the desert districts, due to ideal growing conditions that occurred during December (prior to the freeze). Grower-shippers are currently four weeks ahead of harvest schedules, and anticipate a gap in supply occurring sometime in April.

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



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APPLES & PEARS

Demand and movement is very good. Supplies continue to be short on all small fruit in all varieties. There are still great promotional opportunities on 88s and larger red delicious. Quality remains excellent. Sugar levels are elevated, measuring 14 to 18 Brix (sugar to acid ratio). Fruit is crunchy, juicy, and smooth skinned. Pear demand is exceeding supply, especially for 110s and smaller. Supplies continue to be tight on these sizes. Crop is running heavy to U.S. #1, peaking 90s and larger. Sugar levels are high, ranging from 12 to 14 Brix. Trucking continues to be an issue with more booked loads than trucks to haul them. Rates have eased somewhat but not reflecting lower fuel prices.

ARTICHOKES

Light supplies continue this week and next week. Chokes are currently lightly frosted, but the chokes that will be harvested next week should be free of any frost damage. Frosted chokes have a more nutty taste to them. Once they are cooked any cosmetic discoloration disappears. Prices should continue to high and steady.

ARUGULA

Supplies of regular arugula are very light, and quality is fair. Expect some yellowing and frost damage. Supplies of wild arugula are also very light with some yellowing and frost damage.

ASPARAGUS

Asparagus production remains low this week. Demand is on the rise from the West; pulling from Peru to meet demand, alongside of having labor issues that are causing delays in unloading. Expect to see an increase of price at the LA port. Mexico production has been dealing with weather related issues for the last month and freezing temperatures that stopped majority of production. The forecast seems to look better next week, and we are hoping to see production out of Mexico ramp up in the next week.

AVOCADOS

The market has leveled. Limited quantities of California fruit are on the market; the season will begin in full by late February/early March. Mexican supplies are plentiful and will meet Super Bowl demand. Quality is very good: oil content is high, creating creamy texture and nutty flavor.

BLACKBERRIES

Prices are up due to recent weather challenges in the main growing regions of Central Mexico. Strict quality control has decreased the quantity of defects in finished packs, but also reduced overall volume. Shipment delays and transfer issues are also limiting stocks. Quality is very good: fruit is deeply colored, plump, and sweet. Sugar levels range from 12 to 13 Brix.

BLUEBERRIES

The market is climbing; demand exceeds supply. Off-shore shipment and port delays, as well as transfer challenges from Central Mexico, have reduced availability. Quality is improving: reports of softness and shriveling have decreased. Sugar levels range from 14 to 18 Brix.

BOK CHOY

Tight supplies, high prices.

BROCCOLI

For the past few weeks, supplies of broccoli have been terribly low. With the warmer weather supplies are slightly better, but still much lighter than needed. Expect more normal supplies by February. Until demand coincides with supply, we will continue to see a wide range in pricing as volume opportunities become available. Quality remains very nice.

CANTALOUPE

Market steady and strong with better supplies of fruit on the East coast and minimal supplies of fruit on the west coast. The overall quality of the fruit is very good with a nice straw to green cast, excellent internal color, sugar and very firm piece of fruit. We expect the market to ease a bit in about two weeks as we see better volumes arriving on both coasts. Sugar levels range from 10 to 12 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

Supplies this week will be slightly above average. The majority of the sizing will come in 9s and 12s; limited 16ct this week. Quality remains strong overall and should continue to be strong all week.



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CELERY

Now that the weather has warmed, supplies are steady. Quality is good with weights of 54-56 lbs., good green color, meaty shanks and occasional blister and peel.

CILANTRO

Light supplies continue this week. With warmer weather in the forecast, better supplies are expected next week. Quality is nice with occasional appearance of frost. Prices are starting to decline.

CUCUMBERS

EAST: Weak demand and more off-shore supplies are causing FOB prices to fall from last week. Quality is improving.

WEST: Nogales crossings have increased considerably as we get further from the cold snap of several weeks ago causing FOB prices to drop. Quality is variable but is improving.

EGGPLANT

EAST: Good supplies available. Quality is very good. FOB prices are down from last week.

WEST: Good supplies and good demand. FOB prices down. Quality is good.

FENNEL/ANISE

Fennel supplies this week are projected to be slightly above demand for the week.

GARLIC

In the past few weeks, some Chinese pounds have become available in the market. Although pricing still remains high, it is anyone's guess whether more pounds will continue to become available or if "the pipeline" will run dry again.

GINGER

There is a supply and demand situation that happens from time to time with ginger. The crop in storage remains 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 strong with a big gap between 300's and 900's, with a majority of the Chilean arrivals being 300 code and minimal volumes on the larger fruit. The overall quality is good to fair with some splits showing

up, but overall condition is good and the fruit is eating very good for this time of the year. The market will start to ease off in the coming weeks as volumes increase. The only thing that could cause some problems would be a strike at the ports delaying the offloading. We expect good volumes of Chilean fruit through April and possibly through the first few weeks of May.

GREEN BEANS

Plentiful supplies in Florida and Nogales.

GREEN CABBAGE

Supplies are expected to improve as the warm weather pattern continues. Size and density should improve as well.

GREEN ONIONS

Supplies are slowly starting to increase. Quality is very nice with medium sized onions as the majority with higher prices followed by pencils, somewhat less in price.

HONEYDEW

Market is very strong, demand exceeds supply especially on the west coast as we are depleted of any supplies and will see some light volume arriving tomorrow. The east coast will also be getting some arrivals on Friday which will help ease the situation, but prices will remain strong. We are expecting things to ease up in the next 2 weeks as we see better volumes arriving on both coasts. Quality is very good: sugar levels range from 10 to 11 Brix.

KALE (GREEN)

Plentiful supplies continue. Overall quality and appearance continues to be superb. Bunches are averaging 14-16" in length with dark green color.

KIWI

Chile is the main supply area. California is starting. Italian is available off East Coast and will be available on the West Coast in a week.

LEMONS

Market steady with good demand, demand exceeds on the 165's and smaller as we are peaking on 95's, 115 and 140's. We will continue to see this as we are about a month from finishing our Dist. 3 (desert) fruit and most fruit we have left down there is on the large side. The dist. 1 (Central Valley) fruit is more sporadic in sizing but heavier to the larger fruit. We should go with good supplies out of Dist. 1 through May as well barring any major



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weather issues. The overall quality is fair to good with some blocks showing some soft fruit as well as some clear rot due to the moisture in the ground from the rains, but overall good clean fruit. Quality is very good: lemons are tart and juicy.

LETTUCE (GREEN AND RED LEAF)

Supplies will be closer to average this week, but still on the short side. Quality is better than romaine, but still showing issues from the hard frost of several weeks ago. There are 6-7 leaves with blister (3-4 browning). Green and red leaf will be 20-22 lbs. per case and each head 9-11" in length.

LETTUCE (ICEBERG)

Light supplies are forecasted again this week. Warm weather is also forecasted which could help increase supplies, size and weights. Weights are in the high thirties to low forties. All lettuce is showing epidermal peel or frost damage. Prices are lower as weather has moderated.

LETTUCE (ROMAINE)

Supplies will be limited until mid-February. Demand is strong, and quality is fair. Most heads are showing epidermal peel and blistering in addition to mildew, mechanical damage and irregular head sizing. Lengths are 10-12" and weights are in the 33-35 lb. range.

LETTUCE (ROMAINE HEARTS)

Overall supplies continue to be well below average. Blister and peel issues continue and is expected into mid-February. Crews are doing everything possible to minimize what goes into the final pack. Markets will continue to stay active, due to the fact that it is an industry wide shortage.

NAPA

Limited supplies, high prices.

ONIONS

Demand is steady, quality is very good, and there are plenty of available supplies. No price increase are expected for the foreseeable future.

ORANGES

Market steady with very good demand as fruit is eating excellent and with our cool temperatures the fruit is staying strong and firm. We are peaking on 72's, 88's followed by 56' due to the rains we have had the fruit is

sizing up, the color of the fruit is a nice brick orange and juice content is excellent. The market is holding due to good demand and will hopefully continue to stay steady. We expect to go through May on navels barring any major weather situation. This is a great time to promote California navels. Supplies are available in Florida and Texas. Flavor is sweet: sugar levels range from 12 to 13 Brix.

PARSLEY (CURLY)

Supplies are plentiful this week. Demand is down industry wide. Quality is extremely nice with bunches 9-11" in length with dark green color.

PARSLEY (ITALIAN)

Supplies are up from last week and should continue to improve as the week goes on. Overall quality is very nice with bunches a bit on the shorter side (7-9") in length, but both color and texture are excellent.

PEPPER (GREEN BELL)

EAST: Demand is light while supplies have increased. FOB prices down from last week. Quality is very good.
WEST: Nogales is the major sourcing crossing point. Quality is very good. Demand is weak. Supplies are plentiful. FOB prices are weaker.

PEPPER (JALAPEÑOS)

EAST: Supplies very good. FOB prices down from last week. Quality is very good.
WEST: FOB prices up slightly as supplies and demand remain relatively strong. Good quality.

PEPPER (RED AND YELLOW BELL)

The market is level; this week's warm weather is aiding growth and increasing supplies. Quality is excellent: shape is blocky, skins are smooth, and flavor is sweet, yet zesty.

PINEAPPLE

Prices will remain high through February; stocks are limited. Quality is good, but mold is a minor problem in some lots. Sugar levels range from 13 to 14 Brix.

POTATOES (IDAHO)

There is a good balance between supply and demand. No price increases are expected for the foreseeable future.



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RASPBERRIES

The market is climbing; demand is strong. Because raspberries are not grown in the same Mexican region as blackberries, these crops do not exhibit cold-weather defects. Expect a steady supply increase through Valentine's Day.

RED CABBAGE

Supplies are steady and expected to increase as warmer weather continues. Sizing is somewhat smaller, but color and condition remain very nice.

SALADS & BLENDS

Persistent problems in iceberg and romaine supplies are pushing up value-added markets.

SNOW AND SUGAR SNAP PEAS

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

SPINACH (BABY)

Baby spinach supplies are light. Quality is fair due to frost damage.

SPINACH (BUNCHEDED)

Steady supplies this week from Yuma and Mexican growing areas. Favorable weather should keep supplies consistent for the next several weeks. Bunches are large and full with 10-11" in length and weights of 20-21 lbs. Demand is fair.

SPRING MIX

Spring mix supplies are light, and availability is limited. Product is showing quality issues of yellowing and wetness due to rain and possible freeze damage. Price is up.

SQUASH (GREEN)

EAST: FOB prices generally steady. Demand continues to be weak. Quality is variable but improving.

WEST: FOB prices generally steady. Quality is variable but improving.

SQUASH (YELLOW)

EAST: FOB prices generally steady. Supplies continue to be relatively tight but demand is weak. Quality continues to be variable but is improving.

WEST: Supplies continue to cross at Nogales this week.

Supplies still tight due to the cold weather as has been reported. However, relief is in sight as fields should start to produce more volume shortly.

STRAWBERRIES

Strong demand is driving up prices. Harvesting remains limited in some areas due to recent rain; bruising, softness, and water damage are problems. Sugar levels are elevated, ranging from 14 to 15 Brix.

TOMATOES

EAST

Rounds

South Florida fields are in full production producing ample supplies of excellent quality tomatoes. Sizing continues to improve. If this trend continues as expected, we may see an inverted market where the smaller sized fruit becomes more expensive than the larger size fruit by next week. FOB prices of all sizes continue to fall and are now near the historical market lows. Demand is relatively weak. We expect this situation of low FOB prices and excellent quality fruit to continue for at least a couple of more weeks.

Romas

Increased supplies and weaker demand is putting downward pressure on all sizes. Quality is excellent.

Grapes

Steady supplies and equally steady demand is causing FOB prices to remain mostly unchanged from last week's low prices. Quality is excellent.

Cherries

Ample supplies of cherry tomatoes are also available. FOB prices are down again this week. Quality is very good.

WEST/MEXICO

Rounds

Ample volume is crossing at Nogales. Demand is relatively weak. FOB prices at suspension agreement minimums. Quality continues to improve and is very good.

Romas

Supplies continue to improve. FOB prices at suspension agreement minimums. Nogales and McAllen are the major crossing points. Quality is generally good to very good.



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Grapes

Supplies and demand good. Mexican supplies mostly crossing at Nogales. FOB prices at suspension agreement minimums. Quality is very good.

Cherries

Supplies continue to increase. Quality is variable but good quality can be found. FOB prices at minimums.

TREE FRUIT

New crop Chilean tray-packed nectarines and peaches, as well as volume-filled plum packs are on the market in a wide range of sizes. Quality is good and flavor is mild, but will improve as the season progresses.

WATERMELON

The market remains elevated. Mexican volume will remain low through the winter. Limited quantities of off-shore melons are available on the East Coast. Quality is average: melons are firm, juicy, and sweet. Sugar levels are high, ranging from 12 to 14 Brix.