

FRESH DIRECTIONS

WEST CREEK FRESH

Weekly Produce Trend Report for Week Ending March 6, 2015

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



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MARKET OVERVIEW

With the continued warm weather pattern at this time, there is average supply and demand of most mixed vegetables and lettuce items. However, broccoli supplies in the Yuma growing region are rapidly decreasing. Cold weather is projected for Salinas, and we could see lighter supplies. Most all herbs are steady and in fairly good supply and quality. Cooler weather in Florida and a seasonal decline have reduced yields in Florida on rounds, romas and grape tomatoes.

APPLES & PEARS

Washington prices are low. Although most stocks are plentiful, 125- to 138-count sizes are a bit tighter. Quality is excellent: sugar levels are high, measuring 14 to 18 Brix (sugar to acid ratio). Washington prices are level; D'Anjou stocks are ample. Quality is excellent: sugar levels range from 12 to 14 Brix.

ARTICHOKES

Better supplies are forecasted this week and the coming weeks. The chokes are frost free with excellent quality. Sizing is estimated to be heavy to 12s, 18s, and 24s. Prices should remain steady.

ARUGULA

Supplies of regular arugula are good. Expect some yellowing and frost damage. Supplies of wild arugula are also stabilizing with some yellowing and frost damage.

ASPARAGUS

Mexican supplies are limited, but weak demand is keeping the market steady. Harvesting will begin in approximately one month. Flavor is grassy, texture is firm, and stalks are straight.

AVOCADOS

Prices are rising, especially for 48-count and larger fruit. Both California and Mexican stocks are on the market, yet California growers will not fully harvest until late March/early April. Quality is very good: oil content is high, creating creamy texture and nutty flavor.

BANANAS

In Central America, last December brought cooler than

normal weather patterns, rain and less solar radiation negatively impacting the growing conditions and yield of bananas in Costa Rica. In addition, in January, the Atlantic region suffered extreme high winds in the growing region. Our growers lost thousands of banana plants. Guatemala suffered two extreme cold fronts, causing a significant loss in product. Problems are also being experienced with the government of Ecuador. They are enforcing a policy where growers cannot sell more than a certain percentage of their bananas on the open market, which is an "auction market" for the industry. This, combined with the strong demand from Russian companies, has led to extremely high prices for spot market bananas. This is estimated to continue through March. Please be aware of a shortage in the banana market and an increase in price.

BLACKBERRIES

The market is steady to slightly higher than last week. Mexican volume is a bit lower due to recent storms; expect tighter stocks for several weeks. Quality is average: fruit is deeply colored, plump, and sweet. Sugar levels range from 12 to 13 Brix.

BLUEBERRIES

Prices remain high. Chilean and Mexican supplies are limited; import and transfer challenges persist. Florida growers will start production in mid-March. Quality is good: fruit is plump, sweet, and juicy. Sugar levels range from 14 to 18 Brix.

BOK CHOY

Tight supplies, high prices.



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BROCCOLI

The market is forecast to remain low for the next ten days. While production in Arizona and Mexico is winding down, California growers are ramping up for the spring season. Quality is excellent: flavor is earthy, crowns are tightly packed, texture is crisp, and stalks are smooth.

CANTALOUPE

Expect an elevated market for another three to four weeks. Stocks will remain tight until harvesting increases in Guatemala and Honduras. 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

Although the Arizona season is ending, the market is stable. Salinas Valley growers are ramping up for the spring season. Quality is excellent.

CELERY

Low prices persist; stocks are ample. Quality is excellent; stalks are straight and firm with zesty flavor.

CILANTRO

Supplies are very good this week. Quality and appearance continue to be excellent with 9-11" in length and good green color.

CUCUMBERS

EAST: Vast majority of supplies still coming from Honduras. Our Florida spring crop is about three weeks away. Quality is good.

WEST: Nogales crossings continue. Good supplies. FOB prices are generally weaker. Quality has become extremely variable. We expect supplies to decrease into March due to disease pressures.

EGGPLANT

EAST: Eggs are currently in short supply. FOB prices up again this week.

WEST: Supplies are good but growers are selling out every day as demand for western eggs increase. Quality is good.

FENNEL/ANISE

Fennel supplies are projected to be slightly above demand for this week. Percentages of larger sizes will be close to needs for contracts and may be slightly above. The market should remain steady for the next few weeks with plenty of supplies projected industry wide.

GARLIC

The garlic market has improved, although we are still facing issues with getting product from China. We are still seeing some Chinese pounds that have become available in the market. Although pricing still remains high, it has come down from where it was. It is anyone's guess whether more pounds will continue to become available or if "the pipeline" will run dry again. Time will tell. On the domestic side, the demand continues to remain high/moderate, and supplies are still tight. However, we are seeing it ease up.

GINGER

There is a supply and demand situation that happens from time to time with ginger. The crop in storage remains tight. This is causing a lack of supply and very high prices, although they are not as high as they were several months ago.

GRAPES

Although West Coast port delays persist, prices have dipped slightly. Chilean green and red seedless volume is adequate. Quality is very good: texture is crunchy and flavor is sweet.

GREEN BEAN

Availability is plentiful in Nogales, generally steady in Florida.

GREEN CABBAGE

Green cabbage quality and supplies are great this week with expected weights of over 50 lbs. and medium/large head size. Plenty of supplies are expected for the next three weeks.

GREEN ONIONS

Green onions have been a struggle on both lower than normal volumes and getting them crossed over the border. For the short term there seems to be no changes. The market will remain volatile for the week. Steady prices with lighter volumes.



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HONEYDEW

Prices are level. Mexican volume is increasing; offshore stocks are limited. Quality is very good: sugar levels range from 11 to 13 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 the East Coast and will be available on the West Coast in a week.

LEMONS

Prices are level. Although the desert season is ending, production is starting in Southern California. Quality is very good: lemons are tart and juicy.

LETTUCE (GREEN LEAF/VARIETY LETTUCE)

The market has eased even lower; demand is weak and supplies are plentiful. Quality is excellent, but insects are an occasional issue.

ICEBERG LETTUCE

The market is steady. Despite ample supplies, quality issues from recent heat are reducing yields. Rib blight, sun scalding, ribby texture, growth cracking, and dense heads are issues. Growers are peeling outer damaged leaves.

ROMAINE LETTUCE

The market is climbing; supplies are limited. Quality problems include fringe burn, insects, internal burn, and twisting.

ROMAINE HEARTS

Supplies will continue to be slightly above average for the week. Demand is good. The warm temperatures that have been prevalent over the past week in the southern growing district have pushed the product ahead of schedule. Fields are being harvested 7-14 days ahead of schedule. The overall quality is fair to good.

LIMES

The market will rise and stocks will decrease until the spring harvest in April. Small sizes are especially scarce. Quality is good, but past rain has caused some problems with yellowing.

NAPA

Limited supplies, high prices.

ONIONS

Prices remain near the bottom; Northwestern stocks are abundant. Mexican volume is starting to increase; expect lighter flavor and thinner skins than storage stocks.

ORANGES

The market is stable. Small California Navel fruit (113-count and smaller sizes) is limited. Sugar levels range from 13 to 14 Brix. Growers are harvesting the Valencia variety in Florida and Texas.

PARSLEY (CURLY)

Supplies are plentiful this week. Quality is very nice with bunches of 8-10" in length with dark green color.

PARSLEY (ITALIAN)

Supplies continue to improve. Overall quality is very nice with bunches averaging 9-11" in length.

PEPPER (GREEN BELL)

EAST: Market has increased since last week but more current supplies are now putting downward pressure on the prices. Quality continues to be good but recent rains and cold temperatures are beginning to take their toll.

WEST: Nogales is the major sourcing crossing point. Rains have affected supplies and FOB prices are higher on all sizes and grades.

PEPPER (JALAPEÑOS)

EAST: Supplies remain tight with FOB prices generally steady with some downward pressure. Quality is very good.

PEPPER (RED AND YELLOW)

Prices are unchanged; stocks are adequate. Quality is excellent: shape is blocky, skins are smooth, and flavor is sweet, yet zesty.

PINEAPPLE

The market is stable at higher levels. Increased demand for the Easter holiday will keep supplies tight through March. Quality is good: fruit is sweet: sugar levels range from 13 to 14 Brix.



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POTATOES (IDAHO)

The market is stable; prices for small sizes are the lowest.

RASPBERRIES

Prices are steady at high levels; stocks will tighten for the next several weeks due to cool weather and strong demand. A wide range in quality is being reported.

RED CABBAGE

Light supplies can be expected for the next few weeks as supplies are being stretched between planted acres and demand.

SALADS & BLENDS

Warm weather throughout the desert growing region has caused heat-related defects in some iceberg and romaine fields. Some chunks/wads (large, dense pieces of lettuce) and mildew damage have been reported.

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)

There are good supplies of baby spinach and clipped spinach. Quality is fair due to frost damage.

SPINACH (BUNCHED)

Numbers are strong this week and yields are very high in both production areas (Mexico and California). Demand has improved, and quality is strong.

SPRING MIX

The market is unchanged. Temperatures have cooled, but quality problems persist. Issues such as brittle texture, condensation, shortened shelf-life, and yellowing are being reported. Maintaining the cold chain is critical to shelf-life.

SQUASH (GREEN)

EAST: FOB prices are generally stable. Demand continues to be weak. Quality is still good but the weather has had its affects.

WEST: Supplies are down due to field disease pressure. FOB prices stronger. Quality has become variable.

SQUASH (YELLOW)

EAST: FOB prices generally steady as supplies continue to be light. Quality continues to be variable due to recent rains and wind (scarring).

WEST: Supplies continue to cross at Nogales this week. Rains have affected the volume available. FOB prices up again by several dollars. Quality is variable. We are about 4 weeks away from new crops in new fields.

STRAWBERRIES

Weak demand is keeping the California market stable. New crop Santa Maria fruit is on the market; supplies are limited, but will increase as the season progresses. The Mexican and Florida seasons will wind down in late March, pending supply and quality. Quality is good: texture is firm despite recent high temperatures.

TOMATOES

EAST

Rounds

There has been no new developments to report since our special market report from Friday. The low temperatures last Thursday night did cause some peripheral damage but it was not a catastrophic event. There was some damage to most fields but the damage was not widespread. We expect to see some effects of the cold temperatures on quality, mainly yellowing. Supplies are tight but demand is weak. The volume out of Mexico is helping meet demand. FOB prices of all sizes are up a couple of dollars. Demand will remain tight for another week or two but we do not expect there to be much, if any, additional upward pressure on prices in the short term after this week.

Romas

Supplies continue to be tight this week but demand also remains weak. Prices are generally steady with some downward pressure. Quality is good. Weather may have an effect on quality in the future.

Grapes

Supplies are able to meet demand which has put downward pressure on FOB prices. Quality is still good.

Cherries

Supplies tight but able to meet demand. FOB prices steady. Quality is good.



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WEST/MEXICO

Rounds

Demand is good. Growers sold out yesterday. FOB prices of the ex-large tomatoes remained steady. The FOB prices of large and medium sized tomatoes are down. Quality is good.

Romas

Supplies have increased from last week. Nogales and McAllen are the major crossing points. We expect FOB prices to drop back to Suspension Agreement minimums by the end of the week. Quality is generally good to very good.

Grapes

Supplies and demand good. Mexican supplies mostly crossing at Nogales. A few are beginning to cross at Baja. FOB prices are steady with some downward pressure. Quality is variable.

Cherries

FOB prices steady. Quality continues to be variable due to splits and color.

TREE FRUIT

The nectarine, peach, and plum markets are level despite tight stocks caused by West Coast port delays. Quality is good, but light bruising and soft texture are concerns.

WATERMELON

Prices are finally starting to ease. Volume from Honduras (into the East Coast) is low, but Mexican spring stocks are increasing. Quality is average: melons are firm, juicy, and sweet. Sugar levels range from 10 to 12 Brix.