

FRESH DIRECTIONS

Weekly Produce Trend Report for Week Ending October 9, 2015



COMMODITY	PRICE	QUALITY	PRICE TREND
California Avocados	END OF SEASON		
Mexican Avocados	Moderate	Good	VARIES BY SIZE
Blackberries, Blueberries, Raspberries	Moderate	Good	↔
Strawberries	High	Good	↔
Grapefruit	Moderate	Good	↔
Lemons	High	Good	↔
Limes	Moderate	Excellent	↓
Pineapples	Moderate	Good	↔
Oranges, Navels	Some CA/Chilean Navels	Poor-Vals Good-Navs	↑
Green & Red Leaf Lettuces	Moderate	Good	↔
Iceberg Lettuce & Cucumbers	High	Good	↔
Romaine Lettuce & Romaine Hearts	Moderate	Good	↔
Green Beans	Low to Extreme	Good	↔
Green Bell Peppers	Moderate	Good	↔
Red Bell Peppers	Moderate to High	Good	↔
Yellow Squash, Zucchini	Low to Moderate	Good	↔
Green & Red Seedless Grapes, Cantaloupes, Napa	High	Good	↔
Bok Choy, Carrots, Frisee, Spring Mix, Mache	Moderate	Good	↔
Honeydews & Plums	Moderate	Good	↔
Artichokes	Moderate to High	Excellent	↔
Arugula	High	Fair	↔
Asparagus	Moderate to High	Good	↑
Broccoli	Moderate to High	Good	↔
Parsley (Curly & Italian)	Moderate to High	Very Good	↔
Cauliflower	Moderate	Good	↑
Celery	Moderate	Variable	↓
Fennel/Anise	High	Very Good	↔
Peeled Garlic	Extreme	Good	↔
Green Cabbage	High	Excellent	↔
Green Onions	High	Good	↓
Kale (Green)	Low	Very Good	↔
Red Cabbage	High	Excellent	↔
Snow & Sugar Snap Peas	High	Poor to Fair	↔
Spinach (Baby)	Low	Good	↓
Spinach (Bunched)	High	Good	↓
Yellow, White Onions	Moderate	Good	↓
Red Onions	Moderate	Good	↑
Round, Grape, Roma Tomatoes	Moderate	Good	↔
Idaho Russet Potatoes	Variable	Good	↔
Red & Golden Delicious, Granny Smiths, Pinks	Moderate	Good	↔
Golden Delicious, Fujis – New Crop	Higher	Good	↔
Galas, Honeycrisp - New Crop, D'anjous, Bosc Pears	High	Good	↔
Bartlett Pears	High/Moderate	Good	↔



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MARKET OVERVIEW

The growing areas of Monterey County have been experiencing significantly above normal temperatures for the last several months. In June and July the night time/early morning temperatures were 4 to 5 degrees above normal just about every single day; this was the start of the quality and weights of various commodities beginning to have issues. The plants like to “sleep” at night and to do this normal temps are needed. If too warm, the plants continue to grow 24 hours a day and the result is high core and seeder issues on iceberg, romaine, and leaf items. In August and September we have experienced multiple high pressure fronts with both day and night time temperatures on many days being 10 to 20 degrees above normal. All of this has contributed to many plantings having quality and weight issues, especially on iceberg and romaine. Most companies are harvesting product on the early side to avoid additional issues if crops are left to grow to full maturity before harvesting. All of these factors are contributing to the current demand exceed situation on multiple commodities.

Currently, due to the continued above normal temperatures, many iceberg plantings are being harvested 7 full days before budgeted harvest date. This can create an even tighter supply situation down the road as the industry is harvesting product today that is scheduled for a week from now. At some point, one of two things will happen: supplies will get tighter if future plantings slide back to being on schedule, or the Salinas deal will finish up a week early and put additional pressure on the transition period of Salinas to Yuma. Also remember late plantings in southern Salinas Valley have quite a few plantings with stands only 70 percent of normal due to excessive heat at vulnerable growing stage plus the front end of Yuma had plantings in Yuma Valley impacted by a rare 4 to 6 inch rain event. Thankfully, most of the front end product in Yuma is grown out East in Welton and Dome Valley which received little if any rain.

No one can predict what demand will be, but the supply side has been significantly impacted and there is a strong possibility of tremendous market volatility on many commodities the remainder of the Salinas Valley season. There will be the inevitable swings in both supply, demand, and markets; but the supply side will have many days/weeks over the remaining 8 weeks or so of the Salinas season with both quality and yields being less than normal.

One other key issue will be what will the weather do the remainder of the Salinas Valley season? Will it cooperate and help the crops the remainder of this season or will it continue to be significantly different than normal and negatively impact crops in ground even greater than what we are currently experiencing? Stay tuned for what potentially could be a roller coaster ride the next couple of months.

WASHINGTON APPLES & PEARS

Demand is very good as well as movement. There are still good buying opportunities for old crop 100 larger reds, demand is stronger on 113 smaller. Quality remains good. New crop Galas, Granny Smiths, golden delicious, fuji, and honey crisp are now in good supply as well as Bartletts, D'Anjou and Bosc pears.

ARTICHOKES

Average volume is expected this week although supplies industry wide are low. Most of the volume this week is expected to be 12's, and 18's. Quality is excellent. Most sizes are higher in price. Volume is expected to be below average for the next several weeks.

ARUGULA

Supplies of both baby and wild arugula are good. Quality is good with minimal yellowing and thick stems.

ASPARAGUS

Prices are easing. Volume is rising in Baja, Mexico; quality is very good. Peruvian supplies are sufficient; quality is merely fair.

AVOCADOS

The market is low. The California and Peruvian seasons have ended. Mexican stocks are plentiful. Large sizes (48-count and lower) dominate the crop.



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BANANAS

Supplies are much better, and quality is good.

BLACKBERRIES

Prices are up; recent heat has lowered West Coast volume. Quality is average, but bleeding, bruising, and soft texture are minor problems. Sugar levels range from 12 to 13 Brix. The new crop Mexican season has just begun.

BLUEBERRIES

The market is elevated. Domestic seasons are ending; controlled-atmosphere storage is being used until stocks are depleted. Offshore arrivals have been sporadic. Quality is good, but shriveling and softness are issues.

BOK CHOY

Quality is good, and supplies are plentiful.

BROCCOLI

Prices remain high. Problems like bracketing, hollow core, and knuckly heads persist due to continued heat. The Mexican market is slightly lower, but quality is best in California.

CANTALOUPE

Market very strong with supplies on the Westside slowing down with a few shippers finishing in the next week but we should have fruit up here until the 3rd week of October and possibly the end of October if weather conditions stay good. We have started in the CA and AZ deserts in a very light way as well and will see volumes continue to increase weekly. The overall quality of both areas is very nice with good sugars and nice firm clean fruit. Quality is excellent: sugar levels range from 11-13 Brix.

CARROTS

Availability is good for jumbo carrots in California. Quality is good.

CAULIFLOWER

Supplies will be just above average this week. Quality is still very good, and sizing is normal overall.

CELERY

Supplies are fair this week. Quality is variable. We are seeing some pith mostly in the outer stalks.

CILANTRO

The Cilantro market has continued to drop. Quality is good. Demand has gone down reducing FOB prices. All shippers are seeing issues with yellowing and decay. Currently, all cilantro is out of the U.S.

CORN

The market has been very active on corn. Quality is good.

CUCUMBERS

EAST: FOB prices are generally steady but with downward pressure. Quality has been good.

WEST: More supplies this week is causing FOB prices to be slightly weaker compared to last week. Quality is variable.

ENGLISH CUCUMBER

Hothouse availability in various districts in the U.S., and Canada is steady.

EGGPLANT

EAST: Good supplies are causing FOB prices remain steady at current low levels. Quality is good.

WEST: We are seeing some quality issues at crossing points.

FENNEL

Supplies for the week will be average. Demand continues to be decent and should increase in the coming weeks.

GARLIC

We are now about 80% done with our harvest, and unfortunately, the situation has not improved (actually slightly worsened). We will not know where we will be with garlic for another few months due to the weather in California. The winter didn't get cold enough and the summer was too hot, so the bulbs on the garlic have not bloomed. We will be watching this weekly as the crop is very behind schedule.

GINGER

The ginger market has improved. Prices are moderate and will continue to be moderate.

GRAPES

Market steady and strong with excellent demand on Reds and Greens, the fruit is very high in sugar and is firm and strong eats like candy. We should have good volume of fruit through mid-December and hopefully longer depending on weather as we are supposed to have El Nino conditions hitting us around the middle to end of October. This is an excellent time to promote California table grapes. Quality is excellent. Green seedless sugar levels range from 17 to 18 Brix; portioned grapes and red seedless levels range from 22 to 24 Brix.

GREEN BEANS

An extreme shortage continues for growers in the coastal districts of Central California, driven primarily by hot weather. The Coachella Valley harvest will begin in mid-October; until then, supplies in the West will remain tight. In the East, production is steady in the mid-Atlantic districts.



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GREEN CABBAGE

Green cabbage from the central coast of California will continue with light supplies and below average volume for the next few weeks. Sizing is slightly smaller with 22-24 heads per carton but weights still above 45-50 lbs.

GREEN ONIONS

The industry is currently experiencing a shortage of Green Onion supplies out of Mexico; transition period on production between the Baja and Mexicali growing regions. In recent weeks, both areas have witnessed repeated exposure to temperatures above 115 degrees, which causes the plants to stop growing. This has had a dramatic effect on yields in both areas, but more so in Baja. Both areas also experienced heavy rainfall the week of September 7th which has added to the yield challenges. Last week, harvest labor and transportation also became a challenge as Mexican Independence day fell on the middle of the week, affecting quantities harvested for the week, and overall number of border crossings. The combination of these issues left the industry in a very short position leading into this week. More rain has inhibited the harvest and will lead to severe shortages for several days. We expect to be in full production by the week of October 5th.

HONEYDEW

Market steady with descent supplies out of the Westside and also out of the California and Arizona deserts. The overall quality is excellent out of both areas with very high sugars and very clean green to cream exterior and nice light to deep green internal color. We expect to have good supplies here on the Westside through October and then we will transition to the desert regions. Sugar levels range from 11 to 13 Brix.

KALE (GREEN)

Demand is steady, and quality is good with some occasional yellowing present. Supplies are good.

KIWI

Plentiful availability on late-season kiwi from Chile. The new crop California harvest will begin in early October; the harvest transition from Chile will be smooth.

LEMONS

We have started dist. 3 in a light way and will hopefully have better volume next week this year's crop looks to be about 15-20% lighter than normal, the overall quality of the dist. 3 fruit is nice and firm with a light green tinge on the stem and blossom end, the overall juice content is good and fruit is very firm. There is still some Chilean and Mexican fruit arriving and the market is very firm as demand is excellent keeping prices strong. We expect to start Dist.1 around the middle part of November which will be sooner than normal.

GREEN LEAF/VARIETY LETTUCE

Supplies are light on Green and Red leaf this week. Green and Red leaf will be 22-24 lbs. per case with each head at 9-10" long. Some of the red leaf is showing occasional seeder at 3" long. Quality is better.

ICEBERG LETTUCE

Average to well below average supplies continue this week; supplies are still light industry wide. Quality is generally good although we are seeing insect pressure, growth cracks and some weak tip due to rapid weather changes. Prices are a somewhat lower but still relatively high.

ROMAINE

Supplies will be below average this week. Crews continue to work slowly through the fields as they sort through heads with poor quality to find the best product to pack. We expect some occasional seeder in some heads with the pack 37-38 lbs. and 11-12" long heads.

ROMAINE HEARTS

Supplies are expected to be average this week. Overall quality is good however, we will continue to see some of the issues that result from the past heat. For example: fringe burn, occasional twisting and seeders. The product is clean inside.

LIMES

The market is slightly lower than last week; supplies are adequate. Quality is excellent.

MANGOS

Supply is getting tight, and prices are high. Brazil has very light supplies, and Ecuador will not start until November.

NAPA

Salinas's quality is variable. Some internal problems are being reported. Supplies are low this week due to poor yields.

ONIONS

The Idaho/Oregon onion markets are steady on the yellow and white varieties but up on reds. As previously stated the red onion market will remain strong for the balance of the Idaho season. Reports out of Washington State indicate that they are having some serious sizing issues with most of the jumbo yellows and larger. This will direct more business towards Idaho and will eventually push FOB prices upward.

ORANGES

We are still in a very tough situation where demand far exceeds supply on all sizes and grades and are probably about 2 weeks away from starting new crop California navels and it can't start soon enough. Shippers continue



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to try and cover orders but it is more difficult this week and next week will be worse so shippers we will either be prorating or will not have anything available we appreciate your patience through these trying times for all involved. On the brighter side the upcoming navel crop looks very good and volume should start out with a nice range of size. The sugar is higher than normal and acid is coming on better each week, we are just needing some cooler nights to get some color break so we can pick and start gassing to bring on the color. California sugar levels range from 12.5 to 13.5 Brix.

PARSLEY (CURLY, ITALIAN)

Regular parsley supply is below average. Italian parsley supplies are average. Overall quality on both is excellent.

GREEN BELL PEPPER

EAST: Most supplies now coming out of GA. Rains are bringing the NC crop to a quick close. FOB prices are slightly stronger this week.

WEST: We are seeing declining volume and quality crossing from Baja. FOB prices are up compared to last week.

JALAPEÑOS

EAST: FOB prices are steady to higher compared to last week. Quality remains good.

RED & YELLOW PEPPERS

The market is stable; stocks are increasing.

PINEAPPLE

Prices are up. Inconsistent weather patterns in Costa Rica will reduce stocks for another five weeks; Brix levels range from 14 to 15. Supplies are more plentiful in Mexico; sugar levels range from 12 to 13 Brix.

IDAHO POTATOES

Most shippers feel very strongly that this potato market has bottomed out. Growers throughout the state are starting to pull supplies away due to the unusually weak market. It remains to be seen how quickly this will effect fob pricing. There are now some Burbanks available and being packed in the state of Idaho.

RASPBERRIES

The market has stabilized; stocks have increased in California. Quality has improved. Sugar levels range from 13 to 14 Brix.

RED CABBAGE

Fields are seeing some heavier yields this week with great sizing and color. Industry supplies are still light attributing to strong market. Expect good supplies this week, but possibly lower in the weeks to come.

SALADS & BLENDS

The market is high; raw product supplies are tight. Respiration rates are accelerated due to brittle texture, core material, internal burn, mildew pressure, and rib blight in some finished packs.

SNOW AND SUGAR SNAP PEAS

Snow peas and sugar snaps are still in good demand with good supplies (Peru, Mexico, and California). Prices remain in the highs for both. Quality is good.

SPINACH (BABY)

Baby Spinach and Clipped Spinach supplies are good. Quality is good with some thicker stems, some occasional weaker texture and inconsistent leaf-sizing. Again, the cooler nights will begin to help the texture and sizing improve.

SPINACH (BUNCHED)

Better volume industry wide; market has come off a bit. Volume should be steady for the next few weeks. Quality is good.

SPRING MIX

The market is steady. Recent heat reduced yields and weakened plant structures, causing condensation and shortening shelf-life. Texture in tender leaves like arugula and spinach is brittle, increasing mechanical damage.

GREEN SQUASH

EAST: FOB prices are slightly stronger this week. Like the yellow, quality has been good but the recent rains will cause quality to become suspect.

WEST: FOB prices are steady to lower as volume crossing at Nogales is slowly increasing.

YELLOW SQUASH

EAST: Good supplies and slow demand are causing FOB prices to remain near the bottom. Quality has been good but we will see how the rains will affect quality in the near future. GA and northern FL crops have started while NC and SC crops continue to produce.

WEST: FOB prices are slightly stronger again this week due to weaker supplies. Quality is variable. Slow volume is crossing at Nogales as that crop gets started.

STRAWBERRIES

The market is slightly higher than last week; demand is steady. Quality problems such as bleeding, bruising, and soft texture persist. Size is smaller than normal due to the past month's hot weather. Sugar levels range from 14 to 15 Brix.



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TOMATOES

EAST

Rounds

Rain has fallen for nearly a week in all growing regions in the east. This will affect the volume and quality in the east for weeks to come. Very cool weather is expected to follow the rains which will cause the older fields in the east to wind down quickly. New fields in Quincy have started but with very low volume. The rains are delaying our plantings further south in Florida which will cause our winter Florida crop to be behind schedule. Local fields continue in the mountains of NC, SC and TN but yields are lighter as those crops are very close to ending and quality is suspect. Our Eastern Shore crop is being picked but yield there is light and has seen much rain this past week. **Because of the variable quality and shelf-life issues, we recommend that inventories be kept tight for the next several weeks.** All sizes are running on the smaller side. FOB prices of 6x6s and 6x7s are steady but the price of 5x6s is higher.

Romas

Supplies continue to be very tight. FOB prices on all sizes are steady. Quality continues to be variable.

Grapes

FOB prices are steady on bulk this week compared to last week and slightly higher on the 12/1pt flats. Quality remains generally good.

Cherries

Supplies continue to be extremely tight as they have been all summer. FOB prices are currently steady. Quality continues to be variable but good quality can be found.

Weather Forecast

NC/TN MOUNTAINS: A high chance of rain each day for the rest of the week. Turning colder with highs only in the 50s on Friday and lows in the upper 40s by early next week.

VA EASTERN SHORE: A high probably of rain or showers each day through the weekend. Highs will only be in upper 60s on Thursday and Fridays with lows in the 50s for several nights starting over the weekend.

WEST/MEXICO

Rounds

Volume out of CA fields is dropping off dramatically as is the quality out of those fields. Shelf-life is very suspect. Sizing remains on the small size. FOB prices are steady

for the better quality. Lower prices can be found on lesser quality product. Vine ripers continue to cross from Baja and quality remains variable. Vines ripers crossing over at McAllen are light but with better quality. Crossings at Nogales continue this week but with low volume as that season gets geared up.

Romas

Supplies continue from CA and crossings at Otay Mesa and McAllen. Volume out of the newer Mexican fields appears to be down by as much as 50% compared to prior years. FOB prices are up on the large size romas and steady on the medium size.

Grapes

We are still seeing a range in quality. FOB prices of the better quality are higher this week. Inferior product can continue to be purchased at a discount.

Cherries

Supplies continue to be tight with a wide range of FOB prices depending on quality. FOB prices for quality product are stronger compared to last week.

TREE FRUIT

Prices are high. The nectarine and peach seasons have ended. Plums will be available through this week. Quality is good: fruit is sweet and juicy. Plum sugar levels range from 12 to 16 Brix. The Chilean season will begin in mid- to late December.

WATERMELON

The market will remain elevated through mid- October when new crop Arizona/California desert and Mexican supplies become available. Quality is excellent: fruit is sweet and juicy. Sugar levels range from 11 to 13 Brix.