



NEWSLETTER

Monday, May 1, 2017

GENERAL OUTLOOK: This week's high pressure system over California will keep temperatures in the normal range aiding plant growth. No rain, just wind is forecast. Tanimura & Antle reports that most of January and February plantings in the Salinas Valley took place between rain storms during very short windows. For those two months, 34 of 59 potential planting days were cancelled due to wet weather. Most crops take 75-90 days to mature, thus we are seeing disjointed harvesting schedules now. Peaks and valleys in production should keep many markets strong through May. Harvesting gaps will continue for many row crop vegetables, particularly CELERY, CAULIFLOWER, BROCCOLI, LEAF and ICEBERG LETTUCES.

*** TIGHT ITEMS ***

ICEBERG LETTUCE: Heavy rains this winter/spring in California's Salinas Valley and a heat wave in the Arizona desert have drastically cut supplies, resulting in recent record high prices. Fortunately, this market has retreated from recent record high prices as available supplies have increased. However, this roller coaster market will continue through May as growers deal with production gaps. This erratic market continues!

LEAF LETTUCES: Supplies are slowly improving, but demand is still strong and prices remain elevated. GREEN LEAF supplies are very tight, but demand has slipped because of escalated pricing. RED LEAF availability is a little better, but a smaller crop and good demand will keep this market volatile. ROMAINE supplies and quality have increased the most. Prices have started to ease, but the uneven market conditions mentioned above will prevent leaf markets from falling very rapidly.

CELERY: There is a lot of pressure on this market. Oxnard and Santa Maria, CA are currently supplying the whole country. Right now, supply is NOT matching demand--so prices keep trending upward. Salinas production won't start until June. Until then, this commodity will remain very tight. Fortunately, overall quality has improved.

BLACKBERRIES: Supplies continue to be light this week! Yields in SoCal and Mexico are very light. No real relief is expected until Salinas and Watsonville get going in late May. Prices are higher and should remain up for the near term.

*** PROMOTIONAL ITEMS ***

STRAWBERRIES: Overall supplies are increasing in California because of better weather and due to the start the northern districts of Watsonville and Salinas. Shippers expect May to be a banner month for berry sales—if Mother Nature cooperates. Quality has improved too. Heavy demand for Mother's Day will keep growers/pickers humming. Some shippers continue to ask A&Z to move extra berries in order to keep daily inventories fresh. Cheaper pallet deals become available with little or no advance notice. Please call our sales team for these promotional opportunities!

TOMATOES: Mexican production in the new district of Obregon is increasing, especially for ROMAS. Fewer large ROUND and GRAPE Tom crossings have caused a slight bump in the market. However, new San Diego County roma production is increasing with more round and grape availability coming this week. Call for prices!

CUCUMBERS: A plethora of cukes continue to cross the border from Mexico. Color, size, quality and condition are excellent. Now is the time, please call for prices!

SOFT SQUASHES: Abundant supplies of Mexican ZUCCHINI and YELLOW varieties are coming from Sonora. Shippers expect this low market to continue for two-three weeks. Quality is up and prices are down—call for details!

APPLES: The overall market is strengthening, but there are always several attractive apple values available. Large size PINK LADY, GALA and FUJI varieties are in promotional position this week. Call! (Note: Some smaller sizes continue to be in short supply as demand is dictating the higher prices.)

PINEAPPLES: Plentiful, nice quality Mexican imports are again available and very promotable. Please call! (Note: Costa Rica import numbers are is still below normal.)

POTATOES: Retail poly consumer packs (5# & 10#) continue to be value priced (especially for pallet sales) as Idaho shippers have to run more spuds to keep up with the higher large count (40-70ct.) baker market. This is all due to due to the smaller size profile of the remaining Burbank RUSSET storage supplies. Call for details!

DRY ONIONS: The remaining storage supplies in the Northwest are winding down. Cheaper, season ending prices are still available for REDS and YELLOWS (mediums, jumbos and 40# Sweets.) while new crop Texas and SoCal production increases. Call!

*** **FRESH FRUITS & VEGETABLES** ***

BROCCOLI: There is a little relief this week for BUNCH and CROWN markets because of better quality supplies coming from SoCal and Mexico. There may be serious production gaps down the road—but not this week.

CAULIFLOWER: This market has eased this week too. Demand is lighter, largely because of recent record high prices that have been passed on to consumers. Thus, shippers have more availability now than during recent weeks of uneven markets.

NAVEL ORANGES: This commodity continues to tighten as the season winds down quicker than most everyone expected. Sunkist reports that they will end by June 1. Some smaller independent houses will finish in the next week or two. As a result, prices have risen. (Note: VALENCIAS have started in a limited way.)

MELONS: Bin SEEDLESS WATERMELONS are the best melon value this week as import supplies from Sonora, Mexico increase. Import CANTALOUPEs from the Caribbean are steady as are HONEDEWS from Mexico. Because of recent ideal growing conditions, new crop cantaloupe harvesting will begin this week in Northern Mexico with domestic desert production just around the corner.

ASPARAGUS: Generally, overall market supplies are light even though there are several regions producing. Mexico should have the best volume in May with new product coming from Baja and Obregon. California has had cooler temps recently that has slowed growth. Washington has had lots of rain that has limited harvesting. There may be an occasional deal available, but on balance—marketplace prices are higher.

AVOCADOS: California HASS harvesting is increasing, helping to supply the market for Cinco de Mayo (May 5) and Mother's Day (May 14) demand. Mexican imports will also be a bit higher this week because of increasing holiday demand. Still, overall supplies are inadequate to satisfy demand and prices are firm.

SEEDLESS GRAPES: Dwindling Chilean supplies are steady at current higher levels as the season winds down. Most late grapes are of superior quality although there have been some inferior fruit bouncing around. Focus will soon switch to new crop production that has just barely started with GREENS in Coachella, CA and in Mexico. REDS will start later this week. However, peak production will follow by about ten days.

STONE FRUITS: The first California CHERRIES have arrived so the new tree fruit season has begun with expectations of a good season. A devastating freeze has reportedly destroyed 90% of the South Carolina PEACH crop with other growing districts in the Southeast experiencing losses too. Unfortunate circumstances in one region ends up making a good situation for another region—California in this case. The state had a lot of rain this year which helped the crops, but some orchards were hit with rainstorms that caused more bloom drop than usual. It has been a mixed blessing for growers. A few early APRICOTS, PEACHES and NECTARINES have been picked with good volumes expected by mid-month. PLUMS will start then with decent volumes for Memorial Day week.

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