

SAVVY BUYER

Southern Produce News

FEBRUARY 26, 2010

Veggie Vitals

CELERY: Oxnard, Coachella and Arizona - You Pick!

CILANTRO: Stay away from Oxnard area, lots of discoloration and cheap but you get what you pay for. From Coachella to Arizona best stuff, dark green color, nice, strong texture.

GREEN BEANS: Second rate quality. Lots of rain in Mexico, means lots of mold.

LETTUCE: We have seen a recent increase in iceberg lettuce demand. As the East coast

reloads after their snow days, the movement has been brisk. Do to quality problems and some shippers choosing to disc under lettuce rather than sell at a loss, available volumes have been depleted. There is also a threat of rain for the desert for this weekend. So through all this, the market is higher. Shippers have been reporting about 4 to 5 weeks left in the desert season. With continued reports of lettuce quality problems, coupled with the addition of coming rains we might see a very good lettuce market for the remainder of the desert season.

NEW ITEM!

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BROCCOLI: Good demand especially on crowns is strengthening prices. The transition north is beginning with a couple more shippers starting back up in Salinas next week. The desert looks to wind down early with reasonable supplies only through mid-March, then light supplies through the end of the month. The best quality is still in the south. Takes extra bird dogging to find good lots on the coast. Continued rain could hurt quality and yields further and driving prices higher.

CAULIFLOWER: Light supplies through next week will keep prices elevated. Look to the desert for quality. The transition north has started with a couple of shippers working through March.

LEAF: Supplies are tightening somewhat as we near the end of production in the desert regions. There's a little mildew and fringe burn in the fields but what makes it in the carton continues very nice. With wet conditions and planting gaps on the coast and the possibility of a quick end to desert production, leaf and all commodities could get quite active in the next month.

STRAWBERRIES: How much rain are we going to get this weekend? Growers have been doing a great job working around the rains and there is a lot of fruit on the plants. Prices are sliding but slowly as the country is hungry for great tasting California berries. **Raspberries** Better supplies coming soon. **Blackberries** tight for a while. **Blueberries**

Availability will change depending on how/when ships arrive.

ENDIVE AND ESCAROLE: Good supplies on both.

LEEKs: Mostly 3 per bunch with some 2s and the occasional 4.

PARSLEY AND ITALIAN PARSLEY: Good numbers from both sides of the border. Large bunches, fresh and bright green.

KALE: More reasonable

FLOWERING KALE: Supplies remain short .

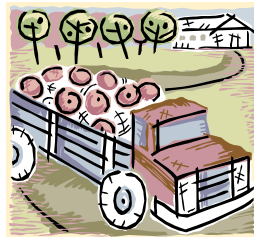
SPINACH: Come and get it.

LEMONS: The Lenten season is upon us. Traditionally lemon sales increase with the many fish fry's and seafood dishes being offered during this time. The market has settled and should remain unchanged for a time. The desert should be finished harvesting in a couple of weeks, but supplies from the coastal area and central part of the state should be plentiful.

GRAPES: The grape market is very active. Continued poor weather in Chile has curtailed normal harvest. This lack of volume has limited supplies on both coasts. Expect this problem to last another 2 to 3 weeks until we fill the pipe line when more ships arrive.

MELONS: The market is still very strong on both the Cantaloupes and Honeydews. Any fruit that is coming from Mexico was hurt by recent adverse weather. Off-shore fruit will increase in volume next week helping to ease the market. Storms continue to pound growing regions in Mexico hurting the quality of Watermelon. What is shipping out of Mexico now is only fair quality. Off-shore watermelons are very limited on the east coast, and almost none on the west coast.

ONIONS: We have seen yet another price increase. Northwest shippers concede that this year's season will conclude two to six weeks early. Some shippers will finish in late February or early March. A slow start due to poor weather in Mexico will keep Mexican onion prices higher than normal. This forecasted shortage will enable shippers to continue to raise prices weekly.



TRANSPORTATION: Trucking companies are having difficulty finding freight to go west. With poor weather (snow) the last couple of weeks, companies have interrupted production of products going west. The availability of trucks on the west coast is well below normal, and freight rates are strong for this time of year.