

JULY 12, 2024

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CROP & MARKET INDUSTRY INFO





MARKET UPDATES

ROMA TOMATOES

Romas are still shy in the East, but we've started to see some of the TN and NC romas come online in a light way. Over the next two weeks, we'll see the rest of the growers get rolling and volume should strengthen to adequate levels. So far, quality has been good but strong demand has caused color concerns at times. In the West, romas are available in Baja, Central MX and CA. Baja's overall volume will be declining as the southern area will finish up by the end of the month, leaving the northern production area to work existing acreage. Central MX's production has been slowed by weather conditions, but there is still light volume available this week. On the domestic front, CA's Central Valley growers, including Lipman, have been fairly steady. Our quality has been good, especially for the bush-type growing methods used in CA and we've harvested mostly XL fruit. However, the extended period of extreme heat will likely bring short-term quality concerns (soft, sunscald, etc.) and longer-term effects with bloom drop in 3-5 weeks.

ROUND TOMATOES

Round tomato supply is still light in the East but there seems to be enough around to get the job done. Lipman's VA crops started last weekend and are looking nice quality-wise. Sizing is mostly in the 5x6 range with limited volumes of anything larger. We're also seeing a few start to pop up in the TN/NC mountain zone. Expect volume in these areas to build over the next 7-10 days as more farms start up for the season. Looking to the West- CA's Central Valley growers are all running with fairly steady numbers right now. The current heat wave has been relentless, causing some heat-related quality issues (soft, sunscald, etc.) for the short term. Longer-term effects will likely show up in 3-5 weeks with lower yields due to bloom drop and overall smaller sizing. Looking to the south, Central MX and Baja are the primary areas in MX with fruit. Southern Baja farms will be winding down over the next few weeks which will result in less product overall. But, northern Baja will continue at consistent levels with a good mix of sizes available.

GRAPE TOMATOES

Overall supply is quite snug on grape tomatoes in both the East and West. Other than Lipman's VA program, there's only a few light pockets of supply from local/regional deals that aren't at full throttle yet. Our VA production started last week in a light way.

We're seeing a few more now that we've begun harvesting from additional plantings and expect things to stay fairly steady, weather permitting. Western supply is primarily coming from Baja and central MX where both are in a light mode due to overcast weather and prior precipitation, respectively.

GREEN BEANS

With MI in a skip and VA on the downhill side of the season, green beans have been a tough item this week. NY is just getting started and should have some volume soon and MI should work through their skip in the next week or so. Pending weather, supply should rebound somewhat soon. In the West, fruit is available from both the CA and central MX growing areas. However, we could see some quality concerns from the extreme heat. The NW, including our WA state program, is also up and running, with most of their product meeting local demand.

COLOR BELL PEPPERS

Both Eastern CAN and Central MX continue in a lighter production mode of colored bell peppers. Central MX should see an uptick at the end of July/early August when new crops come online. We won't likely see volume rebound to normal levels in CAN since there has been a lot of acreage pulled due to disease concerns. Western CAN has had product available consistently, but not an excess. Overall, quality is good but sizing is heavily skewed toward big fruit.

GREEN BELL PEPPERS

Bell pepper crops have been impacted by heat, creating a tight spot for bell peppers this week. The Eastern NC crop experienced extreme high temperatures for an extended period, causing the crop to end early for retail purposes. The remaining crop is primarily suntans and mixed reds. NJ fields have gotten underway, but the first fruit set has been picked heavy to meet demand and farms are now left waiting for the next fruit set. A few local deals have started in a light way, but there's no major volume anywhere in the East at this time. MI will be the next area with bigger volumes. We'll see a few in the interim, but the bulk

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of volume won't come online until the latter part of the month. In the West, Bakersfield and Selma are the CA spots with pepper. Both areas have been impacted by the heatwave, which has limited production hours and may eventually show up in the fruit quality. Looking ahead- we expect to see WA state come online in the last week of July/1st week of August.

YELLOW & ZUCCHINI SQUASH

Both yellow and zucchini squashes are readily available in the East as there are numerous local programs in production as well as MI. Quality is good overall, but there are some occasional fields/lots/growers with issues. In the West, Santa Maria continues to provide consistent volumes, while Baja, MX is finally starting to see some production increases. Santa Maria may see a decline in production in 2 weeks as they transition between blocks but supply should continue to be adequate. WA state also has some nice squash although most of it is staying close to meet local demand.

CUCUMBERS

Super cucumbers continue to present supply challenges as current production areas are seeing lighter yields. NY is just getting started and should have good volumes to add to the mix when they are fully running. Moderate to good volumes are available in the West from Baja and central MX. We do expect to see a little less volume in central MX over the coming week as crops respond to recent weather. Overall, quality is good but is a little stronger out of Baja.

HARD SQUASH

The hard squash scenario is much the same as last week. There are some in NC, NJ, GA and KY and volumes are light for most. We will see more volume from KY in the coming weeks as they have one of the larger Summer programs in the East. As we move into August, we should see NY, VA, PA and a few others come online for the season. In the West, hard squash is available in the Fresno, Bakersfield, & Selma areas where all three varieties are available with nice, clean quality.

EGGPLANT

Lipman's Eastern Carolina program is in full production on eggs with a nice-looking crop and good quality. We expect to go another few weeks there and should end about the time that local deals are running in full force. The West has steady supply out of the Fresno area. Quality has been great and production is expected to stay at similar levels for the next few weeks.

CHILI PEPPERS

The hard squash scenario is much the same as last week. There are some in NC, NJ, GA and KY and volumes are light for most. We will see more volume from KY in the coming weeks as they have one of the larger Summer programs in the East. As we move into August, we should see NY, VA, PA and a few others come online for the season. In the West, hard squash is available in the Fresno, Bakersfield, & Selma areas where all three varieties are available with nice, clean quality.

MINI SWEET PEPPERS

Mainland MX is completely done with mini sweets for the season and everyone is anxiously awaiting the start of Baja at the end of the month. CA has had a few minis, but the extended period of 100+ degree heat has impacted quality and harvests and there's not nearly enough to go around. CAN has had a little fruit as well, but there's been very little available this week. With all factors in play, product is expected to be scarce for at least the next two weeks. WA state should come online around August 15th which will definitely help in the NW.

ORGANIC ROMA

Overcast skies have lightened Baja's organic roma production slightly, but product is available consistently. More growers will be coming online at the end of this month and a couple more in August, so we expect stronger volumes to come. Quality has been good.

ORGANIC GRAPE TOMATOES

Baja's organic grape tomato numbers have been pretty steady and quality has been excellent. Pricing is elevated now, likely due to the conventional grape situation.

ORGANIC MINI SWEET PEPPERS

Baja's new organic mini sweet crops have provided light numbers this week. Quality has been good and the greening and color issues have cleaned up now that they've moved a little further into the crops. A concern is that the conventional market situation may entice organic growers to sell as conventional, which could ultimately impact the supply of organics for a longer term.

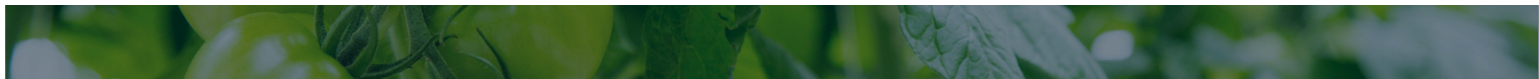
ORGANIC MINI CUCUMBERS

Organic mini cucumber supply continues at moderate levels with product coming from Baja and Central MX. Quality has improved from recent weeks although there's still some amount of grade outs.



WATERMELON

Melon production is on the verge of transition. Both GA and SC are still going with melons but are on the downhill side of the season with 2-3 weeks to go. NC is just about to start and several other areas, including IN, MD, and DE are on tap to get rolling by the 15th. Current quality is mostly good although we are seeing the occasional effects of heat.



CONSUMERS CRAVE SIMPLE, AFFORDABLE FOODS, REPORT FINDS

[PRODUCEMARKETGUIDE.COM](https://www.producemarketguide.com)

by Jennifer Strailey, Jul 09, 2024

What do consumers crave most on their dinner plates? Simplicity with a side of affordability, finds the "2024 Consumer Curiosity Report," an analysis of consumers nationwide most likely to set the next food trends.

Released today, the second annual report focuses on more than 800 early-food adopters from a wide swath of generations, household incomes and U.S. regions, according to a release.

Developed by Curious Plot, a marketing communications agency specializing in the produce industry, the study explores these consumers' curiosity about culinary, nutrition and sustainability topics, all to help food marketers better prepare to take advantage of future trends. Download the report here: curiousplot.agency/curiosity-report/.

Easy meals and budget trending up, but exploration still important

For the second year, respondents ranked "easy (under 30 minutes) meals" as their top curiosity for the year ahead, once again underscoring that even the most food-forward consumers are craving approachable, simple meal inspiration, the release said.

New this year, respondents consistently listed "tips for eating on a budget" as a top curiosity with 73% of early adopters planning to seek new ways to stretch their grocery and restaurant dollars.

That said, despite contracting budgets, they also are seeking to broaden their culinary experiences, says Curious Plot.

Among the report's findings:

- 71% are either very or extremely curious about new ways to prepare vegetables.
- 69% are very or extremely curious about new snack ideas and products.
- 65% are very or extremely curious about global/cultural flavors.
- 63% are very or extremely curious for inspiration for preparing smaller meals, also likely due to inflation.
- 59% are either very or extremely curious about new ways to prepare fruits.

In addition, 65% of respondents are very or extremely curious about reducing food waste, likely connected to grocery budget pressures, the release said.

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INDUSTRY GROUPS WORK TOGETHER TO DEVELOP SUSTAINABLE PRODUCE PACKAGING GUIDELINES BY DECEMBER 2025

[PRODUCEMARKETGUIDE.COM](https://www.producemarketguide.com)

BY THE PACKER STAFF, JUN 27, 2024

Western Growers and the Canadian Produce Marketing Association have launched a working group to address the evolving landscape of packaging requirements imposed by both governments and retailers throughout North America.

Dozens of grower associations from across North America convened to discuss the current state of produce packaging and outline goals for the Sustainable Produce Packaging Alignment for North America, according to a news release.

SPPA will develop unified guidelines for use across the North American fresh produce supply chain, with a target completion date of December 2025.

“Packaging is key to ensuring the quality, affordability and safety of fresh produce,” Western Growers President and CEO Dave Puglia said in the release. “Consumers are requesting high-quality fresh produce from our growers and changes in packaging. As such, the industry is facing new and aggressive demands from both the public and private sector — demands that are often in conflict with each other, and don’t fully recognize industry realities and progress. The intersection of sustainability with packaging must be addressed for the continued trade with our most important partners and continued availability of nutritious foods for consumers.”

“Packaging plays a critical role in enabling the sustainability of North American and global fresh produce supply chains, said CPMA President Ron Lemaire.

“The trend of diverging market and regulatory packaging requirements is a significant risk to fresh produce supply chains, hence the strategic importance of developing and adopting North American guidelines for fresh produce packaging,” he said in the release.

Western Growers and CPMA are actively engaged on the Environment and Climate Change Canada's pre-proposal to constrain allowable fresh produce packaging in Canadian grocery stores, the release said. The ECCC is currently advocating for a significant reduction in produce plastic packaging, demanding that 75% of all produce be sold in bulk or non-plastic packaging by 2026, increasing to 95% by 2028.

The SPPA project plans to develop industry-focused analysis, white papers and web tools on fresh produce packaging technology for U.S. specialty crop growers; host workshops to educate and align stakeholders; organize technical working group meetings to leverage industry expertise to craft the tools above; and launch a public-facing resource to inform stakeholders on how to use the guide once it becomes available, the release said.

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

SEPTEMBER 12-14, 2024

SOUTHERN INNOVATIONS

NASHVILLE, TN

OCTOBER 17-19, 2024

THE GLOBAL PRODUCE & FLORAL SHOW

ATLANTA, GA

TIME TO PACK UP YOUR
PICNIC BASKET WITH
FRESH CUCUMBERS,
TOMATOES, A GOOD BOOK
AND HEAD OUTSIDE!



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