

JANUARY 17, 2025

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# ON THE H O R I Z O N

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industry updates

**CROP &  
MARKET**  
INDUSTRY INFO





# MARKET UPDATES

## ROMA TOMATOES

Florida's roma tomato production is steady and at seasonal levels this week. Quality has improved after last week's fruit was affected by fog and rain showers, and it is expected to continue improving in the coming weeks. Sizing has slightly decreased, but most of the fruit harvested is in the jumbo-large range. In Mexico, the long-awaited increase in roma tomato volumes has finally begun, with harvests continuing to ramp up over the next few weeks. Full seasonal volumes are expected in February. Quality from the new crops has been good, and sizing is primarily J and XL. Baja and Central/Eastern Mexico still have some fruit available, but their seasons are winding down to make way for Western Mexico.

## ROUND TOMATOES

All Florida growers are now in full production with healthy post-storm plantings, resulting in strong supply levels for round tomatoes. Lipman is still harvesting some seconds in Labelle, but has primarily shifted production to the Naples fields. For Lipman and other growers in the industry, sizing is heavier on jumbos and 5x6's, though all sizes remain available. Quality is excellent on crown picks, while second- and third-pick fruit tends to be a bit less consistent. In Mexico, the Culiacán crops have started, and volumes are expected to continue building through the end of January. So far, quality has been great, with sizing leaning toward the larger end. Baja and Central/Eastern Mexico are still producing, though their seasons are winding down.

## GRAPE TOMATOES

Florida farms are in full production on grape tomatoes, with strong volumes this week as recent plantings have come together. While production is expected to ease a bit after the current flush, supplies should remain adequate. Quality is best from earlier picks, though later picks are still acceptable after grading out splits. In Mexico, Culiacán's new fields are providing good supplies and quality. There are also light supplies still available from Baja and Central Mexico.

## TOMATO ON THE VINE (TOV's)

Mexico's TOV supply is on the light side, as is the norm during this time of year when light levels and daylight hours are at their minimums. Supply is expected to slowly and gradually improve, reaching stronger levels by mid-February.

## GREEN BELL PEPPERS

This week, Florida is experiencing strong supplies of bell peppers, with expectations for similar availability in the near future. New fields are coming into production weekly, while growers continue to harvest later picks from older plantings. This schedule is providing a comprehensive range of sizes and grades to meet market demand. Previous concerns over quality issues caused by fog have resolved, and overall quality is now good. In the West, Culiacán is producing strong volumes of bell peppers with good quality and a full range of sizing options. While a shot of cooler weather could potentially slow production, supplies should remain steady unless low market prices discourage harvesting efforts.

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## ENGLISH CUCUMBERS

English cucumber availability is strong this week, with product coming from Culiacán and Central Mexico. The quality is generally good, although some yellowing has been observed due to a lack of sunlight. Canada also has light volumes from their winter crops grown under lights, but larger sizing is currently limited.

## COLOR BELL PEPPERS

As most growers in Central Mexico wrap up their season, colored bell pepper supply has shifted to Western Mainland Mexico. Volumes are currently at low to moderate levels, but an increase in fruit availability is expected over the next 10-14 days, provided cooler weather does not cause any setbacks. There have been some reports of greening, but overall, the quality from these new crops has been good.

## YELLOW & ZUCCHINI SQUASH

Florida has very limited supplies of yellow squash and light volumes of zucchini this week. Many fields in South Florida were abandoned during periods of low market prices, leaving Homestead as the primary source of production. Quality has been inconsistent for yellow squash and average for zucchini. In Mexico, production is also at a seasonal low. Low market prices initially led growers to skip harvesting, followed by cold weather that impacted plantings in the Obregon area. Volumes are expected to remain tight for the next 7-10 days. While zucchini quality has been good, yellow squash continues to face challenges.

## CHILI PEPPERS

Florida has a fairly steady supply of most chili pepper varieties, with Plant City still producing and expected to continue for a few more weeks unless frost or freezing conditions occur. Additionally, three to four farms in South Florida are contributing to the supply. Quality remains good as long as the fruit is fresh. In the West, both Western Mainland Mexico and Central Mexico are maintaining consistent production. Volumes are particularly strong for jalapeños and tomatillos, moderate for poblanos and serranos, and lighter for Anaheims. Quality has been reported as good across all varieties.

## MINI SWEET PEPPERS

Mini sweet production has been consistent now that the Sinaloa-area growers are all up and running. Quality has been good despite some occasional green cast and undersized fruit.

## MINI CUCUMBERS

Mini cucumbers are plentiful in Mexico. Quality varies but is mostly good. Expect supply to remain consistent for at least the next few weeks.

## CUCUMBERS

Florida continues to contribute a small supply of cucumbers; however, the majority of the Eastern supply is now sourced from Honduras, where import programs are in full swing with all growers fully operational. Quality has improved compared to earlier in the season, though it remains important to check freshness due to potential delays from transportation and customs processes. In Mexico, moderate cucumber volumes are available this week, with the majority coming from the Sinaloa region. Additionally, Central Mexico and Baja are still producing fruit. Quality across Mexican regions has been consistently strong.

## ORGANIC ROMA

Most of the organic roma tomato production is coming from the Sinaloa area, with light volumes also coming from Central Mexico. It has been a bit challenging to find quality that meets customer expectations. The tomatoes are either high in color but showing signs of decay, or low in color and requiring additional time to ripen before they are ready to ship.

## ORGANIC GRAPE TOMATOES

Organic grape tomatoes are readily available. There are still a few coming from Baja (which will finish over the next week), but the majority of them are coming from Culiacan's new crops. Quality has been good, even from the last harvests in Baja.

## GREEN BEANS

Florida currently has sufficient green bean availability, with steady harvests taking place in the Lake area, Homestead, and Immokalee. Overall quality has been good. In the West, however, green bean volumes have declined slightly due to cooler weather and some growers opting to forgo harvests because of low market prices. Production is expected to remain at low to moderate levels over the next two weeks as cool and cloudy conditions are likely to further slow growth. Quality in the West is ranging from marginal to good, with some reports of russetting, nesting, and oversized beans.



## CONSUMERS WANT VALUE, HEALTH BENEFITS WHEN SHOPPING

[THEPACKER.COM](https://www.thepacker.com)

JANUARY 15, 2025

Darren Seifer, industry adviser for consumer goods and foodservice with Circana, kicked off his GOPEX 2025 education session with a quick rundown of the state of the consumer. Seifer said inflation has played a major role in the consumption of all goods.

"Grocery prices are, on average, 35% higher today than they were just in 2019," he said. "When we look at how much prices are higher today versus just five short years ago, that's the real pain that consumers are feeling right now."

He said this pinch in the wallet causes consumers to cut back on discretionary spending — which means not adding additional impulse items. Seifer said this causes consumers to change their overall spending. One category with lower prices and higher spending, Seifer said, is travel. How travel relates to the produce industry is that these consumers want to spend money on experiences.

Consumers continue to flock to home-sourced meals, he said, with about 86% of eating occasions sourced from home. While those consumers who make more than \$200,000 a year have typically been a source of growth in foodservice visits, Seifer said that same category that showed concerns about shopping in budget have also reduced spending away from home.

"Even this group is saying, maybe it's a better value for me to source more of my business home versus going out to restaurants the way that I used to," he said.

In term of retail spend, mass retailers and club retailers have continued to see growth in consumers' fruit and beverage dollars. He said many consumers are reluctant to shop for produce online, but he sees opportunity for the fresh produce industry in the future. Perishables has been performing well as a category in grocery sales, Seifer said. In fact, he said produce is the only fresh department to increase its share of sales in 2024. Fresh grapes, berries, avocados, onions, mandarins, tomatoes and deli salads all saw increases in sales in 2024. Organic produce has shown a slight volume share increase. Seifer said organic produce nets the greatest dollar share among perishables, or around 12%.



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## THE KID FACTOR: HOW A GENERATION'S DINING DISCONNECT THREATENS THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

[NRN.COM](https://www.nrn.com)

JANUARY 13, 2024

When we think about the future of the restaurant industry, the buzz centers on AI, tech stacks, and convenience trends. But what if the real threat isn't these innovations at all? What if it's a generation growing up without the habit of or interest in dining out? What if the pandemic didn't just change where and how we eat, but rather fundamentally altered how an entire generation feels about dining out?

It's been close to five years since the pandemic turned life on its head. While some things have returned to normal, others have unintended consequences we're still coming to terms with, like how kids now experience and think about restaurants

The challenge isn't just about convenience anymore, it's about reinvention. As we confront broader challenges like automation and AI, re-engaging children and the family dining experience is a critical task that should be top of the list.

Restaurants need to create experiences so irresistible, so craveable, that kids are begging to go. The 'kid nag factor' should be your number one priority, and if kids aren't asking to go, parents won't be showing up for those family occasions.

If we don't act, we risk losing a generation of diners, future employees, and the communal dining experience that defines the restaurant industry. It's time to make dining out magical again — for families, for kids, and for the future of our industry.



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# UPCOMING EVENTS:

**MARCH 6-8, 2025**

**SEPC'S SOUTHERN EXPOSURE**

**ORLANDO WORLD CENTER MARRIOTT  
ORLANDO, FL**

**[www.seproducecouncil.com/eventsnetworking/southern-exposure/](http://www.seproducecouncil.com/eventsnetworking/southern-exposure/)**

**APRIL 10-12, 2025**

**VIVA FRESH EXPO**

**MARRIOTT MARQUIS HOUSTON TEXAS  
HOUSTON, TEXAS**

**<https://vivafreshexpo.com/>**



**We're back again for 2025!**  
The 11th Annual Lipman 5K Run For Backpacks will be hosted in Ave Maria, FL. The Lipman 5K is a race the whole family can participate in. ALL of the proceeds will go towards purchasing backpacks, bicycles, shoes, and other school supplies for Lipman's Annual Backpack Giveaway, hosted in Immokalee every August. This will be the 15th year that Lipman has hosted its backpack giveaway and this is a great way for you to contribute in a healthy way. School supplies are more essential than ever. Help us take the weight off of families during a demanding back-to-school season by registering for the Lipman 5K Run For Backpacks.