

FEBRUARY 21, 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 overall roma tomato volume has lightened up as several growers are in between plantings/growing areas and have less acreage in play. Lipman continues to produce at a relatively steady pace from our Naples farm. Current harvests are heavier to bigger-sized fruit and with little to no rain, quality is very nice. As an industry, we'll see lighter volumes for the next several weeks before Spring crops come online. West Mexico farms continue to have strong roma volumes. All sizes are available and quality is, for the most part, good. East/Central Mexico also has moderate volumes crossing in Texas.

ROUND TOMATOES

Although yields are down slightly from last week, Florida has a plethora of round tomatoes. Although all sizing options are available, there's more fruit coming off in bigger sizes. Lipman's harvests on the Naples farms have been steady and quality is very nice. We expect consistent volumes for at least the next few weeks. Mexico also has significant volumes of round tomatoes available with fruit coming from the Sinaloa and East/Central Mexico areas. Sizing is still on the larger side, but more options are becoming available. Overall, quality is good with no major issues reported.

GRAPE TOMATOES

There's also an abundance of grape tomatoes available in Florida this week. Lipman will continue to harvest in Naples for several more weeks, but we will also begin harvesting on the Estero farm within the next 2 weeks. Barring any weather, supply looks solid for the near future. Mexico also has steady and strong volumes of grape tomatoes available from multiple growing areas.

TOMATO ON THE VINE (TOV's)

There's not much change to the TOV situation- Mexico has consistent supply and demand is soft so there's plenty of supply. With potential inventory backups, we are watching closely for product freshness. We could see some growers pull crops in the coming weeks, which would lighten up supply until Canada comes onboard in March.

ORGANIC GRAPE TOMATOES

Organic grape tomatoes are plentiful this week, with most product coming from the Sinaloa area. Quality is good as long as the fruit is fresh. Supply should continue at or near current levels for the immediate future.

ORGANIC ROMA

There are plenty of organic romas available this week and this should continue for the next several weeks. Quality is varied- some have strong fruit and others have product that is not holding up as well as usual. Shriveling is one of the primary concerns we're seeing on the lesser fruit.

ENGLISH CUCUMBERS

Although some growers are nearing the end of current crops, Mexico continues to have a more than adequate supply of English cucumbers available. Looking to Canada, one grower is on tap to start new crops in the coming week, but most houses will kick off the season gradually throughout the month of March.

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GREEN BELL PEPPERS

Bell peppers are plentiful in Florida. The new fields in production are yielding mostly jumbo and 2X sizing, while the older fields are heavier to medium and choice fruit. XL, the preferred retail sizing, is actually a little snug. Quality is best from the new fields. Although we'll see growers back off from the older fields due to quality and markets, we expect production levels to stay relatively steady. Mexican farms are also bringing strong volumes and good quality fruit into the US. Production should continue at current levels for the next several weeks as long as growers can make the depressed market pricing work for their operations.

CUCUMBERS

The Honduras cucumber programs are beginning to lighten up as we move into the last 3-4 weeks of the season. Some growers have quality concerns and we expect to see them bow out a little earlier than others. On the domestic front, we will see the first of the Spring Florida cucumbers in the next week. Production will gradually increase to seasonal levels as more growers come online between now and mid-March. Mexico continues to have strong volumes of cucumbers out of Sinaloa. Quality is good on fresh fruit, but inventories are building in Nogales so we are watching quality/age closely.

YELLOW & ZUCCHINI SQUASH

With mostly newer fields in production, Florida has strong volumes of zucchini squash to offer this week. Yellow squash numbers have also picked up but to a lesser extent. Quality has been good on zucchini, but there are some of the usual issues on yellow squash- scarring and scuffing. In the West, Mexico continues to see strong volumes of zucchini and moderate numbers of yellow squash. Quality is average to good on zucchini and a little less on yellows.

CHILI PEPPERS

South Florida farms have good supplies of jalapenos and habaneros, light to moderate volumes of poblanos and light supplies on all other varieties. Hungarian, Cubanelle and serrano peppers are the least available this week and have some quality challenges as picks are currently coming from older fields. New fields in south Florida are on tap to begin in mid-March, then Plant City is expected to come back online in April. Mexico continues to offer consistent production on chili peppers out of multiple areas. Serranos are a little snug, but available, and there have been some quality concerns on tomatillos. Otherwise, Mexico's farms have good quality and steady supply to offer.

HARD SQUASH

Honduras continues to bring butternut and spaghetti squash into the East. Quality has been nice on their butternut, but just fair on spaghetti. Mexico has the full line of hard squash (including acorn, kabocha, and even delicata available from Sinaloa. Overall quality has been good although we have seen some hit or miss issues with decay and excessive scarring on spaghetti. Production will remain in the Sinaloa area until late March/early May when it will transition back to Sonora.

COLORED BELL PEPPERS

After several weeks of lighter supply due to cool weather and shorter daylight hours, we are starting to gradually see more colored bell peppers in Western and Central Mexico. Reds are the most available with lesser volumes on yellows and oranges. Overall quality is good despite an occasional greening issue here or there. West Mexico should see stronger levels of production for the remaining 6-8 weeks of their season with the help of warmer temperatures and longer days. As for Canada, we'll see a grower or two begin harvesting in mid-late March with all on board by mid-April.

GREEN BEANS

With three Florida's growing areas in full production and light demand, there is an excess supply of green beans this week. Growers are picking to order, which means quality should be top-notch. In the West, Sinaloa and central Mexico's crops are producing consistent numbers and sound quality.

ORGANIC VEG

YELLOW AND ZUCCHINI-Sinaloa has strong levels of supply on organic zucchini and more moderate numbers on yellow squash. Quality has been pretty clean on yellows and good on zucchini despite some occasional reports of scarring, scuffing and/or pitting. Production will continue in this area until late March/early April when supply will transition back to Sonora for the Spring season.

BELLS- Although there are a few more available this week, organic green bell supplies are declining as the Sinaloa crops start to wind down a little earlier than usual. Sizing is smaller with the majority of availability in the medium size range. Quality is not great as we are seeing soft and shrivel concerns. Sub-par quality and sizing will likely be a factor until the season ends in late April/early May.

CUCS- Organic cucumbers are available in adequate levels with mostly good quality. As with other items, production is concentrated in Sinaloa now but will start back up in Sonora in late March/early April.



WHAT THE 1.1M HONEYBEE COLONY LOSS COULD MEAN FOR AG

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

FEBRUARY 21, 2025

A nationwide survey of beekeepers has revealed catastrophic honeybee colony losses across the U.S., with commercial operations reporting an average loss of 62% between June 2024 and February 2025, according to a release from the Honey Bee Health Coalition, a project of the Keystone Policy Center.

The coalition says the losses, which surpass historical trends, could significantly impact U.S. agriculture, particularly crop pollination for almonds, fruits, vegetables and other essential food sources.

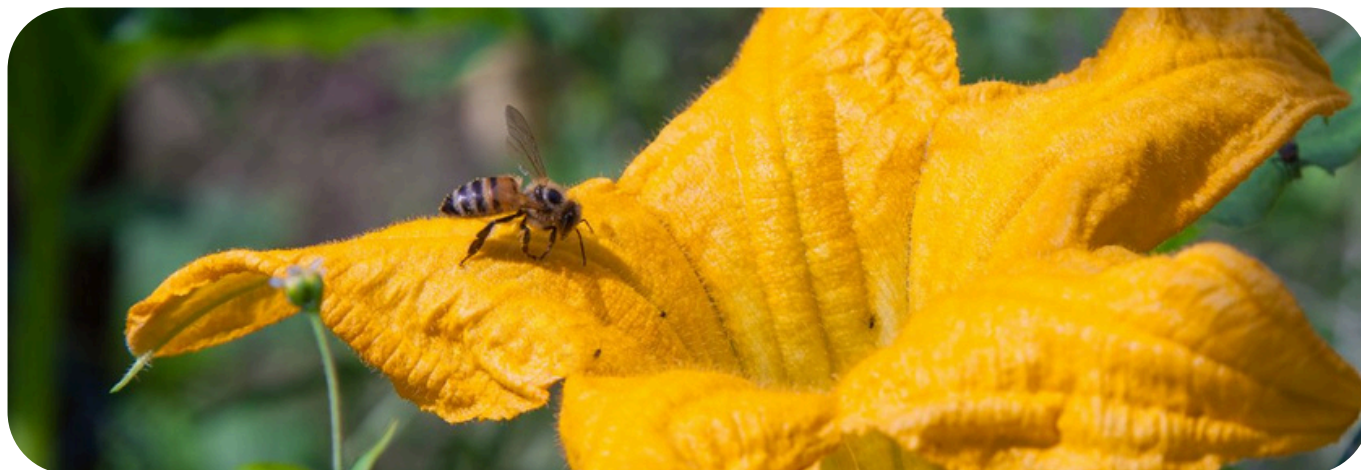
“Early reports of severe colony losses began pouring in last month from beekeepers across the country,” said Danielle Downey, executive director of Project Apis m. “In response, a multi-organizational working group — including Project Apis m., the American Beekeeping Federation and the American Honey Producers Association — quickly mobilized to launch this survey. “The goal was to assess the scope and severity of the losses, gather critical management data and help guide research efforts to determine potential causes,” Downey continued. Administered by Project Apis m., the survey gathered data from 702 beekeepers, covering colony losses, management practices and potential contributing factors. The coalition estimates that survey participants account for over 1.835 million colonies —approximately 68% of the nation’s bees.

“Initial survey results of colony losses suggest that commercial beekeepers may have lost in excess of 60% of their bees,” said Zac Browning, a fourth-generation commercial beekeeper and board chairman of Project Apis m. “The scale of these losses is completely unsustainable. Honeybees are the backbone of our food system, pollinating the crops that feed our nation. If we continue to see losses at this rate, we simply won’t be able to sustain current food production. The industry must look inward and outward for solutions to chronic bee health failure.”

The coalition says findings from the survey indicate:

- Hobbyist beekeepers (1-49 colonies) lost an average of 50% of their colonies.
- Sideliner operations (50-500 colonies) lost an average of 54% of their colonies.
- Commercial beekeepers (more than 500 colonies) lost an average of 62% — a reversal of typical trends, where commercial beekeepers generally experience lower losses due to their scale and resources.

The results translate to an estimated 1,123,959 colony losses among respondents, says the coalition, which equates to immediate economic losses.



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INDUSTRY VIEWPOINT: AI IS HERE, IS PRODUCE READY?

THEPRODUCENEWS.COM

FEBRUARY 20, 2025

The produce industry has always relied on tradition, relationships and instinct, but AI is introducing new ways to optimize everything from marketing to supply chain management. While packaged goods have been quick to adopt AI-driven personalization and predictive analytics, fresh produce is just beginning to scratch the surface. So, the question is: AI is here, but is produce ready?

From personalized shopping experiences to predictive analytics, AI-powered marketing offers produce brands and retailers new ways to drive sales, enhance loyalty and deliver a more engaging consumer experience.

AI-driven recipe recommendations

One of the biggest challenges consumers face is figuring out how to use fresh produce before it goes bad. AI-powered apps and retailer loyalty programs can now suggest recipes based on what's in a shopper's cart, making it easier to use fruits and vegetables efficiently. Some retailers are integrating AI meal-planning tools that create customized shopping lists, ensuring that fresh produce doesn't go to waste. For example, if a customer buys zucchini and Bell peppers, AI can suggest a veggie stir-fry or stuffed peppers and even offer a one-click option to add missing ingredients to their cart.

Predictive demand forecasting for fresh produce

Balancing supply and demand is one of the most significant challenges in fresh produce marketing. AI-powered predictive analytics can help retailers and suppliers make better decisions about stocking, pricing and promotions. By analyzing weather patterns, historical sales data and even social media trends, AI can help predict when certain fruits and vegetables will be in high demand. This not only ensures consumers get the freshest produce possible but also reduces food waste by optimizing supply chain logistics.

AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants for produce education

Consumers are increasingly curious about where their food comes from, how to store it and how best to prepare it. AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants are making it easier than ever to provide instant answers. These AI-driven interactions can enhance consumer trust and loyalty while driving engagement.

Social listening and AI-generated content

AI tools are capable of analyzing millions of social media posts, online reviews and conversations to identify emerging food trends. Additionally, AI-generated content — like social media captions, ad copy and email subject lines — can help brands optimize their messaging for better engagement.

These examples just scratch the surface of AI's potential in the produce industry. The future of fresh produce marketing isn't just about keeping up — it's about leading the way.



[READ MORE HERE](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS:

MARCH 6-8, 2025

SEPC'S SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

**ORLANDO WORLD CENTER MARRIOTT
ORLANDO, FL**

www.seproducecouncil.com/eventsnetworking/southern-exposure/

APRIL 10-12, 2025

VIVA FRESH EXPO

**MARRIOTT MARQUIS HOUSTON TEXAS
HOUSTON, TEXAS**

<https://vivafreshexpo.com/>

Come see us at booth 539!

TOMATO SNAPSHOT

FROM FARM TO FEED! EVERY YEAR, WE BREATHE NEW LIFE INTO 80-120 MILLION POUNDS OF PRODUCE, THAT WOULD OTHERWISE GO TO WASTE, BY TRANSFORMING IT INTO NUTRITIOUS LIVESTOCK FEED. THIS IS OUR COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY AND REDUCING WASTE.

