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ON THE H O R I Z O N

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**CROP &
MARKET**
INDUSTRY INFO





MARKET UPDATES

ROMA TOMATOES

Florida's roma production remains moderate but lighter than the peak of the winter season. Growers are transitioning between winter and spring crops, and cool weather in January has impacted current yields. Lipman continues to harvest in Naples at a mostly steady rate and will move into the Estero plantings by the end of the month. Quality has been solid, with sizing primarily in the jumbo and XL range, though a slight reduction in size is expected as the Estero crop comes online. Mexico's roma crops are also transitioning between winter and spring plantings, leading to slightly reduced production at this time. As new spring crops begin harvesting over the next few weeks, we anticipate an increase in larger-sized fruit. However, overall volume may remain slightly lower, as many growers have reduced acreage for spring production due to ongoing water concerns.

GRAPE TOMATOES

Grape tomato production in Florida has been lighter over the past two weeks, primarily due to prior cool weather. However, volume is expected to improve in the next week as Lipman and other growers begin harvesting new crops. No major quality issues have been reported. West Mexico's grape tomato production remains at moderate volumes this week, though a slight decline is expected in the coming days due to the effects of prior cool weather on harvest levels. Meanwhile, East/Central Mexico has light supplies but is expected to increase production in late April as new crops come online. Quality has been good as long as the fruit is fresh.

ROUND TOMATOES

Florida's round tomato production is also in a lighter phase this week as growers transition between winter and spring plantings while managing the effects of late-January cold weather. Although yields are lower than ideal, supply remains adequate to meet demand. Lipman expects to continue harvesting in Naples for another 2-3 weeks, with crown picks finishing up this weekend. The Estero farm is set to get started within the next 5-7 days. Sizing has been on the larger side, though a slight reduction is anticipated as the new plantings come online. Quality has been excellent on crown picks, though some light concerns have been noted on second and later picks. Looking ahead, a few growers in the Ruskin/Palmetto area are expected to start harvesting within the next two weeks. West Mexico's round tomato production is slightly lighter this week due to crop transitions but continues to maintain moderate volumes. A recent cool spell has slowed fruit maturation temporarily, though production is expected to return to more typical levels within 5-7 days as warmer weather improves harvest numbers. Volumes should remain relatively stable at the lighter spring levels until mid-April, when the seasonal decline is expected to begin.

TOMATO ON THE VINE (TOV's)

Mexico's moderate production of TOVs continues to be sufficient to meet the light market demand. In Canada, production has started at a light pace but is expected to gain momentum and volume in the coming weeks as more greenhouses come online. Current quality is good, with no major issues reported.

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GREEN BELL PEPPERS

South Florida continues to see strong bell pepper production in both the Eastern and Western regions. With growers in various stages of harvests, there is a good mix of sizes available, and quality has remained solid across the board. This consistent production is expected to continue in these areas for several more weeks, with Plant City set to start in about six weeks. As a result, supply should remain steady in the region, helping to meet ongoing demand. Mexico's Sinaloa region continues to produce moderate bell pepper volumes this week. As the crops age, larger sizes, particularly jumbos and XLs, are becoming less common, and overall quality is fair. While a few new fields are expected to start, it's anticipated that volumes will remain steady or near current levels for the next few weeks. There is also speculation that some growers might wrap up their season earlier than usual, possibly in mid-April rather than in May, which could affect supply in the coming month.

YELLOW & ZUCCHINI SQUASH

Eastern squash production is currently concentrated in South Florida. Zucchini supply and quality have been strong and are expected to remain consistent. However, yellow squash is a different story, with less acreage dedicated to it and quality being more hit-or-miss. Production in South Florida will continue, with Plant City expected to join in around three weeks. In the West, production is transitioning from the Sinaloa area to Sonora. While there has been plenty of zucchini to meet demand, yellow squash supplies remain light. Additional plantings of both zucchini and yellow squash are expected to come online in Sonora in the next 7-10 days, which should help stabilize Western supply.

HARD SQUASH

Honduras has moderate volumes of butternut and spaghetti squash available, though acorn squash is not currently in production. Quality has been good on butternut but only fair on spaghetti. In the West, butternut squash has become snug as several growers have already worked through their crops. Although most of the fruit is sound, we have seen some spotting and shrivel issues. Acorn and spaghetti squashes are available in moderate to good volumes. Aside from the normal scarring issues on spaghetti, quality has been good on these two varieties. Current production is still coming out of Sinaloa, but we'll see Sonora get started in the next 2-3 weeks.

CUCUMBERS

Honduran farms are approaching the end of their cucumber season, with volumes tapering off. The lighter supply is expected to persist for the next 10-14 days or until the season concludes. Florida is just beginning its cucumber harvests from Spring crops. Initial volumes are light, but more harvests are expected to start next week, with seasonal volumes anticipated 7-10 days after that. Early evaluations indicated that quality will be strong once Florida farms are fully ramped up, offering a promising outlook for Eastern supply. Mexico's cucumber volumes are lighter this week, with cooler weather affecting production levels. As the region transitions from Winter to Spring crops, there are mixed reports about the outlook for the next few months. Some growers have reportedly planted less Spring acreage due to water concerns, which could impact supply moving forward. Despite this week's lighter volumes, the quality remains strong, with cucumbers exhibiting a nice dark color and firm texture, ensuring good marketability during this transition period. Warmer weather should help boost production to some extent over the next week.

ORGANIC VEG

YELLOW AND ZUCCHINI-Organic squash production is currently transitioning from Sinaloa to Sonora. Sonora has started zucchini production at a moderate pace, though yellow squash is lagging about a week behind. The quality of the new crop fruit has been generally good, despite some minor scarring and scuffing. As production ramps up in Sonora, supply is expected to stabilize, particularly for zucchini, with yellow squash catching up soon.

BELLS-Organic green bell pepper supply and quality are currently poor, as the crops in Sinaloa near the end of their production cycle. There is limited availability of larger sizes, with mostly medium and choice fruit on offer. Quality has declined as the crops near their finish, reflecting the typical challenges of late-season harvests. This situation is expected to persist until Coachella starts its production in May, which should help improve supply and quality.

CUCS- Sinaloa's organic cucumber supply has been adequate, though not in overabundance, as the season winds down for most growers. Sonora is on the verge of starting its cucumber production and should have fruit available within the next week. Despite the seasonal transition, quality has remained strong.

EGGPLANT

In Florida, minimal quantities of eggplant are currently available. Overall, Spring acreage has been reduced, which will likely lead to more reliance on Western production in the next few months. In the West, Sinaloa growers are supplying moderate to good volumes of eggplant, and quality remains strong.



SOCIAL MEDIA AND E-COMMERCE BOOSTING PRODUCE CONSUMPTION

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

March 7, 2025

With 94% of produce shoppers actively using social media platforms and 36% discovering new fruits and vegetables through these channels, digital engagement, especially with younger shoppers, is proving to be vital.

While price and quality remain key factors for produce — with 37% of consumers prioritizing price — shoppers continue to value appearance, ripeness and nutrition. Millennials and Gen Z also show strong preferences for convenient options, generating \$14.6 billion overall in sales in 2024 for value-added produce.

Social media is inspiring meal preparation and produce trials, with 53% of consumers using meal ideas found on social media at least once a week. Produce e-commerce also experienced growth, with 31% of shoppers planning to order more fresh produce online next year.

Health and well-being continues to be important for produce shoppers, with 34% of consumers actively seeking nutritious options. Shoppers are hungry for education about produce, with nearly half of shoppers (46%) looking for more information about produce health benefits and 42% seeking tips on easy ways to incorporate fresh fruits and vegetables into their snacks. Freshness also remains a top priority, influencing store choice for 58% of multi-store shoppers.

By understanding these trends, retailers and suppliers have a unique opportunity to not only meet consumer demand but also inspire healthier lifestyles and stronger connections to fresh produce. These insights highlight actionable strategies that can drive growth while emphasizing the importance of transparency, education and operational excellence.



[READ MORE HERE](#)

DIETITIAN WANTS MORE FRESH PRODUCE IN FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

PRODUCEMARKETGUIDE.COM

FEBRUARY 24, 2025

Access to fresh produce remains a challenge for many U.S. families, particularly those relying on federal nutrition programs. Tiffany Bruno, a registered dietitian and director of education for Switch4Good, is working to change that. By advocating for updates to the USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans, as well as reforms in the National School Lunch Program and the supplemental nutrition program for women, infants and children, known as WIC, Bruno hopes to make fresh fruits and vegetables more accessible to those who need them most.

In an interview with The Packer, Bruno shared insights about barriers to fresh produce access, the policy changes she's championing and how these improvements could transform public health. "It frustrates me that a lot of people can't see a dietitian to help them improve their diet," she said. "It would be great if everybody could, but they do not. So, instead, I feel as if by improving public policy — and increasing access to food as a result — it's a way to indirectly improve public health.

Food deserts are a significant barrier to fresh produce accessibility, Bruno says, but there's also the challenge of prohibitive cost and how some consumers may not realize the value of fresh produce. In WIC, for example, Bruno says participants were getting up to 128% of their dairy needs met, but that leaves less room to purchase items such as fruits and vegetables. Still, Bruno says WIC has made a couple of positive changes. They increased the cash value benefit within the WIC program for fruits and vegetables.

One benefit of this increased cash value, Bruno says, is that WIC programs allot a certain amount exclusively for fruits and vegetables, so it allows people to purchase more produce than they might have if it was lumped together within the general fund.

"It allows participants more access to fruits and vegetables, as well as the opportunity to possibly try new items," Bruno said. "If, for example, at the end of the month they still have \$10 left over, they can go try blueberries that are maybe out of season, but they look really good this week and are on sale. Or try a vegetable they've never had before — because they're not going to get that money back. It really incentivizes people to maybe go to a second grocery store, because they have a better selection of produce. These are some of the reasons we advocated for more access to fresh produce so to see this increase is very good."



[READ MORE HERE](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS:

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.



The 11th Annual Lipman 5K Run For Backpacks will be hosted in Ave Maria, FL. The event will take place on Saturday, March 29th, 2025 from Annunciation Circle.

Registration ends March 29,
2025 at 8:00am EDT
click the image to register

TOMATO SNAPSHOT

This Pi Day, we're savoring a zucchini and cherry tomato pie, featuring fresh, field-picked veggies and aromatic herbs. Dig in and celebrate!

