



Del Bene
PRODUCE

Market Update

For the week ending March 21, 2020

SUGGESTED BUYS

Asparagus – brussels sprouts – corn — melons – strawberries – citrus - sunchokes

TIGHT AND EXPENSIVE

Avocado - cauliflower – broccoli crowns – pineapple - lettuce

NEW ON THE MARKET

CA Orchard Morels (call to preorder) - Green garlic – English peas – Fava beans – MI rhubarb — spring onions – kumquats – white corn – dragon fruit – greengage plums

ASPARAGUS *[market steady]*

Ideal growing conditions are providing an abundance of asparagus from both the San Luis and Caborca regions of Mexico. This trend is expected to continue through March and into early April. This is the peak production period for Mexico, so quality has been excellent. Demand is only fair, allowing for low prices on both standard and jumbo sizes.

AVOCADOS *[market up]*

Although food service demand has fallen off due to restaurants being forced to cut back operations, retail demand is driving the market and holding prices up. Mexico will continue to pace their harvest to keep prices strong and allow the current crop to last through June. We may see slight increases in this market as we approach Holy Week in Mexico, when there will be no harvesting for that week.

BELL PEPPERS *[market up]*

Green Bell – The Coronavirus outbreak is limiting the amount of labor being used to harvest in Florida, resulting in limited availability. Retailers have bought most of the product that was available. The weather forecast is favorable, but the lack of labor and harvesting will keep supply levels down.

Colored Bells – Red, yellow, and orange bell pepper supplies have tightened up with less product crossing from Mexico and Canada still working to increase production. Prices are higher for this week.

BERRIES *[blackberries, raspberries and strawberries - markets up]*

Strawberries – Supplies are tight out of all areas and prices are trending upward. California, Mexico, and Baja are all harvesting light numbers, but recent rainy weather has worsened the situation. Driscoll has been shipping us Florida berries over the past week because the fields in California haven't been ready. Mexico and Florida will begin to taper off in the coming weeks as soon as temperatures start to rise. The market will hold firm until California picks up production.

Blueberries – Light supplies continue to trickle in from both Mexico and Chile. Domestically, Florida has begun to ship the first harvests of the season. Georgia is the next area on deck and will start up within the next 2-3 weeks. Prices remain high until fields down south start to provide better volume.

Blackberries – Inconsistent supplies coming out of Mexico are the main driving factor behind firm prices for blackberries. Quality has been good on all incoming product.

Raspberries – Supplies are still light throughout the industry, but volume is beginning to improve out of Mexico. Market prices should hold at reasonable levels throughout March. Quality has held up nicely.

BROCCOLI/AULIFLOWER *[markets up]*

Broccoli – Availability of broccoli crowns has dropped dramatically over the past week. Some shippers in Mexico are coming to an end of their season, while growers in Arizona are transitioning back to California. Heavy rains have also slowed down harvests and added to the supply issue. Prices will be higher for at least the next 1-2 weeks.

Cauliflower – Yields were already lower in Yuma, Arizona due to the change in season. Recent rains in both AZ and CA have made matters worse and prices continue to climb. The Salinas Valley (CA) has been off to a slow start to the season. Once that area sees a jump in production, the market should find some stability.

SQUASH *[markets steady]*

Zucchini continues to be more available than yellow squash, but volumes of both varieties are down overall. Central Florida is expected to start harvesting this week with Plant City starting up soon thereafter. Once those areas begin with significant volume, it will help the market adjust downward. Supplies are also still light crossing over from Mexico. Quality has held up nicely on both zucchini and yellow squash.

LETTUCE *[markets up]*

We are seeing much stronger markets for iceberg, romaine, and leaf varieties. Demand exceeds supply for the retail market, while the food service part of the industry has been hit hard. The spread of the Coronavirus has resulted in consumers buying up all the product that they can. Additionally, there has been rain in both Arizona and California, limiting harvest volumes. Supplies will remain light until Salinas gets started in early April.

TOMATOES *[5x6, 6x6 - markets down; 4x4, 4x5, roma, grape - markets up]*

Round tomatoes out of Florida continue to improve as growers transition into new fields. Steady volume is expected throughout the month with increased availability expected in April when more areas in Florida open up to harvest. Roma tomato volumes are still light with hopes of improvement as additional acreage comes on in early Spring down in Florida.

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