



**Del Bene**  
PRODUCE

# Market Update

For the week ending March 20, 2021

## SUGGESTED BUYS

Asparagus - avocados - artichokes - Brussels sprouts - pea pods/snap peas - 2 layer vine-ripened tomatoes - honeydew - all citrus - strawberries

## TIGHT AND EXPENSIVE

FCauliflower - Limes - Eggplant

## NEW ON THE MARKET

Ataulfo mango - blood oranges - cara cara oranges - minneola - Sumo orange - hedgehog mushrooms - sapphire grapes (case) - candy heart grapes (case) - muscato grapes

## Freight

The trucking situation continues to tighten and play a major role in price increases throughout the produce industry. Fuel prices are over \$0.30/gallon higher on average compared to this time last year. Additionally, there are significantly less trucks available, increasing the overall demand. Labor shortages are delaying the loading of trucks at pick-up points, which is resulting in late arrivals on product being shipped in from across the country. Prices of several different produce items are driven up by the extremely expensive freight costs of getting a truck to haul product from California, Texas, and Florida.

## ASPARAGUS [market higher]

Abundant supplies of asparagus continue to ship from Caborca, Mexico as growers there are at peak production. Supplies are expected to remain plentiful for March with reasonable pricing across the board. However, prices are starting to increase slightly after the deeply discounted product as of late. Demand will also pick up as we get closer to Easter, which will strengthen the market further.

## AVOCADOS [market higher]

Mexican growers continue to raise prices for their fruit due to increased demand depleting the current supply. Even with California increasing production in March, prices are continuing upward. Quality and overall supply lines have been good, but harvest volumes have slowed down. We are expecting to see another price increase next week.

## BROCCOLI AND CAULIFLOWER [markets higher]

Cauliflower supplies are short heading into the second half of March. Cooler growing conditions along with the end of the Yuma growing season have brought harvest numbers down. Tighter supplies and stronger prices will linger until the transition to California is completed within the next month. The broccoli market is in the same situation as cauliflower, but supplies are not quite as short. Quality has held up nicely for end of the season product.

## BERRIES [blueberries - market lower; blackberries - market higher]

**Strawberries** - Although prices are steady this week, we are expecting an industry-wide supply gap by the end of next week (3/19). Rain and hail have hit Oxnard and Santa Maria, CA, which has forced growers to strip their fields this weekend. Additionally, temperatures are forecasted to be cold next week in the growing areas of California. The season in Florida is coming to an abrupt end as temperatures heat up. We will most likely see prices rise through the Easter holiday.

**Blueberries** - The market is steady with product coming from Chile and Mexico. The new crop Mexican berries are showing better quality than the older Chilean crop, resulting in a two-tiered market. Florida has begun their harvest, but most of that product is being sold within their own state. It will still take several weeks for domestic product to become available.

**Blackberries and Raspberries** - Blackberries remain in tighter supply and strong prices. Quality has been good for the most part with only some occasional red cell. Raspberries are in much better supply and showing outstanding quality coming out of Mexico. This situation should remain through Easter. April and May will bring better supplies and pricing.

## CITRUS [limes - market higher]

The lime market continues to strengthen, even as the market was already at extreme levels. The weather conditions in the Mexican growing region have resulted in delayed production and extensive crop loss. Growers are harvesting as much product as possible to take advantage of the high markets, which is only expected to be detriment to supplies in the near future. The high prices and tight supplies are expected to last at least through March. It remains to be seen, but supplies could also be affected in May and June.

## LETTUCE [iceberg, romaine, bibb - markets higher]

Iceberg lettuce supplies are down this week due to cooler temperatures slowing down volume. The transition from Yuma to the Huron Valley in California has begun. Quality and yield on product are good, but prices will be stronger during the growing area transition. Romaine, romaine hearts, and leaf lettuce are in a similar situation to iceberg. Another factor that continues to affect pricing is extremely high freight rates throughout the industry. Costs for trucks are through the roof in addition to limited availability.

## TOMATOES [round, cherry, grape - markets higher]

Supplies are still good out west with Mexico at its peak point of production. However, supplies are much lower in Florida because of a bloom drop last month. Grape tomato prices have taken a jump after aggressive pricing just a few weeks ago. There is high demand for Florida product, which is down. Mexico is also seeing lighter supplies of grapes. Roma tomato prices are steady this week, but we could see this market gain strength as well as the flush in product is behind us. Cherry, 5x6, and 2-layer vine-ripened tomatoes are all higher this week.