



The Outlook

January 19, 2009

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Crop Outlook

The large high pressure ridge dominating the weather picture on the West Coast will finally begin to break down this week. A couple of low pressure storm systems will bring cooler temperatures and a chance of rain to the region by Wednesday. These systems will bring a good chance of rain (60%) to Central and Southern California and slight chance (10-20%) of showers to the Desert growing regions. Mild temperatures are anticipated to return next week. In the East freezing morning temperatures are once again forecast to impact Northern and Central Florida around mid-week with above frost level temperatures expected by Friday. A hard freeze remains possible in these regions as this frigid air mass rolls through Florida.

Overall production from the Desert regions has improved somewhat in the recent mild temperatures. The cold spell of late December and early January has left lettuce and leaf items with some light to moderate blister and epidermal peel (EP) mainly on the outer leaves. The recent warm up in the region has increased growth rates causing some misshapen and ribby head formation in iceberg, romaine and leaf lettuce stands. Following the brief cool down and slight chance of rain this week forecasts expect a return to mild temperatures in these regions.

Broccoli and cauliflower supplies are also on the rise (although still below seasonal production levels) in the warmer desert temperatures. Light demand from the East is helping ease pressure on current supplies and production should continue to increase as we move through January. Celery production remains very light at the moment however new crop harvests from Florida and upcoming new crop production from Mexico, Arizona and California (expected to get underway in the next couple of weeks) should help ease the situation.

Melon supplies will remain light as harvests transition to new growing areas of Guatemala. Cool weather and rains in this region has slowed growth rates and production for the short term. Production from Honduras, Panama and Costa Rica will begin to add to the mix around early February when harvests are set to get underway. Add to this the lack of production from Mexico and we have the current situation. Mexican growers have been behind the entire season due to numerous factors. First of all Mexico encountered many early season storms that prevented growers from planting their normal plantings, thus less acreage. This along with weeks of cooler temperatures and numerous insect infestations that have impacted growth rates and yields this season has caused a shortfall of product from these growers. Melon production from Mexico, especially watermelon, will remain light for the near future at a minimum given the above mentioned problems this season.

Strawberry production is currently generated from the primary growing regions in Florida and Mexico. Steady production from Mexico looks to continue as Florida continues to battle cold temperatures. The possibility of freezing temperatures in Central Florida this week may impact supplies from this region, depending on temperatures reached and duration of the freeze. On the West Coast new crop production from Southern California is gaining momentum in the warm temperatures recently. Very powerful Santa Ana winds last week has caused some damage to the bloom which will impact supplies weeks down the road.



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Damage to the bloom (flowers) will begin to show up in the form of light yields, crease, cat face and misshapen fruit as these berries mature. The incoming storm systems will likely curtail harvests the latter part of this week as they roll in off the coast. This will keep strawberry supplies light for the near term as Florida and California deal with weather disruptions.

New crop Valencia orange production from Florida (as well as many other crops squash, beans, peppers etc)) may also be impacted by the potential freezing temperatures expected this week.

We will be closely watching the upcoming weather systems and their impact on the various growing regions and keep you up to date as we gather more information.