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*** THE A & Z MARKET REPORT ***

A Weekly Produce Report for Our Produce Buyers

February 22, 2010



GENERAL OUTLOOK: A series of low pressure, pacific storm systems began hitting the California Coast this past weekend and will continue off and on throughout this week. This means more rain, wind, cooler temperatures and harvesting interruptions along with more rain damage--especially to the fragile STRAWBERRY fields. The inland, desert growing regions of California (where Lettuce and other ground vegetables are coming from) will not be impacted with rain but windy, cooler weather will prevail. The central Mexican growing regions were hit with rain and cooler temperatures last week too, which have caused shortages and higher prices this week in many products including TOMATOES, MELONS, BELL PEPPERS, CUCUMBERS and GREEN BEANS.

*** TIGHT ITEMS ***



YELLOW SQUASH: Just when we were hoping for some relief in this market, rain and cooler temperatures have pushed prices into the \$40 range. ZUCCHINI is still reasonable, but it too is expected to be higher toward the end of the week.

TOMATOES: Weather related harvesting interruptions have temporarily hurt production and shot pricing sharply higher on all varieties. Florida and now Mexico have received severe adverse weather impacting production this year.

GREEN BELL PEPPERS: The lack of supplies (again, the weather in Mexico) along with good demand have caused prices to go higher. No relief is expected this week.

GREEN BEANS: An already very tight Mexican market has become even tighter. Pricing is pushing the \$60 level.

SEEDLESS GRAPES: A weather gap in supplies--especially with the GREEN varieties--has the Chilean Grape market really messed up. Berry sizing is down in general and harvesting volume is off as much as 30% with some growers. Demand from national ads has added to this already tight market situation as buyer's scramble for supplies. No relief is in sight for the next few weeks.

*** PROMOTIONAL ITEMS ***

BROCCOLI: Recent rains along the West Coast have caused quality problems in coastal growing regions such as Santa Maria and Oxnard. Water spotting is the main issue which is caused when water droplets on the Broccoli heads don't have time to evaporate before the next storm arrives. Eventually the water droplets discolor the heads and limits shelf life. To avoid this problem, we have been buying better product from either the inland desert regions or from Mexico where rain has not been as much of a factor.

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POTATOES: February is **Potato Lover's** month, and growers have been enjoying the added demand. Idaho supplies are still very plentiful in all packs with pricing near the floor.

AVOCADOS: Heavy supplies have shippers lowering pricing in an effort to stimulate demand. Chile, Mexico and California are all harvesting. However, the best eating quality is with the Chilean and Mexican fruit. With only 5% of this year's crop harvested, California shippers are holding back to let their fruit size up and to let Mexican and Chilean shippers fight it out with lower prices. Chile's season is 95% complete and Mexico has just passed the halfway point in their very large crop. The best values continue to be with the smaller, 70-size.

CARROTS: Even with all the recent weather problems we have seen, this market has remained steady. Most weather related problems occur above the ground, not below it.

CELERY: Finally, this market has softened and pricing is again reasonable. Even the premium brands ("T&A" and "Dole") are price attractive. A sleeved 30-count size is available this week.

ICEBERG & LEAF LETTUCES: The desert rains of three weeks ago followed by warmer, dry weather have pushed fields ahead of schedule and created extra supplies. Prices on all varieties and packs are at bargain levels. Deals are available.

NAVEL ORANGES: Promotions are available this week on the popular 56 FANCY size. Call for pricing.



ASPARAGUS: Good supplies from Mexico and a lack of large national retail ads have made this popular vegetable very attractive. We are currently offering the 28/1# bunched STANDARD size. Call our sales office for promotional pricing.

*** FRESH FRUITS & VEGETABLES ***

CAULIFLOWER: Good demand but fewer supplies have resulted in higher pricing. Santa Maria and the desert areas are producing. The stronger, best Cauliflower is coming from the desert where rain has not created quality issues.

CANTALOUPE: Lighter supplies from off-shore countries in the Caribbean plus good demand in the U.S. have resulted in higher prices. Sizing remains big.

MURCOTT TANGERINES: 4/5# packs are again available this week. This late season beauty has become very popular over the last few years. California growers have aggressively produced and marketed this variety of honey tangerine recently, originally developed in Florida in 1922 by citrus grower Charles Murcott Smith. As witnessed with the Spanish Clementine variety, Murcotts have now become a huge part of the California citrus industry.

STRAWBERRIES: All growers are behind last year's numbers due to the heavy storm systems that have hit the coast for the last six weeks. Volume will continue to increase in the coming weeks and pricing will keep pace with volume, more volume—lower pricing. However, no real change is expected until late March.