



Week of August 3, 2009

## Market News, See What's Cropped Up!

Largely the past week was rather quite in the produce world. However, by and large this summer's inconsistent weather patterns in California continue to impact supplies and quality. Recently some wicked hot temperatures in the San Joaquin Valley, and cooler overcast, moist, and humid conditions in the Salinas Valley have been the norm. These are ideal conditions for mold and mildew growth in **LETTUCE**. This weather is also perfect for our little insect friends. Have you seen the Orkin commercials where the giant ant comes knocking on the front doors trying to get in? Similar problem in California, only the bugs are smaller and some of them fly. At the moment they are becoming problematic in many of the fields. As I've said all summer these issues combined will affect yields, shelf life and overall quality. On the bright side, prices look to remain steady, the same goes for **TOMATOES**. The hot temperatures in Central California's San Joaquin Valley have definitely caused some heat related problems for melons, onions, peppers, tomatoes, squashes, beans, and stone fruit in this region. Bloom drop and sun discoloration are the most prevalent issues and it can take weeks before we see the true extent of the damage. If you've noticed recently that your **ONIONS** and **MELONS** appear smaller here's why. Generally too much heat tends to stunt the growth rates in melons and onions resulting in a smaller size structures. Try as we may to control Mother Nature, it's just not always possible. Typically the months of August and September produce the

hottest temperatures of the season in the San Joaquin Valley and at this point we will have to wait and see what Mother Nature has in store for the valley. **FUJI APPLES** in Washington are all but finished for the season. There are imported Fuji apples available, but if you're trying to reduce your carbon foot print it would be better to wait until harvest time. CA Fuji Apples will not start until sometime in September. There are still some Red Delicious apples out of California storage, but supplies are light! Gold Delicious apples are also in light supply, and we are finishing the storage crop very quickly. **AVOCADOES, Demand Exceeds Supplies!** We are seeing some new crop Mexican fruit making the trip across the border, but supplies are very light and deliveries are running late. This will be the norm until mid August. Please remember that early new crop oil content will be low and require additional time for ripening. Overall, things are going to be a little wacky for the next few weeks. Please keep your seat belts tightened and your trays in their upright and locked positions. **CARROTS, CAULIFLOWER, AND GRAPES** are all steady. **STRAWBERRY** production continues to have some "opportunities". Most to all shippers continue to be very tight on supplies and will only continue to ship to their regular customers, no walk-ins allowed. Here's where TCP has an advantage. We've built great relationships with our shippers. So, where others are facing a shortage we have plenty of supplies to ship! We are still seeing a lot of more mature and bruised berries. Most to all shippers quoting such defects at the time of

shipping, quality continues to be fair at best. Driscolls are still the better berry to choose right now. They may be a bit smaller but quality continues to be consistent and the berries look great. **RASPBERRY** production has increased a bit with a light push from the recent warm weather. Supplies continue to be light and we are seeing some softer berries come through. Quality has been good overall. **BLACKBERRIES** and **BLUEBERRIES** are still looking good. **LEMONS** are the same so are **LIMES**. Valencia **ORANGE** crop estimates now look lower than first projected. Demand is strong and shippers are pacing their harvest to ensure steady supplies though October. There is some definite re-greening going on much like last year. **POTATOES** are the same as last week, large size Russet potatoes remain extremely limited in Idaho with 40 and 50 count very limited. New crop Norkotahs are set to start the week of August 17. **ALL NEW CROP WILL BE NORKOTAHS**. Washington new crop Norkotahs have started in a light way with good quality. Colorado has limited supplies and quality is still good. If you're an Idaho only type of person be sure to look for the state of Idaho stamp on your boxes. TCP has plenty of Idaho russets in stock right now. Many others do not so be careful out there, remember always look for the Idaho state stamp on your boxes.



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### Summer Spectaculars!

Organic Mushrooms

Baby Pineapple

Passion Fruit

Stone Fruit

### In the Spotlight

#### Sugar Cane Swizzles

Originating in India, sugar cane traveled to the West Indies and the Americas. Today, it grows chiefly in tropical and sub-tropical climates and is the source of about half the sugar produced commercially. Swizzle sticks are cane sugar pieces that are already peeled and cut. Use sugar cane swizzles to add sophisticated sweetness when stirring your favorite iced teas, mojitos, other beverages, hot or cold. An intriguing ingredient for any mixologist to have on hand. Perfect to use as a skewer for fresh grilled shrimp or make tasty grilled fruit kabobs for a light summer treat. To store, keep in airtight container.



### Do you have the ripe stuff?



An old myth is that a pineapple is ripe if you can remove a leaf from the crown. This is untrue because pineapples are picked ripe and ready to eat, after approximately an 18-month growth period. The pineapple color varies with time of year, so color does not indicate ripeness. Look for plump fruit with a fresh aroma at the stem end and store at room temperature.



## Harsh drought costing Texas farmers billions

By MIKE TOLSON- HOUSTON CHRONICLE

While Southeast Texas has reverted to more typical summer weather, including more clouds and periodic showers, much of the state is suffering from drought conditions so bad they have inflicted billions of dollars in agricultural losses.

More than a third of the state's midsection, stretching from Central Texas down to the Mexico border, has been plagued by extremely hot and dry weather. Of Texas' 254 counties, 77 are dealing with "extreme" or "exceptional" drought conditions, the two worst categories. That translates into millions of acres of ruined crops and a lack of pastureland and water that has forced ranchers to cull or sell off herds prematurely at lower prices.

Rainfall is below average over most of the state, with only Dallas and El Paso among urban areas reporting more than normal. Agricultural damage has been pegged at \$3.6 billion so far, with that total sure to go higher.

Texas Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples, describing conditions as "devastating," has appealed to the federal government for drought assistance for producers. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has declared 70 counties natural disaster areas.

Much of that area began to experience drier than normal weather starting in September 2007. San Antonio, for example, has gone through a period that is its driest 23 consecutive



months in recorded history, said John Nielsen-Gammon, state climatologist. The 7.5 inches of rain it had received from January through June was less than half its normal amount.

"If you want really dramatic deficits, look at Corpus Christi, which has had less than a quarter of its normal rainfall," Nielsen-Gammon said. "And there are areas around there that have had 10 percent or less."

Chalk it up to bad luck, Nielsen-Gammon said. A persistent ridge of high pressure through the middle of the country this spring and summer brought cooler and wetter weather to eastern states, he said. As that ridge began to weaken, parts of Texas benefitted. South Central Texas did not.

"This is not rivaling the 1950s with respect to water supply issues," he said. "But on a short-term basis, it's just as devastating to ranchers and farmers."

Texas agriculture production tops \$20 billion annually, said Bryan Black, Agriculture Department spokesman. This year's losses should knock at least 20 percent off that amount. And winter planting, which typically begins in August, could be imperiled by a lack of moisture content in the topsoil, Black said.

The drought of the 1950s lingered for years and affected much of the state and surrounding states, Nielsen-Gammon said, but he and other weather forecasters do not expect a

### Farmer's Market Summer Sightings

- PURPLE HULL PINK EYE PEAS
- RANIER CHERRIES
- RAINBOW SWISS CHARD
- YOUNG THAI COCONUTS
- SUNCHOKES
- ROMANO BEANS
- HEIRLOOM CHERRY TOMATOES
- MEYER LEMONS
- ULTRA MINI BABY BOK CHOY
- GREEN FIGS (Limited)
- BLACK FIGS
- RED OR WHITE CURRANTS
- CHAMPAGNE GRAPES
- PORTABELLINI MUSHROOMS
- ORGANIC BABY SHITAKES
- ORGANIC WHITE BEECH MUSHROOMS
- CHEF'S MIX ORGANIC WILD MUSROOMS