



Week of December 7, 2009

Market News, See What's Cropped Up!

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Things are starting to calm down in the produce world. **Romaine** is steady for the moment, however there is a run in the forecast which will most likely affect pricing later in the week. Supply is the big issue on lettuce. **Romaine Hearts** are still not coming back down as fast as we would like, but hopefully that will change soon. **Baby lettuces** are also feeling the effects of the weather, and as a result we are seeing very volatile product. **Cucumbers** and **Carrots** are steady, **Asparagus** is steady, **Artichokes** are still high. One thing about Artichokes for the holidays is they are very popular as we get closer to the holidays, so my suggestion is to buy earlier so you won't be out for the holidays. **French Beans** are getting a little tighter for next week, the same thing is true for **Baby Veggies**. There are plenty of specialty products available if you want to try something different, like **Black Radishes**, **Wild Arugula**, **Rainbow Chard**, **Blood Oranges**, **Cara Cara Oranges**, **Finger Limes**, **Kumquats**, **Buddha Hands**, **Braising Mix**, **Peeled Rainbow Carrots**, **Baby Kohlrabi**, both Red & Green, **Baby Purple Artichokes** and **Baby Apples**. If you have a particular need please let us know and we will do our best to help you. The **Pepper** Market is still very high on **Yellows**, but **Greens** have definitely calmed down. Yellow are hovering around forty per case. Box **Potatoes** are still down and that is

helping the steak house restaurants nicely. **Onions** are steady as well on all colors. **Zucchini** and **Yellow Squash** are better and quality is good on both items. The **Tomato** Market is still very high and product is very, very, limited. Florida has very little product to ship. Mexico needs to step it up. They are doing well with production on **Roma** Tomatoes, but not so great on bulk and sized tomatoes. Growers are having to harvest as quickly as possible in order to keep up with demand and are shipping extremely green tomatoes which leaves us very little time to try and get any color on them. California is done for now, so we will have to wait and see how things develop over the next couple of weeks before we can even begin to estimate when we will see any improvement. Moving on to fruit, lots of great stuff for your Christmas baskets. Really nice **Oranges**, **Apples**, **Pears**, **Tangerines**, and **Clementines**, **Red Bananas**, **Baby Bananas**, and **Pomegranates** just to name a few. **Cranberries** are here still and if you want to use Cranberries for January, I would suggest you buy them now and freeze some just in case they run out like they have in the past. Actually they freeze very well and cook up the same as if they were never frozen to begin with. It's a great way to have fresh cranberries year round just in case you're not fond of the dried.

Seasonal Sensations

Texas New Crop Pecans

Kumquats

Texas Ruby Red Grapefruit

Organic Hidden Rose Heirloom Apples

Holiday Greens & Things



Mixed Wraths

Holly 5#

Poinsettias

Mini Decorated Trees

Chestnuts 5#

Mixed Nuts in Shell

Egg Nog 9/5

Gallons

Apple Cider 4/1

Gallons

Mister "Green"tip Says...

Does switching the lights on and off use more energy than leaving them on? The answer is no, despite the common misperception that turning a light on creates a power surge. The thinking is that it's more economical to just leave a light on rather than pay the costs of flicking it back on.

In reality, that "surge" lasts for only a fraction of second, according to Francis Rubinstein, a staff scientist at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. Any "start-up" energy costs are minuscule at best and are more than offset by the money you save from turning your lights off, even if it's only for a short time.

So if you're strictly concerned about saving energy (and money), you should turn your lights out when you're not using them.

The bigger issue with turning lights on and off frequently, though, has to do with shortening the product's lifetime, says Christina Kielich at the Department of Energy.



It doesn't affect the lamp life of an incandescent bulb very much, says Rubinstein. So it makes sense to always turn them off when

you leave a room, even if it's only for a few minutes.

Compact fluorescent light bulbs, on the other hand, are a somewhat different story. Flicking them on and off repeatedly will affect how long they last, although, Rubinstein points out that the impact is minimal for most households.

How much flicking on and off is too much? The general consensus is that it's best to turn off CFLs when you are leaving for 15 minutes or longer. In fact, Energy Star recommends installing fluorescent bulbs in fixtures that are used for at least 15 minutes at a time. So it doesn't make sense to use them in places where you'd need to switch them on and off constantly.

The rule of thumb is a little different when you're at the office, according to Rubinstein. Turn off fluorescent lighting when you're leaving for at least 5 minutes. The reason? Full-size fluorescent systems aren't as sensitive to frequent cycling as CFLs and won't impact the life of the bulb as much.

All of our lights at Third Coast Produce are motion sensor activated, so they turn on and off by themselves. This way our warehouse is automatically working for us to save energy!



Produce industry faces many challenges

Paul Hollis, Farm Press - The challenges facing the U.S. produce industry range from labor issues to the general state of the economy and everything in between, says Tim Woods, University of Kentucky.

“We continue to see the expansion of imported produce, and the supply chain situation with the consolidation of retailers continues to be a huge driving force for the produce industry,” says Woods.

Demands being made on the produce supply chain include quality assurance, traceability and third-party certification, with food safety being the primary factor in all of these demands, he says.

“Food safety is a driving force behind a lot of these things as consumers become more aware of these issues,” says Woods.

Looking back at the 2002 Ag Census, Woods says the distribution of produce acres in the United States has changed. “During that 10-year period up to the 2002 census, a lot of produce acres shifted out of the South, with the exception of Georgia. Since 2002, we continue to see a lot of movement of the really large-scale produce acreages out of the South. And a lot of the processing has moved either to other parts of the country or moved completely out of the United States,” he says.

For much of the past 20 years, the percentage of vegetables being

imported into the United States market has risen, says Woods, with most of the produce coming from Mexico and also from Canada.

“This year, more than half of our bell peppers, about half of our tomatoes, more than half of our cucumbers, and about half of our squash was imported. This leads us to ask where we will be in the next 10 years,” he says. “How will this impact the opportunities for our producers?”

The markets are changing, and the sources of supply are changing, says Woods. Despite exchange rates that were going against them, Mexico continues to have a major impact on the produce market, and it's due to the labor situation.

In Kentucky, says Woods, growers are looking at a wider variety of marketing options for their produce. “Kentucky is not a really big produce state, but we're seeing this shift in a diversification of market channels for produce. We have a lot of emphasis on direct markets, farmer's markets and on-farm retailing. We've had a fall-off in cooperatives and a resurgent interest in wholesaling.

“We're seeing a lot of direct-to-grocery and direct-to-restaurant sales, in addition to produce auctions. Producers are looking for innovative ways to sell their produce. This is spinning out of the renewed interest in local products for local markets that we're now seeing not just in produce, but in a

lot of food products,” he says.

Many producers, he adds, are positioning their production systems and marketing programs to try and take advantage of the current opportunities to change consumers' preferences.

“This demand for local products is certainly a major driver in our food system today. Looking at the attributes consumers assign to the preference with respect to the different types of food items, and 'locally grown' is at the top of their list. Those of us in Extension are working with chefs at restaurants in trying to help the industry make better connections with our growers,” says Woods.

This same trend is being seen in the grocery industry, he says, where big retailers are trying to establish a beachhead with the local producers of the products they need.

“It's being done to an even greater extent by the smaller, independent chains that don't have the massive supply chains. They actually have a competitive advantage in merchandizing these local products. They're shaking up the traditional distribution system of a lot our large retailers.”

The latest surveys, he says, show a growth in direct market sales of fresh vegetables and melons. “We've seen growth in farmers' markets, agrotourism and on-farm direct marketing. We Extension folks have all we can do to provide

help with the marketing programs and quality assurance programs. We've had new legislation in Kentucky now for a few years that allows on-farm processing. Our farmers' markets in Kentucky are expanding, and we're seeing other products showing up in addition to fresh produce. Farmers' markets are reverting to the old European-style markets that were popular a century ago.”

Another interesting phenomenon in the produce market, says Woods, is the emergence of produce auctions. “This is an interesting business model from the Amish Mennonite producers. They've done a great job. It's like a cattle auction where relatively small-scale producers bring in their products three or four times a week and they're auctioned off. You have restaurant buyers and on-farm retailers looking to supplement their inventory. We provide them with price reports on the products there and quality assurance information. Another business model – the CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) – is also growing in popularity.”

When producers in Kentucky and throughout the South were asked about the major challenges facing the produce industry, labor management and labor availability are at the top of the list, says Woods. “Harvest labor is a chronic problem for our produce growers. We have a lot of labor-related problems throughout the South.”

Thursday, December 24

Customer Service closing
at 12:00 pm

Friday, December 25

Christmas Day, closed

Saturday, December 26 Normal
business hours



Thursday, December 31

Customer Service closing
at 5:00 pm

Friday, January 1

New Year's Day, closed

Saturday, January 2 Normal
business hours