



Week of January 11, 2010

Market News, See What's Cropped Up!

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The arctic blast that we recently experienced moved on to Florida and is wrecking havoc with the winter harvest and spring plantings. Estimates say there is major damage to **Tomatoes, Beans, Squash, Greens, Corn, and Eggplant** just to name a few, but it will be several weeks before we know the full extent of the damage. All of the above will take a major jump next week. The **Tomato** market was going down nicely and now we have chaos happening. The cold weather affects tomatoes in two ways. First, there the growth of the product is impaired. Secondly, if the tomatoes are harvested in weather too cold, they bruise easily and that causes tons of problems with quality. When Florida is in bad shape, Mexico gets hammered with demand. This drives up the market up too. You have the perfect storm: pricing, lack of supply, good demand and poor supply outlook. Florida is also in the strawberry business right now so we will have the problem of light supplies on this commodity as well. Berries that will hit the market next week will be much higher. **Berries** don't look to good for next week especially **Raspberries**. They are very tight and higher priced mainly due to heavy rains and cool rains in Mexico. **Blackberries** are higher too. However, **Blueberries** and **Gooseberries** are now available at a reasonable price. **Asparagus** is moving up. Traditionally at this time, Peru starts to wind down and Mexico ramps up. But this year we have a problem. Mexico has also been having terrible weather and they are just

barely shipping any product. Therefore tight supplies will equal higher prices and less selection. This is good for shippers but bad for food service customers. **Don't forget when supply gets tight sizing also becomes an issue.** **Cucumbers** are going higher, cauliflower is lower, celery is steady, seedless cucumbers are much higher. **Head Lettuce** is steady, **Romaine** is steady, and **Romaine Hearts** are staying high, **Carrots** steady. **Brussel Sprouts** are higher **French Beans** are higher. The **Pepper** Market has skyrocketed; Green Peppers are over \$20 dollars and in some cases as much as \$30. This is directly related to the cold freezing weather we have been seeing. Colored bells were doing very well. However, seeing that the green market is going through the roof, many growers will most likely take advantage of this and harvest their peppers early while they are still green. This will cause the colored bells to run very tight and trying to source any colored is going to be difficult. **B&W Arugula** is out again, supply is way short and they are not shipping product for a week. And yes, it's going to be a bigger issue because of the weather in Florida, it's not growing because of the cold snap. **Cantaloupe** and **Honeydew** are steady for now, supply is getting tighter. Growers are very short on small sizes and did not have a lot of product to begin with. Costa Rica got off to a late start with planting and it will be a few weeks before they are caught up

Seasonal Sensations

Texas Satsumas

Texas "Early" Oranges

Gooseberries

Spring Garlic

In the Spotlight

Micro Popcorn Shoots

Edible and gorgeous, sunshine-yellow Popcorn Shoots are popping up everywhere! Cheerful, charming and cute, these tender shoots are dazzling diners and chefs. Actually grown from a common kernel of corn and offering a corn flavor, these unique shoots are kept in the dark in order to produce this vibrant color. Enhance savory meat and poultry dishes with the sensational good looks of marvelous Popcorn Shoots. Add edible vivid color to dress up vegetable medleys, appetizer trays and hors d'oeuvre platters. Toss in mixed green fresh salads. Great in stir-fries the last minute of cooking. Just right for a bright and beautiful presentation. To store, refrigerate in a sealed container.





Florida tomatoes and vegetables sustain heavy freeze damage

Doug Ohlemeier, The Packer BELLE GLADE, Fla. - While Florida's citrus and strawberries have apparently survived a week of freezing temperatures, the state's winter tomato and vegetable crops could be in jeopardy.

Growers were assessing damages from a freeze that struck south Florida during the early morning hours of Jan. 11. Grower-shippers and association representatives report extensive damage.



Tom Perryman, crop manager for Loxahatchee-based Hundley Farms Inc., a member of the Pioneer Growers Co-op, Belle Glade, Fla., examines some white corn that a killer freeze destroyed on Jan. 11. Growers say the series of freezes wiped out much of south Florida's green beans and corn. Tomato growers are also reporting extensive crop damages.

"This freeze really was the kind of proverbial knockout blow for them (growers) after going 10 more rounds," said Lisa Lochridge, director of public affairs for Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association, Maitland.

At risk are the state's green beans, sweet corn and tomato crops.

During the early morning hours of Jan. 11, temperatures plunged the lowest and caused the most severe damage to Belle Glade-area corn and beans after the freezing temperatures that struck earlier in the week, said Tom Perryman, crop manager for Loxahatchee-based Hundley Farms Inc., a member of the Pioneer Growers Co-op.

He said temperatures fell to as low as 19 degrees in the Palm Beach County growing area.

"The beans got hammered," Perryman said Jan. 11. "We still have a few beans that made it, but otherwise, it's a big loss. On the corn, the first couple of nights froze the tops. Last night finished the bottoms at it got colder lower."

While a majority of Florida's corn crop during January and February is grown in Homestead but packed in Belle Glade, Belle Glade normally harvests some corn during the winter before its spring deal begins in late March and early April.

Green beans are grown and packed during the winter from Belle Glade, Homestead and Immokalee.

Perryman said he estimates Hundley Farms' lost nearly all of its winter corn production that it had expected to begin harvesting Jan. 16.

He said he expects corn and beans prices to increase.

The freeze hit hard Immokalee-area tomatoes and vegetables such as bell peppers, industry sources report.

Lochridge said temperatures dropped low enough and long enough to have caused some significant losses to crops grown in that region.

Reggie Brown, manager of the Maitland-based Florida Tomato Committee and executive vice president of the Florida Tomato Exchange, said it could take several days before the industry can estimate how much of south Florida's tomato crop survived the cold.

He said growers were able harvest the ones near maturity before the freeze, adding that growers are hoping the weather will warm so the crops that have survived can return to growing vigorously.

"We have a fair amount of acreage in Immokalee that is normally harvested in this winter cycle," Brown said Jan. 11. "That production will be curtailed. It will force the remaining winter crop to be coming out of the East Coast and Homestead. The spring crop that was in the ground in Immokalee, which was much younger, is in better shape than the older crop."

While temperatures dipped to freezing levels and may have caused some bloom damage to Homestead's tomatoes, the growing region – which has volume in mid- to late March before Immokalee spring production begins in April – wasn't hurt as much as Immokalee's, Brown said.

Though central Florida's strawberries survived extensive damage, Ted Campbell, executive director of the Florida Strawberry Growers Association, Dover, said shipments remain at a standstill.

He said colder weather is keeping the plants from producing berries.

Florida's citrus is also reported to have escaped major damage.