



The Outlook

April 1, 2010

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Crop Outlook

As the Desert regions wrap up production over the next week or so the transitional and spring acreage in Central and Coastal California are once again being impacted by cold Pacific storm systems. The storm system that rolled through California yesterday brought rain, winds and hail to the various growing regions. Following this system are a couple more disturbances in the pipeline. This will keep an unsettled weather pattern with temperatures well below normal throughout much of California into next week. Long range forecasts show little sign of relief with a few more systems set to impact the area into early April. Weeks of unseasonably cool temperatures throughout Central California's growing regions (San Joaquin, Oxnard, Salinas and Santa Maria Valley's) have significantly curtailed growth rates in the fields. With growth cycles at a crawl many fields are behind schedule (slow to mature) this will likely cause supply shortages or gaps during the transition period. Upcoming weather patterns and demand will determine the severity of the supply shortage. Desert growers will attempt to prolong harvests in this region to help with supplies. Temperatures are increasing as of late and it is just getting too hot to produce quality product.

With production winding down in the Desert growing regions, growers will transition through the San Joaquin Valley on the way to the coastal valley growing regions. This limited acreage fills the void in supplies during this short transition and growers have little choice as to available acreage. This transition acreage is typically problematic as to yields and quality and recent weather patterns along with upcoming storm systems will not help with either. Growers are attempting to limit loss with the use of fungicide sprays and other means but the weather pattern is not helping the situation. Yields, quality and shelf life will suffer as growers attempt to keep up with increasing demand.

Current transition supplies will remain on the light side with questionable quality for the near future. The current and upcoming storm systems will curtail harvesting in the wet fields lessening the already light volume. Mold, mildew, disease and insect pressure are sure to rise in these fields. Irregular solidity with brittle, waterlogged texture is the norm as crews trim out affected leaves leaving lighter carton weights. This product is susceptible to bruising and oxidation during packing and handling increasing mechanical damage and pink rib in the box. Overall quality texture and shelf life will continue to be a challenge for growers as harvests increase seasonally. Bottom line is that production will vary by shipper and growing region with supply gaps anticipated during this transition. Growers remain unsure of upcoming yields at this time. Quality, shelf life and arrivals will show the affects of this recent weather pattern. Spring supplies and quality look to be quite troublesome into mid-April and beyond.

And so we begin what is expected to be a rocky roller coaster ride that is the transition period. With the expected weather pattern, fields and work crews spread out throughout the various growing regions and cooler temperatures spring supplies will remain problematic. At this point (more winter type storms on the way) an accurate forecast is not possible to predict with any kind of reliability. It is safe to say however that most commodities have been affected to some degree and the effects may continue to show up in future supplies (cherries, stone fruit, melons, onions, tomatoes etc.). We will do our best to keep you informed of the ever changing scenario as growers hope for a warmer dry weather pattern to take shape in April.