

FRESH LINK MARKET REPORTS

January 16th, 2025 Fresh-Link Fruit 559.306.6900 | infoFLF@freshlk.com

Market Update for Table Grapes

Week of January 13 – January 19

For months, the South American fruit industry has been preparing for the ILA to strike. Importers have been directing volumes to non-ILA ports, creating some congestion for those shipping lines. Some have incurred great expense chartering their own bulk vessels from Peru, something very rarely done, and others have just taken to stacking inventories as a final safety net. Last week the ILA and USMX came to a tentative agreement, averting the scheduled January 15th strike. They will continue to work under their current agreement until the final draft is executed. The new deal protects ILA jobs, while creating a framework to implement technologies to modernize East Coast ports. Now marketers can get back to work and focus on moving fruit. Some have already started adjusting the spot markets lower, as they need to make room for incoming volumes from Ica. Ica is now packing steady volumes, and we will see even better volumes in February, once Chile really gets going. Shipping lines have put a priority on Chilean cherries, but now that the peak is behind us, look for grape exports to take over. Retailers should be able to take advantage of the shift in market pricing and look to promote table grapes throughout February and March.

Red Seedless

Of the more than 35 million boxes of grapes that are expected to be exported from Ica, just over 8 million boxes are red seedless varieties. There has been such a focus on new production of Autumn Crisp and other green varieties, that new red seedless plantings have fallen behind. Although we will see better numbers over the next 6 weeks, spot availability will remain very light. Programs will swallow up most of the volume, so expect spot pricing to stay very high, especially since Chile will not have enough volumes to impact the market for the next four weeks. Currently, Flames are trading in the high 30s and premium Sweet Celebrations, Jack Salutes and Allison range from high 30s to mid-40s.

Green Seedless

Steady arrivals of green seedless are hitting the East Coast and overall quality looks very good. Ivory, Sweet Globes and premium Peruvian Autumn Crisp will be available in the market throughout February. Chile will start harvesting some early Superiors and still has a meaningful Thompson crop, with more than 50% of that fruit coming to the U.S. in February and March. Peru is expected to export close to 13 million boxes of Autumn Crisp globally with as much as 7 million boxes hitting our market this year. Currently, Autumn Crisp prices range from the high 40s to low 50s, but these prices are unsustainable, with strong volumes about to enter the market. Look for green seedless pricing to adjust lower week by week,

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with prices ranging this week between the high 30s to low 40s for Sugar Crisp, Ivories and Sweet Globes. Autumn Crisp pricing could settle back to the mid-40s.

Citrus

Some growers juicing anything below a certain price, regardless of size or grade to minimize added risk and costs for packaging and freight. Exports to Japan and Korea are scaling back a little due to Chinese New Year on the 29th. Size structure is starting to pick up, though many growers still peaking on the smaller size spectrum and will continue to do so for an extended period of time. Lemons starting to trend to the large end with mid sizes becoming more abundant. Small and mid-size Lemons still building on inventory. Cara Cara oranges are still a little heavy on inventory, however there are some retail ad's coming out which will whittle this down. Mandarins still peaking on both sides of the size spectrum with good quality flavor and condition. Average brix is 14-15. Minneola's are available this week in a small way, peaking on the smaller size spectrum of 100/125s.

Melons

Growers still focused on covering contract commitments as availability continues to be tight on Cantaloupe and Honeydew at all locations. Demand still exceeds supply with no immediate relief in sight even with Honduran and Costa Rican about to begin. These two countries were affected much more than Guatemala from the November tropical storm leaving their early season production in question with relation to yields and quality. With much uncertainty, realistic expectation for a return to normal will likely not be seen until mid-February when second cycle production from the Zacapa region of Guatemala resumes. Weekly production will be determined by how much fields in certain areas were impacted by the rains compared to others (lower lying, virus/bacteria, how plants responded to treatment, recent weather, etc)