

FRESH LINK MARKET REPORTS

March 13th, 2025 Fresh-Link Fruit 559.306.6900 | infoFLF@freshlk.com

Market Update for Table Grapes

Week of March 11 - March 16

Over the past 6 weeks, importers have struggled to stay ahead of large volumes of imported table grapes coming into the market. We have seen weeks of more than 5 million boxes exported to the U.S. and the spot markets have suffered dramatically. With so much aging inventory, many importers have had no choice but to bypass older fruit, to guarantee good arrivals and keep away from retail rejections. As a result, we have seen a significant drop in exports over the last two weeks, with week 9 shipments falling below the magic number of 3 million boxes. Chilean exporters have made the move to divert fruit to other markets, rather than continue shipping big volumes into a depressed market. Chile typically sends 55-60% of its volume to the U.S., but week 9 exports represented less than 45%. It will be very interesting to see week 10's numbers to confirm that this is not just a one off, but an actual trend that will impact April pricing. We shouldn't expect an immediate adjustment to the current spot market as there is still too much fruit to move through the system, but markets like this can turn on a dime once weekly volumes of quality fruit consistently fall below the 3 million box number. Peruvian shipments fell drastically last week, and they will continue to decline, so Chilean volumes and quality will determine how prices move from now until the end of the import season in mid-May.

Red Seedless

Volumes of fresh Peruvian fruit continue to decline every week, and we have yet to see the peak of Chilean red grapes enter the U.S. market. Green seedless movement continues to outperform red, so marketers have not tried to push pricing higher in hopes of keeping fruit moving through the system. Marketers are racing against time, as once pack dates reach the tipping point for freshness, that fruit will no longer be sent to retail and currently, the wholesale markets are full of distressed lots. There is almost no sustainable market for any average or poor conditioned fruit, so only the best quality will survive this current market. There is hope though for late season red grapes, since Mexico will not start harvesting any meaningful volumes until the 15th of May. Currently, the very best fruit is selling between the low to mid-20s, with many importers moving fruit aggressively in the high teens to low 20s, but buyers should be wary of deals that seem too good, as quality is all over the board. Look for the markets to remain unchanged through the balance of the month, with pricing certainly expected to firm by the April 10th USDA marketing order.

Green Seedless

Green seedless volumes have peaked from Chile over the past two weeks, and we should continue to see steady arrivals through March. Volumes of Peruvian premium varieties have

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been declining for weeks and the industry should see a steady decline, especially on late season Autumn Crisp. Growers from Jalisco, Mexico have had their programs set, with shipments of Sweet Globes and Autumn Crisp ready to go to market by the first week in April, but the threat of U.S. import tariffs has the industry scrambling to understand it's full impact. Initially marketers will just look to pass the cost onto the customer, but in a supply/demand fresh fruit industry it's just not that simple. Higher cost will see significant push back from retailers, so eventually the grower will end up footing the bill. The combination of lower volumes from Chile in April and the uncertainty surrounding U.S. policy will certainly have an impact on April and May green seedless pricing. For now, markets remain depressed with the very best fruit from Chile and Peru trading between the low to mid 20s and deals being made between the low to high teens on older, weaker lots. Premium Autumn Crisp continue to prove its weight in gold, as pricing has held firm ranging from the low 30s to the low 40s for the absolute best fruit.

Citrus

Rain and warm weather fluctuation creating size increase in California citrus. Growers are expecting an earlier than usual finish on Navels due to an increase in pliability and puff. Navels are peaking more toward the 72 size with decent supplies of 88s and 56s. Lemons have promotional volumes on the 75s through 140s on both fancy and choice grades. Cara Cara inventory is still exceeding demand leaving plenty for Spring advertising with availability to late April. Minneola's showing some volume in 80s and 100s. Star Ruby Grapefruit ramping up with great color and flavor, pack outs are heavy fancy, peaking in the 36/40 size spectrum.

Melons

Second cycle Guatemalan production has continued to bring good numbers of cantaloupes out west. We have a good mix of sizing - 9s/9Js and 12s out west, and should continue seeing solid production numbers over the next two months or so. The east coast continues to deal with vessel delays, that has kept their inventories limited. Markets have continued to settle though as Honduran shippers try to get through their inventories prior to more Guatemalan fruit arrives. Cantaloupe arrivals continue to show optimum quality characteristics, with very nice high color fruit. With increased supplies there should be a good percentage of all sizes to work with. Internally brix levels are maintaining a solid range of 13-15% with an excellent flavor profile. Warmer weather trends are expected in northern states for at least the next two weeks, which is causing retailers to look at larger promotions in the short term as they attempt to boost the melon category - which has been lagging after two months of record pricing.

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Seedless watermelons continue to move higher with less fruit from both Guatemala and Mexico over the past two weeks. Demand is finally surpassing supply which is pushing the market close to the \$30 level on cartons and \$300 on bins with limited arrivals expected.