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**Strawberry market starting to loosen up**



Strawberries have been tight for the past couple of months. This has made it difficult for retailers to meet their berry sales versus last year. Florida has been the main supplier thus far, placing pressure on the demand. But there is some relief in sight as California and Mexico will start to improve by harvesting more volume. Even though a strong demand will still be an issue, the period of affliction is nearing an end.

Varietal berry supply is a mixed bag. Blueberries are seeing port delays limiting some supplies. More product is expected in February out of Mexico, Peru and Chile. Blackberries are of good quality and steady supply from Mexico. Raspberries are in tighter supply due to cooler weather as demand remains very high.

Strawberries are 45 percent of the entire berry category, making them a huge part of the retail sales volume. Merchandising strawberries right up front is the ideal spot to display them as customers enter the produce department. Get ready to do some big ad promoting as the berry markets start to open up with more availability.