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**Market Minute: Berry markets tight, demand exceeds strawberry supplies**

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By

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November 21, 2022

"What's with the strawberry market?" That's a question many produce directors and their buyers have been asking me these days. This has been a very challenging time for California strawberry supplies. Usually, retailers are well stocked and still promoting the fall crop. But this year is different and there is a strawberry shortage caused by extreme weather conditions. Hurricanes, heavy rain and colder temperatures have set back the strawberry crop in California.



Strawberries are the backbone of all berries, generating 45 percent of the category volume. Therefore, it is one of the top items that retailers rely on to generate maximum sales. Not having them available on a steady basis is effecting produce sales budgets.

Oxnard and Santa Maria California are in very light supply. Demand is fairly good with a slightly higher market. Mexican demand is good and supplies are reduced substantially due to extreme weather. Mexican berries will gradually increase as long as the weather cooperates. The Florida berry crop will take a couple of weeks before harvest.

Blueberries are 27 percent of the berry volume, which is second to strawberries. The Mexican season is starting up with a light demand and a steady market. A good supply is available out of Peru with a

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moderate demand.

Raspberries are 14 percent of the berry category. California is finishing up while demand out of Mexico is light with excellent quality and a steady market. Prices will rise after Thanksgiving.

Blackberries are 9 percent of the berry category. The supply is increasing out of Mexico, and demand is light on a steady market.

Unfortunately, weather has put retailers behind with strawberry promoting. Eventually, strawberries will be back in the supply groove again. Keep communicating with your berry supplier and make plans to get back to the massive merchandising displays and promotions when the new crop is available.

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