



Trendspotting

WITH CRAIG LEVITT

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Trendspotting: Strawberries down, melons up, cherries back on shelves

By

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We are three weeks from Christmas; which commodities are being naughty and which are being nice?

The strawberry market, which has seen sky-high prices, declined 5 percent for the first time in months. Strawberry markets typically peak during the early weeks of December and descend steadily as California winds down and Mexico and Florida pick up production. This year has seen abnormally high prices for an extended period due to an early end to the summer season.

“When a commodity reaches extremely high price points during a transition, prices tend to fall rapidly as the next crop begins to harvest,” said Mark Campbell, founder and CEO of [ProduceIQ](#). “Buyers often have the patience to slow down orders while anticipating that a new crop’s harvest will ramp up.”

Heavy rain in Santa Maria and Oxnard, CA, growing regions delayed harvest over the weekend and growers are still assessing potential rain damage. Campbell suggested that prices may hold this week before continuing their decline. “A silver lining, in a state plagued by severe drought, heavy rain at least contributes to the long-term health of California’s growing regions,” he said.

Strawberry prices reached record highs, exceeding 2015 for this time of year.

Chilean cherry export season is ramping up, and prices are responding. Prices started on the higher end, but now, “Chilean cherry growers are making a notable effort to satiate the American appetite for cherries in the off-season with ample volume,” said Campbell.

He said a steady increase in year-over-year production is forecasted to continue this winter and that “growers reported promising climatic conditions in the early fall that should result in optimal yields and quality.”

Melon prices, mainly cantaloupe and honeydew, are spiking due to a temporary gap in supply. This time of year, domestic and Mexican production winds down, and growing regions shift to central America, forcing melon prices upward.

Campbell reported that honeydew prices are up 45 percent, and cantaloupe prices are up 28 percent over the previous week. “This week’s price increases are a little more dramatic than usual because the domestic season ended before Guatemala could get into the swing of things. Markets will continue to tighten, but with less intensity, as more product from Guatemala comes online,” he said.

[Craig Levitt](#)

About Craig Levitt | 

When his dreams of becoming a professional hockey player came crashing down due to lack of talent, Craig Levitt turned to journalism. He graduated from Hofstra University in 1992 and has covered various areas of the retail food trade since 1996. Craig joined The Produce News in 2017 and is now managing editor. In his spare time, Craig still plays men's league hockey (poorly) and enjoys walking the aisles of his favorite supermarket with his wife and two daughters.

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