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Fresh Farms looking to rebound from slow start to winter deal

By

John Groh, publisher

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A combination of factors contributed to a slow start to the winter veg season out of Mexico, but Fresh Farms was looking forward to an improvement in market conditions as the holidays approached.

David Watson, senior vice president of sales and marketing, said the slow start was due in part to the local deals running later than usual.

“Squash [for example] was still available from the East Coast when we got started, and we can’t compete with the freight rates,” he said. “This wasn’t the case in the past, and logistics are becoming a bigger factor for people making the buying decisions. You have to do more pre-selling of programs for committed volumes, which is best for the industry. It should be more demand driven rather than pushing volume.”

Marco Serrano, who works in sales at Fresh Farms, said it was a tough start to the season this year due to an oversupply early in the deal combined with the late-October landfall of Hurricane Norma, which hit some production regions in Mexico.

He said cucumbers were late to start but saw some recovery in early November and were selling for \$18-20 per box.

Other items, such as sweet corn, were expected to be a couple of weeks late and in some cases with reduced volume. He said sweet corn started in Obregon in mid-November, and Culiacan was expected to be around two weeks late. But sweet corn from Los Mochis, which normally is available by December, was pushed back to February as a result of damage from Hurricane Norma.

“Florida also is a big producer of sweet corn, but if weather doesn’t cooperate there, we won’t have product to cover,” he said.

Serrano added that green beans from Los Mochis also would be in short supply, but “Culiacan production seems to be fine.”

Fresh Farms also handles hard squash, eggplant, green Bell peppers and a full line of dry veg, as well as cantaloupe and watermelon.

Melons also saw a rough start, according to Al Voll, who handles melon sales at Fresh Farms. “The weather has been too warm everywhere, and that brought on cantaloupe from Guatemala about two-and-a-half weeks early,” he said. “Normally it doesn’t start until mid-November, but they were right on top of [Mexico]. It’s been tough on growers, because there was too much fruit on light demand.”

As for watermelon, Voll said it has also been a challenge, as California and Texas still had fruit as of the second week of November.

“It’s pretty much the opposite of last year, when we had huge demand but not enough supply,” said Voll.

[John Groh](#)

About John Groh | 

John Groh graduated from the University of San Diego in 1989 with a bachelors of arts degree in English. Following a brief stint as a sportswriter covering the New York Giants football team, he joined The Produce News in 1995 as an assistant editor and worked his way up the ranks, becoming publisher in 2006. He and his wife, Mary Anne, live in northern New Jersey in the suburbs of New York City.

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