

the Outlook

Weather patterns causing adverse growing conditions across the country will continue to impact yields and production from the various regions. A substantial warm up is forecast for California and the Salinas Valley into the weekend. This strong high pressure system is expected to stagnate and remain in place into the first week of August. Temperatures will remain well above (10-20 degrees) normal for an extended period throughout the western growing regions.

In the San Joaquin Valley, triple digit temperatures are expected with record highs possible into the weekend. Another factor to consider is the heavy rains and warm temperatures throughout the mid-West and Eastern regions impacting regional production. After a slow start, due to heavy rains, these regions are gradually increasing production. California growers plant less acreage in anticipation of these regional/local supplies however, lesser yields from these regions will increase demand for California production impacting overall supplies. Although crop assessment in the numerous districts will be an ongoing process we can forecast some typical results from these humid weather patterns and high temperatures.

The triple digit temperatures in the central valley will continue in the region this week likely hindering/stunting growth rates while increasing sun burn and heat related defects of the various crops, affecting future yields and quality. Sizing issues and sunburn are common in stone fruit, tomato, pepper, grape and melon harvests following extreme temperatures. Fresh onions tend to break down due to sun burn and bloom drop in the tomato, pepper, squash, bean and melon stands may affect supplies down the road. These extreme temperatures may also curtail harvesting hours throughout the valley as worker safety becomes a major concern.

As far as the coastal growing regions are concerned (Salinas and Santa Maria) we will have to wait and see how the stands come through the extended warm up. Insect populations are on the rise in the warm temperatures along with mildew, fringe burn, internal burn and seeders, likely impacting yields and quality in the near future. Romaine and romaine heart production are susceptible to internal burn problems in these warm and humid growing conditions. Heart material becomes very challenging to produce in these growing conditions. Rapid growth in the warm temperatures causes a thinner textures and shorter shelf life on most upcoming leaf and lettuce stands. Growers remain ahead of schedule and this warm up will not help production. Many lettuce stands are showing some mildew and fringe burn issues currently due to warm and humid overnight conditions.

Strawberry production has past its peak and will likely show the affects of the heat as well. These conditions tend to produce smaller, tender, overripe fruit that is difficult to handle and pack. You



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will see an increase in bruising, bleeders, green and seedy tips and overall tender fruit for the near term. Stem supplies will likely also be severely reduced (smaller fruit, higher counts) in these warm temperatures.

Another concern for growers are the young seedlings, transplants and tender or baby leaf (spring mix, spinach etc.) These crops are susceptible to extended hot temperatures. Wilt, dehydration and general growing conditions will affect quality and shelf life of these tender leaf items. Processed lettuce products will also show the effects of these growing conditions with lesser texture and shorter shelf life.

The bottom line is that most upcoming crops are likely to be affected to some degree (yields, quality, texture, shelf life, etc). Heat related defects will certainly rise as growers do their best to combat the heat. Keep a close eye on inventories and rotation as lesser quality and shelf life are expected over the next couple of weeks at a minimum.

