

The Outlook



September 17, 2020

Welcome relief to the Salinas Valley has come in the form of a cold front moving into Northern California clearing some of the smoke and haze. Shifting winds are likely to bring a return of the haze next week as a major wildfire (The Dolan fire) continues to rage to the southwest at only 40% containment, and other fires to the north and east will also contribute to potential smoke cover and haze moving back into the region.

The main effect of this general haze and smoke cover shading the sun has been cooler temperatures slowing the growth rates of many of the tender leaf items while also reducing yields. Some of the field packed leaf items will continue to show a light dusting of ash near the base of the heads from the recent wildfires in the region.

The recent heat events have caused external and internal damage depending on the crop, field location, and stage of growth. While heat-related problems (fringe and tip burn, discoloration, weaker texture) will continue for the near term the weather pattern has drastically increased mold, mildew, and especially virus and disease pressure in the fields.

Some fields will be left behind as yields are down 20-50% in the iceberg, romaine, broccoli, and cauliflower stands. These growing conditions have also brought on increased insect pressure further impacting yields. Harvesting crews are heavily trimming heads to cull defects, however many of these issues are not easily apparent to the crews at pack out. All these factors will cause growers to reach for supplies and enter younger, stronger acreage to fill demand lessening overall supplies as the season begins to wind down.

On the other side of the country, Hurricane Sally made landfall near the Alabama/Florida border and continues to dump heavy precipitation as it tracks to the northeast. Early reports indicate tremendous rains across Northern Florida, Alabama, and parts of Georgia. At this point, growers will be entering the fields for assessments over the next few days, and we will bring you their assessments once that information is attained.

