

PRO*ACT

CONNECTING FARMS | EMPOWERING KITCHENS™

Crop Update

March 18, 2026

Running Early, Running Hot

If you've spent any time watching the desert deal this year, one thing is clear: the crop is running early and now the heat is showing up to match it.

With roughly four weeks remaining before the seasonal transition from Yuma to Salinas, fields across the Arizona-California desert region continue to track roughly three weeks ahead of schedule after a winter marked by early rainfall followed by sustained above-average temperatures.

Now the next challenge is heat.

Temperatures in Yuma are forecast to climb rapidly this week, with daytime highs rising from the mid-90s early in the week to triple-digit temperatures approaching 105°F or higher by the weekend. Overnight lows are also climbing into the mid-60s and low-70s, which limits the amount of overnight cooling crops typically benefit from in March.

When desert temperatures spike this quickly, harvest windows often tighten as crews shift earlier to avoid the afternoon heat. Plants also mature faster under these conditions, which can shorten the overall harvest window and accelerate the end of the desert season.

Warm weather is also beginning to show up in crop quality. Growers are already noting fringe burn, weak tips, seeder, and tip burn in romaine and leaf lettuces, along with rising insect pressure as the season progresses. Crews are working fields carefully and removing outer leaves to manage cosmetic defects and protect shelf life.



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Broccoli and cauliflower supplies remain steady, though some fields are showing minor quality challenges including yellowing, oxidation, and occasional pin rot as temperatures climb. Leaf items such as spring mix, spinach, and arugula remain generally healthy, though insect pressure is beginning to increase.

Maintaining the cold chain becomes especially important during periods of extreme heat. Rapid cooling and proper inventory rotation will help protect quality and shelf life as product moves through distribution.

Further north, the Salinas Valley is beginning to show early signs of life. Spring crops are progressing and early strawberry harvest has started in light volume. If weather cooperates, California berries are shaping up well for Easter and Mother's Day promotions.

Other berries remain tighter. Blackberries and raspberries are still expected to be limited as Mexican production tapers from winter peaks and California volumes gradually ramp up.

For now, the desert season still has work to do. But with crops running ahead of schedule and temperatures climbing quickly, the transition to Salinas is starting to come into view.

