

PRO*ACT

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Crop Update

October 8, 2025

Season Struggles Out West Persist

Another week deeper into fall, and conditions in the Salinas Valley remain challenging. Roughly a quarter inch of rain fell last week, followed by warm, humid weather that has stuck around. That combination of moisture and heat has increased disease pressure and put additional stress on crops just as the season begins to wind down. Broccoli, lettuce, and tender leaf items are feeling the impact. Across the board, we're seeing reduced yields and increased trimming at harvest, which is affecting both commodity and value-added packs. Bottom rot and mildew are showing up more frequently in lettuce fields, and broccoli continues to battle pin rot and rising insect pressure, particularly from diamondback moths and aphids. Color is also being affected. Some chopped and shredded lettuce items are coming in paler than usual due to the extra trimming required to remove damaged leaves. Even when the product looks clean at harvest, shelf life is more vulnerable in these conditions. Premature pinking, wilt, and early decay are more likely, especially if cold chain integrity is compromised along the way.



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Strawberries are facing similar weather challenges. Santa Maria and Oxnard fields are being closely culled after recent rain, which has slowed harvest and tightened supply. Growers are seeing more bruising, mildew, and white shoulders. The Salinas and Watsonville regions are past their peak and continue to wind down. The first crossings from Mexico are expected in mid-November, but until then, berry markets are expected to stay firm.

Citrus growers are also navigating tight markets. Small-sized oranges and lemons remain in very limited supply due to strong demand and light sizing on current fruit. Early volume on California Navels and new crop lemons is expected to lean toward larger sizes when harvest begins later this month, which could keep pressure on smaller fruit programs through October.

The outlook for the remainder of the Salinas season is cautious. Clear skies and warmer temperatures are in the forecast, which may sound ideal, but continued warmth paired with lingering humidity could further stress crops and raise the risk of quality issues.

We are recommending shorter turns, open communication with growers, and flexibility on specs as we move through October. There is still good product to be had, but it is taking more effort to get it right.

