

PRO*ACT

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Crop Update

September 16, 2026

What's Eating at Salinas?

For the last few weeks, we've been talking about disease, insects and lower harvestable yields in the Salinas Valley. This week, those issues are starting to show up more clearly in the market.

Iceberg has moved from something we were watching to the star of the show. Supplies have tightened, markets are moving, and we're now seeing second-tier escalation on several iceberg packs. Romaine is trailing behind. It's dealing with many of the same field issues, but supplies have held together better and the market hasn't reacted nearly as aggressively.

Insects are becoming a bigger part of the story too. Trap counts across the Salinas Valley are showing higher thrips and Diamondback Moth activity. Thrips matter on lettuce because they help spread INSV from plant to plant, which only adds to the disease pressure growers are already dealing with.

Diamondback Moth is creating a different headache in broccoli and cauliflower. The larvae can work their way deep into broccoli crowns and cauliflower heads, where they can be difficult to see during harvest. In some cases, the product can look fine from the outside and the insects are not discovered until it is trimmed or processed into florets. That makes the problem more than just a field issue. It can also reduce usable yields and create quality problems further down the supply chain.



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That's really what makes this time of year tricky. There can still be plenty of acres in the ground, but that doesn't always mean there is the same amount of good product available to pack.

The good news is there is a little relief coming. Huron should start coming into play around the middle of October and give us another source of lettuce and leaf as Salinas begins to wind down. It's a short deal, but if the crop comes in as expected, it should help bridge the gap before Yuma gets going in mid-November.

For now, iceberg is leading the move, romaine is trailing behind, and broccoli and cauliflower remain worth watching as insect pressure builds. The next few weeks will be about getting as much good product as possible out of the remaining Salinas fields while we wait for the next growing areas to come into play.

