

PRO*ACT

Crop Outlook

January 26, 2024

Harvests are gaining momentum in the desert growing regions following the significant rain event early this week as fields dry out. Short term forecasts bring a substantial warm up to the region into mid next week. The warmer temperatures will help crops recover from the rain and cold temperatures. Long range forecasts however show a series of storm systems moving into California with heavy precipitation possible beginning late next week into early February. Guidance indicates a cold, wet pattern continuing into the second week of February.

The desert growing regions have seen their share of inclement weather in the past couple of weeks. Previous very cold temperatures in the region caused widespread blistering and epidermal peeling in many leafy green stands. The rain will encourage these blisters to break open and discolor, allowing an entrance for pathogens to take hold in the plants. We will continue to see some epidermal peeling with discoloration along the ribs of romaine, iceberg and other whole leaf items. This will remain evident in the near term given the widespread extent of the damage. Bottom rot, mold and especially mildew will be on the rise in these stands with all the available moisture in the soil. Increased respiration rates from the rain may cause premature pinking in the iceberg, romaine and leafy green supplies. This condition many times is not evident at pack out and tends to show up during transit and storage.

The spring mix and tender leaf items are especially difficult to harvest in muddy conditions and the excess water can bring fields along quickly as the weather warms up. These fields were already showing yellowing leaves and discoloration in the stands due to the cold temperatures. Water saturation from the excess rain will cause weaker texture and leaf sensitivity in these crops which can result in increased mechanical damage during harvest and processing. Arugula is especially sensitive to these growing conditions. Initially the leaves will display purpling tips (bronzing) which then turn yellow and later transition towards wilt and decay.

Processed leafy green items are in a similar position and will also likely see an increase in pinking showing up in the bag. As mentioned above pinking will not be evident during processing and tends to show up during transit and storage.

Broccoli fields will likely see an increase in mildew (between the florets) and pin rot due to the heavy rains and excess moisture along with mildew spotting in cauliflower.

Bottom line remains we can expect to see overall lesser texture and shelf life in upcoming supplies due to these rains and previous cold temperatures. It is important to keep your rotations in check moving forward as the shelf life of all products will be challenged. Be prepared for pro rates and loading delays in the short term as growers get back on track work and through current obstacles. We will keep you up to date as to supplies and quality as reports become available.

