

1/26/10

Re: Weather

Western Region Outlook

The last in a series of strong Pacific storm systems will move to the east today with dry weather on tap for the week end into early next week. Mid range forecast show another storm system moving into California on Tuesday into Wednesday. This system at this time is expected to impact California however precipitation is not expected in the desert regions with this system. This will once again likely impact the strawberry growing regions of Southern California. The series of storm systems over the past week or so have impacted all Western growing regions with heavy precipitation, very strong winds and cold temperatures. The impacts of which will show up for some time to come. Strawberry growers will begin to strip and cull damaged fruit and flowers in an effort to induce growth to salvageable fruit. Supplies will be light to say the least from Southern California over the next few weeks as these stands recover. Water damage, pin rot, mold, decay, white shoulder and misshapen fruit are likely to be evident when growers re-enter these stands. Traditionally in California February brings the most rainfall and with the El Niño in place in the Southern Pacific we may be in for a few more rounds of heavy precipitation this winter season.



The Desert growing regions of California and Arizona have also received significant rainfall (2+ inches) this week halting harvests late this week. The rain along with cold temperatures and very strong (40mph sustained, 60mph gusts) winds have caused havoc for growers in this region. They even had a tornado watch issued in Yuma County yesterday. Many growers are stating that this is as bad as they have seen in many years if ever. Some growers are planning to try harvest over the weekend to fulfill contracts and processors. Supplies will be very limited with open market supplies likely to be very short until at least mid next week when field dry out. Typically desert growers will not enter a field for at least 3 days after watering as these fields take some time to dry out. With up to 3 inches of rain and the ground already saturated these stands look to be sloppy through next week. Crop assessment will be an ongoing process as growers are able to enter fields over the weekend. It is safe to say that carton weights, quality and shelf life will be compromised for the short term at a minimum. Given the rainfall totals and tremendous winds we can speculate as to potential quality.



The powerful winds will leave lettuce, leaf and tender leaf items tattered and torn allowing easy access for disease, mold and mildews to take hold. Humid conditions following the storm will only add to these problems. Water soaked leaves and the saturated ground will lessen shelf life of processed and whole commodity products for the next couple of weeks at a minimum. Not to mention the cold temperatures slowing growth rates to a crawl in these fields putting crops behind schedule. Bottom line is that supplies, quality and shelf life will be problematic for the near term possibly well beyond. Future weather patterns will play a crucial role as to how these stands recover throughout the Western growing regions. At this time we will have to wait and see how the various growing districts (Eastern and Western) have come through the recent weather events. We will keep you up to date as we gather more information on the various growing regions.



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