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Weather slows green onion growth

Published on 02/23/2011 09:05AM By Kirsten Hudson

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The early February freeze in Mexico that damaged bell peppers, cucumbers, tomatoes and other crops has also created challenges for green onions, but to a lesser degree.

The freeze, coupled with a slew of recent storms and cold weather, has slowed the crop for Castroville, Calif.-based Ocean Mist Farms, which sources from the Mexicali Valley of Baja California in Mexico, said Jeff Post, the company's green onion and asparagus commodity manager.

While the poor weather caused brittle tops, cracking and discoloration to some of the onions, as well as a smaller shank due to slowed growth, Post said much of the company's crop remains uninjured because of microclimates in the area.

"We were pretty fortunate," he said. "We didn't get hurt as much as others."

Ocean Mist plans to switch sources to the Santo Tomas region of Mexico in mid June.

Coastline Produce, Salinas, Calif., which also sources from the Mexicali Valley, saw slowed growth and reduced volume, said Mark McBride, sales manager.

"It's a very light week for us (as of Feb. 21) and we hope to gradually see an increase in volume starting next week," McBride said.

Although the quality of Coastline's crop is still in "excellent" condition, McBride said, the grower-shipper expects quality, demand and volume to increase as spring nears.

"That's when the best product comes out," he said.

Coastline plans to continue to source from the Mexicali Valley for the next few months.

The weather challenges in the Mexicali region during the past two months have put some of Muranaka Farm Inc.'s growers about two weeks behind normal harvest schedule, said John Killeen, the company's vice president of sales and marketing.

Muranaka, Moorpark, Calif., expects the harvest schedule delays, which have already put volumes off, to continue for about four or five more weeks.

"It's created a supply situation not only for us, but in terms of the industry," he said.

While some of the company's onions may be lighter, the overall quality is good, Killeen said.

Muranaka plans to source from the Mexicali Valley until summer.

As of Feb. 21 the market was trading in the high teens, said Post, McBride and Killeen. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's weekly f.o.b. report was not available Feb. 22 because of the President's Day holiday Feb. 21.

On Feb. 18, the USDA reported f.o.b.s of \$21.55-22.75 for 48-count cartons of bunched mediums.

While Killeen said the market should remain about the same for the next few weeks, Post said he

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While Kileen said the market should remain about the same for the next few weeks, Post said he expected the market to “come off a bit” due to “residual effects” from the recent bad weather.

McBride remains hopeful for the coming spring to increase growth and volume.

“Hopefully we’ll be getting away from this weather,” he said.

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