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Crops & Markets Mango deal to shift early from Mexico to Brazil

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Retailers can expect an early end to Mexican keitt mango shipments from Mexico, and an early start to the Brazilian tommy atkins deal.

Because of some weather problems during bloom, the northern Mexico keitt deal will likely wind down earlier than last year, William Watson, executive director of the National Mango Board, Orlando, Fla., said Aug. 18.

"Supplies are pretty strong now, but they'll be pretty soft soon," Watson said.

Late-season quality out of Mexico was "amazing," Watson said, and demand wasn't too shabby, either.

"Demand seems to be strong, and we think it could carry us into the Brazilian deal," he said. "The market stayed relatively strong throughout the (Mexican) deal, better than we've seen in the last couple of years."

That was despite the fact that the crop wound up about 1 million boxes larger than earlier expected, Watson said. Retailers did a particularly good job this season of promoting green mangoes, which some consumers shy away from because they don't look as ripe as red or yellow mangoes.

Because of the early end to the Mexico deal, shipments of tommy atkins from Brazil were expected to begin arriving on the East Coast the week of Aug. 17, about two weeks earlier than normal, Watson said.

The first boat with Brazilian tommy atkins landed Aug. 18, said Mark Falkner, director of sales for limes and tropicals for L&M Cos., Raleigh, N.C.

L&M had been told by one of its biggest customers, Wal-Mart, that once the kent deal ended in Mexico, it wasn't interested in getting keitts from south of the border, Falkner said.

As typically happens, consumers can expect a price bump when Mexican product gives way to Brazil, given the hefty transportation costs, Watson said.

In Falkner's words, the transition from Mexico to Brazil would be "expensive."

"Prices are pretty reasonable out of Mexico," Falkner said, but Brazilian tommys would likely start at around \$7 and stay there until October before falling.

On Aug. 18, Mexican keitt prices on the West Coast were in the \$4-4.50 range, compared to \$7-7.50 for Brazilian tommys on the East Coast, said Gary Clevenger, co-owner of Freska Produce International LLC, Oxnard, Calif.

Demand for keitts was down because of smaller supplies and subsequent higher prices, he said — keitts had been in the \$3-3.50 range in early August.

On Aug. 18, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported prices of \$4-5 for one-layer cartons of keitts 6-8s from Mexico, comparable to last year at the same time.

Freska expected to ship keitts through mid- to late September and kick off its Brazilian deal in early September, Clevenger said.

Early reports on sizing and quality out of Brazil were positive, Watson, Falkner and Clevenger said. And, given the early start, reports of adequate volumes were especially welcome, Watson said. Brazil typically carries the mango deal by itself until about mid-October, when Ecuadorean shipments get underway.

L&M expects to bring in Brazilian mangoes until about Nov. 28, after which Ecuador and Peru will take over the lion's share of supplies, Falkner said.

Freska expects to kick off its Ecuadorean deal about Oct. 1, Clevenger said.