By Tim Linden

2026 Season Produced Mixed Results for California Growers

To be sure, California avocado growers have had some positive returns in 2026 with solid volume, good supplies and periods of a strong market. However, it also has been a disappointing season with large supplies of fruit from Mexico depressing the market for multiple months.

From the Grove interviewed shippers from three different California avocado handlers to get their perspective on the current season as well as any comments they might have regarding the 2027 season.

Keith Blanchard, field manager for Index Fresh, headquartered in Bloomington, CA, said that the industry's early projections of 330 million pounds of fruit have proven to be fairly accurate. However, he said the weekly harvest pattern included several notable deviations. "The season began more slowly than anticipated, with March harvests trailing early projections," he said, adding that volume did pick up in April and aligned more closely with expectations through May and into the summer. "While volume and sizing have been generally favorable, grower returns were disappointing for much of the 2026 season due to persistent pricing pressure," he said.

Blanchard reported that one noteworthy development has been the broader distribution of Hass and GEM avocados into markets east of California. "That wider Hass investment reflected retailer prioritization of produce grown in the USA in correlation to America's 250th anniversary promotions this summer," he said. "GEM distribution reflects increased GEM availability, marketing investment and growing market interest in the variety."

He said California saw a significant increase in GEM production during the 2026 season, with the growth expected to continue with the 2027 season. "This increased availability should create additional opportunities to expand customer awareness, distribution and demand for GEMs across a broader geographic footprint."

As he focused on the major market factors that influenced California growers in 2026, Blanchard said Mexican pricing pressure weighed on the California market and reduced the pricing environment available to domestic growers. He added that South American imports were less influential than they have been in recent years, making them a comparatively smaller factor in the market dynamic this season. "Although reduced South American pressure was helpful, it did not fully offset the impact of Mexican pricing on California fruit values," he added.

Concerning prospects for 2027, Blanchard said it is early but initial indications point to a very strong California crop, potentially exceeding 400 million pounds. "California growers have dealt with recurring heat concerns in recent years, and the industry is understandably monitoring conditions closely," he said. "However, the heat experienced so far in 2026 has not included the sharp, extreme temperature spikes that can cause the greatest concern for groves. Instead, the weather pattern has been more gradual and sustained, which trees generally tolerate better than sudden, severe heat events. At this stage, the recent heat has not materially changed expectations for the 2027 crop. The overall outlook remains positive, though weather conditions through the fall and winter will continue to be important to monitor."

He added there is some expectation that climate conditions in Mexico could affect fruit sizing, potentially resulting in a greater proportion of smaller sizes. "If that occurs, it could become a relevant factor in the U.S. market, particularly in relation to the size profile and competitive position of California fruit. For California growers, an El Niño weather pattern can be beneficial if it delivers meaningful rainfall without excessive storms, flooding or damaging heat events."

Blanchard concluded that the 2027 season is shaping up to be one

worth watching. "California appears positioned for a larger crop, GEM production is expected to continue expanding and weather developments in California and competing supply regions could influence both fruit size and market conditions," he said.

Gary Clevenger, managing member and co-founder at Oxnard, CA-based Freska Produce International, LLC, noted that from a production standpoint, California appears to be finishing close to the approximately 330-million-pound forecast estimated by the California Avocado Commission at the beginning of the season. "A substantial portion of the crop moved during the core summer season, with volume now winding down," he said in late September, adding that the market was challenging during much of that time. "Having fruit available in the right sizes helps, but it does not guarantee strong returns when overall supply is heavy. June provided a better pricing window within this season, yet prices were substantially below June 2025."

He reported that larger sizes did command better prices than the smaller fruit, but was not willing to call it a good season for most growers. "Results depend on yield, size mix, harvest timing and production costs," he said. "Meeting the crop estimate is encouraging, but the more important measure for growers is what they have left after expenses."

Clevenger said CAC's reported promotions with East Coast specialty retailers were a positive development with those programs giving California fruit exposure beyond its traditional markets and helping communicate what makes it worth choosing. "I would distinguish that increased visibility from a confirmed increase in total eastern shipments," he said. "The opportunity is there, but the program has to work economically after freight and handling. Clear California identification, consistent eating quality and retailer support are especially important when shoppers can choose a lower-priced imported avocado."

The Freska Produce executive did express concern about Mexico's production this season. "The volume of Mexican fruit in the U.S. market was a major influence. The September industry report showed Mexican shipments well ahead of last year, while arrivals from Peru and Colombia were lower," he said. "California growers were still competing in a heavily supplied market."

And he noted that the increased costs California growers must pay is problematic. "Water, labor, harvesting and other operating costs also make lower prices harder to absorb."

Clevenger said it is too early to make a reliable prediction on California's 2027 crop. "The immediate questions are how well the young fruit held through the (summer) heat and how the trees recover. Conditions can vary considerably between coastal and inland groves, so damage in one area should not automatically be applied to the entire industry," he noted. "El Niño adds another variable. Winter rainfall could help water availability, while excessive rain or prolonged wet conditions could create other problems. The timing and location of that weather will matter. At this stage, these conditions add uncertainty rather than justify a firm increase or decrease in the crop estimate. We need updated grove assessments before drawing that conclusion."

And he opined that Mexico's volume and timing will remain central to the market California growers face. For Peru and Colombia, he said an important question is how much fruit is directed to the United States compared with Europe and other destinations.

He did add that California growers do have opportunities to provide better results. "The priority is to build committed retail programs ahead of harvest and keep giving consumers a clear reason to choose California fruit," he said. "That puts growers in a better position than relying on a seasonal shortage to support the market."

Keith Barnard, senior vice president of global sourcing from Mission Produce, did comment on the recent acquisition of Calavo, but did not offer commentary on the 2026 or 2027 crops.

"Calavo is now part of Mission, bringing together two organizations with deep roots in the avocado industry. For growers, that means being connected to a broader sourcing, packing and distribution platform," he said. "We're excited to work with more growers across California. The state remains one of the most important growing regions in the category, and expanding our grower network further strengthens the foundation of our sourcing program. It also creates an opportunity to share the agronomic expertise, technical resources and operational support that Mission has developed across its global farming operations."

Barnard continued: "From a sourcing perspective, the combination is valuable because strong sourcing programs are built on both relationships and infrastructure. The California avocado industry has been built on generations of grower relationships, expertise and commitment to the category, and bringing those relationships together with complementary operational capabilities further strengthens the foundation of Mission's sourcing network."

He added: "California has been an important part of Mission's sourcing program for many years. The combination deepens those roots and reinforces our commitment to the state's avocado industry."