

Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau Ask Laura Column September 2018 (printed October 2018)
Column Author: Laura Tourte, Farm Management Advisor

Q: Where can I get more information about market prices and sales for berry and vegetable crops?

A: Market News, from the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), is a great resource. The website is: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/market-news>. Market news provides timely price and sales information for conventional and organic fruits, vegetables and other specialty crops. Information related to livestock, poultry and dairy can also be accessed at this website.

Here are some of the ways in which you can use Market News:

If you are interested in only one crop and price, for example strawberries, you can click on the specialty crop and then fruit links, and then search by commodity. There you will find information on price and sales for terminal markets, for example San Francisco, or you can search by shipping point, for example Salinas-Watsonville. You can further search for information by specifying date(s), and whether you are interested in conventional or organic prices and sales—or both.

Another way to search, which can be particularly helpful, is to go to the Market News Portal under the Specialty Crops link, where you can request a number of custom reports. For example, there are reports available for terminal markets, shipping points, organic, or more specifically, a “custom average pricing” report. Again, if you are interested in prices and sales of strawberries, you can select the “snapshot average prices and graphs” tab, and then “shipping point averages” tab. You can select a report by week, month or year (for current and historical data), product type (conventional and/or organic), district (Salinas-Watsonville), and package type (different flat sizes), among several other choices.

Besides strawberries and other fruit, there are reports that are available in various formats for vegetables, herbs, nuts, ornamentals and honey. There is information on product movement in California and others part of the US, and world, and national shipping point trends, to name just a few other options. News releases and other announcements that may be of interest can also be easily viewed from the Market News Portal.

Market News has a wealth of information—far more than can be detailed in this column. What I would recommend is that you spend some time becoming familiar with the website, and the many options that are available for you to use. It may take a bit of time to learn how to best use the website for your own needs, but your searches may yield unexpected results of value! If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our office.