



By Jeff Long

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Mexican asparagus in demand



With favourable weather and trade channels clean Mexico's asparagus traders are enjoying a smooth season ahead

The 2019 Mexican asparagus deal is expected to perform like more of a bell-shaped production curve as opposed to the sharp spike of 2018.

Cold night time temperatures prior to the harvest are what asparagus farmers hope for every year because it forces the plant into dormancy, fortifying for the season just ahead.

"The last of the production out of (Southern) Baja California is just finishing and Peru is directing the last of its volume to Europe so the supply channels are quite clean at the moment," said Jim Hanson of Grower Direct Marketing, a major importer-exporter of Mexican asparagus.

"Prices are ranging anywhere from US\$35 to US\$50 on 11lb (5kg) cartons at the moment. Doesn't matter if it's standards, large or jumbo – if you've got a box of 'grass it will sell."

"Last January (2018) was one of the heaviest ever (for shipments)," noted Hanson. "There's a totally different 'feel' to the deal this year as production won't get going in any significant way until early February."

"The bulk of the deal – barring weather – will hit between week 7 (10 February) and week 13 (26 March) this year. The Mexicali Valley will get going around 20 January followed by Caborca (Sonora) a little later. Beginning in early April, however, we're expecting a significant

downturn in production, which probably means very low supplies for Easter (21 April)."

With the current gap in production, shipments all but ceased to Japan during much of January. Since Japan demands a specific grade of asparagus, Hanson expects that exports probably won't resume until late January or early February.

"It takes another seven to ten days after the domestic deal gets going to have enough asparagus to supply that market."