

Drought driving up food prices

By Dana Hull, San Jose Mercury News

With 2013 the driest year on record and 2014 possibly worse, the devastation of California's drought is trickling down to crops, fields, farmers markets, grocery stores – and the kitchen table.

While it's too early to tell precisely how much the drought will push up household grocery bills, economists say consumers can expect to pay more for food later this year because fewer acres of land are being planted and crop yields are shrinking.

Large grocery chains have distribution networks and can import produce from around the world to keep customers in everything from cantaloupe to cauliflower, but experts say California's smaller yields will inevitably lead to higher consumer prices here and elsewhere. Some consumers already are plotting ways to keep their food budgets under control if there is a big spike in prices.

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