

Crop Report

Wednesday 12th February to Wednesday 19th February

Get the insight you need to plan more effectively and manage your menus with our latest report from the field, brought to you by our expert produce team.

Apples



We are approaching the end of the European season, which has been one of the worst on record. This was caused by early season frosts and means that there is currently very limited supply of small-sized fruit, which is widely used in the foodservice sector.

Currently, the most affected variety is Granny Smith's, and we have introduced concessions to support availability. It is, however, likely that this will extend to other varieties as we get closer to the end of the season.

The South African season will start in April, after which we expect the situation to ease, but over the course of the transition between the northern and southern hemisphere seasons it will be very challenging.

Brassicas



The cold weather that we have seen in the past few weeks has slowed the growth of some crops and we are starting to need concessions to aid availability across certain products. Further cold temperatures have been forecast for the UK in the coming weeks, which could have additional implications for the harvest.

As a result of the weather, we have a concession in place for cauliflower to allow for a lower weight, while the curd size remains unchanged. Likewise, some savoy cabbage will require a weight concession.

The greatest issue is with Cavolo Nero, which has been affected by white fly and poor quality. This appears to be a market-wide issue and, because it is not grown as widely as other brassica varieties, it is more difficult to address quickly. We therefore expect some availability issues in the short term.

Other brassica varieties, including broccoli, sweetheart cabbage, kale and cabbage are currently in good availability, albeit we continue to monitor cabbage as there are some concerns that stored product may become scarcer at the end of season due to poor European harvests.

Melons



While there are no current shortages, we are approaching the transition between Brazil and Central America. There has been some heavy rain across Central America, which led to a two-week delay to planting and caused some concern about a potential gap in supply as we move origins.

We have been working with our suppliers and hope that we can avoid any major availability issues by extending the Brazilian season. We are also happy to report that we have seen some produce depart from Central America on time, albeit in very limited quantities.

We will continue to monitor the situation closely over the next two weeks or so, until the Central American harvest begins in earnest. Supply, however, will be extremely tight for the next few weeks and it may require some concessions to maximise availability.

Mushrooms



We are continuing to work with our suppliers to address the challenges caused by damage to growing tunnels in Ireland following the recent storms. With suppliers in a number of origins across Europe, we do not anticipate any major issues on general lines.

However, we are seeing some specific issues on portobello mushrooms, which has required a concession to allow smaller portobello and flat mushrooms to minimise any availability issues.

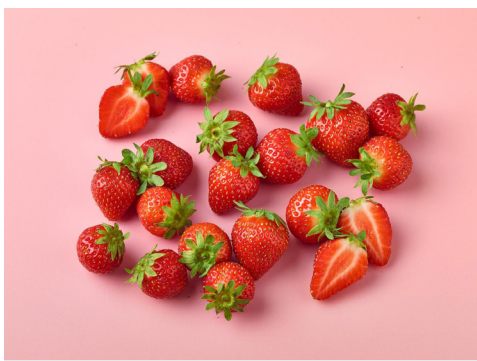
Peppers



While this week has seen improvements in market availability on some peppers, we are expecting the Thrips virus to have an increasing impact on peppers from Spain. The greatest impact will be on some colours that are not grown as widely, for example yellow.

Thrips affects aesthetic appeal and in severe cases, it can affect shelf life and quality. It is already beginning to affect quality in small amounts and we expect that concessions will be required to maintain availability as the season progresses.

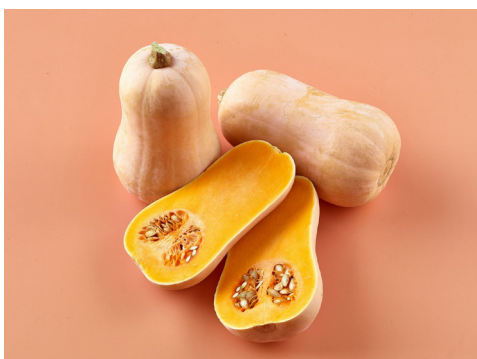
Strawberries



Following the gales caused by storms Garoé and Herminia, there has been further heavy rain and low temperatures affecting the Huelva region of Spain. This is causing major supply problems across the sector, as the fruit is not ripening or colouring as it should.

We are working with suppliers to minimise the impact on customers, but we could see some availability issues for the next couple of weeks.

Butternut Squash



There are no availability issues as we start the transition from Europe to South Africa, but the end of season quality is not as high as we would like. We have introduced additional checks to try to minimise quality issues, however, there may be some scarring on the skin, but this is cosmetic and should not affect the eating quality.

Potatoes



As we have been reporting, we expect to see shortages of salad potatoes, red potatoes and larger potatoes later in the season, potentially from around April. However, there are currently no major problems with potato supply, and we will work with suppliers on potential contingency plans in the event of any issues.

Plantings are likely to be around 10% lower this year, due to a lack of seed potato across the UK and EU.

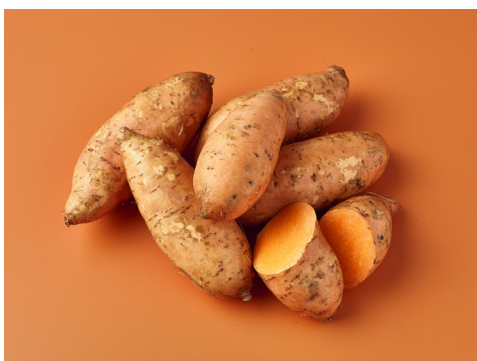
Tomatoes



We are seeing some backward colour on cherry tomatoes following cold weather in Spain.

This is also being seen on some round tomatoes from Morocco and the Canary Islands. This is caused by the cooler temperatures, coupled with the longer distances that the fruit travels. The tomatoes must be dispatched to allow for some colouring up on route to the UK and the cooler temperatures have made this slightly more challenging to judge.

Sweet Potato



In the next month or two, we will be moving to American produce. Growers there are reporting that yields are likely to be significantly down, by around 30% to 40%, which is due to poor weather during the growing period. We are maintaining a close watching brief and will work with suppliers to take action to mitigate any potential issues, which will include sourcing from additional origins.

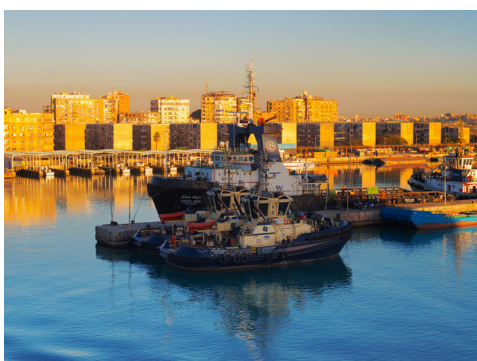
Eggs



Avian Influenza Protection Zones are now in place across Great Britain and Northern Ireland following the increase in bird flu outbreaks in commercial poultry. This includes enhanced biosecurity measures and Housing Orders in specific areas of the country.

There is likely to be additional pressure on the market as a result of outbreaks, which include a large barn unit in the past couple of weeks.

Shipping delays



Shipping delays across British ports are continuing to improve, although some suppliers are reporting three-day delays at London Gateway, one of the key ports for fruit and veg arrivals, as it continues to clear the backlog caused by congestion and exacerbated by storms and poor weather.

We are continuing to monitor the situation.