

CROP REPORT

Wednesday 27th March to Wednesday 3rd April

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.

Seasonal Spotlight



We have received the first deliveries of Isle of Wight tomatoes, which are looking fantastic. These are top quality tomatoes, delivering exceptional flavour. This year we'll be adding a Piccolo tomato, along with an excellent Heritage Tomato to the range we sell from this excellent grower.

Jersey Royals have been a little delayed this year as the wet conditions make harvesting challenging. However, we hope that we will see the first deliveries soon.

The full British Asparagus season is around a month away and we are expecting a good quality crop.

European farmers' action



Farmer action continues across Europe, but it is having only limited impact on supplies coming to the UK. However, while the protests continue, there is always the chance that individual loads will be delayed.

Weather update for planting



The wet weather has delayed plantings across a number of categories, and we are working with suppliers to look at the impact this could have on future harvests.

The weather is forecast to be a bit milder over the coming weeks, which will hopefully allow delayed plantings to be completed. However, we may need to continue to import for a bit longer than anticipated in some areas.

We will keep customers updated as the situation becomes clearer.

Avocados



While the market for avocados is very short, it is easing slightly as we begin the transition to the larger growing regions in Peru and South Africa. Concerns remain over potential shipping delays, which could potentially add some further challenges.

We continue to work closely with our suppliers as we try to mitigate the problems that we have seen over the past few weeks.

Lettuce



Following the ban on planting in Murcia before Christmas, we are expecting to see some challenges around availability. However, the warmer weather in Spain has delayed the timing of these and we are now not anticipating supply challenges until April. The exact timing will depend on weather conditions and demand, but we will continue to work with growers and look for alternative supplies to mitigate any potential problems.

More of a concern are the continental varieties, which take a lot longer to grow - around 120 days or more. These slower growing varieties are likely to run very short in April and we are working to try to identify additional supply.

Separately, there are some delays to plantings in the UK, but it is too early to know the full extent of the impact on availability. Initial plantings are covered and are likely to be fine, however later product could be an issue.

We are also looking at how prepped materials are being affected by the growing conditions and are working with suppliers to minimise any impact on customers.

Potatoes



We are starting to see availability issues taking hold. We expect Maris Piper to become a major issue soon as market conditions begin to impact some varieties.

We are currently working with our suppliers to look at alternatives that can be used as a potential replacement, albeit the issues are market-wide and with a dominant all-round potato like Maris Piper, a like for like swap is challenging.

Bakers remain available, but as we have been reporting, availability and quality of potatoes will become increasingly problematic over the coming months as we get further into stored product.

We are still seeing issues in processed potato and are likely to see these continue throughout the season as processors struggle with the quality and yield from what they can process.

Tomatoes



We are now around halfway through Ramadan and there are no imminent issues being discussed in relation to an export ban from Morocco, which we've seen in the past couple of years.

We are seeing issues with sizing, particularly on G tomatoes as well as some round tomatoes. This happens when the fruit colours up more quickly than it should, which stops it growing to the size it should.

However, quality is good, which is preferable to the potential quality issues if the fruit is too far forward.

We had some big challenges on the quality of plum and Intense tomatoes over the past couple of weeks, but we've worked very hard with suppliers to address these, by stripping back plants and putting extra checks in across the supply chain. This is helping to deliver a significant improvement in quality.

Berries



Moroccan berries are continuing to struggle for yield and size, as they are impacted by lower temperatures in the region. This is predominantly impacting raspberries, but we are also seeing some problems with strawberries and blackberries.

We currently expect the problems to last for around another two weeks.

Grapes



There are no current issues with supply, but we are carefully monitoring the situation with Chilean grapes as delays to the start of the season are expected. We normally move to Chile in mid-April, but with the hold-up, there could be some issues as we transition between origins.

However, we will work with suppliers to minimise any potential shortages.

Spring Greens



There is a steady, but limited supply of Spring Greens as the ongoing wet weather continues to impact the harvest.

With some of the current fields being written off as they are too wet to be harvested, there is limited supply as we wait for the next fields to be ready. We are hoping for an improvement in the coming weeks, but failing that, we may need to move to imported product.

Cabbage



We expect Savoy to finish in early April and we will therefore have to rely on imported product a lot earlier than normal to cover the premature end to the UK season.

Kale and Cavolo Nero have also struggled under the extreme weather conditions and we expect both varieties to be challenging until the end of the season.

We will continue to work with suppliers to minimise shortages.

Melons



We are now around three weeks into the Central American season, and there are no availability concerns. The concession that we had on watermelons, due to sizing, is set to end this week. Everything then looks positive, and we will transition to Spain in mid-May.

The only exception and our main potential concern is around Galia, where yields are reported to be lower than expected. This could have an impact as we get towards the end of the season.

Parsnips



We are seeing an early finish to the UK season as the wet weather and flooded fields have taken their toll on the quality of the crop.

We are anticipating some gaps in the first two weeks of April, as the Spanish season is not yet ready to take up the shortfall from the UK.

We will continue to work to try to identify additional product, including contingency suppliers and utilising imported product if possible.

Chives



We have switched suppliers in Kenya, and supplemented this with Moroccan produce as we seek to mitigate the issues that we're currently seeing with Kenyan supply.

UK chives will be starting soon, which will hopefully help quality and availability.

Limes



Suppliers have introduced additional checks and have also been removing poor quality fruit as they address some of the challenges caused by the heavy rain in Brazil. We are expecting issues for the next two to three weeks as availability suffers following the quality concerns.

Peppers



We are continuing to see some intermittent issues with the quality of peppers. It is challenging at the moment, with class 2 product in particular deteriorating more quickly once picked. Our growers are using more class 1 product to cover class 2 orders to help to minimise this.

