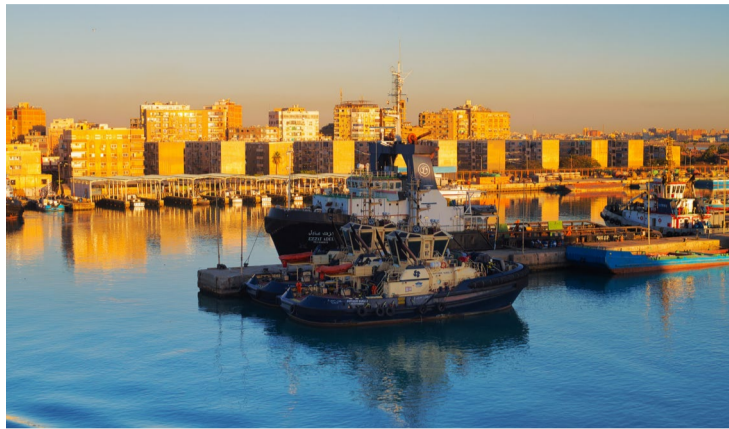


Crop Report

Wednesday 29th January to Wednesday 5th 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.

Shipping delays



Storms Eowyn and Herminia have put additional pressure on British ports, which were struggling to catch up following congestion and weather-related problems through Christmas and the New Year.

While the situation is much better than it was over Christmas, there is still the potential for further delays in the key ports for fresh produce.

Strawberries



We have been working with our suppliers to try to minimise the impact of Storm Garoé, which brought heavy rain and flooding to the Huelva region of Spain last week. This has caused some major availability issues across the industry.

While we have been able to avoid most of the problems, there are likely to be some short-term availability issues this week.

We are watching the impact of Storm Herminia very closely as this could add further complication to both the harvest and transportation from Spain and Morocco.

Brassicas



Temperatures in Spain and the UK have both risen, helping to ease the pressure on brassica farmers. The recent storms have brought some further challenges, but our growers have coped well with the wind, rain and flooding.

We continue to manage availability well and the warmer weather will hopefully speed the crop's growth, which should help to further reduce the challenging market supply situation that we have seen in the past couple of weeks.

Red and white cabbage is now coming from stored produce and there are some concerns about end of season availability due to the poor harvests in Europe. It is too early to make a definitive prediction, but we are keeping a close watching brief on the situation and will work with suppliers to maximise availability should the need arise.

There are some potential challenges on prepped product as the storms in Ireland have caused power cuts. Our supplier is currently using generator power, which is not as efficient as power from the main grid, although we are hopeful that this will be restored soon.

Lettuce



The weather in Spain has warmed up, which is helping to improve the availability of lettuce. Over the past few weeks, we have managed availability well across our five suppliers and the market situation should return to normal next week.

With the ongoing storms in Spain, there is the potential for high winds to cause some tip burn, which may require a concession if it happens.

There are also some challenges on continental varieties as market availability that meets our standards is currently not available. We are working with suppliers to try to address this.

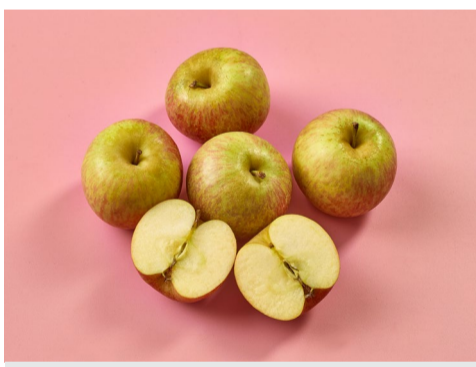
Potatoes



While there are currently no major issues with potato supply, we expect to see shortages of salad potatoes, red potatoes and larger potatoes later in the season. We are working with suppliers on potential contingency plans in the event of problems.

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

Apples



It has been a very difficult season for European growers, with frosts in Spring 2024 impacting yields and leading to a very limited supply of small-sized fruit.

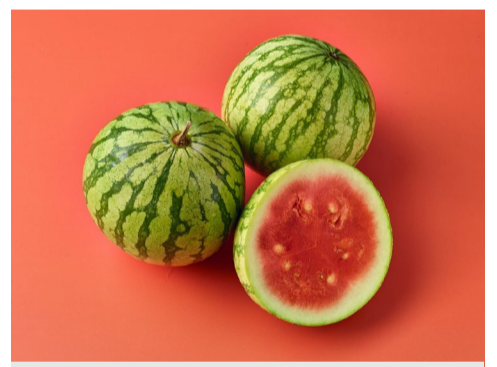
We will start to see the first arrivals of South African fruit in April, but the transition between the northern and southern hemisphere seasons will be a difficult one.

Beef tomatoes



We have a concession in place for size of beef tomatoes, following the cold, dry weather over the past four weeks, which has reduced the size of the tomatoes being harvested in both Spain and Morocco. While it is not currently a major problem, we expect to see continued challenges in meeting the 82mm+ size spec over the coming weeks as availability of larger fruit declines and will probably require additional concessions in February.

Melons



Heavy rains in the Central American growing regions affected the planting of melons and it is likely to lead to around a two-week delay to the new season at the end of February/ beginning of March.

We are working with suppliers as we try to extend the Brazilian season for as long as we can, which will hopefully bridge some of the anticipated gap. The greatest impact is expected to be seen on Galia, Cantaloupe and Watermelon, while yellow melons, which enjoy a longer Brazilian season anyway, are likely to be least affected.

Eggs



There are currently Avian Influenza Protection Zones in place across England and Scotland, as there has been an increase in the number of outbreaks of bird flu in commercial poultry. Last week saw the largest individual farm outbreak in the UK, with 1.6m birds affected. The implications are currently being assessed, with the potential for some challenges on availability across the industry.

Peppers



We are seeing increasing evidence of Thrips virus affecting peppers from the Almeria region of Spain. While this also happened last year, it has been seen earlier this year. The virus affects aesthetic appeal and in severe cases, it can affect shelf life and quality, particularly later in the season

Salad



Salad crops are being affected by colder Spanish temperatures, which followed a long period of warm weather with high production. We are managing supply well across our growers, but there are challenges across the market, with cucumbers, aubergines and cherry tomatoes currently particularly badly affected.