

# Crop Report

Wednesday 12th March to Wednesday 19th March

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.

## Spanish Weather Update



As we have been reporting, there has been some very heavy rain and flooding in parts of Spain, with the Murcia region being particularly badly affected.

With the downpours continuing for more than a week, harvesting has been very difficult. While this weekend saw further rain, it is expected that the weather will improve this week, which should provide some respite for growers who are struggling to deal with the aftermath of the dreadful conditions.

It is likely that crops will suffer some quality issues in the short-term due to excess water, and we will continue to monitor the longer-term implications of the weather on quality and availability.

## Brassicas



While we still have a weight concession in place for cauliflower, availability is improving with the better weather and, subject to no further issues, should be removed this week. Conversely, Spanish cauliflower, along with broccoli and sweetheart cabbage, has been impacted by the heavy rains, which has affected market availability, although we are not expecting this to have a major impact on our supply.

Cavolo Nero continues to be very challenging with the crop affected by white fly and poor quality. While the recent rain has led to some improvement, availability remains difficult due to the small number of farmers who grow this product, which means that it takes longer for problems to be rectified.

Kale, spring greens and cabbage are currently in good availability and quality.

## Lettuce



The heavy downpours across Murcia have caused major market availability problems for lettuce, with all varieties affected to some extent.

The rain and strong winds have caused widespread crop damage and impacted quality, for example, with mud getting into the product and pinking due to the amount of water present.

A number of concessions are in place to try to maximise supply, but these are market-wide issues that will cause availability problems in the short-term, potentially for the next fortnight.

While this is impacting all lettuce, some varieties have been particularly badly impacted, including Batavia.

Our procurement team reacted immediately to the situation, increasing volumes from other origins to try to mitigate the problems as far as we can, and we will continue to work with suppliers to minimise the impact on customers.

## CauliShoots®



There are no current issues with CauliShoots®, but we are anticipating a challenging transition between the Spanish and British seasons. The UK harvest is not expected to be available until June. The Spanish crop is facing challenging growing conditions, with excessive heat affecting the crop, which could lead to significant supply shortages in April and May.

We are working with the supplier to try to minimise this, but it is likely to be a very challenging period from April. We will provide a further update next week.

## Peppers



We are working with our suppliers to try to mitigate the impact of the Thrips virus, which is affecting peppers in some areas of Spain. This includes taking product from areas of Spain that have been less impacted by Thrips, which affects the aesthetic appeal and in severe cases, it can affect shelf life and quality.

While it is challenging, there has been additional contingency stock planted to try to minimise the impact on the harvest and we hope that we can avoid any major availability issues. There is also the potential for an early start to the Dutch season, due to current weather conditions, although it is too early to confidently predict this.

## Apples



The final part of the European season is proving particularly difficult this year. This has been caused by early season frosts leading to one of the worst harvests on record. We are seeing an increase in quality issues, as well as availability challenges on some lines, with Granny Smith's particularly badly affected. Customers may wish to consider Golden Delicious as a potential alternative option.

It will remain a very difficult market until we get to the South African season in around two months' time.

## Berries



Berries have been impacted by the poor weather conditions in Spain, with market-wide shortages for raspberries, strawberries and blackberries.

We have worked with our suppliers to mitigate the problem, which has included taking additional product from Morocco. However, this origin has been impacted by delays at the port of Algeciras. The delays are affecting quality, although the supplier is taking steps to grade these out.

To date, we have managed to avoid any major supply shortages, but it will remain challenging, particularly on strawberries, throughout the week.

## Lemons



Lemons have been affected by the Spanish weather, which has severely restricted access to the orchards and meant that harvesting has been very limited. With the expectation of better weather this week, it is hoped that harvesting will be able to resume as normal.

However, stocks have been depleted by the lack of crops and loadings have been difficult over the weekend. We are working with suppliers to try to minimise the impact on customers.

We are currently assessing the damage to the crop, which could lead to further quality problems in what is already a difficult season.

## Melons



As predicted, the transition between the Brazilian and Central American seasons is proving to be a difficult one. This was caused by a fortnight's delay to planting in the Central American region, putting pressure on the overall market as we move between the origins.

This has been made worse by some delays to shipping, adding to the supply problems. However, we continue to manage supply well and have seen little impact on our availability.

We are expecting to see an improvement within the next couple of weeks and, until then, we will continue to work with our suppliers to maximise availability.

## 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.

We continue to investigate avenues to minimise the impact of market shortages on customers. This includes the introduction of a new supplier to help mitigate risk.

## Sweet Potato



We are anticipating some availability problems from April, as the American harvest is down by more than 30%. This was caused by poor weather during the growing period, and we are working with our suppliers to mitigate any potential issues and identify product from additional origins.

## Tomatoes



There have been some problems with rugose virus. This has been caused by the wet conditions in Spain, with two weeks of persistent rain impacting shelf life and quality. This has been exacerbated by port delays, which has affected product from Morocco, and rising demand due to Ramadan.