

CROP REPORT

Wednesday 3rd April to Wednesday 10th 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.

European farmers' action



Farmer action continues across Europe. We have seen some further protests in the UK, but these are primarily around central London and targeting policymakers. To date, the actions are only having a limited impact on supplies coming to the UK. However, while the protests continue, there is always the chance that individual loads could be delayed.

Seasonal Spotlight



This week sees the welcome return of that traditional favourite, British outdoor rhubarb. We're expecting a good season, which will last until around the end of August.

Early season Isle of Wight tomatoes are in stock in limited quantities, which will increase over the coming weeks as we get further into the season. So far, we're pleased with the quality we're seeing.

The full British Asparagus season is around a month away and we are expecting a good quality crop. We have some very early season produce available, which will reduce in price and increase in quantity as we move towards the main crop.

Cabbage



Speciality cabbages remain a challenge with Savoy, Kale, Cavolo Nero all facing short supply in the coming weeks, as a result of the weather conditions causing ongoing difficulties or an early finish to the British season.

As we've been reporting, Savoy will need to move to imported product from this week as British stocks are now almost fully exhausted.

We continue to review the quality of product in stores to monitor the impact the wet conditions during harvest have had.

We remain unsure about regrowth on the kale fields, so we are working to fill gaps with imported product, while we wait to see if and when the UK fields can recover.

Berries



The lower temperatures in Morocco have meant that berries continue to struggle for yield and size. Worst affected are raspberries, but strawberries and blackberries are also being impacted.

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

We expect the UK season to begin in early May, which will, weather permitting, hopefully improve availability.

Potatoes



As we've highlighting for several months, the gradual decline in potato availability is beginning to become more pressing. Maris Piper currently has very limited availability and we expect the situation with other varieties to also deteriorate in the coming weeks.

We will continue to investigate alternatives and do what we can to mitigate some of the availability issues.

As quality deteriorates, processors are finding it increasingly challenging as they need to remove more of the potato, leading to significantly reduced yields. Again, we do not expect this to improve over the season.

Spring Greens



There are concerns regarding the availability of Spring Greens, as the wet weather impacts the growth and harvesting of the crop. This has led to many fields being written off, leading to a gap in supply while we wait for the next fields to be ready in around two to three weeks.

We are working with our growers and contingency suppliers where possible, but these are market-wide shortages that are unlikely to be solved until the new fields are ready.

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.

Lettuce



We are continuing to see some issues with Spanish crops, so we are working very hard with our suppliers to make the transition to UK produce as quickly as we can. We hope that we will be able to move in May.

Of most concern are the slower-growing continental varieties, which take around 120 days or more to grow. These are likely to run very short in April and we are working to try to identify additional supply. We are currently facing particular issues with Batavia.

Limes



The quality and availability of limes was already challenging following the heavy rains in Brazil. Now, we are experiencing extended shipping delays of around two weeks, which have compounded the problem and led to widespread shortages across Europe.

There is very limited supply available until the arrival of the delayed vessels, which is currently scheduled to be Friday 5 April. Because the limes have been delayed by two weeks, we will be monitoring quality, although we will be unable to provide any update on this until the fruit arrives.

Tomatoes



The situation with tomatoes is beginning to ease, with quality and availability showing a significant improvement over a month ago.

There are still some occasional quality issues, for example with softness, but the situation is much improved.

Melons



We are seeing some shipping delays on melons, but they are unlikely to have the same impact as we are seeing with limes.

We are continuing to maintain a watching brief on Galia, which is a potential concern as yields are reported to be lower than expected. We will know more as the season progresses.

Parsnips



We are anticipating an early finish to the UK season as the wet weather and flooded fields impact the quality and availability of British parsnips.

There is likely to be a gap of around four weeks between the UK finishing and Spanish product being available. This is likely to cause significant market-wide shortages and we will continue to work with suppliers both in the UK and in Spain to try to identify additional stocks to mitigate the issues that we are going to be facing in April.

Avocados



The availability of avocados continues to improve week on week, but still remains very challenging. While we are balancing supply well, we are conscious that any potential shipping delays could cause further problems.

Chives



The situation with chives is beginning to improve as we see an increase in British supply. We are also seeing an improvement in Kenyan and Moroccan produce. We are working with suppliers to improve consistency as we transition between origins.

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. We are working with suppliers to try to mitigate these issues, including looking at other suppliers and using more class 1 product to cover class 2 orders.

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