

Crop Report

Wednesday 2nd April to Wednesday 9th 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.

Avocados



April and May are one of the most challenging times of the year as we transition from the Northern to the Southern Hemisphere.

At this stage, we are not expecting shortages, but market availability will be severely restricted during this time. This means that any additional problems such as vessel delays, poor weather or longer ripening periods could lead to some short-term problems.

We will continue to monitor the situation closely, as there has already been an early finish in Israel along with a delay to start of the South African and Peruvian seasons. In addition, rains in Spain have affected the availability of smaller sized fruit, so there is a concession in place to allow larger fruit and maximise the limited availability.

We will continue to monitor the situation carefully over the coming weeks and provide updates as we move between the origins.

Sweet Potato



We are expecting some severe disruption to sweet potato supply in the coming weeks, as the impact of the poor American harvest, which is around 40% down, is felt. This is expected to start to affect the market in May.

In the meantime, we are working with suppliers to try to identify addition supply, for example looking at increasing supply from other origins such as Portugal to mitigate some of the expected shortages.

We will continue to provide updates over the coming weeks.

CauliShoots®



We are anticipating availability challenges and shortages of CauliShoots® during April and May, as we expect an early finish to the Spanish season before the UK harvest is ready at its normal June timing.

Originally, the Spanish crop faced excessive heat affecting the crop, which caused browning. Additional plantings to address this were then impacted by the heavy rains which we saw recently in Spain.

We are working with the supplier to try to minimise the impact of this, but it is likely to be a very challenging period during April and May.

Apples



There are going to be some very challenging end of season availability problems with apples. The early season frosts have contributed to one of the worst harvests on record. Granny Smith's remains the most impacted, but we expect to see other varieties facing similar problems in the coming weeks.

Depending on the weather, we expect to see the first of the Southern Hemisphere red apples in around three weeks, followed by Granny Smith's and other green varieties in approximately six weeks. However, it will be very difficult until then.

Berries

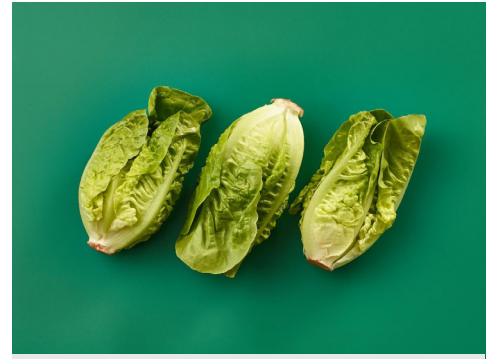


There has been some improvement in the availability of strawberries over the past week, as warmer temperatures have brought better growing conditions to Spain and Morocco, leading to fewer supply challenges.

However, raspberries and blackberries have been slower to recover from the earlier cooler temperatures, which resulted in issues with ripening and some additional quality concerns.

While we are not expecting any major shortages, conditions across the market will remain very challenging this week, albeit they are improving day by day.

Lettuce



Demand for lettuce remains high, while supply is restricted due to the aftereffects of the Spanish storms. These caused widespread crop damage, which has seen some growers having to write off fields. This has been made worse by the lack of planting that took place during the storms as it would simply have been washed away.

We are maintaining a number of concessions to try to maximise lettuce availability, for example weight where growers are having to strip away leaves to avoid excess mud.

We expect April and May to be very difficult.

Melons



Having completed the move to Central America, we are starting to see a continued improvement in availability.

While things are improving, we are maintaining a couple of concessions for the coming weeks on watermelon and honeydew melon to help support availability.

There are some longer-term concerns on honeydew melons, which are likely to be a challenge as we get later into the season, with growers reporting a larger than expected level of out grades.

Peppers



We continue to work very closely with suppliers to try to minimise the issues that are being seen with peppers. Much of this is being driven by an increase in Thrips virus, which affects the aesthetic appeal and in severe cases, it can affect shelf life and quality of peppers.

While we have managed well to date, we do expect further problems in the market over the coming weeks before we begin to source from Holland in around a month's time. As a result, we have put some concessions in place, which will help to mitigate some of the shortages.

Potatoes



Availability is currently satisfactory, but we are starting to see some quality issues as we get further into stored product.

We are expecting the supply situation to get more difficult as the season progresses, with shortages of salad potatoes, red potatoes and larger potatoes expected.

We have introduced a new supplier to help mitigate our risk as we approach what is likely to be a challenging end to the season.

Lemons



With around five or six weeks left in the Spanish season, we are maintaining a close watching brief on the quality of the crop.

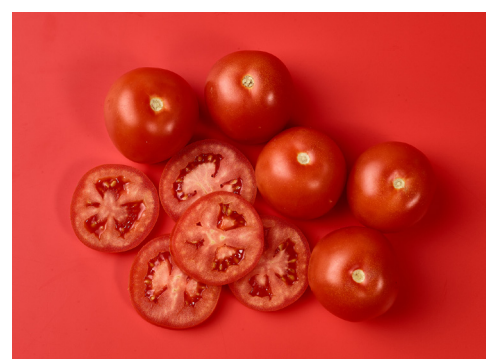
High levels of humidity and wet weather has led to an increased risk of lower quality fruit. We are working with suppliers to assess and manage this as far as we can. However, it is likely to remain a problem until we transition to South Africa.

Seasonal Oranges



Spanish Leafy Clementines and Blood Oranges are expected to finish this week, following the end to their seasons. We hope that we will see them back next winter as we know they are popular with many customers.

Tomatoes



We are seeing some improvement on the availability of tomatoes, albeit, we have put a range of concessions in place to try to aid availability.

The better weather is good news for growers, who are still recovering from the storms that had a devastating impact on many Spanish regions. However, with demand strong in the UK, there is pressure on limited supply and we are working with suppliers to try to balance this, alongside some quality issues, particularly on class two product.

Eggs



Eggs remain in short supply across the market, as avian flu continues to impact availability. Demand is also increasing in all sectors, with retail sales currently very strong.

It is expected to remain challenging for the short-term while bird flu outbreaks continue.