

Crop Report

Wednesday 5th February to Wednesday 12th 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



The delays in British ports caused by congestion and exacerbated by storms and poor weather are easing but remain a challenge for some suppliers delivering into the UK.

We are monitoring the situation but believe that this should return to normal very shortly.

Mushrooms



Storms in Ireland have caused damage to the growing tunnels, which has meant that the crops cannot be harvested.

While we have significant supply from other parts of Europe, which should mitigate most of the issues, there may be some isolated problems, particularly on portobello mushrooms

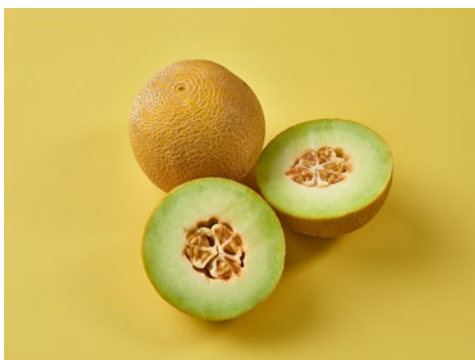
Strawberries



The aftereffects of gales and heavy rain from storms Garoé and Herminia are still affecting the Huelva region of Spain. This is causing major supply problems across the industry.

While we have been able to avoid the worst of the issues, short-term availability remains a concern, albeit we are taking action to minimise the impact on customers.

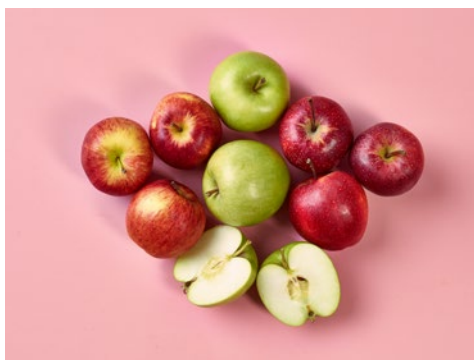
Melons



While there are no current shortages, we are coming towards the end of the Brazilian season and the market is tightening. Supply will shortly move to Central America, but heavy rains in the region's growing areas has affected the planting of melons. This is likely to lead to around a two-week delay to the new season at the end of February/ beginning of March.

The market will be exceptionally tight, and we are working closely with our suppliers to try to avoid any major availability issues. 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.

Apples

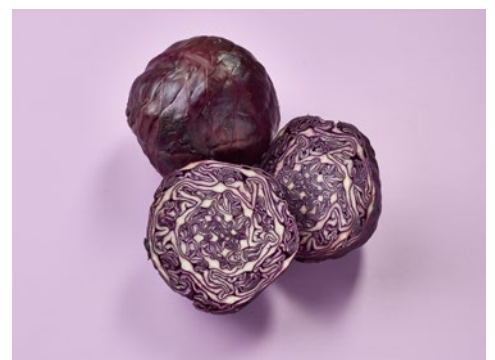


It has been a very difficult season for European growers, one of the worst of the past decade, with frosts in Spring 2024 impacting yields and leading to a very limited supply of small-sized fruit.

The market is tightening significantly, with particular problems on Granny Smith's, where we have introduced a concession to help maximise availability.

South African fruit will start to arrive in April, but we expect the transition between the northern and southern hemisphere seasons will be a challenging one.

Brassicas



We are continuing to manage availability well in a challenging period for brassica growers.

The cold weather in the UK has slowed the growth of some crops and we have a concession in place for cauliflower to allow for a lower weight.

We have also seen the wet weather affecting the quality of some crops, for example Spring Greens. To date, we have managed to maintain supply despite these challenges.

There is further cold weather forecast for the UK, which is a concern, and we will be watching this closely over the coming weeks. However, we are receiving good volumes from Spain, which is helping to supplement the British crop as we planned.

We are continuing to monitor cabbage, which is now coming from stored produce. With both red and white varieties there are some concerns about end of season availability, which has been caused by increased exports following 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 also 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.

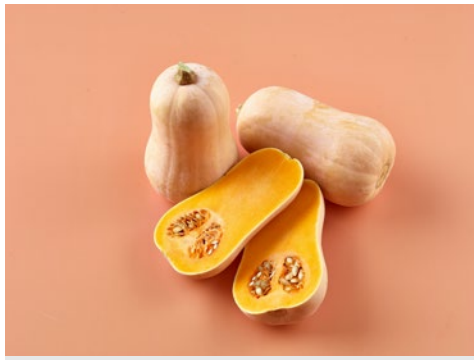
Lettuce



The weather in Spain continues to improve, which is helping the availability of lettuce.

There are still some potential issues with tip burn, which is caused by high winds. However, with the better growing climate, both quality and availability should return to normal shortly.

Butternut Squash



We are about to start the transition from Europe to South Africa. However, the end of season quality is not as high as we would like, so we have introduced additional checks to try to minimise quality issues.

Sweet Potato



We have seen some quality issues, which were caused by delays to shipping meaning that contingency stock needed to be used. Fresh produce has now arrived from Egypt, which should ensure that any short-term problems are addressed.

In the next month or two, we will be moving to American produce. Growers there are reporting that yields are likely to be significantly down. We are maintaining a close watching brief and will work with suppliers to take action to mitigate any potential issues.

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.

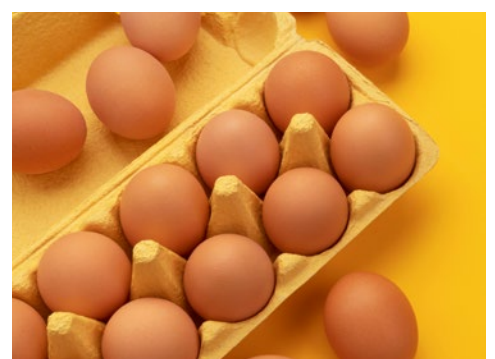
Peppers



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. It is already beginning to affect quality in small amounts, but we expect this to increase significantly over the next month, which will require concessions to maintain availability.

Eggs



There are now Avian Influenza Protection Zones across Great Britain and Northern Ireland following the increase in the number of outbreaks of bird flu in commercial poultry. This includes Housing Orders in several areas in the UK.

There have been outbreaks on several egg premises, including the largest outbreak to date on a barn unit. This is expected to add pressure on market supply, particularly in foodservice.