

Crop Report

Wednesday 27th August to Wednesday 3rd September

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.

Dry weather impact on crops



As the dry, humid conditions continue, the impact on crops is also rising.

The UK has experienced the driest six-month period since the summer of 1976 and there are large portions of the country officially in drought conditions or being severely impacted by the ongoing dry weather.

As many growers have had water licences curtailed or stopped, irrigation of the crop is also increasingly problematic.

As well as the impact on the crops themselves, there are other, broader problems, including pests, such as aphids and mites. Hot and humid conditions are particularly good for pests and with an extended period without rain, which physically removes the insect from the plant, they are more likely to remain a problem.

Potatoes



Overall, new season supply appears to have stabilised after three years of falling volumes and market shortages. While it will be around October or November before the full picture becomes known, the early signs are promising.

However, the recent hot and dry weather is causing some concerns with reports in the media of significant issues with potatoes, particularly in the east of England.

As we source from a number of locations across the country, we are currently able to balance supply and demand well. There may, however, be some issues with larger sized potatoes later in the season, as the dry weather is likely to have curtailed the crop's growth.

Lemons



There will be availability challenges in the coming weeks, caused by poor growing conditions and flooding across South Africa in May and June, which has had an impact on the end of season crop.

With a premature finish to the season predicted, around three weeks earlier than normal, there will be some challenging weeks as we transition to the Spanish season.

Currently, we have a concession in place to allow a slightly smaller size for large lemons, but there are no immediate supply issues.

The Spanish season is also expected to be difficult, with growers predicting lower yields.

Cauliflower



There are shortages of cauliflower not only in the UK, but also across Europe, with the hot weather causing several problems, particularly with the density and weight of the heads. There is also significantly increased pest activity.

While the weather forecast is more conducive to growing conditions over the coming week, it will be some time before availability improves, especially as new crops were planted in heatwave conditions. This will mean that managing availability over the coming weeks will be challenging.

There is currently a concession in place for head weight to try to maximise availability while the market is so short of product.

Broccoli

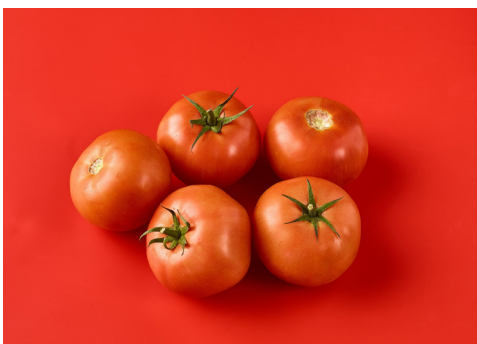


There are widespread shortages of broccoli caused by the hot weather. The crop that is being harvested is lower in weight as it struggles to grow, with product shortages, some quality issues and difficulties with sizing all impacting the produce. Some growers are reporting around half the normal yield, as they struggle in drought conditions.

Pre-packed product is particularly badly affected, as it relies on higher weights. While loose broccoli is also struggling, it has slightly better availability as the weight requirement is not as strict.

The market is expected to remain difficult in the short-term, but this week's forecast rain should help to improve the situation.

Tomatoes



Production has fallen after a period of good supply across the summer, which has been accompanied by significant increased demand. As we approach the end of season cross-over, which is generally challenging at this time of year, we expect to see more issues with availability before we get into the winter season.

Cucumbers



There are some size issues with cucumbers following very high temperatures in Spain. This has led to shortages of some of the largest-sized produce. A size concession remains in place to help the market recover, but we expect that to happen quickly due to the fast-growing nature of cucumbers.

Nectarines and Peaches



We expect supply of this popular seasonal line to come to an end next week. It is a little earlier than normal due to the extremely hot weather in Spain and Italy. Watch out for more of these fantastic products next year.

Cabbage



Both red and white cabbage are suffering from reduced volumes, with the lack of water and heat leading to an estimated reduction of between 30 and 50% in yield. The conditions are also causing some quality issues, for example a significant level of edema, which means that more leaves need to be cleared away to reach acceptable quality. A concession is in place for reduced head weight to help availability.

In addition, there are some ongoing problems with pests, which are more persistent than usual due to the lack of rain.

Spring greens also have a concession in place, for hearting and limited dark, external leaves.

Lettuce



Like many other categories, we are also seeing an increase in aphids on lettuce, due to the warm weather and the lack of rain.

With cooler and wetter weather forecast for the coming week, this should help alleviate, albeit not entirely eliminate, the problem.

Tenderstem® Broccoli



While water shortages continue to create challenges for growers, the market has stabilised and volumes are recovering.

We do not expect any more shortages, although some growers, particularly those most affected by water shortages, are utilising imported produce to cover any shortfall in the UK crop.