

# Crop Report

Wednesday 26th March to Wednesday 2nd 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



We are approaching the most challenging point of the season, April and May, as we begin the 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, something which will be exacerbated by an early finish to the Israeli season and a late start to the South African season.

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

## Brassicas



While the recent concession on cauliflower has ended, we are maintaining a close watching brief as size remains a challenge.

We have added a concession on savoy cabbage as it continues to struggle to meet the required weight, due to the challenging growing conditions last year, in particular low light levels.

Cavolo Nero remains difficult as it recovers from its recent availability and quality issues, coupled with increased demand.

Broccoli, sweetheart cabbage and Spanish cauliflower were all impacted by the heavy rains, which has affected market availability, but we do not expect this to have a major impact on our availability.

Kale, spring greens and other cabbage all remain in good availability and quality.

## 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 from April.

## Apples



There will be challenges with the availability of apples over the next few weeks, as we approach the end of the European season. This has been caused by early season frosts leading to one of the worst harvests on record.

We expect to see the first of the Southern Hemisphere red apples in around three to four weeks, followed by Granny Smith's and other green varieties in six or seven weeks.

## Berries



Our procurement team has been working hard to manage a very limited supply of berries, including identifying additional suppliers and stock management.

The root cause of the problems has been cooler temperatures, resulting in issues with ripening, particularly with strawberries and raspberries. While there has been some improvement in strawberry availability this week, raspberries and blackberries remain a challenge.

We are also working with suppliers to try to manage some of the issues that the poor weather has had on quality.

## Lettuce



Demand for lettuce is high, partly as a result of the good weather that we are experiencing. At the same time, we are continuing to see significant issues with supply, which has been caused by the poor weather conditions in Spain over the past few weeks.

The storms caused widespread crop damage and are continuing to impact quality, for example, with mud getting into the product and pinking due to the amount of water present.

We are maintaining a number of concessions to try to maximise lettuce availability, and we are hopeful that the improvement in the Spanish weather will help to progress the harvest.

## Melons



We have now fully transitioned to the Central American season and things are beginning to return to normal. However, we have introduced a couple of concessions for the next few weeks on watermelon and honeydew melon to help support availability in the early part of the season.

We are monitoring honeydew melons as availability on this line is likely to become more challenging as the season progresses, with growers reporting a larger than expected level of outgrades.

## 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.

## Potatoes



Availability is currently satisfactory, but 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 or May.

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

## Lemons



With an improvement in the Spanish weather, there are no further issues with the harvesting of lemons.

However, concerns remain over the quality of the crop, which has been affected by high levels of humidity and the wet weather. As there are around six weeks left of the Spanish season, we will be working with suppliers to try to minimise the impact on customers, but it is likely to remain a problem until we transition to South Africa.

## Sweet Potato



We continue to work with suppliers to mitigate some of the anticipated problems that the poor American harvest is expected to cause, including looking at additional origins to cover the shortages. This is the result of poor weather during the growing period, and US growers are expecting a shortfall of around 30%, which will affect the market from May onwards.

## Tomatoes



Tomato availability remains very challenging because of the weather conditions in Spain. We have put a range of concessions in place to try to aid availability, which is helping to stabilise supply during a tough period.

However, the situation will remain difficult for the next few weeks while growers recover from the storms that had a devastating impact on many Spanish regions.

## Eggs



Eggs remain in short supply across the market, as avian flu continues to impact availability, coupled with increased demand.

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