

Crop Report

Wednesday 19th February to Wednesday 26th 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.

Apples



The European season is nearing its end, and it has been one of the worst on record, primarily due to early season frosts. As a result, there is a limited supply of small-sized fruit, which is heavily used in the foodservice sector. Granny Smith apples are currently the most affected variety, and we have introduced concessions to help with availability. However, this issue may extend to other varieties as the season draws to a close. The South African season will begin in April, at which point we expect conditions to improve, but the transition between the northern and southern hemisphere seasons will remain challenging.

Brassicas



The cold weather experienced in recent weeks has slowed the growth of some crops, and we are beginning to require concessions to help with availability of certain products. With more cold temperatures forecasted for the UK in the coming weeks, there may be further impacts on the harvest. Weight concessions remain in place for Cauliflower, Savoy and Cavolo Nero. The latter continues to be impacted by white fly market-wide, impacting quality. This is forecast to remain a challenge for the next couple of weeks and our technical teams will continue to monitor this situation closely. Other brassica varieties, such as broccoli, sweetheart cabbage, kale, and cabbage, are currently widely available. However, we continue to monitor cabbage supplies closely, as there are concerns that stored products may become scarcer towards the end of the season due to poor European harvests.

Sweet potato



Supply of sweet potato is typically sourced from the USA from March to July, before returning to Egyptian supply in August. North Carolina is the primary growing state supplying the UK and Europe. During North Carolina's growing season (July to October), the crop faced heavy rainfall followed by a drought in August, resulting in significant dry and wet rot. This was compounded by Hurricane Helene in September 2024, which destroyed much of the crop. Initially, the US estimated a 50% yield reduction, but this has now been revised to a 30-40% shortfall. Current availability remains strong although this is forecasted to become a challenge in 6 weeks as the transition to US supply takes place.

Melons



The seasonal transition between Brazil and Central America is imminent. Central America is experiencing a period of heavy rain during a key growing period and as such, we forecast this will cause a tightening of availability during the transitional period between late February and early March. Size concessions are expected, and volumes are forecast to be reduced. We continue to work closely with our suppliers and will extend the Brazilian season if viable. We will also closely monitor produce quality into our supply chain during this transitional phase.

Peppers



Supply of Spanish peppers are currently experiencing signs of Thrips virus. Thrips primarily affects the aesthetic appeal of peppers and, in severe cases, can reduce shelf life and quality. The most significant effects will be on less widely grown colours, such as yellow. We are already seeing some minor quality impacts, and as the season progresses, we anticipate the need for concessions to maintain availability. Whilst we are not expecting this to be a significant issue over the next 2 weeks, we are exploring options to mitigate challenges and manage the situation over the coming months.

Tomatoes



We are observing some backward colouring (orangery red) affecting round tomatoes from Morocco and the Canary Islands. The cooler temperatures, combined with the longer travel distances, have made it more challenging to ensure the tomatoes colour properly during transit to the UK. Spanish supply is colouring nicely. Ramadan is expected to commence on the evening of 28th February lasting for the month of March. This typically tightens market availability, although we remain well positioned with diversity in our supply chain that isn't over reliant on a single geography.

Butternut Squash



We are currently in a transition period between European to South African supply which is expected to conclude mid-March. There are currently no availability issues although slight minor scarring on product but isn't impacting quality and extra quality checks remain in place.

Strawberries



Adverse weather in Spain, with heavy rain and low temperatures, continues to cause challenges to the colouring of strawberries and we are expecting minor shortages into our supply chain. Despite this, we remain in close contact with our berry suppliers, Driscoll's who are supporting us to maximise availability. Concessions currently in place for coloration are forecast to end this week.

Eggs



Last week, four new cases of Avian Influenza were reported in the UK, prompting tighter restrictions in certain areas. To help control the spread, mandatory housing orders have been implemented in parts of the UK. As of Monday this week, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have also enforced mandatory housing measures. We source from a diverse range of British farms to maintain a steady supply during challenges and continue to closely monitor any supply restrictions.