

Crop Report

Wednesday 23rd September to Wednesday 30th 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.

Tomatoes



The market continues to edge forward as growing conditions improve, but we are now moving into the final phase of the season, which is typically one of the most challenging periods for the category.

Not all lines are seeing the same level of recovery. Plum, beef and cherry tomatoes remain under pressure, largely due to ongoing issues in Morocco, a key origin for these varieties. Normally Spain and the Netherlands would help to bolster supply, but both are experiencing their own shortages, limiting the ability to top up volumes.

A more meaningful improvement is unlikely until the winter crop comes through from mid October, when new season production should begin to ease the strain across the category.

Brassicas



Growing conditions have improved over the past couple of weeks, but the category is still contending with several persistent challenges.

Pest pressure continues to rise, particularly whitefly, which is being fuelled by the warmer weather. The lack of rainfall is making control more difficult and is adding further strain to crops already under pressure. This is particularly affecting spring greens, kale and cavolo nero, and customers are reminded that these products should be washed before use.

Cooler night time temperatures are now slowing growth, which is creating additional difficulty for a category where availability is already curtailed. This is likely to remain a limiting factor as we move deeper into autumn.

Cabbage, especially red cabbage, remains the most constrained line. Concessions are in place to support availability, and seasonal cabbage varieties continue to experience intermittent pressure as conditions fluctuate.

Peppers



Dutch production is still feeling the effects of earlier poor growing conditions, and supply remains tight across the category. Red and green peppers are coping reasonably well under the pressure, but yellow continues to be the most difficult line, with growers unable to bring volumes up to where they need to be. Fruit is trending towards smaller sizing, and growers are continuing to lean on earlier colour picks to keep product moving and protect shelf life.

Quality strain is still evident, although Class 2 fruit is proving more robust and is helping to underpin overall availability while Class 1 remains limited.

As we move through the remainder of the season, conditions are expected to stay challenging and potentially worsen as it moves from summer to winter supply at the end of October/beginning of November. Sizing is likely to remain under pressure, and both quality and availability will continue to require close management.

Focus on....Large Pears



Large pears are coming into peak season - sweet and aromatic, with a delicate flavour that develops as they ripen.

Try our chefs' elegant serving suggestion for Earl Grey-poached pear, served with yoghurt sorbet, hazelnut caramel, lemon tuile, Earl Grey syrup, micro lemon balm and lemon zest.

Courgettes



Availability continues to improve as the transition from UK to Spanish supply progresses. The season is still bedding in, so the next couple of weeks may bring some short term fluctuations, but no major issues are expected at this stage.

Once Spanish production is fully established, conditions should settle and the market is likely to move into a more stable rhythm.

Cucumber



Spanish volumes continue to build as growers move into their autumn crop rotation, which is helping to stabilise market conditions. Dutch supply remains steady, despite heading into the final part of its season, adding further support.

We are not anticipating any major issues at this stage, although the market remains fragile and will require close management as we move through the coming weeks.

Asparagus



Peru's growing environment remains unsettled, and El Niño is still influencing supply. Sea freight arrivals are the most affected, with longer transit times continuing to increase the risk of condition issues. Air freight is being used selectively to protect quality and keep programmes moving, but availability remains tight and is unlikely to improve meaningfully until growing conditions stabilise.

Melons



The transition from Spanish to Brazilian supply continues to present some early season challenges. As Brazilian volumes build, fruit is running slightly larger than usual, and concessions will remain in place for the next couple of weeks or so to support availability while the season settles.

We are working closely with suppliers to minimise any impact on customers, including supplementing programmes with additional fruit from alternative origins to maintain continuity of supply.

Onions



Summer growing conditions are now showing their full effect on this year's onion crop. Yields are expected to be down by around a quarter, and bulbs are materially smaller across the board. We are working closely with suppliers to manage the situation, and concessions may be required to support availability as the season progresses.

The overall outlook remains challenging, with reduced size profiles likely to be a consistent feature of this year's harvest.

Aubergines



Availability and quality are becoming increasingly strained as the season winds down. Crops are losing strength, and shorter shelf life alongside more visible quality challenges is expected over the coming weeks. Suppliers are working closely with us to manage continuity, but conditions are likely to stay difficult until new season production comes through.

Berries



Colder evenings are beginning to slow raspberry growth, signalling that the UK season is entering its final stretch. Even so, the warmer late summer temperatures are helping to maintain momentum in the category as we move towards the seasonal close.

Blueberries will be the first to step away from UK supply at the end of the month, with the remaining berry lines following in sequence. Blackberries will be the last to transition, completing the shift as October concludes.

Mushrooms



The mushroom category has faced summer long challenges with compost, which is stored outdoors and has been difficult to bring down to the required temperatures. While the hot weather has softened demand and allowed suppliers to manage volumes relatively well, pockets of pressure continue to surface.

This week has seen an issue with flat mushrooms, where tighter availability has required a short concession to support continuity of supply. Overall conditions remain manageable, but the category is still navigating the tail end effects of prolonged heat.

Lettuce



Growing conditions remain difficult, with limited water making it hard for crops to gain weight and reach full specification. To protect availability, we are working closely with suppliers and have introduced concessions on iceberg, driving continuity while fields remain under pressure. The challenging conditions are also likely to bring forward the transition to Spain, and planning is already underway with growers to make that shift as smooth as possible.

Aphid pressure has increased significantly in several parts of the country, creating further strain on supply. A major part of our programmes is grown in the northwest, where contamination levels are currently lower, and growers are managing the situation well through proactive field interventions. We are monitoring conditions closely and will update if the risk profile changes, but for now supply remains stable and under control.

Parsnip and carrots



Extreme summer heat has had a clear impact on root growth, with smaller sizing and more variable quality now feeding through into early season production. The drilling gaps caused by the heatwaves are also expected to create market wide pressure through October and November, when those missing plantings begin to show more visibly in supply.

Both categories are likely to remain challenging throughout the season, with tighter availability and more inconsistent sizing becoming increasingly common as the effects of the summer weather continue to unfold.

Potatoes



Water shortages during key growing periods are now showing more clearly in this season's crop, with larger baker grades carrying the greatest pressure. Sizing challenges are expected to persist throughout the season, particularly across baker 40s and 50s, where availability is likely to remain under sustained strain.

Although lifting is still underway, indications point to a season low issue, with smaller size profiles becoming the norm as crops continue to feel the impact of restricted water during development.