

Crop Report

Wednesday 24th September to Wednesday 1st October

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.

Lettuce



Pest problems continue to be an issue for UK growers, following the driest summer for almost 20 years.

While the hot summer and environmental restrictions curtailing the use of certain treatments are proving very challenging, growers continue to work hard to minimise the impact on customers. This includes stripping back leaves to remove the aphids and not cutting heads where contamination can be seen. They are also walking the fields to check the crop before harvesting and leaving any areas of severe infestation in the ground, reported to be to 50% in some areas. Both our growers and our own technical team are performing cut tests on all varieties and rejecting crops where they see a proliferation of aphids.

In addition, our suppliers have been importing stocks from Germany to support British growers.

Potatoes



We are expecting better overall availability following increased planting and lower demand over the hot summer. This appears to have stabilised the market after a couple of years of challenging conditions and market shortages.

However, due to the hot, dry spring and summer this year, we are seeing an increase in dry matter on potatoes, which is leading to more internal bruising. The dry weather is also likely to create some challenges for larger potatoes, especially the larger bakers, which could result in less availability further along the season.

It is unlikely that we will know the final outcome until after the full harvest in October and November.

Mushrooms



Overall yields remain low, following a period of high temperatures in Poland and Ireland. This is causing particular problems for catering mushrooms with both quality and availability impacted.

Growers are working hard to supply product and are delaying picking for as long as possible in order to fulfil orders. However, this is proving challenging as temperatures are not getting low enough, which is causing mould and leading to rejections.

While it is a particularly challenging time, we are managing availability well, helped by moving supply around our three growers to maximise available produce.

Cabbage



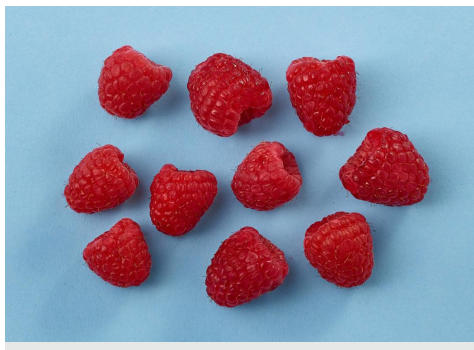
Concessions remain in place to support availability of both red and white cabbage, which are suffering from reduced volumes, with the earlier lack of water and heat affecting the main growing period and leading to a reduction in yield.

There are also some continuing quality issues, caused by insect damage and edema which means that more leaves need to be cleared away to reach acceptable quality, reducing head weight and yields.

There is also a weight concession in place for savoy cabbage, which is struggling to make its standard weight due to the growing conditions.

Spring greens also have a concession in place for hearting of the centre, with limited dark outer leaves.

Berries



Cooler nights with low temperatures are seeing berry numbers drop, with strawberries and raspberries seeing the greatest challenges.

While UK growers are importing significant numbers to meet demand, we have managed to remain fully British, despite the market-wide shortages. We expect to start the transition to Dutch produce in around two weeks' time, while we also expect the first arrivals of the Peruvian blueberries this week. We have put a concession in place for size on strawberries to help support availability in the meantime.

Broccoli



After a very challenging period, we are not expecting any further availability issues, although some concerns remain around larger sizes, which are in short supply.

The main problem is currently with pests, which are being found in large quantities on farms. We are working closely with growers and undertaking additional steps to try to minimise the impact on customers.

Lemons



Southern Hemisphere lemons are becoming increasingly challenging as the impact of the flooding early in the season has curtailed availability.

We continue to manage supply well in a difficult market, with only one concession required so far, which allows for a slightly smaller size for large lemons.

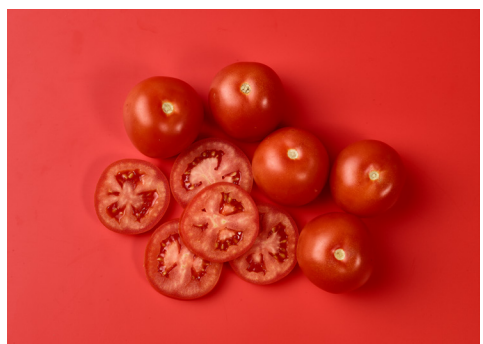
While we will be transitioning to Spain in November, we are expecting a poor harvest from that region, with growers reporting much lower yields.

British Basil



British basil has now finished for the season. It will return next summer, with the harvest expected in June.

Tomatoes



Beef and round tomatoes will continue to be challenging for the next few weeks, as we approach the end of season cross-over, moving from the Netherlands to Spain and Morocco. With the slowdown in production, growers are having to use more backward crop to meet demand. However, this is not unexpected as this seasonal changeover is generally one of the most difficult periods of the year for quality and availability.

Cauliflower



Supply of cauliflower is good, with no current availability issues. However, in common with other crops, pests remain an issue, and there is still a concession in place for insects, which are more prolific following the long and hot summer.

Nectarines and Peaches



It has been a difficult end to the season, but we have maintained good supply over the past couple of weeks. However, it is likely that nectarines will come to an end for the season this week, while peaches will finish towards the end of the month, quality-permitting.