Crop Report

October

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Welcome October

October brings a real change in the fresh produce calendar, as we move fully into autumn and see the last of the summer crops gradually come to an end. British brassicas, root vegetables, pumpkins, squash, leeks and parsnips are becoming more widely available, bringing plenty of seasonal variety for autumn menus.

The growing conditions throughout the summer have, however, left their mark on a number of crops. Prolonged periods of hot and dry weather, together with water shortages in some growing areas, have affected yields, sizing and quality. These effects are likely to continue to be seen across some lines as we move further into the autumn.





For some crops, the change in season should bring more favourable growing conditions, and we are hopeful that cooler temperatures and improved moisture levels will help crops recover. At the same time, growers are continuing to manage the effects of the difficult summer and working hard to maintain consistent supply.

Despite the challenges, October brings plenty of excellent seasonal produce, with new season crops continuing to build and a good selection of British grown vegetables coming into their own. It is a great time of year to make the most of the quality, flavour and variety that autumn has to offer.

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Market Supply

Market conditions are beginning to improve as we move into October. The effects of the challenging summer are still being felt across some key lines, with reduced yields, smaller sizing and quality variation continuing to affect availability and pricing.

Broccoli and cauliflower have both improved considerably, with better availability and more consistent quality now coming through. However, farmers are still reporting very dry conditions in many growing areas, with the continued lack of rainfall putting pressure on crops and soil moisture levels.





Potatoes remain an area to watch. As reported previously, the hot and dry summer has affected sizing and quality, with smaller potatoes and increased damage seen in some crops.

Meanwhile, autumn production is building, bringing better availability of brassicas, root vegetables, leeks, squash and pumpkins. Overall, the outlook is becoming more positive, although the lack of rainfall remains a concern.

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Vegetables

Broccoli - Broccoli availability has improved considerably following the challenges experienced over the summer. Cooler conditions have helped crops recover, with better volumes and more consistent quality now coming through. As long as market supply allows, we will also be supporting our local farmer Mark, who is growing broccoli for us this year.

Cauliflowers - Cauliflower availability has improved considerably, with better volumes and more consistent quality as growing conditions become more favourable. We are now seeing good-quality British cauliflowers coming through, along with locally grown purple cauliflowers from Mark's farm, adding colour and variety to autumn dishes.





Cabbage Savoy - British Savoy cabbage supply is improving as cooler conditions help crops recover from the challenging summer. Our local farmer Mark is now bringing through some beautiful Savoy cabbage, with good quality and flavour. We'll continue to support his crop as local supply becomes available.

Tenderstem and Purple Sprouting Broccoli - Tenderstem is looking good, with strong quality and reliable availability. Purple sprouting broccoli is now coming into season, with the first British crops from local farmer Mark's farm. A great seasonal choice for autumn menus, with plenty of flavour and versatility.

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Potatoes - Potatoes remain challenging following the hot, dry summer. Baking potatoes are particularly affected, with sizing a real issue. Quality is also suffering due to the lack of rainfall during the summer, with some crops showing increased damage. Availability and pricing may remain changeable through the autumn and winter.

Cabbage and Kale - British cabbage and kale are coming into their own as cooler weather arrives. Quality and availability are improving, with plenty of seasonal choice for autumn and winter menus.

Cavolo Nero - During our last visit to Mark's farm, we spotted some beautiful Cavolo Nero growing just around the corner. It's now in stock, with fantastic quality and flavour. A great local British crop for autumn and winter menus.



Pumpkins and Squashes - English pumpkins and squashes are a real highlight this month, with plenty of choice for autumn menus. We'll be bringing different varieties into stock throughout October, including mixed squash boxes, Munchkin pumpkins and mixed gourds. If you're looking for something specific, please get in touch with our team and we'll do our best to source it for you.



Parsnips - British parsnips are now coming into season, with good quality and availability. A classic autumn and winter vegetable, perfect for roasts, soups and seasonal dishes.

Leeks - October is when British leeks really start to shine. With their mild, sweet flavour, they're a natural fit for warming autumn and winter dishes, from creamy soups and gratins to hearty sides.

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Courgette - The British courgette season is coming to an end, with Spanish crops now taking over. Good quality and availability are expected, making courgettes a reliable option for autumn menus as we move through the seasonal change.

Brussel Sprouts - The first British Brussels sprouts are now coming through, bringing the first taste of the winter season. Quality is looking good and prices remain stable, making them a great seasonal addition to autumn and winter menus.

Beetroot - Beetroot remains in good supply, with stable pricing and excellent quality. Red, golden and candy beetroot are all available, offering chefs great colour, flavour and versatility for autumn menus.



Aubergines - Aubergines remain in good supply, with good quality and stable pricing. A versatile ingredient for autumn menus, they work well roasted, grilled, baked or used in rich seasonal dishes.

Lettuce, Salad & Herbs

Peppers - British peppers are slowly coming to the end of their season. During October, supply will gradually switch to Dutch and Spanish peppers as the season changes. Quality remains good, with steady availability expected throughout the transition.



Tomatoes - Tomato supply is gradually improving, although plum, beef and cherry varieties remain under pressure due to shortages from key growing regions. A better improvement is expected from mid-October as new-season winter crops begin to come through.

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Spinach - After a challenging summer, British spinach is starting to pick up again. Cooler conditions are helping new growth, with supply improving as crops recover.

Iceberg and Cos Lettuce - British Iceberg and Cos lettuce are recovering after the summer heat affected growth and head weights. Availability should return to more normal levels, although some lighter heads may still be seen.

Mix Leaf Salad - British mixed leaf is settling into a more stable period after the summer heat. Growth is improving and supply is becoming more consistent, although some variation in leaf size may remain.





Herbs & Cresses - Herbs and cresses are currently in good supply, with no major issues to report. The hot summer did slow the development of some micro herbs, but growing times are now returning to normal.

Fruits

Strawberries - The British outdoor strawberry season is coming to an end, with quality and availability now declining. Glasshouse production is expected to begin in early to mid-October, although lower supply and higher growing costs are likely to push prices up. Dutch strawberries are expected to follow once the UK season finishes.

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Peaches and Nectarines - The European peach and nectarine season is coming to an end. It's nearly time to say goodbye to nectarines, while peaches should stick around a little longer, depending on quality. If they're on your menu, now's the time to make the most of them while they're still at their best.

Pears - British pear season is now well underway, with plenty of choice coming through. Quality is looking good, making this a great time to bring seasonal British pears onto autumn menus.

Blackberries - The British blackberry season is now coming to an end, with availability and quality beginning to decline. Imported berries are starting to take over, with supply expected to become more consistent as we move further into autumn.





Apples - It's peak time for UK apples, with the new-season crop coming through well. Crisp, flavour-packed varieties such as Gala, Cox and Russet are at their best, while Bramleys are in great supply for cooking. A great time to make the most of British apples while they're at their freshest.

Figs - The European fig season is now nearing its end, with availability becoming more limited as we move further into autumn. Quality can vary as the season closes, so it's a good time to make the most of them while they're still around.

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Milk & Dairy

UK milk supply is coming under increasing pressure following the long, hot and dry summer. Reduced grazing has led to greater reliance on purchased feed, increasing production costs for farmers and adding further pressure as we move into the autumn and winter months.

The dairy industry is working to support farmers and encourage increased milk production to help maintain supply. We have already been informed by our milk and dairy suppliers of upcoming price increases, reflecting the current pressures across the market.

We continue to work closely with our suppliers to maintain a reliable supply and ensure the quality and standards our customers expect.





Bread

Fresh bakery produce remains well supplied, with a good range of breads and bakery products available. However, the market is facing increasing cost pressures following a poor UK wheat harvest, with the long, hot and dry summer affecting domestic wheat production.

Alongside the pressure on wheat, bakeries continue to face higher costs across energy, labour, transport and production. We have already been informed by our bakery suppliers of upcoming price increases, so some changes to bakery pricing are expected over the coming months.

We will continue to work closely with our suppliers to maintain reliable supply, consistent quality and a good range of fresh bakery products for our customers.

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We remain positive about the outlook and will continue to monitor developments and provide updates in due course. Should you require any further information or clarification regarding this report, please do not hesitate to contact our team.



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email us: info@ab-fruits.com call us: 01234 262880