



FRESHVIEW
Foods Ltd

Crop report - December

Crop report - December

The latest updates on the marketplace to help plan menus, what to look forward to and what to avoid.

We have a few short term season products - Such as January King Cabbage(see buyers choice), fresh chestnuts and fresh cranberries will be available in December.

Potato

Weather and Harvesting Challenges

The 2024 harvest has been severely affected by two major storms — Agnes and Babet — which hit the UK in September and October. These storms brought heavy rainfall, resulting in waterlogged fields and disrupted harvesting operations. By mid-October, around 85% of seed potatoes had been lifted, but the remaining crops are at risk of rotting due to wet conditions. Growers in heavier soils, such as those in the Vale of York, have struggled significantly, with some fields still inaccessible at that time due to standing water

As a result, potato yields are lower than expected. The average yield for 2024 is estimated at 40 tonnes per hectare, which is lower than the five-year average of 44.2 tonnes per hectare

Area Planted and Production Decline

The area planted with potatoes in 2024 has seen a notable decline compared to previous years. In 2023, the total area planted was approximately 103,500 hectares, a 10-15% reduction compared to 2022. This reduction has been attributed to both economic pressures and adverse weather during the planting season. As a result, the total potato production for 2024 is expected to be around 4.14 million tonnes, which would make it one of the smallest UK potato crops in recent history.

Table 1: UK Potato Production (2019-2024)

Year	Area Planted (ha)	Average Yield (t/ha)	Total Production (million tonnes)
2019	118,000	45.5	5.37
2020	113,000	43.2	4.88
2021	108,500	44.6	4.84
2022	103,500	44.2	4.57
2023	103,500	44.0	4.54
2024 (est)	90,000 - 95,000	40.0	4.14

Conclusion

The 2024 UK potato harvest is one of the most challenging in recent years, with reduced yields, disrupted harvesting, and rising prices. The smaller planting area and ongoing weather volatility have created supply shortages that are driving up prices across the board. While imports are helping to fill the gap, domestic growers face significant pressures that could impact the industry's long-term stability. Going forward, farmers will need to carefully balance planting decisions with the realities of weather unpredictability, rising costs, and market demand.

Vegetables

Onions

Fusarium (This fungus infects onions and garlic at any growth stage through the wounds and scars at the base of the bulb. Initial symptoms include leaf curling, yellowing, and dieback. Red-brown discoloration and rot forms along the root-basal plate margin. When cut open, the bulb tissue will appear brown.) is really starting to show now from stores, a greater percentage being seen in brown onions than red onions. This is holding up movement of affected ambient stores and if not moved within the next fortnight will have to stay in store until after Christmas, contributing to further losses. Growers are expecting the average budgeted 'packed' yield to decrease significantly, from a target of c85% to an expectant yield of c70%.

As reported previously, the growing area across the UK and Europe is significantly greater than the last two growing seasons, so product is available and is expected to continue until well into mid 2025, this is clearly reflected in today's market value verses the previous two seasons.

Availability of the larger bulb sizes (80mm+) are now coming under some pressure, again, due to the growing season, this may require discussions of revisiting the sizing specs, for example from a 60mm/80mm current to a 55mm/75mm and a 80mm/100mm current to a 75mm+. One to watch.

Crop report - December

Savoy, spring cabbage and sprouts

Our Lancashire grower will see us through the majority of Winter on Savoy and spring cabbage. Quality is excellent and price remains steady.



Cauliflower

After the recent flush of UK Cauliflower this has slowed after the recent frosts, prices and availability will start to increase. There will be an increased reliance on French and Spanish cauliflower.

Broccoli

There is good availability of Spanish Broccoli and the UK is all but finished. Prices are travelling on a steady course, quality is excellent.

Hispi cabbage

We are now using Portuguese Hispi cabbage – prices are expectedly a little higher than the UK season.

Courgette

Spanish courgette is coming through with good quality and availability. After the shortened UK season with its higher prices.

Leeks

Prices are stable and in good supply. Quality is very good.

Carrots

UK Carrot is in good supply, prices remain stable.

Parsnips

UK Parsnip is in good supply and prices remain stable.

Red and White cabbage

This is all mostly in cold store now, quality remains good and prices steady.

Fruit



Italian blood oranges

The three most common types of blood oranges are the Tarocco (native to Italy), the Sanguinello (native to Spain), and the very dark Moro (native to Italy), the newest variety of the three.

The skin can be tougher and harder to peel than that of other oranges. Blood oranges have a unique flavour compared to other oranges, being distinctly raspberry-like in addition to the usual citrus notes.

The flesh develops its characteristic red colour when the fruit develops with low temperatures during the night.

Oranges/ easy peeler

Spanish oranges and easy peelers are now available and will run alongside South African fruit as its season finishes. The Valencia region is the largest growing area for oranges and the recent storms and flooding will have an effect on Spanish availability. This is one to watch, we may rely more on other regions like Murcia and Seville.



Seville oranges or Bitter orange, sour orange, bigarade orange, or marmalade orange

These will be available at the end of December. This is a short season and only lasts a few weeks. Further info below.

Crop report - December

This fruit is prized for making British orange marmalade, being higher in pectin than the sweet orange, and therefore giving a better set and a higher yield. Once a year, oranges of this variety are collected from trees in Seville, hence their name. The fruit is round in shape but slightly flattened and depressed at the ends and with a thick, slightly rough ring of uneven texture.

Forced Rhubarb

December we will see the first Forced Rhubarb - The cultivation method for forced rhubarb was developed in the early 1800s. The fields were fertilised with large quantities of horse manure and 'night soil' from the nearby urban areas and woollen waste from "mungo and shoddy" mills.



The rhubarb plants spend two years out in the fields without being harvested. While in the fields the plants store energy from the sun in their roots as carbohydrates. The roots are subjected to frost before being moved into sheds in November where they are kept in complete darkness. In the sheds the plants begin to grow in the warmth and the stored carbohydrate in the roots is transformed into glucose resulting in forced rhubarb's sour-sweet flavour.[8] The sheds are long low buildings which are heated; originally with coal, which was plentiful and relatively cheap in the area, but this has been replaced by diesel.

Forced rhubarb grown in the sheds is more tender than that grown outdoors in summer. Without daylight the rhubarb leaves are a green-yellow colour, and the stalks, measuring around 2 feet (61 cm), are crimson in colour with a smooth texture. Traditionally, the pickers pull the stalks in candlelight as any exposure to strong light will stop the growth. By the end of March the harvest is over and the root stock is totally exhausted and used for compost.

Blackberries

We will continue with Mexican and Guatemalan blackberries throughout December. It is now the very end of the Dutch/Belgian season with supplies ending at the start of December

Blueberries

We will continue with Peru / South Africa / Argentina throughout December. Then supplies from Chile will commence at the end of December

Raspberries

We anticipate good availability of raspberries from Morocco and Spain throughout the month of December.

Strawberries

The main supply for strawberries will be from Egypt, with fruit from Morocco starting in the middle of December. There will also be some small volumes of Dutch / Belgian fruit available although these are likely to be very high in price

Stone fruit

We have the new South African stone fruit season starting – Peach, Plum, Nectarine and Apricots. We have only had European plums available for the last 4 weeks.



Lemons

We started several weeks early on the Spanish Primofiori lemons, due to the weather in South Africa and we will continue until April before we switch to Spanish Vernas.

Melons

We are on Brazilian fruit and the quality and availability is good.

Crop report - December

Salads

UK heritage tomatoes

These have come to an end with products now arriving from France and Spain.

Round Tomatoes

After delays from Spain, due to the storms and flooding, we are back on track now. The Dutch tomato is at an end and Morocco and Spanish volumes will start to increase.

Lollo rosso, Oakleaf and Lollo Biondi

We are solely using Spanish lettuce now. The Rains have limited the volume, however the recent better weather will help over the coming weeks.

BUYERS CHOICE - THE JANUARY KING CABBAGE



The January King cabbage, also known as Langedijk or Dutch Winter cabbage, is a popular variety of cabbage that is known for its excellent winter hardiness. It is a biennial plant that belongs to the Brassica oleracea species, which also includes other cabbage varieties like red cabbage, savoy cabbage, and Brussels sprouts. One distinctive feature of the January King cabbage is its beautiful and unique appearance.

It forms a dense, round-shaped head with dark green outer leaves that are tinged with a deep purple or red colour. The inner leaves are a lighter green and have a crisp and crunchy texture. This cabbage variety is well-suited for cultivation during the winter months, hence its name. It has a strong tolerance to cold temperatures and can withstand frost and snow, making it a great choice for winter gardening.

The January King cabbage is typically sown in spring or early summer and can be harvested from late fall through winter, providing a fresh and nutritious vegetable during the colder months when other crops are scarce. In terms of taste, the January King cabbage has a mild and slightly sweet flavour, making it versatile for various culinary uses. It can be enjoyed raw in salads, coleslaws, or as a crunchy addition to sandwiches. It can also be cooked in stir-fries, soups, stews, or steamed as a side dish. The outer leaves can be used for wrapping other ingredients or for making cabbage rolls.

What does January King Cabbage taste like?

A January King cabbage has a unique and delightful taste. Its flavour can be described as sweet and mild, with a slight peppery kick. The leaves are tender and crisp, providing a refreshing crunch when eaten raw. When cooked, the cabbage develops a sweeter taste and a soft, buttery texture. The flavour is subtly nutty, with hints of earthiness. Overall, the taste of a January King cabbage is well balanced and enjoyable, making it a popular choice among cabbage lovers.