

The Grocer

Focus On Fresh Produce

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Publishing: 21 June 2025

Advertising deadline: 6 June 2025

Submissions deadline: 2 June 2025

Fresh produce sales are booming. Combined sales of fresh fruit, veg and salad items have surged by 8.1% to hit £14.5bn in the past year; unit sales are up by 3.6%. But there's an issue for UK growers. "Increased reliance on globally sourced products even for UK produced variants is prevalent due to price pressures and disruptions to the weather," says NIQ retailer services team leader Lisa Rees. "UK sourced 'in season' products are still a focus for retailers but supply difficulties and increased costs are a constant issue." So which UK-grown crops are affected most? Why? Can anything be done about this or do farmers simply need to change what crops they're growing? Where does this leave the retailers that have committed to source UK produce? And where's the UK sourcing its fresh fruit and veg from instead?

The market: This feature will explore the factors – including health and culinary trends, the rise of flexi/vegetarianism, the UPF debate, constriction and surfeit in supplies – that have driven changes in the kinds of fruit, veg and salad items Brits are buying. What's in strongest growth and decline? Why?

Retailers: We will be exploring in detail what different retailers are doing in terms of commitments to source 'in season' UK produce as part of their ESG pledges. With supplies of UK produce tightening and costs rising, are retailers having to water down their commitments?

Suppliers: We will be looking to speak with branded and own-label suppliers about the challenges and opportunities they see in the market. How is climate change affecting their ability to grow certain kinds of fresh produce? What are they doing to drive demand in different types of fruit, veg and salad items?

Innovation: The past year has seen plenty of innovation in bagged salads, fruit and veg. This feature will explore the latest trends and how this is playing out in terms of product innovation. We will profile four new products or ranges, ideally ones that have not appeared in The Grocer before. We need launch date, rsp, and a hi-res picture of each.