

French strawberry season gets off to late start

A lack of sufficient sunlight during the early part of the year delayed the start of the French strawberry season. Prices are currently strong, as early-season supplies are low, but they should come down as the season progresses.

“It's been two weeks since the season started, and the crop has been quite good,” said Maxime Laclaverie of Rougeline. “The size of fruit is big, and, for Rougeline, we expect to have more volume this season than we had the previous season.” He pointed to a lack of sunlight in January and February for not allowing plants to mature as quickly as they usually do. Those conditions caused a delay in picking of about 10 days, but Laclaverie doesn't expect that delay to affect the season in any significant way.

“Retailers are willing to pay good prices right now because the fruit offered is at a minimum,” said Laclaverie. “So the price is very good.” Aside from a few small shipments to Switzerland, all of Rougeline's production is sold domestically, so Laclaverie noted that they don't compete in other European countries with cheaper Spanish fruit. Laclaverie doesn't really see Spanish production as a threat on the French market but as a complementary offer. Consumers know the French varieties and the incredible taste they may offer them.

“Spanish strawberries don't have the same varieties as we do, they aren't of the same quality and the taste of the two berries is different,” claimed Laclaverie. “So even though Spanish strawberries are usually the cheapest available, competition from Spain doesn't bother us.”

Rougelines berries are available in a large selection of sizes and packaging. Depending on the variety and size, berries are packed in 250-gram, 400-gram, 500-gram, one-kilogram and two-kilogram punnets. Label, graphics and presentation also vary, resulting in 18 different packaging

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