

Vegetable growers warn of possible shortages in new year

British vegetable growers have been overheard warning of possible shortages in the new year, after this year's extreme weather conditions led to low yields. Growers of carrots, brassicas, onions, parsnips, potatoes and leeks have reported a drop in the size of the vegetables and yields after a year that has seen delays to planting because of freezing temperatures and an exceptionally wet April and a scorching summer that halted growing at best.

Leek Growers Association chairman Tim Casey said some growers were already reducing deliveries to customers in an attempt to give crops longer in the field, but growth was so slow that yields had reduced by 23%. "Leek growing and harvesting has never been easy, but we have never seen a year like this one, our leek crops have really struggled. Crops have not grown to size before the onset of winter, so customers should expect smaller and more variable leeks this winter. Smaller leeks and lower volumes are likely to result in shortages in the New Year."

He said normally the UK would expect to import a proportion of its leeks to make up for shortfalls, but similar conditions across Europe meant this was not an option this year.

A Lincolnshire parsnip grower said the extreme summer heat caused six weeks of growing time to be lost on the back of the wet spring that forced the delay of planting to May and the beginning of June instead of the usual April. "It's not going to be the big yields of past years. The parsnips are going to be small, and the yields will be smaller."

Dailyecho.co.uk however, also reported some good news. British pumpkin growers for Tesco have reported a bumper harvest after the hot summer meant less waste in the field, resulting in a better quality crop. The retailer is predicting sales of two million pumpkins this Halloween, a 5.4% increase on last year.