

- *Soup, Kids Pizza and Chilli con Carne should all be available for distribution by the end of May.*

Then we have a further update of the weather impact on UK production too. Despite this though, our local food sourcing team in the Midlands is confident that our food levels ahead of the summer mean we can support some more groups in the region. If there are any organisations who would like to increase memberships, or start receiving food orders on Thursdays/Fridays, we would be happy to work with them on this.

### UK Food Production – Surplus Impact

You may be aware from media reports that British farmers are flagging serious concerns about the impact that prolonged rain will have on UK harvests (Met Office figures show that England has recorded its highest-ever level of rain in the eighteen months to March since records began in 1836):

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/apr/16/uk-facing-food-shortages-and-price-rises-after-extreme-weather>

*'People should be in no doubt about the immense pressure UK farm businesses are under thanks to this unprecedented and constant rain. It's no exaggeration to say a crisis is building. While farmers are bearing the brunt of it now, consumers may well see the effects through the year as produce simply doesn't leave the farm gate,'* said National Farmers' Union vice-president Rachel Hallos last week.

Also, growers in Spain have been experiencing an exceptionally dry season and expect their supplies to end early. This could mean availability being stretched even more in May and June for products like broccoli and spinach.

### **What is FareShare UK doing?**

There are still 2.9 million tonnes at farm-gate in the UK according to the WWF so we're:

- Working through a 'hitlist' of new growers and packers to onboard with the help of retailers and other partners
- Deepening relationships with current partners with support from Regional Sourcing Officers. These existing, deeper relationships and new partnerships resulted in 21% produce volume growth in the financial year to March 2024
- We are raising awareness of FareShare ahead of UK harvest season through the media
- In addition to the Surplus with Purpose fund, which helps to make it cost-neutral for farmers to give us their surplus, we have ringfenced additional funding to allow us to *purchase* produce in emergencies
- We are running initiatives to make the most of surplus gluts - for example we froze surplus carrots as part of FLEX (FareShare Life Extension Project), enabling us to maintain availability when fresh supply was low
- The Coronation Food Project is generating more interest from our existing produce partners as an opportunity to deepen their relationship with us and provide even more surplus produce

**For background: the wider impact of weather on surplus produce**

**Harvest Yield:** Excessive rain or flooding can damage crops, leading to a lower yield. It can also delay planting, as it is now, which results in a later and potentially shorter harvest season depending on weather later in the year. Prolonged droughts can also result in lower yields if growers don't have enough water in reserves

**Seasonality:** Cold, wet weather in winter can lead to less surplus winter crops due to lower overall yields. However, a warm and sunny summer will result in more surplus as field and greenhouse crops flourish

**Consumer Demand:** During hot weather, there might be higher demand for fruits and salads, leading to less surplus of these items available for redistribution. Or, if there is a cold bank holiday weekend in the summer, we see less consumer demand for salads leading to more surplus

**Retailer specs:** When harvest yields are lower, retailers tend to widen specifications to ensure they can get food on the shelves. This can result in lower volumes of surplus.