

# Growers of fresh produce in Wales feeling the pressure of COVID-19

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Fruit and vegetable growers in Wales need support to help them deal with a dramatic increase in demand due to COVID-19, [a report says](#).

Dr. Hannah Pitt of Cardiff University worked on the research alongside experts at Food Sense, Food Foundation and Tyfu Cymru. A survey and a virtual summit were conducted with all edible horticulture producers in Wales to gauge how they are coping with the current challenges brought about by coronavirus.

Following the lockdown, many producers diverted from servicing catering outlets to providing home deliveries. Some say an initial spike in sales due to panic buying has continued with demand up a fifth on previous years.

The findings show many of them are experiencing staffing shortages as they adapt their working practices. These pressures are expected to increase as the season progresses.

Several businesses surveyed were optimistic that current patterns of consumption may endure, resulting in continued high demand for Welsh produce.

Based at the University's Sustainable Places Research Institute, Dr. Pitt said: "Growers in Wales have reacted quickly to ensure their supplies are still reaching households during this time. Nevertheless, it's clear COVID-19 is continuing to put a huge amount of pressure on them as they work under new conditions and with dwindling staff.

"This crisis has highlighted the strengths and weaknesses in our food supply chain. It's also demonstrating the value of local producers to consumers. There is a willingness and scope from growers to expand but to do this effectively they need [financial support](#) and guidance from Welsh Government. This investment would not only help their work to continue during this period of uncertainty. It could lead to longer-term expansion of a sector that has often been overlooked."

Almost 40 businesses took part in the research, ranging from small, family-run operations through to a large cooperative which supplies welsh supermarkets.

The report sets out a number key issues that need resolving in order to support horticultural producers, including the need for investment and capital support, the importance of enhancing skills and training and the value of consumer campaigns to promote local produce.

Improved cooperation between growers and across the supply chain would help enhance efficiency and enable expansion, say researchers. Monitoring consumption trends and recognising other ongoing barriers that prevent scaling up of production are also vital, they add.

Provided by Cardiff University

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