



By Tom Joyce

Thursday 9th April 2020, 10:01 GMT

Blue Whale ready for unexpected

In the wake of Covid-19, French apple giant Blue Whale is prepared for tough times ahead, as the possibility of labour issues approaches



Operations at French apple shipper Blue Whale are currently working at a higher capacity than normal, according to commercial export director Marc Peyres, although issues with labour are a concern for the months to come.

"Those working in the food industry in France are classed as essential workers so we have our packhouses running just as fast, with every attention given as usual to the hygiene and health of our staff," he said. "But we are worried for our growers, in terms of getting the required labour as June approaches. We just have to wait to see what happens and how long this lockdown lasts."

The market situation in

and around Europe remains fluid, he said, with sales and deliveries presently working fast. "We are slightly worried about the situation in Bangladesh, India and Africa," he added, "as the ports get to work following the lockdown, but hopefully within a few days things will settle down."

As for the Asian market, the company had already shipped most of its apple volumes prior to the lockdown. "We did have some small problems getting our containers into China in February, but that was only a minor headache," he explained. "One difficulty we have now when supplying markets is getting the required documents, since office staff aren't working as normal. But in the fruit sector we are used to having to deal with red tape and bureaucracy!"

In many ways, he conceded, the apple sector remains fortunate. "We are lucky that we supply a healthy product, packed full of vitamins, which isn't too expensive in light of the economic situation consumers are likely to find themselves in over the months to come," said Peyres. "Also, in the produce industry we are used to dealing with the unexpected, be it frosts or some other crisis. This is obviously an exceptional case, but this time all sectors are in the same boat. We are all in it together, so customers are quite understanding and flexible at this time."