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Wednesday 2nd June 2010, 8:25 GMT

Surge in South Korean fruit imports

A spell of unseasonably cold weather in South Korea has led to a jump in imported fruits according to the country's retailers.

Frosts and cold temperatures in South Korea have led to a spike in imports of fresh fruit on the back of a decreased supply of local produce.

"This year the trees froze to death," stonefruit farmer Baik Pal-gan told JoongAng Daily.

"Last year we were able to collect 7,000 boxes of peaches, but this year we will only get around one third of that.

"We will have to take out dead trees and plant new ones, but I just can't bring myself to do that," Mr Baik said.

Pear farmer Park Chul-ki echoed Mr Baik's sentiments, stating this year's crop will be a poor one.

"We will be lucky if we can collect 30 per cent of what we had last year," Mr Park said.

Korean retailer Lotte Mart expects this year's harvest of peaches, plums and pears to be around 30-40 per cent on last year, with an even poorer apple crop expected.

With locally grown produce at such low levels, retailers are turning to imported fruit to fill the gaps in supply.

According to retail industry figures, imported fruit usually makes up 35-40 per cent of all fruit sold in Korea in April. This year foreign fruit accounted for 48.1 per cent of the total sales at Lotte Mart throughout April, while at GS Supermarket it was 50.7 per cent.