



By Tom Joyce

Wednesday 26th June 2019, 15:10 GMT

Heat wave could hit sizes in France

In France, growers fear the current heat wave could affect fruit sizes, with stonefruit and apple growers on high alert



Dozens of schools have closed across France and national exams postponed as a blistering heat wave brings record June temperatures to many parts of Europe.

Around half of France has been placed on orange alert – the second highest heat alert – as the country braces for temperatures in excess of 40°C.

Such extreme temperatures present a threat to fruit across the country, including to peaches, nectarines and apricots, as well as to the new apple crop.

According to Raphaël Martinez, director of the AOP (association of producer organisations) for peaches and apricots, the heat has not been good for sizes.

“This season, we are seeing a higher proportion of size B fruit than usual,” he said. “This is due to the wind and cold that we experienced at the end of May, followed by this period of extreme heat. However, we should see the proportion of larger sizes increase in the next ten days.”

“Any extremes in nature have an effect on the fruit,” said Marc Rauffet of apple exporter Innatis, “including this June heat. It will have a limited impact as long as we have a normal July. Otherwise the situation is still manageable, with irrigation allowing us to fulfil the trees’ water needs. The fruit has a tendency to grow a little less large as the tree looks first to protect itself

before producing fruit. But the French apple harvest is so far looking good overall. Obviously conditions in July will be decisive.”

Didier Crabos, director of Cofruid’Oc, equally foresees no damage to the cooperative’s apples as a result of the heat wave. “We are irrigating, which can slow down the growth of the fruit a little, but already the fruit was looking rather large as a result of the favourable spring conditions,” he said. “Now it’s summer, so there is always a risk of some burn marks on the fruit. Thankfully, at this time of the season, the fruits are well protected by the leaves.”