By Fred Searle

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Tesco launches rail reefer service from Spain

Transfesa Logistics will transport fruit and veg from Valencia to UK as retailer looks to shift more of its distribution network from road to rail

Photo: Santosh Puthran

Tesco has started importing Spanish fruit and veg via an express rail service in a bid to reduce its reliance on road transport.

Towards the end of September, the retailer announced a supply partnership with Madrid-based Transfesa Logistica to bring produce from Valencia to Barking via a new express refrigerated service.

In September, Tesco launched a £5 million investment programme aimed at shifting a greater proportion of its distribution network from road to rail in a bid to reduce its carbon emissions.

In the first stage of the new partnership, Transfesa will transport 15 loads a week from the Almussafes rail terminal in Valencia to the Barking rail frieght terminal.

The Barking terminal is operated by DB Cargo, the group to which Transfesa Logistics belongs, and is a strategic location in the south east of the UK.

Transfesa said the new service will be reviewed weekly and monthly, and volumes may expand depending on the new supply link's performance.

Transfesa Logistics has established a new departure time of 8pm for the express service. This allows fresh produce to be picked and dispatched on the same day, helping to maximise freshness and quality.

In addition, permits have been requested to increase the weight of the cargo that can be transported. The ultimate goal is to improve transit times and provide ample loading times per unit, Transfesa said.

The logistics firm has a wealth of experience in delivering goods to the UK by train, and back in the 1970s and 1980s it transported around 750,000 tonnes of produce to the UK each year by rail.

According to Business Green, Tesco has also invested in 500 new rail boxes and two new stacking machines with a particular focus on moving more freight by rail in the north east of England.