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By Mike Knowles

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More bad weather hits Italian crops



Hailstones in Puglia (photo: Italiafruit News)

Tomatoes, asparagus and stonefruit all reported to have been badly affected by new wave of hailstorms

Bad weather in Italy over the past few days has left many of the country's fruit and vegetable growers reeling once again, with hailstorms in particular feared to have hit production in several regions.

Italiafruit News reported that parts of the southern region of Puglia – a key source of tomatoes, cherries, table grapes and various vegetables – were effectively “on a war footing” following sudden storms, violent hail and even tornadoes.

That appears to be especially true in Foggia and areas to the immediate north and east, as Giuseppe De Filippo, president of the Foggia branch of agricultural group Coldiretti explained.

“The effect on vegetables, on tomato plantlets that

have just been transplanted and on asparagus coming to the end of the harvest, has been disastrous,” he commented, adding that a full and immediate survey of the damage was essential.

The poor weather also reportedly struck other regions including Basilicata, Campania and Romagna, where large hailstones struck around Forlì and Cesena on the afternoon of Tuesday 22 May – raising concerns about the possible impact on apricots, cherries, strawberries, peaches and nectarines.

In Basilicata, a short, sharp hailstorm apparently scythed through an estimated 50-60 per cent of one grower's apricot crop in Nova Siri, near Metaponto.

Other producers were similarly unfortunate, lamenting the loss of 12 months' hard work in just two or three minutes.

The latest wave of unseasonable weather follows a particularly chilly episode in March, when the much-hyped Beast from the East left large parts of Italy under snow and ice.

De Filippo's colleague Marino Pilati noted: “We are very concerned about the effect of this extraordinary wave of bad weather, which evidently will have repercussions in the fields to add to the damages caused by the crazy weather in March.”