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By Ed Leahy

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Supermarkets import as brassica shortages bite

Heavy downpours in Lincolnshire last month have lowered broccoli yields by up to 50 per cent



UK retailers are having to import brassicas to make up for shortages following last month's record rain levels in Lincolnshire.

Broccoli yields are estimated to be around 50 per cent under in Lincolnshire, which suffered crippling downpours at the start of June, with a month's worth of rain falling in a single day.

Managing director of TH Clements Chris Gedney described the rain as the worst he had seen in 40 years of farming.

Workers in the field battled

to save crops from the deluge, and it was hoped that with the resumption of drier weather crops might recover. But the full extent of the damage is now being realised.

Chairman of the Brassica Growers Association, David Simmons, said: "Those floods have come home to roost and a lot of crops are beginning to die.

"The likes of broccoli and cauliflower are really struggling. The broccoli yields are 50 per cent under what they should be. On cauliflower it's 70-80 per cent under what they should be, with shortages on the high street; they are having to import produce.

"The root structures on the plants aren't strong enough. The plant just keels over and dies. There are quite a few losses. There's going to be problems for supply of broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage."

Simmons says supply of winter sprouts will also be hit later in the year. With UK yields down, retailers are resorting to imports to make up for the gap, but he notes that costs will inhibit them from fully stocking.

"Brassicas are short all over Europe from the hot weather they've had, and prices are very high."