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By Mike Knowles

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## Coronavirus creates volatile produce market

Demand for fresh fruit and veg becoming far more unpredictable in the wake of global health scare, says importer



Photo: Thai Star Foods

**F**resh produce buyers in the UK are having to contend with greater than usual market volatility when placing orders, as the ongoing coronavirus outbreak affects consumer demand.

That's according to Yorke Rodrigues of Thai Star Foods, an importer and wholesaler based in London and Sussex that specialises in fresh fruit and vegetables from across Asia.

"At the moment it's very much business as normal with just a few bumps and extra precautions along the way," Rodrigues told Fresh Produce Journal. "The emphasis is to keep strong for all our customers and we are still delivering all over the UK."

Rodrigues said his company was keeping a watchful eye on developments. "We do have contingency plans in place for the

future, whatever challenges might arise and will adjust business accordingly," he explained.

"The biggest challenge so far seems to be the variation in volume of orders," he continued. "Orders for us are up and down and a specific item volume can change dramatically every week."

"Given our order lead times with imported, pan-Asian exotic fruit and vegetables, it's a bit of a nightmare for big supermarkets or small restaurants to get their order levels right in the UK."

Requests for products regarded as essentials by many, especially in the foodservice and horeca sectors, had proven remarkably resilient, Rodrigues said.

"Overall demand for essential everyday exotic items such as lemongrass, morning

glory, banana leaf, turmeric, pandan leaf, yam bean, green papaya, mangosteen and so on is still high but varies weekly.

"Fresh calamansi lime and kaffir lime demand is probably at an all-time high in the UK," he added. "Indonesian produce such as red-flesh dragon fruit is also high in demand."

"You can still find a wide range of pan asian produce in Chinatown, London. I feel it's important we all stay strong but cautious in this uncertain time."

<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

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