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CRUNCH TIME FOR ENGLISH APPLES - CONSUMERS URGED TO CHOOSE THIS YEAR'S CROP ON TASTE RATHER THAN LOOKS

2012's main English apple crop is from today, ready for consumers to get their hands on but due to the adverse weather conditions the UK has faced during this year, shoppers may have to choose flavour over looks when shopping for their favourite varieties.

Apple growers, represented by English Apples & Pears Ltd, the growers' association, have been working with the supermarkets to ensure this year's crop – already three weeks late due to the weather– gets on shelf as quickly as possible to allow consumers time to tuck into the new seasons' best English apples.

The problem stems from the high rain fall throughout the summer combined with unseasonably cool temperatures. This reduced the crop and caused weather marking on the skins of some apples. Additionally, there has been some splitting on skins due to the high rainfall which has made that fruit un-saleable.

Besides the problems of splitting, the skin on some apples has been marked by hail and the effects of high winds, leaving some of the crop less attractive to shoppers.



'Split' English Worcester 2012



'Perfect' English Worcester 2012

However, in order to maximise the availability of English apples whilst ensuring the fruit will satisfy shoppers, the major supermarkets have decided to relax their rules on appearance this year in order to meet as much of the ever-increasing demand as possible.

The crop itself, approximately 70 000 tonnes, is around 25% lower than in 2011 but there will be adequate supplies from now until at least the end of the year.

Although the skin blemishes have absolutely no effect on the taste of the apples, faced with this unprecedented situation, the apple industry has decided to launch an advertising campaign called '**Still tastes great**'. The aim is to ensure consumers are aware that despite appearances English apples this season will provide the great taste and flavour for which they are famed.

Adrian Barlow, Chief Executive of English Apples and Pears Ltd said "The adverse weather conditions during 2012 have reduced the quantity of this years crop to the level of 2008. However, we know that ever-increasing numbers of shoppers want to be able to buy English apples and there will be good supplies of English Gala, Cox and other mid-season varieties in the shops from the end of September. Our new campaign 'Still tastes great' is asking consumers to overlook some weather marking which does not affect taste and go for flavour - which, as ever, is the best in the world."

English apples are available in shops from this week until the end of next spring (2013).

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For further information or interviews with Adrian Barlow please contact Alex Tunney on 07989 343271 or Alexandra.tunney@talktalk.net