

Quality and Seasonality – Key Factors in Brassica Prices

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To maximise profit, producers need to have good knowledge of the markets into which they sell. They need to know what buyers and consumers want, and when they want it. Awareness of market trends – both seasonal and longer term – is a great advantage in planning production.

With many vegetables, seasonality plays an important role in price trends throughout the year. Maximum profit will come from a first class crop hitting the market when prices are high.

Brassicas are one of the favourite crops for farmers in Wales to diversify into, so CALU has looked at the seasonal price trends for two popular brassica crops: Savoy cabbages and cauliflowers.

The prices Savoy cabbages fetch vary greatly through the course of the year. Highest prices are always achieved between May and September. This market is difficult to target with the more traditional varieties of Savoys, but newer varieties can crop from July. Catching the July and August trade can improve prices by around 10p per head. This might not sound like much, but multiplied across a hectare it could be worth about £2,000. A top quality crop in August can be worth more than twice as much as a second class crop sold in February.

The seasonal price trends for cauliflowers are less clear than those for Savoys, probably because of the wide range of varieties available that can provide crops almost year round. The worst time to be selling cauliflowers is November and April when crops tend to fetch the lowest prices.

Information from the major wholesale markets is readily available, and formed the basis of our analyses. However, there is also a wide range of other market outlets for producers and this should be borne in mind. For example, those selling through a middle-man might receive a lower than average price, and those selling at the farm gate could achieve premium prices.

To achieve the best price possible for a product, it is always important to take care with presentation. Crops need to be carefully packed, packaged and presented – a premium crop carelessly packed will not achieve its real value in the markets no matter what time of year it is.