

A strike at the port of Calais is seriously exacerbating the dangerous practice of migrants trying to get aboard haulier transport to cross the French border into Britain.

From the early hours of today (June 23), the port has closed due to industrial action, and as a consequence ferry services have been suspended and there have been heavy delays to surrounding road networks.



Port of Calais: Photo: Marek69, via Wikimedia Creative Commons

Gridlocked lorries have been easy targets for [growing numbers of migrants desperate to flee a camp just outside of Calais](#), and stowaways are forcing thousands of tons of fruit and vegetables to be destroyed because of contamination concerns.

Access to the Eurotunnel was blocked earlier and isolated incidences of fire and violent outbreaks have been reported in the international press as migrants take full advantage of the strike action.

One English importer and exporter of vegetables, salads and fruit, Moorhouse & Mohan, explained how the strike and port shutdown has led to holding back produce and cancelling orders.

"We had a couple of trucks which were meant to be going out on export to the Czech Republic and Slovakia and we have cancelled those loads because it's too dangerous to put them onto the trucks," Moorhouse & Mohan sales and marketing director Colin Galbraith told www.freshfruitportal.com.

"We are being affected by the strike inasmuch that trucks scheduled and due to arrive for our sales are not going to arrive. Those cargoes that we were going to start loading, particularly in Spain and the south of France, we are holding those orders at the moment.

"While it may not affect us instantly, if this is not resolved over the next four or five days it will affect our stock position on fresh. We have been watching events unfold on the news here in the office and things look very ill tempered and very dangerous, especially for drivers."

Moorhouse & Mohan was expecting to receive Spanish onions and French corn and has also postponed loads of brassicas and onions from leaving the U.K. and heading to Poland.

"We have postponed loads due to leave and we will review the situation; we need to know

whether it's safe for lorries to set off or not.

"We have had to cancel the export because some of our products are a little bit near to the end of the season so we can't hold them and had to agree with our customers to cancel.

"Anyone wanting to get into our vehicles would have to hack their way in because most of them are sealed and locked very heavily, although we have had incidences in the past and now we try to stop it."

Addressing contamination concerns

Speaking specifically about the migrant situation, Galbraith adds how the intense security of Moorhouse & Mohan transport means it's near-on impossible to get aboard.

"We are carrying food and we can't afford to deal with the contamination issues, because if we have a lorry with a corn cargo coming in from France for example, if someone breaks in and gets into that lorry, that's the end of that cargo.

"It then becomes an insurance job as the cargo is contaminated. To put it politely; we have no idea what they've done in there. In that case, the risk of contamination would be too high and we would have no option. Hence, we make sure the lorries are secure.

"The migrants getting aboard is not affecting us right now because we have taken care to take the necessary security precautions and are constantly advising our third-party hauliers to do the same. There are easier targets for migrants rather than one of our vehicles and I don't understand these hauliers with unlocked doors."

The U.K.'s Freight Transport Association (FTA) has also been watching today's events in Calais and has sent a statement to www.freshfruitportal.com.

"The closure of the port, coupled with delays on the Eurotunnel and the ongoing problem with migrants, has created a perfect storm," says FTA head of policy for the South East, Natalie Chapman.

"Lorry drivers and members of the public are sitting ducks and we are concerned for their safety and welfare.

"The French authorities need to do more. They are allowing migrants to swarm around vehicles waiting at the port. For those waiting in Calais, it's like a war zone."



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