



COMMERCIAL ROADMAP FOR LEBANESE FRESH POTATOES INTO THE UNITED KINGDOM

Market-entry guide for Lebanese exporters



Creating Export Opportunities by
MINISTRY OF ECONOMY & TRADE

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Important note: This roadmap is a practical exporter tool. Exporters should verify market access, buyer specifications, plant-health requirements and commercial terms before each shipment.

Commercial Roadmap for Lebanese Fresh Potatoes into the United Kingdom

Product description and classification

Fresh potatoes fall under **HS heading 0701**: potatoes, fresh or chilled. This roadmap focuses on **non-seed ware/table potatoes** rather than planting material. For Lebanese exporters, the priority is not a generic potato offer but a specific seasonal product that can fit a UK buyer programme.

The strongest first proposition is **early/new table potatoes** with attractive skin finish, consistent sizing and clear traceability. **Spunta** is commercially useful because it is known to UK potato buyers through Cypriot supply, but UK acceptance still depends on buyer specification, residue compliance and arrival quality.



The calendar indicates why Akkar early potatoes are the best starting point. Bekaa and Baalbek-EI Hermel can support later opportunities, but they should be treated as secondary or buyer-led programmes rather than a broad speculative season.



What you should prepare before approaching buyers

- Define the export offer: variety, harvest period, weekly volume and target channel.
- Focus first on Akkar early potatoes because this matches the Mediterranean window.
- Prepare information on variety, size, skin quality, residue control, traceability and packing.
- Do not produce for the UK market before written buyer specifications are confirmed.

Why this matters: UK buyers do not buy a generic potato offer. They buy a product that fits an existing programme.

Market opportunity

The UK is a large end-consumption and processing market with substantial domestic potato production. It should not be treated as a structurally short fresh-potato market. The practical opportunity for Lebanon is to supply **seasonal and specification gaps**, not to compete as a bulk commodity origin.

The user-supplied Trade Map analysis shows that UK HS 0701 imports moved from about **US\$61.8 million** in 2023 to **US\$117.6 million** in 2024, then back to about **US\$70.3 million** in 2025. This volatility confirms that imports can matter when supply conditions change, but they are not a guaranteed annual opening. Source: user-supplied analysis.

In 2025, the relevant competitor set included nearby European suppliers such as the Netherlands, France, Ireland and Belgium, plus Mediterranean suppliers such as Israel, Cyprus and Egypt. Lebanon belongs in the **Mediterranean seasonal group**, not the rapid European shortage-response group. Source: user-supplied analysis.

What this means for exporters

- Do not build the UK case on national shortage alone.
- Use the Akkar April–June window as the clearest commercial opening.
- Compare against Cyprus, Israel and Egypt rather than the average UK potato price.

- Treat Trade Map unit values as benchmarks, not live quotations.

Competitive position

Lebanon should compete on **timing, quality and flexibility** rather than price or scale. Cyprus, Israel and Egypt already have stronger UK relationships, while nearby European suppliers can react quickly when the UK needs short supply. Lebanon's opportunity is to be a **reliable additional Mediterranean origin** with buyer-approved specifications. [7][9]

What you should learn from competitors

- Do not rely on "Mediterranean origin" alone.
- Ask buyers where their Egyptian/Cypriot/Israeli programmes are least secure.
- Use quality proof, residue assurance and timing to support the offer.
- Avoid undifferentiated maincrop competition with the UK and nearby Europe.

Competitive position

How Lebanese potatoes compare in the UK market

Lebanese potatoes face competition from established suppliers in the UK market. Understanding rival strengths helps identify where Lebanon can best compete.




Origin	Main commercial advantage versus Lebanon	Lebanese response
 Cyprus	Established new-potato reputation; Spunta already bought by UK wholesalers; relatively short supply chain	Compete only with equal or better timing, finish and landed value; do not rely on "Mediterranean origin" alone. [9]
 Israel	Established UK sourcing relationships across salad, organic and retail-linked potatoes	Offer buyer-verified quality, residue assurance and a credible alternative-origin programme rather than generic commodity volume. [7]
 Egypt	Large Mediterranean potato exporter with existing GB plant-health protocol and well-developed UK buyer relationships	Lebanon needs both phytosanitary authorisation and operational discipline before it can compete. [20]
 France / Belgium / Netherlands	Speed, scale and established road logistics into Britain; can fill UK shortages rapidly	Avoid competing head-on in undifferentiated maincrop; focus on an earlier seasonal window. [9]
 Domestic UK crop	Very large local supply, established retailer programmes and low transport cost	Enter only where timing, shortage or variety creates a gap; 2025's larger crop shows the risk of relying on structural shortages. [14]



Commercial takeaway for Lebanon

Lebanon's competitive position should be based on **timing, quality and flexibility** rather than price or scale. Cyprus, Israel and Egypt already have established UK relationships and stronger market presence. Lebanon's opportunity is to offer a reliable Mediterranean alternative through early-season potatoes, buyer-approved specifications, consistent quality and an importer-led programme. [7][9]



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Sources: [7] Agri-Pop UK, [9] ePark, [14] UK Government Agriculture in the United Kingdom 2025, [20] Citra Plant Health Portal.

Pricing and landed-cost logic

Pricing should be built from a **full landed-cost stack**, not from farm price alone. Each offer should be benchmarked against comparable Mediterranean suppliers using the same variety, pack format, arrival week and commercial terms. Source: user-supplied analysis.

The landed-cost model should include: **farm/aggregation cost** + grading and packing + Lebanese inland transport + testing/certification + phytosanitary costs + reefer freight + insurance + UK border/inspection/handling + applicable customs treatment + **importer/packer margin**.



What you should do before quoting a buyer

- Confirm variety, pack format, arrival week, Incoterm and target channel.
- Request live freight, inspection and customs information for each programme.
- Verify any UK-Lebanon tariff-rate quota only after plant-health access is resolved.
- Avoid using annual import averages as a sales price.

Why this matters: Potato prices change by week, origin, variety, pack and buyer channel.

Market entry route

The first entry route should be **importer-led**. Direct supermarket access should come later, after one controlled pilot has proven specifications, quality, claims handling and delivery reliability. [23]

What you should do first

- Secure one specialist UK importer or potato packer before approaching supermarkets.
- Agree specifications, shipment timing, quality criteria and claims procedure.
- Test one controlled shipment and collect buyer feedback before scaling.
- Use refrigerated sea freight as the main commercial logistics option unless another route gives a clear advantage.

Why this matters: Specialist importers can manage UK requirements and place product into the right downstream channel.



For logistics, the first programme should be built around one confirmed route selected with the UK buyer. Obtain at least three current door-to-port or door-to-buyer quotations and compare total landed cost and schedule reliability, not only ocean freight. Source: user-supplied analysis.

Finding and qualifying buyers

The best lead list is **not a random directory**. Start with companies that publicly import potatoes from Mediterranean origins, then validate the right procurement or technical contact. **Agripeg** and **E. Park** are stronger first-wave leads than a generic supermarket list because their own websites show Mediterranean potato sourcing. [7][9]

Buyer type	Example	Exporter approach
Specialist importer/trader	Agripeg UK	First-wave contact; send crop calendar, varieties, certification status, volume and proposed UK window.
Importer/packer	E. Park & Sons	Lead with early potatoes/Spunta and ask which arrival weeks are hardest to cover.
Large national packer	Branston	Second-stage prospect after proof of access, quality and repeatability.
Wholesale bridge	Fruits of Lebanon, London	Use for market intelligence; confirm whether it currently handles fresh potatoes.

How you should build your buyer list

- Use association/member lists, trade fairs and company websites to identify active companies.

- Check import-origin evidence before assuming a company is relevant.
 - Use Companies House before granting credit or open-account terms.
 - Use LinkedIn to find procurement, buying, import, commercial, supply-chain or technical roles.
- Why this matters:** The right contact and basic due diligence are more valuable than a long unqualified list.

Buyer outreach and promotion

The promotional message should **solve a buyer problem**. Avoid generic claims such as “high-quality potatoes” unless you can prove them. A credible value proposition is:

“Traceable Lebanese early potatoes from controlled Akkar/Bekaa production, available in a defined Mediterranean supply window, packed to UK buyer specification, with documented plant-health and residue controls and flexible importer-led programmes.”

What your buyer presentation should show

- Lebanese origin story and Akkar/Bekaa production areas.
- Harvest calendar, varieties, exportable volume and certifications.
- Residue-control approach, packing options and logistics route.
- Evidence of pest-free-area experience without claiming GB authorisation.

Trade fairs should be used for **targeted meetings**, not general exposure. Fruit Attraction 2026 is useful for buyer development ahead of the 2027 crop, while FRUIT LOGISTICA 2027 is better timed for confirming spring programmes if market access has advanced. [36][37]

The exporter website should make the offer clear in under one minute: origin, harvest weeks, varieties, exportable tonnes by week, pack options, certifications, residue testing, traceability, packhouse images and a named export contact.

Doing business with UK buyers

UK potato buyers are likely to respond better to a **specific offer** than a long introductory story. State what is available, when, from which region, what volume can be supplied, which certifications are held and how the offer complements the buyer’s current Mediterranean programme. [7]

Practical working rules

- Do not overstate volume, size or quality capability.
- Send specifications before meetings and confirm decisions by email.
- Prepare certificates, residue reports, farm registration, spray records and traceability examples.
- Use safer payment structures for new buyers; do not grant long open-account terms too early.

Reliability should be treated as part of the product. A one-week delay can move the shipment into a different competitive situation as domestic or European potatoes become available. UK buyers therefore need prompt replies, realistic crop forecasts and early warning of yield, quality or shipping problems.

Risks and commercial gates

The UK opportunity remains **conditional**. Exporters should manage risk before shipment rather than trying to solve issues after arrival. The most important risks are plant-health access, buyer specification, residue/phytosanitary compliance, transit quality, payment security and freight volatility.

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Date: Sep-2026 Revision: 00 Prepared by: MoET

Key Risks and How to Manage Them

Practical steps for a safer and more successful UK market entry

Entering the UK market offers real opportunities for Lebanese potatoes, but there are important risks to manage. This table summarises the main commercial, regulatory and operational risks and the practical steps exporters, growers and authorities should take.



Risk		Commercial severity	What to do	
	GB plant-health prohibition remains in place	 Critical	- Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture/NPPO should pursue the technical access process with Defra/APHA. - Exporter associations and growers should provide production-area, pest-surveillance, traceability and treatment/testing information needed for a dossier. - Defra identifies NPPO technical dossiers as a route by which some prohibited trades are assessed.	
	Northern Ireland derogation expires	 Critical for any NI strategy	- Do not build a programme beyond 31 August 2026 unless the competent authorities confirm a renewed legal basis. - The current EU instrument expressly ends on that date.	
	Domestic UK crop is strong / price weakens	 High	- Do not contract a speculative annual volume. - Sell a defined arrival window against current Mediterranean parity. - UK output rose 8.5% in 2025 while early/maincrop producer prices fell 18%.	
	Egypt/Cyprus/Israel out-compete on established relationships	 High	- Find a gap rather than merely matching their season. - Target importers that already diversify origins and ask which weeks/varieties are least secure.	
	Residue or phytosanitary failure	 Critical	- Test commercial lots before shipment; maintain field-level spray records and lot traceability. - Work only with registered/controlled production blocks for an access programme. - Potatoes are included in GB's 2026 residue surveillance, while EU Lebanese access already requires pest-free areas and pre-export testing.	
	Quality deterioration in sea transit	 High	- Run a shelf-life/transit simulation before commercial launch. - Agree reefer protocol with buyer/carrier, and use the exact commercial pack in the test. - Mediterranean potatoes already move to UK buyers in temperature-controlled sea containers.	
	Wrong buyer specification	 High	- Never grade a container on an assumed UK specification. - Obtain signed size, defect, finish, dry matter, packaging and claims criteria before harvest/packing. - CBI recommends tailoring product to buyer requirements.	
	Buyer non-payment	 Medium-high	- Verify company status and filings on Companies House. - Take supplier references and restrict unsecured open-account terms until trust is established.	
	Freight or schedule volatility	 Medium-high	- Obtain several current reefer quotations, compare total landed cost and book only against a confirmed programme. - Update the preliminary Beirut-UK logistics assumptions immediately before contracting.	
	A more resilient export programme By understanding these risks and taking practical steps now, Lebanese exporters can build a more reliable, competitive and sustainable presence in the UK market.			
		 Safe trade	 Stronger markets	 Sustainable growth

Practical risk-control priorities

- Treat GB plant-health access as a national commercial project with Lebanese authorities and the NPPO.
- Build a registered grower group rather than relying on spot-market aggregation.
- Validate samples under realistic transit conditions before the first commercial container.
- Do not print UK-branded consumer packaging before a buyer programme exists.

Gate	Minimum condition	Decision if failed
Market access	Written confirmation that the specific Lebanese potatoes/origin/area may enter the UK territory	Stop shipment
Buyer	Named importer/packer, written specification, pack, arrival week, Incoterm and claims procedure	Do not ship speculatively
Production	Approved farm/field, variety, traceability and realistic weekly volume	Reduce or stop programme
Compliance	Required certification, residue test and phytosanitary documentation are cleared	Stop affected lot
Economics/credit	Landed cost, buyer status and payment terms are acceptable	Renegotiate or decline
Pilot	First load passes agreed arrival-quality review	Correct before scaling

3–6 month exporter action roadmap

Timing	Priority action	Output
Month 1	Build access file and buyer shortlist	Farm registration, traceability file, production-area data and priority UK importer/packer list.
Month 2	Validate specifications and sample requirements	Buyer-ready technical pack and shortlist of realistic pilot partners.
Months 3–6	Prepare controlled pilot programme	Importer/packer, volume, logistics, Incoterm, inspection criteria, claims procedure and landed-cost model.

Practical checklist before exporting

- GB market access is approved.
- Buyer specification is agreed in writing.
- Farm and packhouse traceability are ready.
- Residue and phytosanitary requirements are met.
- Reefer logistics and landed cost are confirmed.
- Payment terms are secure.
- The first shipment is treated as a controlled pilot.

Final message for exporters: **Do not start with volume. Start with proof.** A successful UK potato programme will be built by showing buyers that Lebanon can deliver the right product, at the right time, with the right controls.

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