



**@Rmarketgarden** Anyone want organic strawberries for processing? We have a glut! email [admin@riversidemarketgarden.co.uk](mailto:admin@riversidemarketgarden.co.uk) #toogoodtowaste.  
9 July

**@WillHillBet** 28,000 kg of strawberries, 7,000 litres of cream, 33/1 the caterers run out at #Wimbledon  
24 June

**@Nigella\_Lawson** Greengages are my favourite fruit: love their honeyed acidity  
14 July

**@farmvending** Scottish grown Pak Choi, yes really we have grown our own! Stir fry is the best way to cook them! #eatsscottish  
10 July

## Soundbite

Michel Roux Jr on the news that air raid tunnel farm Growing Underground is ready for business



“  
I'm looking forward to creating my first dish using produce from the world's first underground urban farm  
”

## Budget offers pros and cons

George Osborne's latest budget is a 'game of two halves' for fresh produce businesses, according to Stephen Beck of Kent law firm Whitehead Monkton.

Companies planning to buy machinery or make capital investments will welcome the news that the Annual Investment Allowance (AIA) will now be set at £200,000, when it was previously due to fall to just £25,000. "You can now start to plan your capital investment projects in the knowledge that so long as you can spread the costs over the next few years, significant tax savings can be achieved," said Beck.

On the flip side, the news that a compulsory minimum wage increase for anyone over 25 to £9ph, starting in April 2016, is likely to cause headaches for growers. "The National Insurance rebate is unlikely to go anywhere near compensating the farmer for the higher wage costs," added Beck. See p4 for full story.

## In the press

Salmond gets red-faced over tomato quality

Ex-Scottish first minister Alex Salmond has railed against the lack of good-quality tomatoes in his column for local paper *The Press and Journal*.

"Where on earth can you buy a decent tomato these days?" he lamented, before dismissing offerings from the Netherlands, Spain, Morocco and England as "totally tasteless".

"Italian on-the-vine ones are slightly better," he conceded, before surprising no one by claiming Scottish tomatoes are the best. "My advice? Buy Ayrshire and demand more Scottish growers," he concluded.



## VIEWPOINT

### Lauren Hakes

Technical director of management services firm Alomora Group



## Top tips for completing an audit and why one manager once ate a failed compliance form

I've been working in the industry for over 16 years and have been involved with audits ever since the beginning.

Over the years, I have found there are a few key things that can make the audit process easier and more successful.

While compliance is the key, the presentation of the site is vitally important: first impressions count. In several audits I have led, the auditors have commented that if they arrive to a clean, well-ordered site, they feel that they will not find much wrong elsewhere. Housekeeping details matter; it's a strong indication of how a site is managed in all its aspects.

It is vitally important for the site's record keeping to be accurate and comprehensive. During the audit, a traceability test will be carried out to ensure the site can trace the product from the grower to the customer's depot. Good record keeping is achieved through ensuring members of staff are thoroughly trained and records are continuously updated. They are 'live' documents. Blowing off the dust prior to an audit is hardly good practice and, anyway, audits are increasingly unannounced.

Having a good pest contractor helps. This is one area where I do not like to have any problems found during an audit. Pest contractors are employed for their specialist knowledge and the site should only have to carry out any recommendation raised during their routine visits. It may seem like a small part of the audit standard, but a poor pest contractor can cause a site several non-conformances.

Training is a critical part of compliance. This is not just about the auditor being satisfied that the member of staff in question has had their training documented but that staff are carrying out each task and are completely clear on the correct way of conducting it. The result of this is good practices, discipline and record keeping.

The great thing about being audited is that it supports confidence in systems, processes and procedures and any improvements.

Each auditor comes with insight into different approaches and this can provide you some really useful ideas about how to improve things even further. I always ensure I have a pad of paper and make lots of notes, which we go through as a team afterwards to see what fresh ideas we can use.

I believe that everyone wants to do a good job and wants to know when they have done well. There's no reason why an audit can't be pleasurable – to take pride in a job well done.

My trainer once told me that during one audit he found a problem with one of the compliance forms. Taken aback and clearly desperate not to fail, the manager being audited promptly ate the form in front of the auditor to destroy the evidence. Apocryphal? Possibly. But perhaps I could add 'humour' to 'pleasurable' in the auditor's vocabulary? **FPI**