

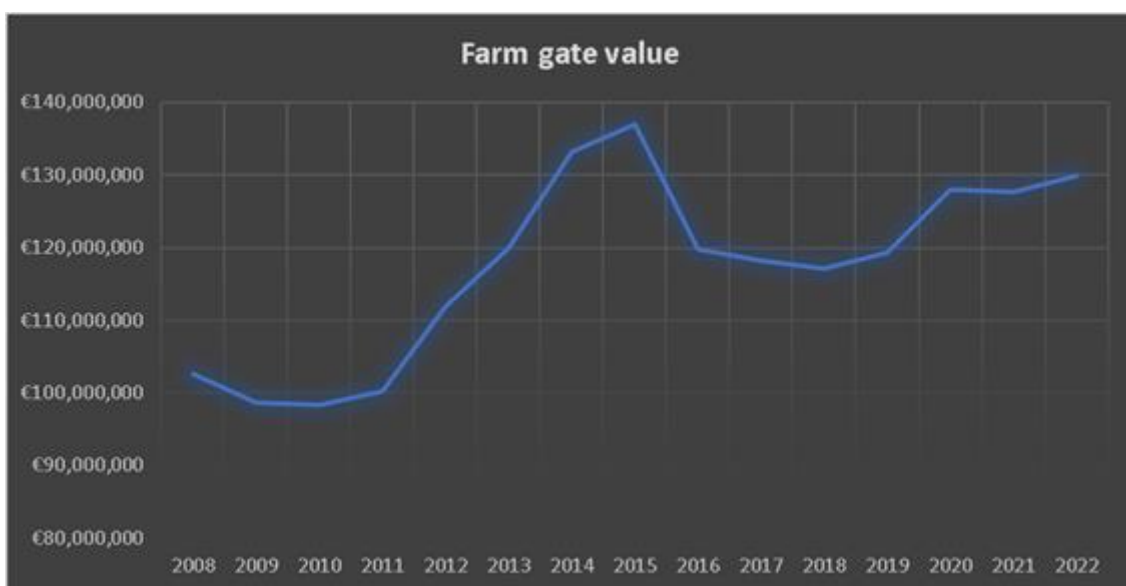
Irish Mushroom Industry Labour Survey

Executive summary

- Irish Mushroom Industry Farm Gate Value is €129.9 million.
- 85% of all mushrooms produced in Republic of Ireland is exported to the UK.
- Total Direct Employment in the Irish Mushroom Sector is 2,968.
- 96% of total employment is full time, 4% is part time.
- 2,009 people are working directly on mushroom farms - 77% employed in Harvesting, 15% employed in Operations, 8% employed in Management.
- 365 vacancies currently on Irish mushroom units – 81% of these vacancies are harvester positions, 13% of the vacancies are operational positions and 6% of the vacancies are in management positions.
- 514 new hires are required on mushroom farms over the next 12 months.

Introduction

The Irish mushroom industry is the largest horticultural sector in Ireland. It has a farm gate value of €129.9 million, of which approximately 85% is exported to the UK. The graph below illustrates the farm gate value trend since 2008 to 2022:

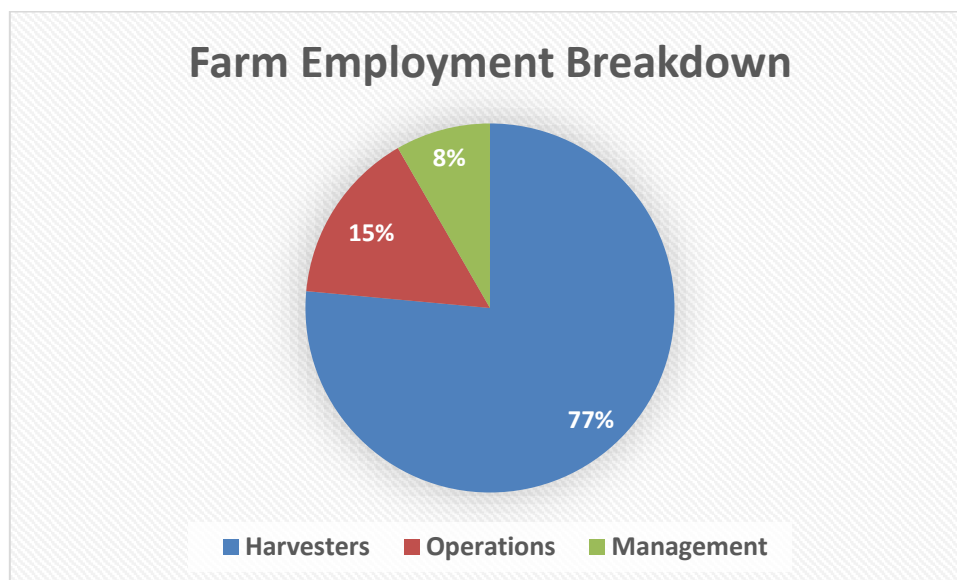


Teagasc recently conducted a survey to identify the total employment in the Irish mushroom sector. This survey highlights total employment on grower's production units, mushroom compost production facilities, packhouses, mushroom casing suppliers and all other companies supplying goods and services to the sector. A similar survey was previously conducted in February 2021. Since then, the Irish mushroom sector has benefited from the General Employment Permit scheme which was made available for the Horticulture industry.

Farm employment:

Labour is a very significant cost of production as all mushrooms produced in Ireland are handpicked. Labour is a key input in the mushroom sector and represents on average 42% of total input costs. As an input, it has increased by 10% during 2023 according to Teagasc horticulture crop input price inflation report 2023 (<https://www.teagasc.ie/publications/2023/horticulture-crop-input-price-inflation-2023.php>).

Mushroom farms are located in rural areas and generate employment in these remote locations. There are 32 mushroom units in Ireland employing 2,009 people. 2% of these people work part-time with the remaining 98% working full time. The chart below shows the breakdown of staff within mushroom farms:



It was identified that there are 365 vacancies on mushroom farms currently with 90% of these vacancies being harvester positions. The survey indicates that an estimated 514 new hires are required on mushroom farms over the next 12 months.

General Employment Permit:

The Irish mushroom sector benefited directly from the General Employment Permit scheme which was made available to the Irish Horticulture sector in October 2021. The Horticulture sector was allocated a quota for 1,000 horticultural operatives. In 2021, the mushroom sector in Ireland indicated that they required 1,195 new hires as the industry was struggling to attract new staff and retain existing employees. The General Employment Permit scheme was a life-line for the sector as up to 90% of the 1,000 permits allocated were taken up by the mushroom industry (source: personal communication).

Total Industry employment:

The mushroom sector provides a range of employment in areas such as compost production, packaging, mushroom casing, packing, transport/haulage, HR, administration and R&D. In addition to on-farm employment, an additional 959 jobs are directly employed in the Irish mushroom sector, leading to total employment in the Irish mushroom sector being 2,968.

Survey Methodology

The Mushroom Industry Labour Survey was conducted between 1st August 2023 and 14th August 2023. Donal Gernon (Teagasc Mushroom Advisor) carried out the survey by contacting each company. The relevant data was collected via an online survey, direct phone and email correspondence. Once all the data was compiled, the total employment figure was then generated and augmented and verified using Teagasc' direct knowledge of production facilities and operations.

Further information

For further information please contact
Donal Gernon, Mushroom Advisor at:
+353 (0)87-225 8647
Donal.gernon@teagasc.ie