

Press release

Publication of a new National Strategy for Horticulture 2023-2027

From [Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine \(/en/organisation/department-of-agriculture-food-and-the-marine/\)](#).

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Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue, together with his colleague Senator Pippa Hackett, Minister of State for Land Use and Biodiversity with special responsibility for Horticulture, launched a new National Strategy for Horticulture 2023-2027 at Bloom 2023.

The National Strategy for Horticulture 2023-2027 is a major milestone for the horticulture sector. The stakeholder led Strategy sets down a clear vision for the sector to grow a more profitable, value-added sector, driven by innovation and sustainability and provides a roadmap for the sector to achieve this potential.

The publication of the National Strategy for Horticulture 2023-2027 aligns with and delivers on a specific action in Food Vision 2030 by providing a road map for the horticulture industry to ensure the future economic, social and environmental sustainability of this crucial sector.

Minister McConalogue said:

“I fully support Ireland’s new National Strategy for Horticulture. It charts an important way forward for this crucial industry which many citizens depend on for their livelihoods and for access to fresh local quality produce. I recognise the challenges in relation to fairness and transparency in the supply chain and we must strengthen the position of growers in the marketplace. I want to see this sector grow and flourish in the years ahead and I am confident that it will with strong leadership and collaboration between the sector’s key players in implementing the actions in this Strategy.”

Minister Hackett said:

“I am delighted to launch this important Strategy for the sector and I thank everyone involved, in particular the Horticulture Industry Forum for their work to date. However, our work is not finished and to achieve our vision will require us to work smarter, leverage relevant science and technology, value our existing growers and businesses and encourage new entrants.”

Minister Hackett called on consumers at Bloom to:

“recognise and value the Irish Horticulture sector and to play their part by supporting fresh, locally grown produce and Irish trees and plants when it is available, be that in the supermarket, garden centre, your local grocer or on the menu in restaurants across Ireland.”

Eight key strategic actions have been identified in the Strategy as key to addressing the challenges and opportunities for the industry and implementation of these actions will drive change and growth across all the horticulture industry’s sub sectors.

The eight Key Strategic Actions in the Strategy are:

1. Strengthen the position of the grower in the marketplace
2. Develop a written charter between growers, consolidators and retailers, and increase consumer demand for local, in season, fresh, quality fruit, vegetables and plants

3. Establish the framework for a permanent non-EEA seasonal workers' scheme for the horticulture industry to ensure a reliable supply of skilled seasonal workers in the short to medium term while innovation and research into automation is intensified
4. Review horticulture course availability and suitability for a modern dynamic sector, enabling the educational platforms to attract talent that will drive the horticulture sector to realise its true potential
5. Research and Development for the industry
6. Better data and information for better insights
7. Integrate Horticulture back into the broader Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System
8. Support innovation and diversification

If all the actions in this Strategy are implemented, a 30% increase in farmgate value from €529 million in 2022 to €688 million by the end of 2027 is anticipated, generating more rural employment and thriving local communities.

Photo Caption: Ministers Charlie McConalogue, Senator Pippa Hackett and Martin Heydon at the publication of the Publication of a new National Strategy for Horticulture 2023-2027 at Bord Bia Bloom in the Phoenix Park.

Notes

The National Strategy for Horticulture 2023-2027 is the result of a multi criteria analysis of the actions identified in the KPMG report [Opportunities for the Irish Horticulture Sector](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/229861/9d3aa8c0-b2b8-4b71-9341-) (<https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/229861/9d3aa8c0-b2b8-4b71-9341->

[b154b1e7ac20.pdf#page=null](#)) (published July 2022) in conjunction with further desk research and public and stakeholder consultation through the Horticulture Industry Forum sub-committee which represents the Industry.

The Strategy is available to download. (<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/2a5d5-national-strategy-horticulture-2023-to-2027/>).

Printed copies are available to order from horticulturestrategy@agriculture.gov.ie (<mailto:horticulturestrategy@agriculture.gov.ie>).

About the horticulture industry

While covering less than 2% of agricultural land, the Irish horticulture industry accounts for approximately 11% of total agri-food jobs (direct and downstream) and therefore it is a vital component of rural economies. This industry is responsible for providing employment directly to more than 7,000 people involved in primary production and a further 11,000 people involved downstream.

The horticulture industry makes a valuable contribution to the Irish economy with a farm gate value of €529 million in 2022, of which €429 million was edible horticulture and €100 million was amenity and other non-edible products. Although the number of growers has declined over the past 20 years, farm gate value has increased by 78% in the last decade (€297 million 2012 to €529 million 2022). Mushrooms and potatoes account for 45% of the total farm gate value.

For edible horticulture most of what is produced in Ireland is consumed domestically, apart from mushrooms where approximately 85% are exported to the United Kingdom. Amenity growers in Ireland service both the domestic and export market.

The fresh produce retail market was valued at approximately €1.63 billion in 2022, where fruit accounted for €810 million, vegetables €593 million and potatoes €231 million.

Given Ireland's geographical position on the periphery of Europe, only high volume, high value or unique Irish grown produce is suitable for export. Imports will always be an important part of supply due to our relatively short growing season and consumer desire

for a large variety of out of season produce but there are some real opportunities for import substitution which this National Horticulture Strategy will pursue.

The horticulture sector is one of the most carbon efficient sectors of Irish agriculture, hence it is important at a minimum to retain that area in horticulture but preferably to increase the area. Recent developments and advancements will further improve the environmental sustainability of the sector. There has been widespread adoption of Integrated Pest Management practices, innovative technology to reduce energy use and adoption of precision farming methods.

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