

CBI MARKET SURVEY

THE FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLES MARKET IN IRELAND

Publication date: October 2006

Introduction

This CBI market survey gives exporters in developing countries information on some main developments on the fresh fruit and vegetables market in Ireland. The information is complementary to the information provided in the CBI market survey 'The fresh fruit and vegetables market in the EU' which covers the EU in general. That survey also contains an overview and explanation of the selected products dealt with, some general remarks on the statistics used as well as information on other available documents for this sector. It can be downloaded from <http://www.cbi.nl/marketinfo>

1. Market description: consumption and production**Consumption**

Retail sales of fresh fruit and vegetables were €844 million in 2003.¹ Bananas were the most popular fruit, followed by citrus fruit. Salads and salad vegetables were the most popular vegetables (Consumer Strategy Group 2005).

Production

Ireland is one of the smallest producers of fruit and vegetables in the EU accounting for less than 1% of total production. In 2005, fruit production was 23 thousand tonnes, consisting mainly of apples and strawberries. From 2001 to 2005, production decreased by 10%.

In 2005, vegetables production was 222 thousand tonnes. From 2001 to 2005, production decreased by 4%. Mushrooms were the main vegetable produced accounting for 32% of domestic production. On an EU scale, mushroom production is still small accounting for 6% of EU production. Other vegetables produced were cabbages (23 % of total) and carrots (10%). Most of the fruit and vegetables grown domestically are consumed in Ireland, except for mushrooms.

Trends

Because of the changing lifestyle of the Irish, who spend less time on preparing meals, convenience is the most important trend in food retailing. Sales of pre-packed and prepared fruit and vegetables are higher than in other EU countries. Ireland is one of the most expensive countries for food in the EU. Although price does play a role in the purchase behaviour of the Irish consumer, the impact is smaller than in other EU countries. A consistent quality and a varied year-round choice of products, including tropical products, is more important (Consumer Strategy Group 2005). The Irish have increased their consumption of fruit and vegetables, which is considered the second major change in the Irish diet after reducing fat (Irish Universities Nutrition Alliance 2001).

Opportunities and threats

Consumption of fruit and vegetables is rising in Ireland and exotics are popular. Retailers offer a wide variety of fruit and vegetables throughout the year. The quality requirements are high. This offers opportunities for off-season product and new varieties. Since the trend of convenience is strong in Ireland, products that are easy-to-prepare also have good changes.

¹ These figures may differ from figures in the CBI market survey Fresh fruit and vegetables in the EU. In the CBI market surveys covering individual countries, national sources are preferred for providing the most detailed information, while the general survey uses statistics that are easily comparable between countries.

Useful sources

- Checkout Retail Magazine - <http://www.checkout.ie>
- Irish Consumer Organisation – <http://www.irishconsumer.ie>
- FAOSTAT, Statistical Database on Agricultural Production - <http://faostat.fao.org>
- Irish Department of Agriculture and Food – <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie>

2. Trade: imports and exports

Imports

In 2005, Irish fruit imports were €180 million and 184 thousand tonnes, 1% of total EU import value (Eurostat 2006). From 2001 to 2005, import value of fruit increased by 13%. In 2005, 79% of total value was imported from other EU countries; 18% of the imports came from developing countries.

Fruits with the largest import value were apples, bananas and grapes. The United Kingdom is the largest supplier of fruits to Ireland followed by the Netherlands and Germany. Fruits with the largest imports from developing countries were bananas, apples, tangerines, oranges and pineapples.

Vegetables imports amounted to €123 million and 112 thousand tonnes in 2005, 1.3% of total EU import value. From 2001 to 2005, import value of vegetables increased by 26%. In 2005, 98% of total import value in 2005 came from other EU countries; 2% came from developing countries.

Vegetables with the largest import values in 2005 were tomatoes, onion and shallots, and sweet peppers. The Netherlands and United Kingdom are the largest suppliers, followed by Spain. Vegetables with the largest imports from developing countries were onions and shallots, and sweet peppers.

Table 2.1 Import from developing countries by Ireland and leading suppliers, import value in thousand euro (€)

Total fruit	18% of total import value 2005	
Product	DC imports	Leading DC suppliers
Bananas	17,870	Costa Rica (76%), Belize (20%), Colombia (2%), Liberia (1%)
Apples	6,034	South Africa (44%), Brazil (37%), Chile (12%)
Tangerines	1,506	Peru (60%), Uruguay (17%), Chile (15%), South Africa (8%)
Oranges	1,344	South Africa (81%), Egypt (18%)
Pineapples	1,182	Costa Rica (94%), Liberia (3%), Panama (2.9%)
Total vegetables	2% of total import value 2005	
Product	DC imports	Leading DC suppliers
Onions and shallots	1,051	Chile (56%), Mexico (41%), South Africa (1.6%)
Sweet peppers	864	Turkey (100%)

Source: Eurostat 2006

Exports

Exports of fruit by Ireland were €20 million and 19 thousand tonnes in 2005, 0.2% of total EU export value (Eurostat 2006). From 2001 to 2005, exports of fruit decreased by 10%. The main exported fruits were bananas, tangerines and apples. About 50% of the imported bananas were exported to the United Kingdom.

In 2005, exports of vegetables were €132 million and 65 thousand tonnes, 1.5% of total EU export value. From 2001 to 2005, exports of vegetables increased by 7%. The main exported vegetable was mushrooms of the Agaricus species, accounting for 83% of total export value in 2003.

Opportunities and threats

Direct imports of exotics and off-season fruit, other than bananas and apples, are very limited. Imports of vegetables from developing countries are also very small. Nevertheless, the country hosts one of the largest European banana importers, Fyffes.

Exporters from developing countries are advised to also look at those EU countries that supply Ireland with products from developing countries (United Kingdom and the Netherlands).

Useful sources

- EU Expanding Exports Helpdesk - <http://export-help.cec.eu.int/>
- Eurostat – official statistical office of the EU - <http://epp.eurostat.cec.eu.int>
- CSO, Central Statistics Office Ireland - <http://www.cso.ie>

3. Trade structure

Supermarkets and hypermarkets are the most important sales channel for fresh fruit and vegetables, accounting for 75% of total sales in 2003. The largest multiple retailers in Ireland are:

- Mushgrave - <http://www.musgrave.ie>;
- Tesco - <http://www.tesco.ie>;
- Dunnes Stores - <http://www.dunnes.ie>;
- Superquinn - <http://www.superquinn.ie>;
- Spar Ireland - <http://www.spar.ie>.

Multiple retailers have central distribution centres and often own import facilities. Next to the retailers, there are independent importer of fruit and vegetables. One of the largest is Fyffes (<http://www.fyffes.com>). This Irish multi-national is a major banana importer in Europe also importing pineapples, citrus fruit, avocados and other fruits. Ireland's largest wholesale market is located in Dublin.

For a list of importers and agents, please refer to the following source:

- The Manufacturers' Agents' Association - <http://www.themaa.co.uk>
- Chambers Ireland - <http://www.chambers.ie>

4. Prices

From 2003 to 2005, the average import price of fruit increased by 5%, to €0.98 per kg. The average price of fruit imported from developing countries increased by 5%, to €0.56. The price levels and developments of selected products from developing countries were: bananas -5%, €0.46; apples -8%, €0.80; tangerines -25%, €0.71; oranges +15%, €0.55.

Over the same period, the average import price of vegetables increased by 12% to €1.10 per kg. The average price of vegetables imported from developing countries fell by 16% to €0.50. The price levels and developments of selected products from developing countries were: onions and shallots +6%, €0.33; sweet peppers +9%, €0.89.

For information on wholesale prices, please check Dublin wholesale market prices at <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/index.jsp?file=areasofi/dubmkt/dubmkt.xml>. Importers and agents can also give up-to-date information on the price levels of individual products.

5. Market access requirements

Manufacturers in developing countries should be aware of the market access requirements of their trading partners and the country government. Requirements are defined through legislation and labels, codes and management systems. These requirements are based on environmental, consumer health and safety and social concerns. For more information go to 'Search CBI database' at <http://www.cbi.nl/marketinfo>

For fresh fruit and vegetables, the zero value-added tax (VAT) rate (0%) is applicable.

6. Business practices

For information on doing business in Ireland, try the following source:

- Chambers Ireland – <http://www.chambers.ie>.
- IFEX, Ireland's International Food and Drink Exhibition held in Dublin – <http://www.expo-events.com/ifex>.

7. References

Consumer Strategy Group. 2005. Make consumers count: A new direction for Irish consumers. Report available at <http://www.irishconsumer.ie/report/>.

Eurostat. 2006. Statistical Office of the European Communities, COMEXT database on external trade, available at <http://fd.comext.eurostat.ec.eu.int/xtweb/>.

FAO. 2006. FAOSTAT, Statistical Database on Agricultural Production. Available at <http://faostat.fao.org>.

Irish Universities Nutrition Alliance. 2001. North/South Ireland Food consumption Survey. Available at <http://www.iuna.net>.

This survey was compiled for CBI by Mercadero in collaboration with Bureau Leeters.

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