

HORTICULTURE FORUM NI

Submission on Amenity Horticulture – NI affairs Committee

The Horticulture Forum for Northern Ireland recognises that the terms of reference for the Inquiry by the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, examining the impact of the UK leaving the EU on Northern Ireland’s Agriculture sector, was focused on food, farming and the environment. However, we feel that there is a significant lack of appreciation of the contribution of the non-food production aspect of horticulture and its contribution to the NI economy. The ornamental and hardy nursery stock sector was valued in 2017 at £25.3M, half of the mushroom sector, and therefore deserves recognition.

In addition, the need to maintain high standards of disease-free stocks, particularly from *Xylella fastidiosa*, and the huge importance of maintaining Northern Ireland, and the entire island of Ireland, free of this significant plant health concern, as well as many others, is an issue for Brexit and future trade. Such diseases do not recognise borders. The island of Ireland maintains very high plant security standards which must be maintained. This also has the potential as a resource – for producing higher quantities of such nursery stock, free of diseases, and potentially important import substitution products.

Whilst the contribution which the non-food sector generates is not included in the farm gate prices, its contribution to tourism as well as health and well-being is enormous. These figures have been obtained from DAERA statistical information.

HORTICULTURE		
EMPLOYEES	production	2700
	amenity services	4000
	processing	2500
	garden centres	1100
	TOTAL	10,300
FOOD PRODUCTION	Farmgate	£108M
	Fruit & veg processing	£314M

AMENITY HORTICULTURE

Ornamental/Hardy nursery stock	£25M
Tourism	£22M
Food tourism	£350M
Golf tourism	£33M
TOTAL	£430M

Horticulture output had increased in 2017, driven partly by increases in the fruit and flowers sectors. Horticulture is the fifth largest contributor to gross output – see below.

Value of horticulture in N Ireland versus Republic – farm gate values

Republic 350M Euros

N Ireland £108M

Therefore in spite of the significant financial support provided by Board Bia and the Minister for Horticulture in the Republic of Ireland , Northern Ireland horticulture producers are relatively important contributors.

VALUES OF THE NI AGRICULTURE SECTORS

GROSS OUTPUT

	£M
Dairying	662
Cattle	460
Poultry	275
Pigs	163
Horticulture	108M of which Mushrooms are £53M
Eggs	100
Sheep	73
Field crops	66
Potatoes	24

We therefore wish to emphasise the value of horticulture at farm gate prices to the NI economy and its potential contribution to food security. However

the importance of the amenity sector – ornamental and hardy nursery stock, tourism, and the value of green spaces to health and well-being must not be underestimated.

Barbara E Erwin, Chair
Horticulture Forum for Northern Ireland