

Strawberry Production

Introduction

Strawberries are the most attractive fruit crop with low capital investment and quick cropping. The crop is grown for fresh market and production for processing in this country has now ceased.

The value of fresh strawberry production in Ireland is in the region of €20M per annum with growth of about 12% annually.

Fresh market production is centred along the east coast with potential for development around large towns throughout the country.

The Market

Multiple retail outlets account for 50% of fresh strawberry sales. Roadside stalls and farmgate sales account for 35% and greengrocers account for 15%. Irish strawberries are normally sold on the home market with producer groups successfully exporting onto the UK when supply exceeds demand on domestic market.

Production Systems

Irish Strawberries are now available from early May to November. Production over the extended season is achieved by growing under protection and use of waiting bed plants.

Strawberries are produced on two systems:

- (a) Intensive production in peat modules in fixed tunnels or glasshouses.
- (b) Field grown strawberries to be produced as either
 1. open ground
 2. mobile (Spanish) tunnels
 3. low tunnels (cloches)

The open ground system is less capital intensive but low tunnels demand high labour and picking is weather dependant.

Mobile tunnels require very sheltered sites and for stability require large multi-span units.

Recent technological advances have made mobile tunnels much more stable and adaptable to Strawberries.



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This is one of a series of fact sheets on potential income generating activities.

All fact sheets are available in the Advisory Section of the Teagasc Website www.teagasc.ie

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Teagasc Fact Sheets present a brief overview of a topic. Further detailed advice should always be sought from relevant sources.

Production in modules on tabletops in greenhouses have the advantage of:-

- Long season production from successive crops,
- Easier environmental control leading to top quality and minimal pesticide use,
- Reduced growing variables,
- Ease of picking - important as labour availability is becoming more critical.

Limitations to Table Top Production

High investment costs, i.e. from €20 – €50 per sq. metre.

Costs and Returns

Fresh Strawberries - Tabletop Production

Fixed Costs: (2 crops – autumn followed by spring)	€67,500 per Ha.
Growing & Harvesting Costs	€9,000
Sales @ €5.59 per Kilo (1/2 Kilo /plant yield)	€92,000
Annual gross margin per Ha (excluding marketing)	€15,500

Critical Factors

- If an average price of €5 per Kilo is not attainable, the enterprise would be marginal.
- Access to markets
- Management capability to produce quality and volume.

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