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## **Uptick in mushroom sales also reflects growth in organics**

January 31, 2020

According to a Jan. 15 press release issued by the Avondale, PA-based American Mushroom Institute, mushroom growers are entering 2020 with record sales volumes, increasing retail prices and solid demand for fresh mushrooms.

The September shipment report from the Mushroom Council shows domestic mushroom production set a new all-time high, which was the fourth consecutive new monthly high reflecting steady sales growth throughout the summer months.

Both June and August 2019 volumes exceeded 80 million pounds for the first time ever, indicating that mushroom sales are strong year-round. Combined shipments — domestic plus imports — also hit new record highs.



Mark Lang, MBA, Ph.D., University of Tampa,

analyzed the recent data trends for the Council.

“As mushrooms become a staple item for many Americans and more people start consuming them, demand has risen steadily for the past decade,” said Lang.

Retail prices are also seeing a steady increase. Recent tracking data from IRI showed that as of Nov. 3, 2019, the average selling price for fresh mushrooms increased from \$4.06 per pound in October 2018 to \$4.17 per pound in October 2019, with an average increase of one percent per month.

“Retailers and their shoppers are demonstrating that the demand for fresh mushrooms is no fad — it’s a long-term trend,” said Steven Muro, president of Fusion Marketing. “We see expanding displays and more real estate in the produce department, combined with record high retail prices — all the result of consumers demanding more healthy, flavorful plant-forward foods. Fresh mushrooms are well positioned for even greater growth in the near future.”

In an Aug. 21, 2018 report issued by the National Agricultural Statistics Service, Agricultural Statistics Board, U.S. Department of Agriculture, certified organic agaricus and specialty mushroom growers produced 128 million pounds of mushrooms that were certified organic during the 2017-18 growing season; 16 percent above 2016-17.

Sixty-eight percent of the total, or 87.4 million pounds were sold as certified organic mushrooms. This reflects an increase of 17 percentage points from the 2016-17 crop year.

Agaricus mushrooms accounted for 83 percent of the mushrooms sold as certified organic, while all specialty mushrooms made up the remainder. The total certified organic sales of all mushrooms represented 10 percent of the 2017-18 total mushroom sales. The number of certified organic mushroom growers totaled 80, up four growers from the previous season. These growers represented 26 percent of the 307 total mushroom producers.

Mushrooms are also trending in the food service sector. The National Restaurant Association named mushrooms the top produce item of 2020 with The Blend, where a portion of meat protein is replaced

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with mushrooms, as a 2020 trend.

Colleges and universities are also embracing meat and mushroom blends on their menus, with 42 percent of college dining halls serving mushroom-blended products.

The increase in prices and demand for fresh mushrooms was also indicated in the recently revised National Agriculture Statistics Service 2019 Report. The average reported price was \$1.34 per pound, up three cents from the previous year's price for the eight states documented in the new reporting method.

The report also revealed a new record high of mushroom crop being sold into the fresh market at 92.1 percent. These increases have also prompted multiple producers to expand, with some growers either planning or have recently completed expansions.

Kennett Square, PA-based Phillips Mushroom Farms, as one example, continues its expansion initiative at its Warwick, MD, facility. It is currently in the process of completing the second half of the third expansion — this time adding 80,000 square feet to its footprint.

“This third building is double the size of the first two expansions combined,” said National Sales Manager Kevin Donovan. “Because of the increase in the demand, one of our three buildings is producing only organic mushrooms.”

Phillips Mushroom Farms' Maryland facility will produce about 750,000 pounds of mushrooms per week when it is in full production. The company plans to add another 40,000 to 60,000 square feet in the future.

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