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Short supply of mushrooms this holiday season

The current market forces of global supply chain shortages, transportation availability constraints, and a drastically reduced farm labor market combined with seasonal threats of crop disease are heavily negatively impacting U.S. mushroom production, resulting in the forecast of a significantly reduced mushroom holiday supply capability, the American Mushroom Institute announced.

Because the mushroom growing process integrates many other industries' products into the growing medium for mushrooms, when availability for any single ingredient is compromised, it impacts growers' ability to mitigate crop threats and to maximize yields. Mushroom farms are doing what they can to push back against these headwinds, but the reality is that the 2021 holiday season will see greatly reduced salable mushroom pounds than in previous years.

Mushroom growers can rely on upwards of 30 different inputs or raw materials to make their growing substrate for the mushroom beds.

"Mushroom growers across the country are describing challenges not seen previously in their time working in the industry," said AMI President Rachel Roberts. "A host of raw materials needed to grow their crops are severely limited, including outright cut-offs of certain critical inputs, for the foreseeable future. In addition to the shortages, the competition for growing medium is greater than ever, with many nurseries, home gardeners, and hobbyists using much of the same growing medium, which is also driving inflation for those products. These factors are not expected to change anytime soon."

Additionally, the mushroom industry is fighting these challenges with a workforce of about 75 percent of the labor force needed to do the job.

The result of all these pressures — insufficient raw materials availability, crop disease, transportation constraints, and labor shortages — is lower supply than in previous years during the holiday season. "We continue to work with our local, state, and federal legislators to explain the predicament that our members face every day," Roberts said. "Our members are telling us that this is the toughest time mushroom farms have faced in more than 30 years."

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