



Vitacress Herbs Ltd

Runcton, West Sussex

Food Waste Inventory from 1st January 2019 – 31st December 2019



About Vitacress Herbs

Vitacress Herbs is the market leader in living and cut fresh herbs in the UK. The completion in 2015 of our cutting edge herb nursery and packing facility builds on our expertise in growing, procurement and innovation. We supply 20 million pots of living herbs and 60 million packs of fresh cut and bunched herbs per year.

Our living herbs are grown in glasshouses, giving us control over atmospheric conditions. This ensures that we can monitor growth and plant condition carefully and enables us to supply British living herbs throughout the year.

We grow a great deal of our cut herbs on our own farms in the UK, Spain and Portugal. We constantly review and optimise the volume of own grown herbs and work closely with selected third party growers so they embrace the same food safety and ethical working practices that exist on our Vitacress farms.

We constantly review our sourcing and develop our packing methods to ensure our products reach the consumer in optimal condition.

Global climate concerns feature strongly within our business, so an Environmental Framework is in place to ensure we are all aware of the goals we are working towards.

We seek to minimise waste generation and the impacts of this by identifying opportunities to reduce, reuse, recycle and recover otherwise redundant resources.

In 2019 we made a commitment to reduce food waste in our own operations by 50% by 2030.



What we are doing to tackle food waste

Over the last three years we have significantly reduced our food waste. This reduction has been achieved in several ways:

More accurate forecasting: Our living herb forecasts are reviewed regularly, in collaboration with our customers, to ensure we are sowing to the most accurate forecasts available.

More accurate growing information: Crop growing times have been recorded over the last four years and are continually reviewed to be certain we are sowing crops at the correct time to ensure we fulfil our orders. For 2020 we have invested in bespoke crop planning software to further reduce waste in living herbs.

Identifying surplus living herbs ahead of time: We have expanded our range using all available space within our glasshouses. Surplus living herbs are identified and made available to our procurement team who programme them in to be cut on site.

Redistributing Surplus Herbs into the Community via our Local Charity

UK Harvest is a not-for-profit perishable food rescue operation with a mission to eliminate hunger and food waste through distribution of quality surplus food. Vitacress Herbs have been supplying UK Harvest with surplus living herbs since February 2018. They collect our surplus product and deliver free of charge to various charities. They also do educational work with schools, colleges and community groups to raise awareness about food waste and provide them with the key skills they need to produce meals for themselves. In 2018 we donated over 6,000 pots of living herbs and in 2019 this increased to over 10,000. This was all surplus stock which would have otherwise gone to waste.

Potential Pesto Project

To further reduce waste, although we already use our surplus living herbs for cut, there can still be a significant amount of leaves left on our basil plants, so we are working in partnership with UK Harvest to look at options for developing a fresh pesto line.

Investment in Chilling and Vacuum Cooling Capacity

Over the last year we have significantly improved our chill chain from intake through to despatch. We have done this through investment in additional chilling capacity and onsite vacuum cooling. This has led to better management of temperature within the cold stores and as a consequence helped reduce the food waste that occurs due to over temperature arrivals and storage losses. It has also improved shelf life performance which in turn reduces in-store waste and ultimately improves customer perception.

Working Closer with our Suppliers

Working with our own farms and building stronger relationships with our growers has helped to deliver better quality product, thereby helping to reduce waste. We have also worked with growers to promote the introduction of machine harvesting techniques which increase yield and reduce cropping waste. This also shortens lead times within the supply chain, enabling lower stock holding in our packhouse and thereby helping to mitigate stock losses.

Total food handled
2,647
tonnes

Waste as a % of food handled

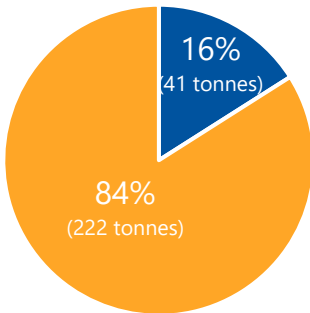
9.9%



Overall food waste

263 tonnes

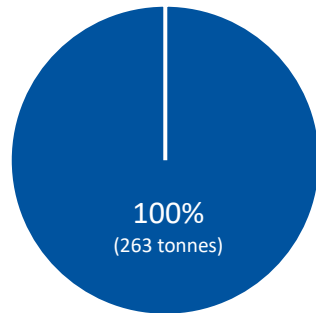
Waste by category



■ Living Herbs

■ Cut Herbs

Waste by destination



■ Composting

Food waste data commentary

- The food waste data illustrates Vitacress Herbs own operations (including growing and packing) in the UK for the year ended 31st December 2019.
- Our total food handled for this period was 2,647 tonnes. We have calculated our overall food waste to be 263 tonnes which is 9.9% of our total food handled.
- Food waste mainly occurs through the rejection of substandard cut herb raw material that arrives in our packhouse or through losses sustained in the packing process. It is also derived from losses sustained during the growing of living herbs within our glasshouses which accounts for 41 tonnes (16%) of the total.
- All of our green waste is sent for composting (100%, 263 tonnes). Where possible, we also send surplus living herbs to local charity UK Harvest, diverting them from waste.
- This is the first year of reporting for Vitacress Herbs. We are committed to reducing food waste and will be reporting our numbers annually.