

MUSHROOMS MATTER

# Sustainability



A NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

**G**rowing mushrooms is a unique blend of recycling, science and efficacy. This powerful combination makes them one of the most sustainably produced foods in the United States. Mushroom growers are known as the "ultimate recyclers" for their ability to convert byproducts

and waste from other sectors of agriculture into the compost or medium used to grow mushrooms. Because of this recycling of other agricultural crops and byproducts, mushroom farms have a smaller environmental footprint than almost any other farms.

*Mushrooms are an incredibly efficient food.*



Today's growers use smart management and production practices that use less than 2 gallons of water to produce one pound of button mushrooms – that's about 32 (8 oz) glasses of water to grow, harvest, and process an entire pound of mushrooms, compared with an average of 50 gallons of water per pound of other fresh produce items.



Mushrooms are grown year-round, across the nation, and don't require much land. On average, one square foot of space in a mushroom bed can produce 6.55 pounds of mushrooms. One square foot is 144 square inches, or 4.5 red bricks in a patio – that's a lot of production power in a small space.



Mushrooms are a fairly low-energy footprint crop. Producing one pound of button mushrooms takes 1.0 kilowatt hour (kwh) of electricity. This is the same amount of energy (1 kwh) as it takes to run a coffeemaker for one hour each day.



One acre of land can produce 1 million pounds of mushrooms annually. In recent years, mushroom growers have produced just over 900 million pounds of *Agaricus* mushrooms each year. Put another way, one acre of land can produce enough mushrooms in a year to fill the length of nearly 4,700 football stadiums. Even more, 900 million pounds of mushrooms is enough to circle the circumference of the globe – mushroom cap to mushroom cap – 19 times!



From the compost recipe all the way through to what you purchase in the store, one pound of mushrooms generates just 0.7 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents. By comparison, using one gallon of fuel emits nearly 20 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub>.

By any measure of water and energy inputs, and the low CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, mushrooms are a nutritious food that have a very small environmental footprint. More than being the 'ultimate recyclers,' mushroom growers are providing a sustainable, smart food source for a growing world population.