



UK FLOUR MILLERS

ANNUAL REVIEW
2023



Contents

- 1 Introduction
- 1 2023 key stats
- 2 Nourishing the Nation
- 3 About the industry
- 4 President's introduction
- 5 Look ahead
- 7 Industry priorities
- 10 Highlights and Action Plan
- 12 About the association
- 13 Data

As flour millers, we supply an essential ingredient, which provides 20% of people's daily energy intake. The majority of our flour is used in bread making, but flour is used far more widely, in around 30% of all foods in UK supermarkets. With our partners in the agri food supply chain, we are nourishing the nation, every day.



This is our first Annual Review. We have developed this publication to give partners and stakeholders a snapshot of industry performance and priorities. We would welcome feedback so that we can develop the publication further to meet readers' needs in the future. We'd love to hear from you, please get in touch via: communications@ukflourmillers.org



2023 KEY STATS

3.8m

FLOUR SUPPLIED (TONNES)



4m

BRITISH GROWN WHEAT PROCESSED (TONNES)



+£270m

TOTAL INVESTED (LAST TEN YEARS)



+£2bn

ANNUAL TURNOVER



+2,000

NO OF PEOPLE EMPLOYED



Introduction

The UK has some of the most modern flour mills in the world. Operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week, they ensure that bakeries, food manufacturers, restaurants and retailers have the flour needed to make food for the nation. We are investing and developing continually, delivering our quality products sustainably, at competitive prices.

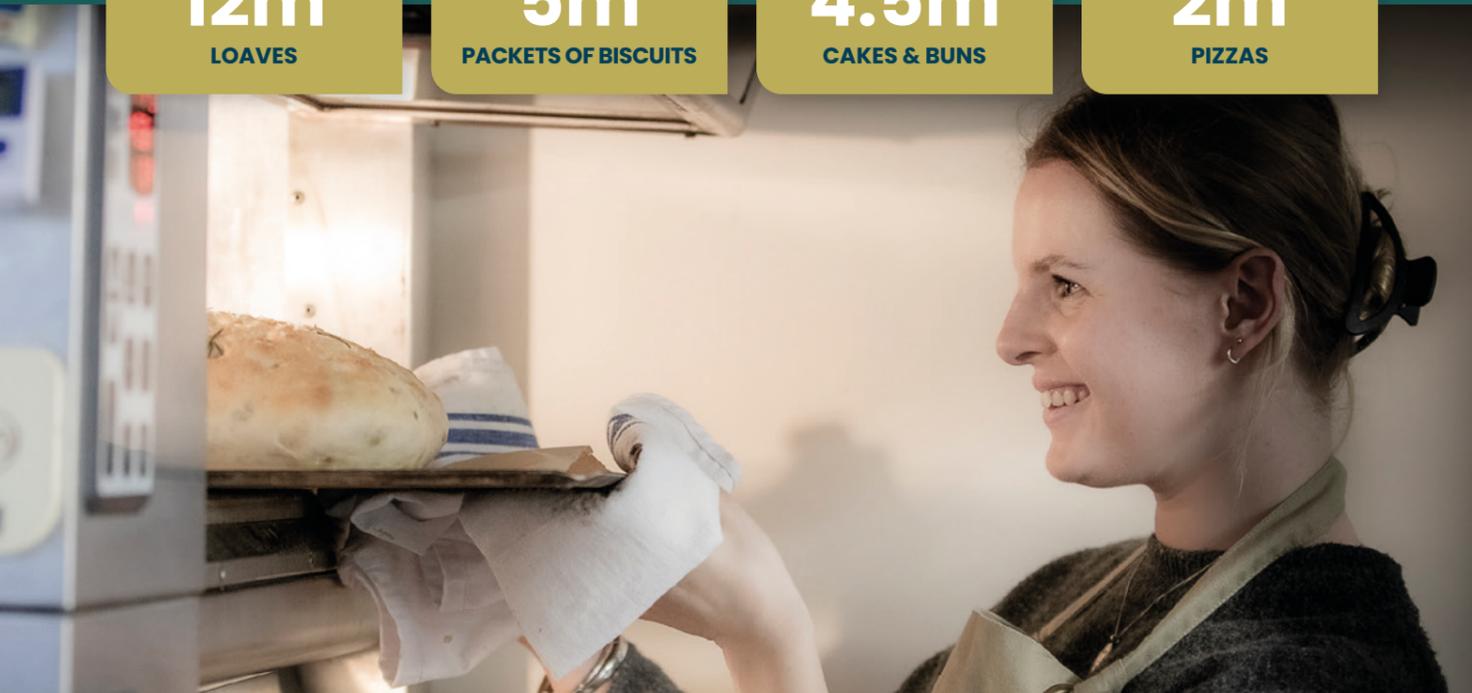
The UK flour milling industry is part of the backbone of British food security, supplying an ingredient key to the diet and nutrition of our nation of 67 million people. We are part of a supply chain consuming around a third of the UK's annual wheat harvest, making us a major customer of British farms.

Ours is a process which produces very little waste; the main co-product of flour milling is bran which is used as food for people and in animal feed. Over the last fifteen years, mill efficiency has improved, with 9.5% less energy used on average, per tonne of grain milled.

Nourishing the Nation

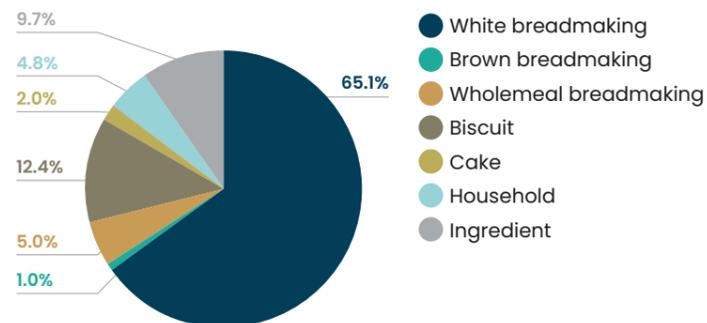
Wheat flour is fundamental to the nation's diet. About a third of all grocery items in supermarkets contain wheat flour – from bread, biscuits and cakes to soups, sausages and sauces. Wheat flour is a significant contributor of essential vitamins and minerals. A third of the fibre and calcium we consume comes from flour, along with 30% of our iron intake.

EVERY DAY IN THE UK, OUR FLOUR IS USED TO MAKE:



FLOUR PRODUCTION

Almost all households in the UK purchase bread, and the majority (65%) of the flour we supply goes to large scale, plant bakeries. The remaining 35% is used in biscuits, cakes and other products. Pre-packed flour, used for household baking remains an important market. UK milled flour is also used in specialist ingredients including batters and coatings. All our members innovate actively, improving existing products and developing new ones for customers.



About the industry

We have mills spread across much of the country, from Edinburgh to Belfast, Whitley Bridge to the Isle of Wight. More than 2,000 people work in the UK flour milling industry, a sector with a turnover of approximately £2 billion every year.

The 32 UK flour milling companies operate 51 mills, with the four largest companies accounting for two thirds of flour production. The flours milled range from bulk bread making to stoneground and ancient grains. Many of the smaller millers supply niche markets, ranging from pre-packed flours to those for specific uses, such as flours for speciality breads.

UK Flour Millers is the trade body for the UK flour milling industry. We support our members by facilitating reliable, sustainable and affordable supplies of wheat, providing training, promoting good practice in health and safety, advocating for the industry, shaping and supporting long-term research and development.



President's introduction

The UK benefits from a resilient flour milling sector. Every day, across the country, millers create the essential ingredient, feeding families and providing some 20% of their food energy intake. It is a modern industry, it is an efficient industry. It is a key asset, underpinning national food security. It is an industry that must not be taken for granted.

As an industry we are primarily focused on ensuring food safety and quality. Our future challenges are expected to be around increasing sustainability – working towards a Net Zero future – developing our workforce and making the most of innovation whether in crops, agricultural techniques, or milling technology. All undertaken in collaboration with our partners.

Sustaining the high degree of food security founded on our use of home grown wheat is increasingly important. This is key to us helping the UK respond to climate change, energy, geopolitical and often unanticipated developments.

As UK flour millers we are proud of the contribution we make, we are investing, we are innovating, we are developing, we are actively contributing to the life of the country, supplying a key ingredient, every day.

Looking ahead, we have clear priorities and a detailed 2024 action plan, set out in this document. We are actively engaged with agri food supply chain stakeholders, policy makers, growers, researchers and customers on addressing the challenges ahead, for the benefit of the nation.



Gary Sharkey
President, UK Flour Millers
Procurement Director, Hovis

“As UK flour millers we are proud of the contribution we make, we are investing, we are innovating, we are developing, we are actively contributing to the life of the country, supplying a key ingredient, every day.”

Look ahead

Every day, often unseen, our members supply an essential ingredient, flour, literally helping to sustain the nation. Behind this seemingly simple action are a dedicated, skilled workforce, an agri food supply chain, committed owners and investors.

And like many industries, milling has challenges to address, from climate change to trade agreements, energy efficiency to finding and making the most of innovations.

Sitting with millers and partners across the supply chain, growing crops on the UK's productive land is a prime concern. This is key for food security. In a normal year some 80% of the wheat we mill is sourced in the UK. With partners we are asking Government to ensure that the policy mix favours growing crops on our best land, giving us secure supplies and the nation better food security.

Mills are major energy users. Across the UK, mill teams are focused on energy efficiency, drawing through the remaining opportunities for reducing energy consumption. In this context, continued energy intensive users support and the settling of achievable climate change agreement targets are a priority, supporting the competitive production of flour.

Our work around energy efficiency is part of our wider commitment to sustainability. Like supply chain partners, whether farmers or bakers, the tracking of greenhouse gas emissions and planning for their progressive reduction is critical. This is a priority for us as an association, where we are developing our sustainability programme, with Scope 3 emissions in our medium term sights.



Alistair Gale
Chief Executive
UK Flour Millers

The terms of some new trade agreements are a major concern for the UK milling sector. Shortly we will see Government open discussions with Turkey, the world's largest flour exporter. The structure of the Turkish industry, from Russian wheat imports to farming support, underpins subsidised exports. We are engaging on this trade deal with Government to ensure that UK jobs and food security are not jeopardised by the terms of a new agreement.

Looking to the long-term future, collaboration and research are set to be key. To be best placed to respond to the range of challenges, especially crop yield, fertiliser use and crop resilience. We expect to be engaging more closely with the research community to ensure that research, crop breeding and precision breeding targets the specific characteristics we need in milling wheat.

I hope what comes through as we look ahead is the degree to which collaboration is set to be the key to tackling the challenges in front of us. Standing on each other's shoulders, engaging on key matters and sharing knowledge, we will progress more quickly together, and keep nourishing the nation.



Industry priorities

As a sector, we are working across six priority areas to secure the long-term future of flour milling in the UK.

- FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY**.....
 - we test throughout the supply chain, farm, mill and on to customer, to ensure food safety and quality
- FOOD SECURITY**.....
 - we actively track growing conditions and wheat quality, nurturing secure supplies to support delivery of reliable quality wheat supplies
- SAFE AND SKILLED WORKFORCE**.....
 - we are investing, developing the millers of the future as the industry becomes increasingly diverse
- SUSTAINABILITY**.....
 - as an energy intensive industry, we are actively working to reduce carbon intensity as we work towards a Net Zero future
- INNOVATION**.....
 - we embrace new technology and approaches to create new products for customers, improve efficiency and support greater supply chain resilience
- COLLABORATION**.....
 - working in partnership with customers and other stakeholders across the supply chain, including researchers, Government and regulators



FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY

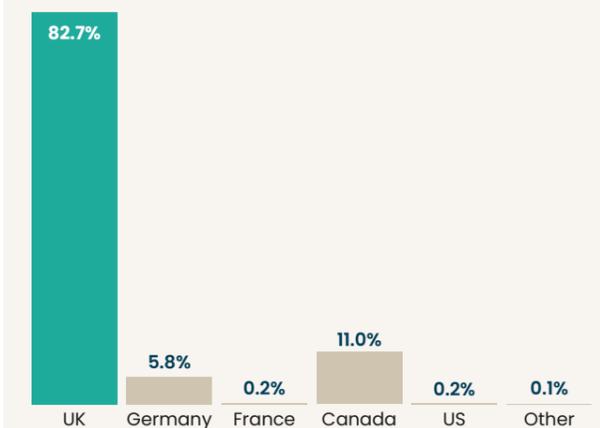
Food safety is a critical priority for UK Flour Millers, with wheat, flour and other materials tested extensively to ensure compliance with legal limits. UK Flour Millers also works to tackle natural contaminants at their source, for example by chairing the Ergot Working Group, which brings stakeholders together to develop research proposals and interventions to tackle the fungal disease, ergot.

FOOD SECURITY

To ensure our contribution over the long term, we are working to address concerns along the supply chain around the production of our raw material, wheat. Today we enjoy a secure position, with domestic wheat continuing to serve around 80% of our requirements. It is essential that this position is maintained. With global demand for wheat increasing, we need UK agriculture to remain productive, sustainable and competitive.

There are significant pressures on UK farmers and we have seen a decline in availability of homegrown wheat meeting out quality specifications. We are actively supporting steps to develop new varieties of wheat and working with partners on progressively reducing the carbon intensity in agriculture, as we move towards Net Zero. The key intermediate step is striking the optimum balance between the inputs needed to grow milling quality wheat and reduced environmental impact.

Source of wheat milled in the UK



Source: UKFM wheat usage and imports survey

SAFE AND SKILLED WORKFORCE

We are actively developing our people. Many members have apprentices as part of their teams and employees enrolled on UK Flour Millers training which provides a staircase of options for progression, up to the Advanced Milling Diploma. Training is an area of innovation for us, with increasing use of online systems for both training and examination.

Personal health & safety is a key priority, with trends tracked so that improvement programmes can be properly focused; our safety committee liaises with the Health & Safety Executive over performance and trends.



CASE STUDY: SAFE AND SKILLED WORKFORCE

UK flour milling companies are investing in apprenticeships today, with more than 30 apprentices in training across the businesses, and at least ten more set to be taken on in the coming year. The apprentices are learning and developing, while contributing in mills operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week, ensuring that bakeries, food manufacturers, restaurants, and retailers have the flour they need to make food for the nation.



SUSTAINABILITY

Our sustainability focus ranges from farm to mill. We are engaging around the greater use of more sustainable farming methods, including regenerative agriculture.

We are a technologically mature, energy intensive industry. Investment continues to be made on the mills, as the most is made of emerging efficiency innovations. Members across the UK are completing projects, realising the remaining scope to improve energy efficiency. It is essential that targets for the new Climate Change Agreement, set to come into effect in 2025, reflect millers' many years' commitment to improving energy efficiency.



CASE STUDY: SUSTAINABILITY

Our members are continuously improving the environmental performance of their mills. Our latest environment survey indicated continued progress in efficiency improvement, with sites using 9.5% less energy per thousand tonnes of grain milled compared to 2008. This is a result of a total investment in UK mills over the last ten years of more than £270 million, including five new mills coming into operation.

9.5% less energy on average

per thousand tonnes of grain milled in 2022, compared to 2008.

2008	94,104
2022	85,139

kWh/'000 tonnes of grain milled

COLLABORATION

Partnership working is fundamental to the change we will see across the wider supply chain over the coming years. Our continued liaison spans from the National Farmers Union to civil servants in Defra, Department for Business & Trade and Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

We convene the Arable Chain Advisory Group as a forum for key industry players to come together, meet and exchange on developments with Defra officials. In addition, we work with researchers at Campden BRI, nutrition experts at the British Nutrition Council to overseas' governments' agricultural attaches.



CASE STUDY: COLLABORATION

Data shows that 90% of UK adults in the UK don't eat enough fibre. Since the Fibre February campaign launched in 2017, we have been working to help bridge the gap between fibre awareness and intake. Our partners in this annual awareness campaign include the British Nutrition Foundation, Food a Fact of Life, Food & Drink Federation (FDF), and Federation of Bakers. Together we are able to reach as wide a UK audience as possible, highlighting facts about fibre, health benefits associated with fibre, and flour's contribution to fibre.



INNOVATION

The flour milling industry has a long history of investment in R&D both by members individually and on a cross industry basis. We sponsor research in a wide range of areas, including the development of new wheat varieties, improving wheat quality and functionality for end use, and milling process control. Our annual R&D seminar provides a focus for discussion of the latest innovations in agriculture, milling and baking.



Highlights and Action Plan

UK Flour Millers supports delivery of the industry priorities, with a detailed action plan touching on key areas including Health & Safety, Sustainability and Collaboration. We have drawn together some of the 2023 highlights and key elements of our 2024 Action Plan.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Tracking performance, providing training materials, helping best practice exchange.



2023 saw the lowest level of Lost Time Accidents (accidents which resulted in more than seven days off work) in nine years.

We are actively developing a new Health & Safety awareness programme in 2024, including a film centred on manual handling, which has been identified as an area for focus.

TECHNICAL AND REGULATORY

Liaising between the industry, regulators, government and members.



Work with supply chain partners and Defra through 2023 resulted in practical amendments to the Bread and Flour Regulations, continuing to support consumer nutrition, whilst reflecting the realities of modern flour milling. The regulations are being updated principally to require the mandatory fortification of non-wholemeal wheat flour with folic acid, to help prevent neural tube defects in foetuses.

We continue to play a significant role in ensuring food safety policy protects consumers and is pragmatic for industry to deliver. In 2023 we carried out research looking at allergens, mycotoxins and other naturally occurring contaminants, work which continues into 2024.

WHEAT

Providing variety information, tracking wheat crop development and availability.



Development of plans for the Digital Grain Passport reached a milestone, with consultation on the Business Case for the proposed innovation. The Digital Grain Passport would replace the existing paper passport that goes with every load of wheat, improving efficiency, accuracy, and traceability of data throughout the supply chain.

Work on development of new milling wheat varieties and assessment of their performance continues, with a view to them being added to the Recommended List of milling wheats.

TRAINING

Offering specialised courses for millers at all career stages.

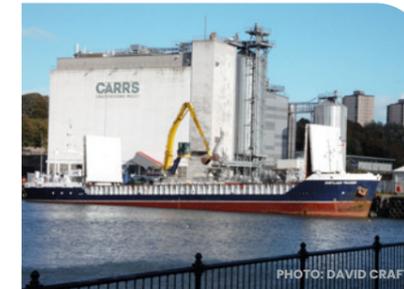


Six employees from flour mills across the United Kingdom were awarded our highest qualification, the Advanced Milling Diploma, after three years of study.

We are continuing through 2024 to modernise our training offer. By making both course material and exams available online, including via our new training app, we are enabling students to learn and check their learning at times that suit them better.

SUSTAINABILITY

Tracking industry performance, reporting and planning for greater sustainability in the long term.



The one millionth tonne of wheat was moved over the quay to Carr's Kirkcaldy mill in 2023. In the 12 years since the port reopened, 506 vessel calls have removed around 70,000 truck journeys from local roads, cutting carbon emissions.

Developing the sector wide sustainability plan is the priority, with a special focus on deepening our engagement of Scope 3 emissions linked to growing and supply of our main raw material, wheat.

CONVENING

Working with partners across the agri food supply chain.



Research and development seminar attracted a full house of more than 60 delegates, with topics covered including precision breeding, ultra processed foods and wheat variety research.

We are drawing together the Arable Chain Advisory Group, an industry/civil service forum, refocusing on issues critical to the sector, including food production and security, availability of comprehensive, accurate and timely data and ensuring regulatory divergence is minimised.

About the association

UK Flour Millers is the trade body for the UK flour milling industry.

Originally formed as the National Association of British & Irish Millers, we changed our name to UK Flour Millers in 2020. We continue to represent millers in Ireland.

We support our members by facilitating reliable, sustainable and affordable supplies of wheat, providing training, promoting good practice in health and safety, advocating for the industry, shaping and supporting long-term research and development.

We offer full membership to companies who operate mills and also support associate members who work in a variety of supporting industries from mill equipment supply and sack manufacture to research and grain trading/supply.

TEAM

Our team of 12 provides expertise across the industry's priority areas, including technical and regulatory affairs, training and health & safety. In 2023, the team was strengthened with the appointment of a new chief executive, sustainability manager, policy officer and communications manager.

GOVERNANCE

The operation of UK Flour Millers is overseen by an Executive Committee. The Executive is representative of member companies from multinationals to family-run businesses. A president is elected at the AGM, normally for a term of two years, along with the vice president and treasurer. Our other committees and working groups cover specific areas of activity. They are the main mechanism for discussion and development of policy. Membership of the committees is drawn from amongst our miller members.

Our committees and working groups are:

- Executive Committee
- Communications Committee
- Development Group
- Environment Working Group
- Health & Safety Committee
- Horizon Scanning Group
- Policy Development Working Group
- Pre-Packed Flour Committee
- Technical and Regulatory Affairs Committee
- Training Committee
- Varieties Working Group

- Wheat Committee

ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATIONS

Telling the milling industry story to customers, partners and stakeholders is a key part of our work. Ideally placed at the heart of the supply chain, we work closely with partners across agriculture, nutrition, sustainability, innovation and much more.

We are working through a radical update to our communications, with greater use of social media platforms, and advance plans for redeveloping our websites, starting with the consumer-facing FAB Flour website.



Data

WHEAT USAGE AND ORIGIN DATA

Origin (% by country)



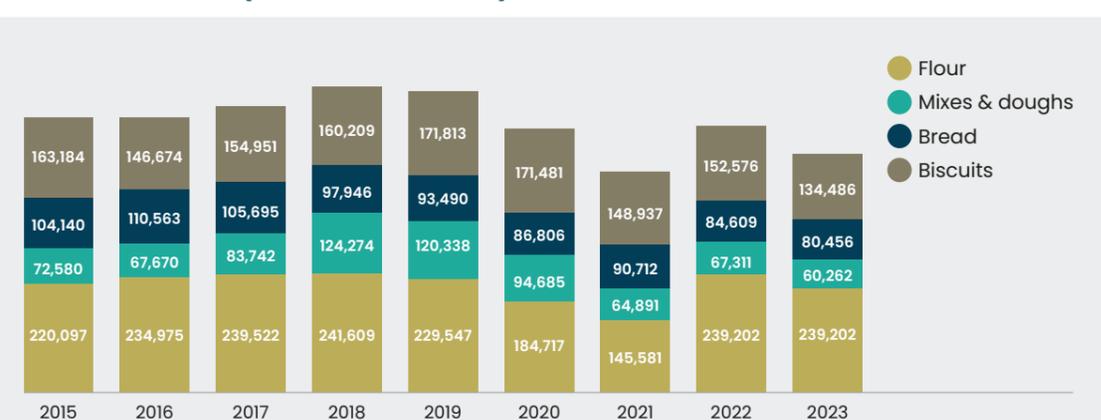
Data source: UKFM wheat usage and imports survey

Non-UK origin - more specific breakdown (% of total)

Year	Germany	France	Canada	US	Other
2022/23	5.8	0.2	11.0	0.2	0.1
2021/22	9.3	0.3	9.9	0.0	0.1
2020/21	15.2	0.5	10.2	0.4	0.9
2019/20	3.2	0.9	9.2	0.4	0.1
2018/19	4.4	1.4	7.3	1.7	0.1
2017/18	4.8	1.9	7.2	2.1	0.1

Data source: UKFM wheat usage and imports survey

UK FLOUR EXPORTS (THOUSAND TONNES)



Data source: UK trade info



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