



Customer Case Study

The Customer: Cottage Mushrooms

Cottage Mushrooms is a producer organisation, formed by five mushroom growers. Collectively employing over 150 people, Cottage Mushrooms produces over four million kilogrammes of mushrooms each year as a group, supplying local shops and supermarkets.

Laurence Gould

Laurence Gould has provided agricultural consultancy to farmers, landowners and associated businesses since the 1960s. Operating from five regional offices around the UK, Laurence Gould is known for providing sound advice in the rural sector and has worked with Cottage Mushrooms since 2003.

The Challenge

Mushroom production is both an art and a science – but with tight profit margins. Faced with competitive pressure from overseas, a hefty increase in electricity rates and the need to meet carbon reduction commitment (CRC) targets, Cottage Mushrooms was looking for a competitive advantage.

Keith Leddington-Hill of Laurence Gould proposed that Cottage Mushrooms investigate and understand how much electricity it used to grow, store and pack mushrooms. It recommended its energy efficiency service and NoWatt for the job.

“We were interested in the idea,” explains Mr. Bebbington, Marketing Manager at Cottage Mushrooms, “but thought our energy consumption, like the cost of raw materials, was something we couldn’t influence.”

The Solution

NoWatt installed sensors around the Little Hall Farm at Ormskirk, Lancashire.

Mr. Bebbington confirms the installation was straight-forward: “We couldn’t afford a minute of downtime, but it was all very easy. The NoWatt team worked in the switch room and didn’t interfere with mushroom production at all.”

But beyond understanding its current costs, Mr. Bebbington wasn’t sure what Cottage Mushrooms would do with the consumption information.

A lot, as it turns out.



“NoWatt showed us how much we could influence and control our electricity consumption. It was eye-popping.”

Mr. Bebbington
Marketing Manager
Cottage Mushrooms



The Results

With NoWatt installed, Mr. Bebbington and Mr. Leddington-Hill started reviewing the energy consumption of equipment around the plant. They focused on the chillers first. Cottage Mushrooms uses these extensively and was running them at single speed. "We thought it was the most efficient way," explains Mr. Bebbington. But the NoWatt data told a different story.

Mr. Bebbington took action and installed variable speed controllers ('inverters') on the chillers to match the peaks and troughs of the energy demands throughout the day. This allowed him to run the chillers at a speed needed to achieve the job, but no more.

The results were instant and dramatic. "We reduced the energy consumption of a fifteen-year-old chiller by more than half without negatively affecting its operational effectiveness," explains Mr. Bebbington. "This is just one of many examples. The results were eye-popping."

In a mere eight months Cottage Mushrooms reduced its consumption at the site by 12.5% - a staggering 238,354 kilowatt hours. "By the end of the year we'll have reduced our consumption to more than offset the 20% increase in electricity rates," enthuses Mr. Bebbington. "Incredibly, our next energy bill should be lower than last year's."

But that's not all. Cottage Mushrooms has calculated it will also recoup its investment in inverters within the year.

The Benefits

Mr. Bebbington is very pleased with the results: "We have no hesitation in recommending Laurence Gould and NoWatt to any large electricity consumer, especially if they think they are energy efficient," he declares. "We thought we were quite good about our energy use. We were wrong."

Mr. Leddington-Hill agrees. "Any kind of agricultural business seeking to save money by proactively understanding its energy use and making operational changes should investigate this type of energy efficiency service."

Despite the success achieved to date, Cottage Mushrooms is far from finished. "NoWatt showed us how much we could influence and control our electricity consumption," explains Mr. Bebbington. "Encouraged by our results, we've now decided to undertake a comprehensive review of all our energy spend."

Cottage Mushrooms still watches its mushrooms grow. But not its energy bills.

Laurence Gould Partnership Ltd.
+44 1223 813 622
keith@laurencegould.com

NoWatt Ltd.
+44 161 408 5299
sales@nowatt.com

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BENEFITS

Learn how energy efficient your business *really* is.

Understand the peaks and troughs of your company's energy needs.

Reduce electricity bills.

