

# From family business to food firm with global reach

In the second of the Homegrown Series with **Harbinson Mulholland**, we look at Mash Direct, a family-owned farming and food production enterprise now in its sixth generation

**T**he HM Homegrown Top 50 campaign showcases the leading employers within our SME sector who were founded and are still headquartered in Northern Ireland.

Mash Direct was founded by Tracy and Martin Hamilton in 2004 and has grown from supplying its products to two independent local stores, to now providing their products to over 9,500 stores across the UK, Ireland and internationally.

Employing 240 people, the company has a turnover of £24m from their single site in Comber, Co Down, using their high-quality raw materials, such as the comber spud to create innovative products in their factory. Jack Hamilton was speaking about the firm's ambitious growth plans and the challenges of expanding a factory during a global pandemic

Discussing some very present business issues on the *Ulster Business* Podcast, Jack, alongside Darren McDowell, senior partner at Harbinson Mulholland about the cost of doing business, the impact of the NI Protocol on their business and what's next for Mash Direct, for the second in our Homegrown chats.

"It's no surprise that the biggest cost to us as present is energy," he said. "The government intervention is welcome but at the minute, we don't yet know what that looks like and we need to keep food prices at their most manageable.

"We've had a good harvest this year thanks to some good weather which helps us control our prices – but there's only a certain price that people are willing to go up to when it comes to food."



“In a cost of living crisis... people are only willing to pay so much when it comes to food.”

Darren, who advises SMEs across NI, reflected on his firm's experiences with clients over the past 12 months and said: "Although we are facing yet another once in a lifetime experience with the movement of energy prices, we continue be alert to the power of our SME community and the advantage they are given from their ability to take a longer-term view."

The HM Homegrown campaign highlights the significant contribution of SMEs, with this year's analysis showing over 10,500 people are employed by the Top 50 companies, 43 of which are family owned and 12 of which are in the manufacturing sector. ■

*You can listen to the Ulster Business Podcast on Spotify, Apple or Soundcloud*

**hm** harbinson  
mulholland