

Retail Excellence Ireland

Positive December figures welcome but harsh 2012 in store for retail – CSO retail figures reaction

Commercial rates reductions required to minimise job loss

Friday, 27th January 2012: While welcoming encouraging retail figures for December from the CSO, Retail Excellence Ireland, Ireland's largest retail industry group, warned that 2012 would be another very challenging year for retailers.

The CSO today issued retail sales figures for December 2011. They showed that the value of retail sales (excluding the motor trade) increased by 1% in December 2011 compared to December 2010. This is the first time in over 45 months that like for like retail sales have increased.

David Fitzsimons, REI Chief Executive Officer said, "After suffering 45 consecutive months of retail sales decline, December's like for like sales increase is undoubtedly welcome. However it must be remembered that retail sales in December 2010 were particularly weak as a result of the severe weather."

"2012 looks set to be as challenging as recent years have been for retailers. Consumer confidence remains at record lows. The effects of the 2% rise in VAT will act as a weight around the neck of the industry in 2012. As a result, large numbers of indigenous and international retailers will continue to close their stores each week and large scale retail industry job losses will continue. Over 50,000 retail employees have lost their jobs since 2008."

"If the Government and local authorities are serious about protecting the remaining 250,000 retail jobs, they need to take meaningful action, starting with commercial rates. While some reductions have been passed on to retailers by local authorities, reductions of 1-2% are simply not good enough considering the massive increases in rates over the last decade and the 30% drop in retail sales over the same period."

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About Retail Excellence Ireland

Retail Excellence Ireland is the largest retail industry group in Ireland with over 8,500 store members employing over 110,000 people.

Vision – We strive to continually exceed Irish consumer's expectations through retailing excellence

Mission - We exist to enhance consumer's retail experience by developing retail standards and skills and through the promotion of a vibrant and competitive world class retail industry

Aims and Objectives: We will do this by:-

- Learning - Raising the skills, performance and standards in Irish retail through the delivery of specialist learning interventions
- Market Intelligence - Understanding and sharing emerging consumer needs and trends
- Representation - Enabling an effective, vibrant and competitive retail industry through focused Government cooperation and representation
- Commercial Services - Delivering exceptional value for Irish consumers by driving retail costs down
- Awards - Driving excellence by recognising the best operators in the Irish retail industry