

Agri-Food: Tasting Success

From field to fork, deep sea to dinner table, Cornwall's Agri-food industry is bursting with potential. Whether it's growing, catching, selling and serving up in county, or processing and shipping around the world, now's the time to make the most of what Cornwall has to offer – with a plan for growth that will make a real difference.

Over the next 10 years we want to help Cornwall's Agri-food businesses connect, collaborate, incubate and excel with access to the skills development they need, when they need it.

And it starts here.

The Lay of the Land

The UK Agri-food landscape is on solid ground. As the single most important area of manufacturing, it delivers an annual turnover of around £80bn and leads the way in the rising demand for healthier products.

Agri-food UK: The Facts

- £80bn annual turnover
- 395,000 workforce
- 32 broad job roles
- 8,500 new products a year

Agri-food Cornwall: The Facts

- £1.17bn annual turnover
- 6,000 workforce

Cornwall's Agri-food sector too, is sure-footed – with an estimated annual turnover of £1.17bn. Businesses are mainly spread across bakery, meat and dairy products, with an increasing number of businesses sourcing their raw ingredients locally, which in turn helps to encourage an integrated

supply chain. Our food festivals also help many of these businesses connect with each other on Cornish soil, while up to 80 businesses in the county take products further afield, to customers worldwide.

But it's far from plain sailing. From weather and legislation, to changing consumer tastes, external factors all have significant impact on our producers, retailers and hospitality businesses. What's more, many of Cornwall's Food and Drink businesses are tourism-driven, which affects employment levels across the year.

We have a large number of domestic and international stakeholders here, from local authorities to chambers of commerce, education institutions to government bodies and agencies. Add to that the shifting sands of



technology, in production and communication, alongside rising energy costs, transport costs and raw materials, and the pressures on our Agri-food industry quickly mount up.

However, this is a sector that knows how to adapt. BIS (Department for Business Innovation and skills), Defra, UKTI (UK Trade and Investment) and FDF (Food and Drink Federation), have developed strategies to keep Agri-food buoyant in the face of such challenges.

Whether it's reaching out to over 60,000 young people to raise awareness of careers options (supported by 50,000 apprenticeships), developing an industry-sponsored technical degree offering work experience, internships and the potential for full-time employment on completion, or awareness weeks like Food is Great, the Government has set an ambitious path, which will see 20% growth by 2020.

Plotting Our Course

In line with this, Cornwall will need to boost its workforce by over 2000 to see a stronger, bigger and further reaching Agri-food sector by 2020.

8% of graduate entrants to the Agri-food sector took jobs in the South West of England and 1.2% took jobs in Cornwall

We'll need 500 more employees at senior level bringing their know how into the sector mix. We'll need more skills, from quality assurance, audit skills and STEM subjects, to specialist knowledge like butchery, bakery, fish filleting and winemaking.

Which means we'll need to tackle recruitment, shifting from just upskilling and promotion internally, to building the reputation and desirability of the sector externally.

Spreading the word and showing just what our sector has to offer will attract young talent, deepen the skills pool and ensure we have the best in the business, shaping our future.

Stepping Forward

Connections. Awareness. Support. Our Agri-food industry depends on us being able to encourage and guide businesses on how to grow; through the people they recruit and the skills they have.

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To make this happen, there are a number of recommended steps we can take. We should research and better understand the shape and ambition of Agri-food businesses so we can match skills to needs. We should use that information to design and develop appropriate specialist support.

We should promote and support new business collaboration groups and develop case studies to show how these sorts of collaborations can be most effective. And we should look to establish a central space, which draws all this together and offers a focus for Cornwall's Agri-food sector.

From arranging for specialists to get classes excited about career options, to clustering businesses together so they can tap into new opportunities, this work will help everyone discover, explore, learn and make more of the business of food and drink.

To get started, we need to focus on four specific areas:

- **Collaboration:** by encouraging businesses to learn from each other, connect and work together to reach higher, we can build significant skills advantages across the sector.
- **Cohesion:** led by Agri-food specialists, a one stop

shop for all things food and drink will help families, schools, councils and businesses understand, recognise and benefit from the opportunities and scope of the Agri-food sector.

- **Upskilling:** whether it's assessing skills requirements or offering advice on solving skills needs, improved connections and opportunities between businesses and training suppliers, will help businesses develop and grow through their people.
- **Exports:** Brand Cornwall is a hit overseas – and local food and drink specialities are at the heart of it. By sharing and showcasing case studies of businesses that have capitalised on this and grown as a result, more businesses can be encouraged to look beyond the often crowded UK market to new, global customers.

What's Next?

Cornwall's wider Agri-food industry has long been recognised as a priority sector by the Cornwall Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Cornwall Council, with Food and Drink businesses making up a key part of this overall business sector. And now a new piece of work is aiming to push it forward.

A sector strategy and action plan is currently underway, with the hope of uncovering a whole range of exciting investment opportunities designed to encourage continued growth and development in the sector. With careful consideration of the recommendations made by the Food and Drink Skills Report, we'll make sure that the requirements for people and skills development remain at the heart of all of our investment options.

The report will be complete and available for review by summer 2014.

This is not about complicated technology, over-whelming resources or impenetrable reports. It's about bringing businesses together and helping them reach higher by collaborating, building their skills and sharing their insights.

Find out more about the thinking behind this Skills Action Plan and read the full report by visiting <http://www.cornwallandislesofscillylep.com/employment-and-skills.html>