



Dear all

As we continue to experience the fast-moving impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and as we draw closer to some key Brexit deadlines, the Food and Drink Wales Industry Board has been persistently engaging with both Government and industry to provide the best direction and support possible in these challenging times.

Since my last update in March we have been hosting regular in-depth conference calls with our Board members and senior Welsh Government colleagues to look at the challenges and opportunities presented by Covid-19. We have invited sector experts into these meetings to provide additional insight to these issues and we have been working alongside the Food and Drink Federation to leverage their insight and knowledge to benefit food and drink businesses in Wales. Our strong link with Food Innovation Wales has helped us to shape important guidance and resources for the industry on best practice, as well giving us access to vital data.

We are continuing to work closely with Government in both Wales and the UK (on retained issues) to ensure that the food and drink industry in Wales is prioritised in recovery planning and that help is provided where it's most needed. We are currently in the process of making recommendations to Government on the challenges and opportunities that the C19 crisis has presented.

We have been communicating regularly with the industry via social media as well as through our new weekly concise bulletin of information, designed to be a direct source of support, relevant news and sector voices, directly to your inbox. We know that many businesses will be facing redundancies and unemployment and we continue to raise these issues and look for solutions and support. Our new Welsh Food and Drink Workforce Collaboration group on Facebook is available as a resource during the pandemic crisis and links up with work being done by key partners such as Lantra Wales.

As we approach the unlocking of food and drink businesses and the relaxation of some restrictions, we are aware that there are a mix of businesses facing hugely different challenges. These include the new strategy - Test Trace Protect – an evolving approach that is focused on protecting the Welsh public from contracting and spreading the virus. We are in direct contact with the “TTP” taskforce to ensure food and drink industry-specific issues and challenges are considered within this strategy.

As well as challenges, crisis always brings opportunity and the Board is systematically identifying those opportunities for businesses in Wales and working to ensure we pin point any barriers to potential growth. This will ensure that Welsh food and drink is amongst the first to pick up opportunities both in the UK and abroad.

The end of June is a key date for Brexit negotiations and we are aware that as a Board we will need to act decisively and fast on these issues.

The food and drink industry remains a huge asset and opportunity for Wales and we know our strong brands continue to resonate with consumers. The Board will continue to advocate for, support and represent the industry and, as ever, I welcome your thoughts and questions for collaboration.

Andy Richardson, Chair of the Food and Drink Wales Industry Board