

£7.3m EU-backed package to boost Wales' food sector

Led by Aberystwyth University's Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences (IBERS) the investment will support two initiatives, Future Foods and BioInnovation Wales.

BioInnovation Wales will receive over £3m EU funds to help employers address high level skills shortages in the agri-food and biotech sector.

BioInnovation Wales, in partnership with Swansea University, will target people already working in the sector, offering bespoke qualifications and industry accredited skills tailored to industry needs. This includes technicians, consultants, researchers and managers working in the food and biotechnology supply chain.

Future Foods will receive £1.9m EU funds to drive forward growth among Welsh food businesses, improving their competitiveness through research, science and technology.

Future Foods, working with BIC Innovation, will deliver world class expertise in food science, technology, and nutrition research and development to ambitious Welsh based businesses seeking to develop healthy, market creating products targeted at UK and international markets.

Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, said:

"The agri-food and biotech sectors are vital to Wales. Investing in high level skills and research to drive forward these sectors is essential for economic growth and jobs, ensuring businesses are on the cutting edge of innovation and competitiveness. I am really pleased that focus areas will include consumer wellbeing and healthier products, assuring product quality and food safety and protection from food fraud"

Professor Mike Gooding, IBERS Director, said:

"We welcome this comprehensive EU funding package at a crucial time for the food and agriculture sector. This is a vote of confidence in the expertise of IBERS and its partners, enabling us to make science accessible to more companies in Wales to further develop their employee skills, and to create innovative, healthy products that are fit for the future".

Further funding will come from the University and partners involved in the

projects, including BIC Innovation.