

'Bounce back' plan for agriculture, food and drink industry launched

- Package of measures designed to turbo charge UK food and drink as the world recovers from coronavirus
- The plan will provide unprecedented help for SMEs and allow them to capitalise on trade agreements being negotiated by DIT with Japan, US, Australia and New Zealand
- Designed in conjunction with business and the devolved administrations, the plan will be driven jointly by Defra and DIT

The new strategic interventions jointly announced by the Department for International Trade (DIT) and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) will offer immediate support to help businesses in the industry grow their trade activity overseas.

The agriculture, food and drink industry is the UK's largest manufacturing industry and plays a vital role in the UK's food supply chain, which contributed £121 billion to the UK economy in 2018 – supporting around 4 million jobs. In 2019, UK food, feed and drink exports were worth £23.7bn – up 4.9% from 2018.

The measures introduced today will support producers, manufacturers and agri-tech companies across the food supply chain, from farm to fork, and has been developed with insight from the devolved administrations, trade associations, businesses and DIT's regional and international networks.

The UK agriculture, food and drink industry has been significantly impacted by Coronavirus. Although it has done well to adapt, exports have been hit and the Government is committed to supporting this most important of industries get back into international markets and start growing market share once again.

That's why we're proud to announce our 'bounce back' plan, introducing a new programme of physical and virtual events that have been tailored to help a variety of businesses and exporters. These include an overseas virtual buyer trial, a 'Smart Distance Selling Process', and a package of 'Ready to Trade' Exporting Masterclass webinars.

Leveraging DIT's existing E-exporting Programme, we are also launching a new SME E-commerce Accelerator Pilot to increase the level of international e-commerce backing for SMEs in the food and drink industry.

The plan will also see the introduction of Defra's first Agri-food Counsellor serving the Gulf. In this new role, they will support the UK's food and drink industry and represent the interests of UK businesses already exporting, or planning to export, to the region.

These measures are being announced as part of a programme of support for the agriculture, food and drink industry to ensure they benefit from new trade

and investment opportunities – including future free trade agreements (FTAs).

Over the last two months the Department for International Trade has launched the first round of talks for the US, Japan and Australia and New Zealand Free Trade Agreement negotiations. Additionally, the department has announced the first UK Tariff in almost 50 years, the UK Global Tariff, which firmly backs British industry, including agri-food and drink. In 2019 the UK exported £2.4bn of food and drink to the US, £312m to Japan, £453m to Australia and £58m to New Zealand.

Minister for Export, Graham Stuart MP, DIT said:

More trade is absolutely critical to helping the UK's agriculture, food and drink industry recover from the impact of coronavirus.

The package of measures we have announced today will support 'bounce back' in exports, and help our world-class producers and manufacturers increase trade with the rest of the world. It will also get the industry ready to capitalise on the opportunities that are being opened up by the series of free trade agreements that my department is negotiating around the world.

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Victoria Prentis, Defra said:

The high quality of British food and drink is recognised around the world and the wider industry supports thousands of jobs across the UK.

This package of measures signifies our strong commitment to support the sector in recovering from the impact of coronavirus. It includes the promotion and showcasing of British expertise and produce to new export markets, identifying opportunities and strengthening existing relationships.

Our new Agri food counsellor serving the Gulf region will be an important new role representing the interests of UK businesses exporting to the area, working to open new export markets and supporting food and drink promotion activities within the region.

Ian Wright CBE, Chief Executive of the Food and Drink Federation said:

Support on this scale from UK Government is extremely welcome at this uncertain time. The package of measures is testament to the close and long-running work between FDF, DIT and Defra to boost our exports performance. Our success in restarting and expanding exports will be absolutely vital in aiding the UK's post-Covid economic recovery.

UK food and drink is an international success story, exporting more than £23 billion of quality products each year. The 'bounce back' plan will ensure that specialist support is available to those UK businesses which trade around the world and provides fantastic potential for those companies looking to export. With a footprint in every constituency, food and drink is uniquely placed to drive an exports-led recovery. In the longer term, it is important that government and industry continue to work together to take advantage of export opportunities and address fragmentation in available support across the UK.

AHDB's International Market Development Director Dr Phil Hadley said:

We welcome today's announcement by government to launch a new recovery package, which will provide immediate support to those businesses looking to grow their trade activity overseas. Coronavirus has had a big impact on the UK's export activity and while we continue to ship our produce around the world, the challenges of the pandemic have been strongly felt in all sectors.

Therefore, we are very encouraged to see this 'bounce back' plan, which will provide significant support to many of the UK businesses we assist in growing their overseas trade. We hope that many will benefit from new trade and investment opportunities, so that AHDB, in partnership with government, can continue to put UK produce on the tables of more households around the world.

UK Government minister for Scotland David Duguid said:

Scottish food and drink is world-famous and highly sought after around the globe. This 'bounce back plan' will help support the thousands of people working in the industry across Scotland and is a further example of the UK Government doing everything we can to make sure we recover from the unprecedented pandemic.

We are working to ensure we enjoy the new opportunities as a country outside the EU through making new free trade agreements with countries around the world – bringing a wealth of new markets to our sector.

Agriculture, food and drink are among Scotland's biggest success stories and vital to our economy and we are working to make sure this flourishes for many years to come.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:

Wales has a proud and growing international food and drink reputation. This bounce-back plan will provide opportunities for Welsh businesses to market their produce around the world and help support thousands of people working in the industry.

The UK Government said it would do whatever it took to support the people and businesses of Wales through the pandemic and we have produced an unprecedented package of measures to deliver on that promise.

The full range of measures announced today include:

1. Launch of a GREAT DIT Food & Drink Exporting Masterclass, an extensive and bespoke programme of webinars to be produced in conjunction with trade associations, UK regions, including Devolved Administrations, and DIT's international network, all supported by DIT's Export Specialists.
2. Launch of Food & Drink SME E-commerce Accelerator Pilot to leverage DIT's E-exporting Programme to increase the level of international e-commerce support for food and drink SMEs, including agri-tech. This will include the offer of one-to-one e-commerce export clinics with the programme's e-commerce specialists and regional advisers, a new series of industry webinars and podcasts focussed on highlighting the opportunities available to export through e-marketplaces internationally, as well as virtual workshops on internationalising their websites for those companies selling direct to consumers in various markets around the world.
3. Promote 50 Food and Drink Export Champions to stimulate aspiring exporters, while utilising International Trade Advisor specialist networks focused on agri-food.
4. Announce the first Defra Agri-food Counsellor serving the UAE and wider Gulf Region, with the role focussing on supporting our food and drink sector and representing the interests of UK businesses already exporting to the area, as well as those looking to export for the first time. The new Defra-funded Regional Agri-Food Counsellor will be based in Dubai and will work alongside DIT's existing sector leads in the UAE, providing specialist knowledge and engagement in Government to Government discussions on behalf of UK interests and sectors. She will also support food and drink promotion activity at the UK pavilion at World Expo in 2021, identifying opportunities for new markets and further developing existing export relationships.
5. Launch of a programme of physical and virtual events, using innovative,

interactive software to connect buyers, promote the UK and reach international markets. This will include: an overseas virtual buyer trial working directly with chosen US buyers through a virtual delivery programme; and developing a UK 'Smart Distance Selling Process', which includes the dispatch of food and drink samples to buyers.

6. Leveraging Defra's Food is GREAT campaign, which will extend into the UAE and the EU later this year, to provide impactful and targeted activity in priority export markets, such as USA, China and Japan. This also will be complemented by new agri-food creative imagery within DIT's GREAT Ready to Trade campaign when this resumes in the summer, under the Food is GREAT and Invest in GREAT pillars.
7. Two Virtual Investor Roundtables chaired by Lord Grimstone, Minister for Investment, with agri-food and drink, and agri-tech companies to inform the development of the UK's investment strategy, the UK Agri-Tech International Strategy and the launch of Phase 2 of the High Potential Opportunity Programme.
8. Uplift of UK Export Finance's "Exporters' Edge" campaign to further outreach and engagement to identify and respond to the needs of the industry and raise awareness of how UKEF and Trade Finance can help the businesses win and fulfil export contracts. UKEF is also accelerating the development of its products to allow a wider range of UK exporters to access its support. Its enhanced offer will provide easier access to working capital for UK exporters by offering financing that is not tied to specific export contracts but instead supports general business activities.