

Press release: Food and Drink Sector Council meets for first time

Leading figures from across the food and drink sector have formed a new partnership with government to boost productivity and make the industry more resilient, sustainable and competitive.

Meeting for the first time yesterday (Monday 29 January), the Food and Drink Sector Council agreed priorities for the next 12 months, including a focus on boosting skills, agricultural productivity, improving the nation's nutrition and building on emerging proposals to establish a sector deal. The Council will set up expert working groups to develop recommendations for industry and government on each of its priorities.

The new group is made up of leading industry figures from agriculture, manufacturing, retail, logistics and hospitality sectors.

The UK's food and drink industry is already a huge success story, with exports of quality British produce – worth £20 billion – reaching over 200 countries. The Council's work to boost productivity will mean industry will be better placed to take advantage of emerging global opportunities to access more markets and boost exports as we leave the European Union.

Speaking following the meeting, Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

This first meeting of the Food and Drink Sector Council marks a significant step forward in supporting this vital industry, which is already worth over £110 billion to the UK economy.

This ambitious partnership between government and industry will secure the UK's position as a global leader in sustainable, affordable and high-quality food and drink. Increasing productivity will also benefit consumers and businesses, creating jobs and providing a real boost to our economy.

The Food and Drink Sector Council was first announced in the [Industrial Strategy white paper](#), which sets out the government's long-term plan to build a Britain fit for the future through a stronger, fairer economy.

Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

From Scotch Whisky, to award winning cheeses and premium seafood, the produce from our thriving food and drink sector is in demand and enjoyed around the world.

Through our modern Industrial Strategy and the Food and Drink Sector Council, the government is working together with industry to build on these exceptional strengths, boost its productivity and seize the future opportunities of this national success story.

Iain Ferguson, Joint Chair Food and Drink Sector Council, (Chairman Stobart Group Ltd) said:

Today has been possible due to the huge amount of work and commitment to bring the sector together. It is exciting to see everyone in the same room working together to address the opportunities and challenges we face as an industry.