

Quarter million pound initiative to promote tasty careers in the Valleys

At the first of two 'Invest in Skills, Invest in Growth' conferences, held in Cardiff Bay's Exchange Hotel, the Cabinet Secretary will announce funding of £250,000 to run two pilot projects, working with the Welsh Government's Valleys Taskforce.

The Welsh Government Valleys Initiative will focus on two key areas for the food industry. Focussing on the South Wales Valleys, the first will provide funding to allow for up-skilling of the workforce, helping to turn those already in the industry into technicians.

The second will work with local communities and businesses to help raise the profile and attractiveness of careers within the industry.

Speaking ahead of the conference, organised by the Welsh Government's Food and Drink Wales Industry Board, the Cabinet Secretary said:

"Our Food and Drink industry is one of Wales' largest business sectors and a Welsh success story. Over 222,000 people are employed within the whole supply chain and in 2016 we exported £337 million; around 20% growth on the previous year.

"We cannot, though, ignore the issues facing the sector. Brexit, for example, is not just a challenge in terms of the security of our supply chains and ability to export, it also presents a threat to the stability of our workforce.

"I want to ensure the momentum the industry has generated is maintained in the years to come. Through the Welsh Government Valleys Initiative, which I am announcing today, I want to encourage young people to consider the food sector as a fulfilling career, reduce our reliance on migrant labour and, in turn, ensure Wales' food and drink industry is ready for the challenges ahead."

Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language and Chair of the Valleys Taskforce, Alun Davies said:

"This initiative will build on the priorities highlighted in Our Valleys, Our Future. The Valleys Taskforce will work with people there, local businesses, local government, the third sector and civic organisations to promote the valleys as a region for investment and a place to live."