

## Smaller Welsh food & drink companies to benefit from €1.8million boost to increase global competitiveness

Wales will become the latest nation to join the Atlantic Area Export Project, which supports businesses from across the Atlantic Arc to work together to overcome the barriers smaller businesses in the sector face when they try to expand into international markets.

Currently over 72% of food and drink exported directly from Wales goes to the EU. This figure is much higher for Welsh red meat, where 90% of exports go to the EU.

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, will make the announcement during the second day of the Royal Welsh Show.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“We’ve seen Welsh companies become global brands, such is the high quality of food and drink we produce in Wales.

“We want to help more small companies break into new markets. Today’s announcement will help them to do this – just one breakthrough can be a real game changer, providing a significant boost to our rural economy.”

Exports of food and drink have grown by almost 20% in the past year.

The latest boost to smaller businesses follows the Welsh Government’s announcement in March that £21million would be made available through Project HELIX to help smaller food manufacturers in Wales increase production and reduce waste. Since then the project has supported 162 small and medium sized businesses and safeguarded 120 jobs.

The Welsh Government has committed to investing £2.4million over the next two years to expand the food and drink industry’s export market and raise Wales’ global profile.

As part of this commitment, the Cabinet Secretary will today announce the successful BlasCymru/TasteWales event, which brought global food and drink industry members to Wales to connect with Welsh food and drink producers earlier this year, will be returning in 2019.

The announcements come as initial findings from research undertaken by the Welsh Government on UK consumers views on the value of Welsh products, found 8/10 shoppers prefer to buy Welsh products and 75% think Welsh food equals excellent quality.

The Cabinet Secretary added:

“We will continue to push the UK Government to prioritise full and unfettered access to the single market and avoid any new barriers which impede Welsh food and drink businesses from operating effectively. There are many opportunities and we are supporting our food and drink sector to be in a position to make the very best of these.”