

# Government Chemist conference 2021: Safe food for tomorrow's world

The Government Chemist conference, 'Safe food for tomorrow's world' took place online on 23 and 24 June 2021.

[Presentations from this conference are available.](#)

You can also read a [short report on the conference.](#)

## **Conference information as published before the event**

This conference was originally scheduled to take place in June 2020 and was postponed to June 2021 as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. In view of the ongoing restrictions for public events, we have decided to proceed with this conference as an online event.

The conference will be opened by Gideon Henderson, [Chief Scientific Adviser, Defra](#) after a brief introduction by Dr Julian Braybrook, [Government Chemist](#).

Scientists, regulators, enforcement agencies, industry and policy makers are invited to join the Government Chemist on a virtual platform to discuss future challenges in the manufacturing, packaging, retailing and testing of food that is safe and consumers can trust.

The conference programme will include national and international perspectives on assuring food safety and integrity, advances and challenges in allergen testing, the use of science for improved consumer protection and much more.

## **Defra Deep-dive workshop session: Consumer confidence in food integrity and authenticity beyond composition**

The conference will include a Deep Dive session, between Session 1 and 2, aiming to explore some of the emerging trends impacting on our food system and discuss what the integrity of the food supply looks like in a post pandemic/EU Exit world – from industry, consumer and enforcement perspectives.

## **23 June, Session 1: Perspectives from the UK's Official Control System**

- Welcome address by the Government Chemist, Julian Braybrook
- Keynote lecture – Gideon Henderson, CSA, Defra
- Overview of recent referee cases- Paul Hancock, LGC

- Opportunities and challenges facing the Public Analyst Service – Jane White, Association of Public Analysts
- Actions and impact of the Food Crime Unit – Hayley Ward-Ivan, Food Crime Unit

## **23 June, Session 2: Regulation for a global market**

- Defra Deep Dive. Defra would like to invite participants to think about what the current and future technical challenges for food integrity and authenticity are likely to be beyond the usual compositional authenticity issues (more details further down the page)
- The role of data science in achieving the objectives of the FSA – Julie Pierce, FSA
- Food Standards Scotland – Strategy and approach to science – Geoff Ogle, FSS
- The NIST Food Quality Program: Measurements and standards to support the global food industry – Katrice Lippa, NIST
- Authentication analysis of tonic food products in Hong Kong – Foo-wing Lee, Hong Kong Government Chemist
- The importance of company culture in assuring food safety and integrity- Fiona Humphries, BRCGS
- Achieving business compliance in an international market – Ingrid Fiordaliso, McCormick

## **24 June, Session 3: Science for improved health outcomes**

- The importance of standardization of biomarker measurements in nutrition – Ian Young, Queen’s University Belfast
- Current perspectives on food toxicology- Stella Cochrane, Unilever
- Challenges in measuring clinical proteins and allergens – Milena Quaglia, LGC

- CBD and controlled cannabinoids in consumer products – Selvarani Elahi and Christopher Hopley, LGC
- Microbiome for protected status – Marc Kennedy , Fera

## **24 June, Session 4: Novel solutions for food authenticity and sustainability**

- Nuclear and complementary field-deployable technologies to build food authenticity capability – Simon Kelly, International Atomic Energy Agency
- Effective solutions for GMO analysis – Malcolm Burns, LGC
- Desirability and plausibility of meat alternatives – Barbara van Mierlo, Wageningen UR
- Science assurance in a sustainable food system – Professor Robin May, FSA Chief Scientific Adviser

## **Defra Deep-dive workshop session: Consumer confidence in food integrity and authenticity beyond composition**

The aim of this deep-dive session is to explore some of the emerging trends impacting on our food system and discuss what the integrity of the food supply looks like in a post pandemic/EU Exit world – from industry, consumer and enforcement perspectives.

Defra would like to invite participants to think about what the current and future technical challenges for food integrity and authenticity are likely to be beyond the usual compositional authenticity issues.

During the session the participants will have a deeper dive into: – the impacts of climate change, achieving decarbonisation (net zero), sustainable agriculture production (including organic) on food integrity – the current and future scientific challenges and potential solutions to ensure food authenticity including Food origin, Provenance and Protected Food names

Defra will use the outputs to help them identify future priorities for research and innovation to support consumer confidence in the food system.

Download the programme

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# Surge testing to be deployed in areas around Manchester, Norfolk, Southampton and Surrey

Press release

Further targeted areas will have additional testing made available to control and suppress the spread of a COVID-19 variant.



Working in partnership with the local authorities, additional surge testing and genomic sequencing is being deployed to targeted areas within Norfolk (targeted areas within the IP22 postcode), Southampton (S015) and Woking, Surrey (GU22) where the COVID-19 variant first identified in South Africa has been found.

Following the [deployment of surge testing in Manchester last week](#), testing in Manchester will be expanded to targeted areas within the M40 and M9 postcode districts.

Surge testing is being introduced in addition to existing extensive testing. In combination with following the current lockdown rules and remembering [‘Hands. Face. Space’](#) advice, it will help to monitor and suppress the spread of the virus. Positive cases will be sequenced for genomic data to help understand COVID-19 variants and their spread within these areas.

People living within these targeted areas are strongly encouraged to take a COVID-19 test this week, whether they are showing symptoms or not.

People with symptoms should [book a test in the usual way](#), and those without symptoms should [visit their local authority website for more information](#).

Surge testing in parts of Haringey, Merton and Sefton is now complete. Further data on surge testing will be provided in due course.

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# PM call with United Nations Secretary-General: 16 February 2021

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres this evening.



The Prime Minister spoke to the United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, this evening.

They agreed on the importance of scaling up the global manufacturing of coronavirus vaccines and increasing international support to the COVAX facility, to ensure vaccine access for developing countries.

Looking ahead to the COP26 summit in November, the PM and Secretary-General committed to work together to encourage states to put forward ambitious plans to reduce global emissions.

They also discussed their concerns regarding the situation in Myanmar, and stressed the need to continue international support for the political process in Libya and for a negotiated solution to the crisis in Yemen.

The Prime Minister looked forward to joining the Secretary-General at the UN Security Council next week for a virtual session chaired by the UK on climate and security, and to welcoming him to the Cornwall for the G7 Summit in June.

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# Further £650 million funding boost for Covid-19 response in Wales

Press release

Latest Treasury announcement brings the extra funding provided since March 2020 to the devolved administration in Wales to £5.85 billion.



- UK Government provides devolved administration in Wales with additional £650 million to help tackle coronavirus
- Funding can be spent now or carried over to spend in 2021/22 financial year, providing vital and unprecedented flexibility
- Money is in addition to the £5.2 billion already provided for this year through the upfront Barnett guarantee, bringing the total to £5.85 billion

The UK Government has provided the Welsh Government with an additional £650 million to support people, businesses and public services affected by coronavirus.

This funding brings the total allocated through the Barnett formula to the Welsh Government since the start of the pandemic to £5.85 billion.

In recognition of the exceptional circumstances and in response to calls for flexibility, the Welsh Government will be able to carry over any of the £650 million not spent this year into the 2021/22 financial year on top of their existing tools to transfer funding between years.

**Welsh Secretary Simon Hart said:**

We in UK Government have been relentless in our determination to get the necessary support to all parts of the UK, and today's announcement will top-up that support for Wales to £5.85 billion.

That is on top of all of the other UK Government support packages including the furlough scheme, the Eat Out to Help Scheme and the different business loans.

It is important that this funding now gets to the businesses and individuals across Wales as we look to rebuild the UK economy.

**Chief Secretary to the Treasury Steve Barclay said:**

We're committed to giving the Welsh Government the resources and flexibility it needs to tackle coronavirus and today we're delivering an extra £650m boost.

We have worked closely with the Welsh Government in advance of this announcement to ensure they have the certainty they need ahead of finalising their budget on 16 February.

UK Treasury schemes such as furlough, support for the self-employed and business loans also continue to protect jobs and livelihoods across Wales.

Following the previous update on 24 December, this is expected to be the final update for 2020-21 as part of the process for finalising departmental funding at Supplementary Estimates.

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## [Invitation to Tender for research for the 2021 report and beyond](#)



The Low Pay Commission (LPC) has launched an invitation to tender for research projects to inform recommendations on next year's National Minimum Wage (NMW) and National Living Wage (NLW) rates. There are two separate open calls for projects, with deadlines on Thursday 11 March and Friday 12 March respectively.

This work is part of our ongoing remit to monitor the operation of the NMW and NLW, and to assess the impact of increases in the levels of those minimum wages. We carry out continuous evaluation of the impact of minimum wage upratings on the sectors and groups of workers most affected, and on the labour market more generally. To do this, we draw on a range of evidence to making our assessments, including research projects commissioned specifically to inform our recommendations. As in previous years, we wish to commission a number of new research projects to inform our future work. However, the onset of the pandemic and its continuing effects makes our assessment of the impact of minimum wages much more difficult than in previous years.

We are therefore keen to understand the impact of the recent unprecedented upheaval in the economy and the labour market caused by measures to control the global pandemic. This has affected some sectors, in particular many low-paying sectors, more than others. It has also disrupted many of the usual data sources upon which much of our standard analysis depends. The pandemic has, however, also led to the development of new data sources. We are therefore keen to consider tenders that can take advantage of these. In addition to the impacts from the pandemic, the UK began a new trading relationship with the EU on 1 January 2021 that will see significant changes in the way the UK trades. This will have different implications for low-paying sectors and minimum wage workers. We are therefore also keen to try and understand these developments.

With concerns about the pandemic and its impact on the labour market our usual data sources, we have broadened the coverage of our call for research this time. We would particularly encourage innovative use of new and existing sources of information to help us assess the impact of minimum wages in the UK. The evidence generated will inform our deliberations on the recommendations for future changes in the minimum wages.

In both of these open calls, we have identified a number of areas of research that might be particularly interesting but we would welcome any research that gives insight into the impact of the NMW, including the NLW. These insights will help inform our recommendations in our autumn 2021 Report and beyond.

Information about previous LPC research projects is available elsewhere on [our website](#).

Please direct all enquiries through UKSBS Research and Contracts Finder. Details of how to apply are given in the links provided for the individual calls.

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Last updated 18 February 2021 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 18 February 2021

Page updated with link to the second invitation to tender (UK SBS CR21035).

2. 16 February 2021



First published.