

Welsh food & drink exports up by almost 20%

This compares to a 9.5% increase for the UK as a whole over the same period.

Provisional data for the year ending December 2016 shows the value of food and drinks exports from Wales rose to £337.3million, a 19.8% rise on the same period in the previous year.

While the EU still remains the largest importer of Welsh food and drink, accounting for 72.4% of exports, there have been major increases in exports to the Middle East and North Africa.

The top Welsh food and drink export for the year was meat and meat preparations, accounting for almost 22% of all food and drink exports.

The latest data follows a push by the Welsh Government to raise Wales' global profile. This includes support for Welsh food and drink producers to take part in a number of trade visits during 2016 and 2017 to key markets including Ireland, Spain, Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Denmark, Norway, Canada and the United Arab Emirates, with further visits planned for the remainder of the year to Germany, the USA and France.

It also follows the recent TasteWales event, organised by the Welsh Government, which brought together Welsh food and drink producers, global buyers and food industry professionals in the largest ever showcase of Welsh food and drink.

Welcoming the figures, the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths said:

“We are extremely proud of our high-quality food and drink and recognise the enormous value it brings to our economy. These figures are further testament to the reputation our food and drink is gaining around the world.

“I am delighted we are continuing to support the sector to expand its reach to new markets. Following our successful TasteWales event some of our producers are pursuing interest from buyers from all over the world.

“There are undoubtedly challenging times ahead. The EU remains our biggest export destination by quite a stretch. It is further proof of the threat a hard Brexit poses to our economy, which is why we continue to push the UK Government to priorities full and unfettered access to the single market and to avoid any new barriers which impede Welsh food and drink businesses from operating effectively.

“However, the increase in exports to markets outside of the EU is encouraging and with the quality of products we can boast in Wales I am confident we can continue to make excellent progress in new markets.”