

Innovation Gateway: Unlocking the technology in food and drink

3 years ago



A unique collaboration making it easier for food and drink companies in England, Scotland and Wales to adopt cutting edge technology and grow their business has been launched.

The Food and Drink Federation (FDF) brings together a range of specialists to create [the Food and Drink Innovation Gateway](#), a simple online tool that will match firms in the sector with the expertise to support them with their technical challenges. This partnership will provide valuable insights into the technological needs of the industry, helping improve and better target the support available.

UK food and drink manufacturers have a justified reputation as a global leader in innovation – in 2020, the sector's procurement of robots increased by more than a third on 2019 and nearly £800m was invested in research and development and software. But rising costs, labour shortages and stretched supply chains are putting increased pressures on businesses seeking to make longer-term investments.

Utilising existing and new technologies is vital for food and drink businesses to overcome these challenges and to increase productivity, reduce waste and improve sustainability. It can also create new, high skilled green jobs across all nations and regions, and support the FDF's ambition for the sector to be [Net Zero by 2040](#).

Experts in the world of research and higher education, from the Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC) to the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC) to the University of Lincoln will be on hand to enable businesses of all sizes to better understand the opportunities that innovation can deliver, while helping to de-risk investments and implement the technology.

Karen Betts, Chief Executive, the FDF, said:

“The FDF is proud to have established the Innovation Gateway that we’re launching today. It will offer practical support to food and drink companies across the UK to help them to harness the opportunities that technology can offer. By investing in digital capability, food and drink businesses will be able to improve the productivity and sustainability of our companies and our supply chain – critical investments both in future growth and in the resilience of our industry.”

Pete Robertson, Chief Executive, FDF Cymru, said:

“FDF Cymru is delighted by today’s launch of the Food and Drink Innovation Gateway. Introducing and harnessing the future of automation, digitisation and data is key to manufacturers’ resilience and will create a higher skilled sector with a greater potential to improve productivity and add value to its products.

“Within our thriving partnership with AMRC Cymru, FDF is delighted to act as the initial contact point for all Welsh businesses who seek to understand the support for innovation available to them across Wales and the wider UK High Value Manufacturing Catapult network.”

Steve Barton, Strategic Project Director, ABF Grocery Group and Chair of the FDF’s Technology Forum:

“The Innovation Gateway makes it easy to quickly identify the best automation and technology solutions. This is increasingly important as we manage decarbonisation, rising energy costs and commodity price volatility. Completing one online form connects food businesses to an independent specialist to help find the right partner to step change their productivity and efficiency. It may sound like a simple concept, but the Innovation Gateway has been complex to bring together and I applaud the work of the FDF and the commitment of the UK innovation sector for their support for the UK food industry.”

Image credit: FDF