



## GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE LEP CONFERENCE AND UK FOOD VALLEY LAUNCH

On 2<sup>nd</sup> November over 250 delegates attended the Greater Lincolnshire LEP's Annual Conference, UK Food Valley Launch and Investor Conference.

In her compelling UK Food Valley launch speech, Sarah Louise Fairburn, Deputy Chair of Greater Lincolnshire LEP and Chair of the Greater Lincolnshire Food Board, said: "This is an ambitious project which aspires to put Greater Lincolnshire at the heart of a global top 10 food production cluster, by pioneering sustainability through innovation.

"Here in Lincolnshire, we have an international reputation for growing and processing high-quality food, and we're home to one of the largest concentrations of agriculture, food manufacturing, storage and distribution in Europe, with a focus on and infrastructure for technology and innovation.

"The facts and figures tell their own story: Greater Lincolnshire grows 30% of the nation's vegetables and produces 18% of the poultry."

*Continued...*

## SECTOR PROGRESS & HIGHLIGHTS

- Annual Conference Recap & Speech from Sarah Louise Fairburn
- **YOUR NEWS:** UK Food Valley
- FPC Future & Careers Event
- University of Lincoln at COP26
- UK Food Valley Sector Propositions
- IMP & MAKER Sponsors Celebrity London Book Launch
- **NATIONAL NEWS:** Seafood Sector Boost from Community Renewal Fund
- Greater Lincolnshire & New Anglia LEPs Collaborate
- Grimsby Fish Cluster Meets with MP & Partners
- Industry Successfully Lobbies for A16 Upgrades
- Grimsby Smoked Fish Production to get Boost
- Launch of New Website for International Trade
- CERES Agritech Launches New Spin-outs
- Cotemaco Interreg Project Helps Lincolnshire Food Business Automate
- NCFM Welcomes New Staff
- **FUNDING & ADVICE:** Business Lincolnshire Brings Agriculture & Horticulture Advice
- Farming Innovation Fund Launched
- **AGRI-TECH HOT FUNDING LIST**



# GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE LEP CONFERENCE AND UK FOOD VALLEY LAUNCH

## *Continued...*

"And our total agricultural output alone in 2019 topped £2bn; a massive 11% of England's total agri-food output.

"Our strengths in farming are mirrored by our food processing sector. Not only are we the UK's largest fish processing cluster, we're at the centre of the UK's fresh produce industry, and we're home to major arable, poultry and meat processors across our area, making Greater Lincolnshire strategically important to the UK food supply. We want to create actions that align with our industry needs, including new routes to market, and working more closely with retailers and organisations such as the Institute of Grocery Distribution and collaboration is key.

"Greater Lincolnshire has embraced the trend for convenience prepared food and is now home to large businesses such as Gousto, Plant & Bean, and Youngs Seafood which are at the forefront of a revolution in how people buy and consume food.

"18% of our total workforce is employed in agriculture, food processing, food wholesaling, and distribution - a concentration five times higher than the UK average. Spalding alone dispatches over 1,200 lorry loads of food into the supply chain each day which I think is incredible!

"The last five years have seen significant investment in agri-food R&D and innovation infrastructure in Greater Lincolnshire with the creation of the Lincoln Institute for Agri-Food Technology, the growth of the National Centre for Food Manufacturing, the development of an Institute of Technology focused on higher level agri-food skills, and the development of Bishop Burton's Riseholme Showground campus."

Our food industry is made up of over 6,000 companies, from SMEs to some of the world's largest food businesses. While agriculture is dominated by SMEs, the rest of the food chain has a diverse mix from start-ups and specialist micro producers to multi-nationals with thousands of employees. We have over 70 large food producers, and now over half of them are part of large

international companies. The sector is dynamic and knowledge led with a strong record of investment in innovation and skills.

As well as hearing from the UK Food Valley team, the event featured regional and national business and industry leaders Mark Suthern, UK Food Valley; Dr Nigel Davies, Director of Technical and Sustainability at Muntons plc and Director of Maltdoctor Ltd; Martin Hanson, Managing Director HSBC Agricultural Business for the UK; Kate Halliwell, Chief Scientific Officer at the Food and Drink Federation; Professor Mark Swainson, Deputy Head of the National Centre for Food Manufacturing (NCFM) and lead for Higher Education and Research; Simon Dwyer, Seafox Management Consultants Ltd and the Seafood Grimsby and Humber Alliance; and Neal Collishaw, Operations Director for Worldwide Fruit.

Delegates also watched short vlogs from our first group of UK Food Valley ambassadors including Judith Batchelar, Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability Director at Sainsburys; and Simon Smith, CEO at Youngs Seafood among others.

"What we're creating here is something that is nationally and internationally significant," continued Sarah Louise.

"This is THE place to have a food business and we're looking to make sure that all our food businesses are fit for the future. While there are so many challenges at the moment for food growers, suppliers and producers - collaboratively, we have the solutions for all of that.

"I'm personally so excited about the UK Food Valley because for me food is all about product development and innovation, and this is where things can really happen. Everything from the start of the development right through to the finished product going into retail or e-commerce, we can do that here – all under one roof. And I love that. And it's enabling my business to grow."

Full details on the UK Food Valley are available at: [UK Food Valley | Greater Lincolnshire LEP](#).

# YOUR NEWS

## THE UK FOOD VALLEY

Already responsible for producing one-eighth of England's food, Greater Lincolnshire is developing the UK Food Valley Programme to position its UK leading food sector as a Top 10 Global Food Cluster.

The UK Food Valley will support growth and encourage inward investment through promoting the scale, diversity and importance of the food sector to the area, and by ensuring that existing food sector companies and new investors are supported.

The UK Food Valley currently supports around 75,000 food sector jobs, 18% of jobs in the area compared to 4% of the UK workforce. At the heart of our food clusters, this concentration is much higher, for example in the South Holland District which focuses on fresh produce and logistics, it is 42% of the local workforce.

Key priorities for the UK Food Valley are:

- Accelerating food chain automation and digital technology adoption to deliver productivity growth and high value jobs;
- Delivering low carbon food chains from farm to fork by focusing on low carbon technologies for production, processing and distribution;
- Developing the market potential of naturally good for you foods and new sources of protein, such as fish, vegetables, salads, fruit, pulses and lean meat, in which Greater Lincolnshire specialises.

The UK Food Valley supports Europe's largest Agri-food Tech automation and robotics cluster and businesses investing in automation, a test-bed for

investors endorsed by the DIT through a High Potential Opportunity (HPO) for Automation in Food Processing. Automation will create more highly skilled jobs, benefitting industry and making the food chain a career of choice for aspirational young people.



The UK Food Valley is leading efforts to reduce carbon emissions from food production by using new technology and skills, new energy sources and production processes, to reduce carbon emissions from food production, processing, transport and storage.

The UK Food Valley was initiated by Greater Lincolnshire LEP supported by industry partners. By maximising collaboration across industry, universities, colleges and local business groups, we support our food companies by ensuring the conditions for growth are provided.



# YOUR NEWS

## FPC FUTURE AND FPC CAREERS

November also saw the first FPC Future and FPC Careers event at the Lincolnshire Showground, organised by the Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC) and University of Lincoln, with UKRI as the official Innovation Partner for the events.

The events were developed to address industry challenges and to showcase the opportunities and innovations available to ensure the sustainable future of our nation's food supply. With 1,350 delegates ranging from industry and academia, including hundreds of students looking for their first job in the fresh produce industry, the event was a great success.

DEFRA Minister Jo Churchill MP attended the event and as a former Lincolnshire County Councillor is very familiar with the area and industry. During her visit Jo also visited the Risholme Park Campus of the University of Lincoln, home of the Lincoln Institute for AgriFood Technology (LIAT), to experience the world leading developments underway in agrirobotics and digital technologies.



FPC's Chief Executive, Nigel Jenney, explained: "We're proud to be able to offer a platform to showcase the amazing innovations that UKRI, and the projects they are supporting, are bringing into focus for the industry."

Tom Jenkins, Deputy Challenge Director for UKRI's

[Transforming Food Production](#) challenge, added:

"Whether it's the use of data, robotics and AI to improve monitoring and measurement, new solutions to prevent pests and disease, or alternative growing and harvesting methods, there are a huge range of exciting innovations being developed across the food sector.

"Being part of key industry events such as FPC's is crucial to our strategy of reaching out to new stakeholders in the industry, so we look forward to showcasing our work so far and engaging with new farmers, growers, researchers and technologists to help inspire solutions to the issues facing the food sector."

In the run up to FPC Future, Prof Simon Pearson, Director of LIAT, Martin Collison, Greater Lincolnshire LEP Agri-food Advisor and Ali Capper, Chair NFU Potato and Horticulture and grower joined Nigel Jenney, Chief Executive Fresh Produce Consortium to record a Food for Thought Podcast, securing the future of our food supply through innovation and new blood, which explored the issues facing the industry and the role technology can play. This is available to listen to [here](#).

All 40 presentations from the event, including one on the UK Food Valley by Martin Collison, are available [here](#).



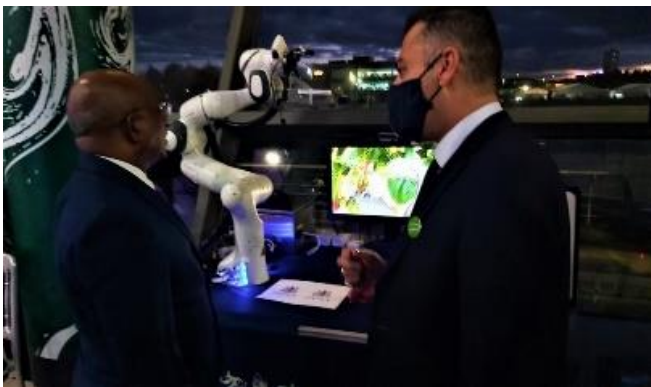
# YOUR NEWS

## UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN SELECTED TO SHOWCASE NET ZERO ROBOTIC FARMING AT COP26

With an estimated 37% of the world's greenhouse gases being produced by the agri-food industry, the UK Government selected the University of Lincoln to showcase the cutting-edge robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) technology which is influencing the future of sustainable food production at COP26.

The Lincoln Institute for Agri-Food Technology (LIAT) exhibited in the public-facing Green Zone exhibition alongside numerous industry leaders at the forefront of climate science. Lincoln's researchers exhibited Robofruit, one of many state-of-the-art agri-tech projects, which uses AI and novel picking technology to harvest ripe fruit. See it in action [here](#).

This research has long-term environmental benefits including reduced food waste by better utilising crops and will also help to address labour shortages in the UK, supporting the route to the use of robotics and AI in agriculture.



**President of the UN, Abdulla Shahid, chats to LIAT Research Fellow Soran Parsa about LIAT work on robotics for agriculture**

The University of Lincoln has one of Europe's largest academic research centres for agri-robotics. Research

carried out by LIAT aims to drive industry sustainability by addressing labour shortages, productivity in global food production and reductions in the environmental impact of farming. LIAT and partners are also responsible for Robot Highways, one of the world's largest robotic farm demonstration projects which delivers a vision for the future of farming. Robots assist farmers by carrying out essential, energy intensive physical farm processes such as picking and packing fruit and treating crops to reduce critical pests and diseases - all powered by renewable energy.

The COP26 exhibition showcased various field activities – including agri-forestry, robotic harvesting and crop care as well as packaging, digitalisation and the employment of artificial intelligence.

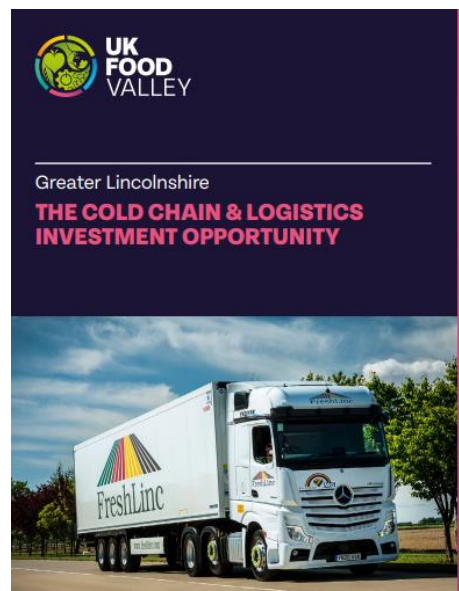
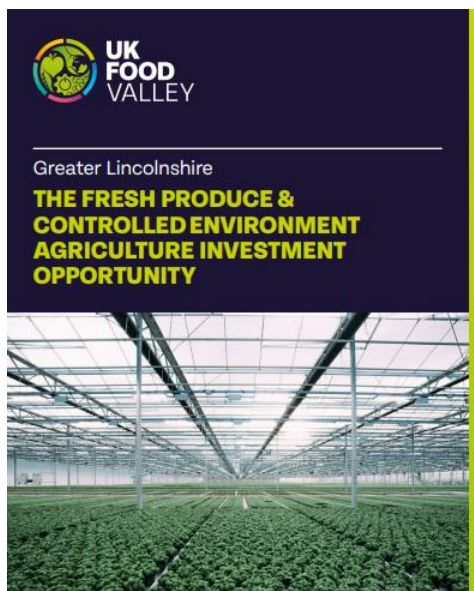
Professor Simon Pearson, Director of the University's Lincoln Institute for Agri-food Technology, said: "The Lincoln Institute for Agri-Food Technology is supporting and enhancing the future of food and agriculture productivity, efficiency, and sustainability through research, education, and technology. We are honoured to be one of the few UK universities to be selected by Government to showcase at COP26."



# YOUR NEWS

## UK FOOD VALLEY SECTOR INVESTMENT PROPOSITIONS

As part of the UK Food Valley launch, the team launched three focused sector propositions on the parts of the industry where there is believed to be the largest potential for growth: [fresh produce and controlled environment agriculture](#); [seafood and aquaculture](#); [cool chain and logistics](#).



## LINCOLNSHIRE LUXURY FOOD & DRINK START-UP SPONSORS CELEBRITY LONDON BOOK LAUNCH

IMP & MAKER launched their luxury Christmas Cocktail Hamper range at legendary Soho private members club, Blacks, the former home of Charles Fortnum on 15<sup>th</sup> November.

Blacks Private Members club saw a truly scrumptious gathering of UK-based celebrities to launch the leading psychic Sally Morgan's new book with the evening's delicacies sponsored by Lincolnshire's luxury food and drink experience company, IMP & MAKER.

The Vice Chair of the Greater Lincolnshire LEP, and Chair of the Food Board, award-winning entrepreneur Sarah Louise Fairburn, founded her new start-up to challenge and surpass other hamper companies by curating beautiful hampers and gift experiences. Sarah Louise said: "Our products are created to be enjoyed in the here and now, with every detail carefully considered and sourced impeccably from the finest producers in Lincolnshire, the UK and beyond to create exceptional culinary experiences that can really be cherished".

*Continued...*



# YOUR NEWS

## Continued...

Bringing a decade's worth of experience from the food industry after working with many of the country's top UK retailers, Sarah Louise understands food and drink and believes in working with growers and producers to create exemplary products through sourcing ethically with social conscience and holding sustainability at the height of this emerging new brands agenda.

Sarah Louise Fairburn has embarked on this new venture bringing together an eclectic mix of fresh food and drink produce to create beautiful hamper and gift experiences that can be delivered to a location of choice and are all packed by hand for extra quality and care at IMP & MAKERS HQ based in the UK Food Valley. "We exclusively showcased our cocktail and charcuterie range for Sally Morgan and her guests with our infamous IMP & MAKER Blackcurrant Vodka Liquor sure to raise the roof and a couple of 'spirits'," said Sarah Louise.

"We are huge fans of Sally's work and are proud to have sponsored this incredible event. We are delighted to be toasting to Sally's success in the historic venue, in our great capital, with a delicious glass or two of fizz topped with our divine new IMP & MAKER Vodka Liquor."

Upon the launch of her latest book, Sally Morgan commented: "I am delighted to have IMP & MAKER supporting me on this special evening, their impeccably sourced products, support for sustainable farming, reducing carbon footprint and the passion driven through this fresh new venture led by Sarah Louise and her team is setting the standards high for all food producers and suppliers worldwide."

## SEAFOOD SECTOR BOOST FROM COMMUNITY RENEWAL FUND

A grant of £433,510 has been secured from the Community Renewal Fund (CRF) by the UK Food Valley pilot for the seafood sector in North-East Lincolnshire to support a programme focused on skills and innovation managed by the National Centre for Food Manufacturing (NCFM) in conjunction with local partners in the seafood cluster and Seafish, the national body which supports the seafood industry and whose HQ is in Grimsby.

The seafood cluster is one of the priorities for the UK Food Valley, with over half of all UK fish processing now concentrated in Grimsby in a sector which is

growing as consumers and public policy both seek to increase seafood consumption, as both a healthy and low carbon protein option.

The CRF project is intended to create lessons for future larger projects developed as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) which will replace EU Structural Funding from April 2022. **Continued...**



# YOUR NEWS & NATIONAL NEWS

## *Continued...*

Grimsby's seafood cluster is the largest in Europe and this has been recognised in a new investment proposition issued by the UK Food Valley in November 2021, which is available [here](#).

## GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE AND NEW ANGLIA LEPS COLLABORATE WITH THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY ON AGRI-TECH PROMOTION

The LEP and Mayoral Authorities covering Greater Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk have collaborated as part of AgriTech Week, to make a commitment to work together on agrifood sector and linked technology development.

The combined area is a national powerhouse for the agriculture, food and technology industries with 57% of England's vegetables production; 39% of the poultry; 30% of wheat, oilseed rape and protein crops; 30% of the pig herd, and 30% of ornamental crops originating here.

With 75 people at the webinar, the partners agreed to build on existing collaborative projects such as the CDT for agri-robotics, with a commitment to work together on tackling net zero, digital transition and healthier diets, with a focus on:

- Leading transformational projects which help deliver the transition to net zero.
- Tackling energy and water infrastructure challenges.
- Securing investment in phase two of the CERES agri-tech translational programme.
- Building on the region's Agri-Food Robotics Centre for Doctoral Training partnership.
- Spearheading mission-based approaches to lead the agri-food robotics agenda

Presentations from the event are available to view [here](#). Those interested in working across this region on agrifood development are invited to contact the UK Food Valley team.





# YOUR NEWS & NATIONAL NEWS

## *Continued...*

With 75 people at the webinar, the partners agreed to build on existing collaborative projects such as the CDT for agri-robotics, with a commitment to work together on tackling net zero, digital transition and healthier diets, with a focus on:

- Leading transformational projects which help deliver the transition to net zero.
- Tackling energy and water infrastructure challenges.
- Securing investment in phase two of the CERES agri-tech translational programme.
- Building on the region's Agri-Food Robotics Centre for Doctoral Training partnership.
- Spearheading mission-based approaches to lead the agri-food robotics agenda

Presentations from the event are available to view [here](#). Those interested in working across this region on agrifood development are invited to contact the UK Food Valley team.

## GRIMSBY FISH CLUSTER MEETS MP AND PARTNERS TO SCOPE INNOVATION AND SKILLS CENTRE

On 5<sup>th</sup> November a team of industry members from major seafood processors and the cluster group met the MP for Greater Grimsby Lia Nici, to discuss plans to develop an innovation and skills centre. *Continued...*



*Lia Nici MP Great Grimsby (centre) meets representatives of the Seafood cluster, NCFM at the University of Lincoln, Seafish and UK Food Valley*

# YOUR NEWS & NATIONAL NEWS

## Continued...

Martin Collison of the UK Food Valley team, who was present at the meeting, said: "The UK Food Valley is delighted to see the initiative being taken by the seafood cluster, working with the University of Lincoln, Grimsby Institute and Seafish to develop a centre to support skills and innovation.

"As the UK transitions to a low carbon food chain, with more use of automation and embraces actions to use dietary change to support improved health, it is vital that we support the development of skills and innovation in the seafood industry. The UK Food Valley looks forward to working with the seafood cluster to secure the support for this centre which can benefit the region and the seafood sector nationally."

The team developing the proposals, led by Dean of the National Centre for Food Manufacturing (NCFM) Professor Val Braybrooks and Simon Dwyer of the Seafood Grimsby and Humber Alliance met with DEFRA to discuss the proposals, and welcomes input from anyone in the industry who would like to get involved in this development. For further information please contact Simon Dwyer at: [simon@seafont.no](mailto:simon@seafont.no)

## INDUSTRY SUCCESSFULLY LOBBIES FOR A16 UPGRADES TO BENEFIT SOUTH LINCOLNSHIRE FOOD SECTOR

The A16 is to benefit from £19.5m of investment from the Levelling Up Fund to address pinch-points on this strategic road which links the UK's largest food production and logistics cluster in South Lincolnshire to A1.

The farming and food sector in Boston and South Holland districts employs over 30,000 people and is the UK's largest logistics hub for the food chain with over 1,200 lorry loads of food leaving Spalding every day for UK and international food markets.

The local councils worked with Lincolnshire County Council and the local food industry, including FreshLinc Ltd, Fowler Welch, Worldwide Fruit Limited, Karsten UK Limited, Davis Worldwide LTD, Ripe Now and many others, supported by the UK Fresh Produce Network to successfully influence and make the case for these upgrades.

With the continued rapid evolution of the industry, moves to decarbonise transport and change in how products reach consumers, continued investment in the supply chain will be essential as highlighted in the new UK Food Valley investment proposition for logistics and the cool chain, available [here](#).



# YOUR NEWS & NATIONAL NEWS

## GRIMSBY TRADITIONAL SMOKED FISH PRODUCTION TO GET A BOOST

The Great Grimsby Ice Factory Trust (GGIFT) is delighted to announce that planning permission has been granted for the Grade II listed building to be restored as a traditional fish smokehouse. Its landmark chimney cowl will be preserved, and an internal staircase, office and mess facilities will be installed.

In 2009, Traditional Grimsby Smoked Fish was awarded Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status by the European Commission and only fish which are cold smoked in accordance with the traditional method, and within Grimsby smokehouses such as Peterson's, can use this name.

The project also includes the renovation of the empty 'Fred's Fish' building, which sits opposite on Wharncliffe Road, for use as offices and a cafe. When complete, it is intended that both buildings will be let out and the revenue invested in future projects.



## LAUNCH OF NEW WEBSITE AIMED AT BOOSTING INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Three leading UK industry bodies have joined forces to launch an initiative aimed at boosting trade opportunities for British companies around the world. **UK Technology for Agriculture and Genetics** (UK TAG), the **Commercial Horticultural Association** (CHA) and the **Agricultural Engineers Association** (AEA) are working together to promote the skills, innovation and technology capabilities of their members.

A major part of this collaboration is the launch of a new website on behalf of the Department for International Trade (DIT), which will enable overseas businesses to source British companies from an extensive directory and food businesses can now create their own free profile and register on the [Agri-Tech UK](#) website.

The AgriTech-UK Directory, featuring companies and products from across the UK, will be a focal point and

main source of contact for overseas farmers, breeders, growers and the agricultural industry in general. The portal will also enable overseas embassies and government trade departments to find UK companies and their specialist services.

The user functionality on the website's directory offers a complete experience for both producers and buyers alike. Key information is featured on producer profiles, including products, and services – and is navigable by sector, product and region. By signing up to the platform, users will gain exclusive access to several 'Meet the Buyer' events each year, as well as the ability to communicate directly with international buyers through an internal messaging system.

Similar portals to promote UK food producers overseas can also be found at: [Great British Food Programme](#) and the [UK's Finest Marketplace](#)



# YOUR NEWS & NATIONAL NEWS

## CERES AGRITECH LAUNCHES FIRST SPINOUTS



Ceres Agri-Tech launched its first three spin-outs last month. CERES Agri-Tech is a government-backed knowledge exchange partnership designed to revolutionise the creation and uptake of early-stage agricultural technology (agri-tech) opportunities.

Robotic mushroom picking, strawberry yield forecasting and new bio-based materials to drive down the carbon footprint of car manufacturing are the focus of the first three companies to emerge from projects funded by Ceres Agri-Tech. CERES is a partnership between five leading UK universities, including the University of Lincoln and three renowned agricultural research institutes.

Two of the spinouts, Agaricus Robots and Fruitcast, were supported by the University of Lincoln.

The market for fresh mushrooms in the UK is worth £450 million and growing. But until now, the picking has had to be done by hand to prevent damage to the delicate structure of mushrooms. Existing robotic harvesters are not suitable for mushrooms – which is a major issue as the industry struggles to cope with the current labour shortages. The Ceres Agaricus Robotics project is developing a robot that can harvest

even the most challenging dense clusters of mushrooms. "In the UK alone, approximately 4,500 people are required every day to pick mushrooms – with labour costs representing a third of total production costs," said Agaricus Robotics founder Bashir Al Diri.

"It takes up to six months to train a picker and their skill determines the productivity of each mushroom bed. But our patented intelligent mushroom harvesting robot can pick whole crops without bruising the mushrooms and will lead to 20-30% yield increases from optimised 24/7 harvesting 365 days a year. The backing of Ceres is proving invaluable as we now accelerate the commercialisation of our technology."

Another Ceres spin-out FruitCast is focused on strawberry yield improvements, with an innovative forecasting system based on AI-enabled data analytics. Image data from hand, vehicle or robot mounted cameras is used to measure individual fruit numbers, along with the weight and maturity state of millions of berries each day. This data is combined with weather forecasts in algorithms to predict yield with unrivalled accuracy six weeks ahead of existing systems.

**Continued...**

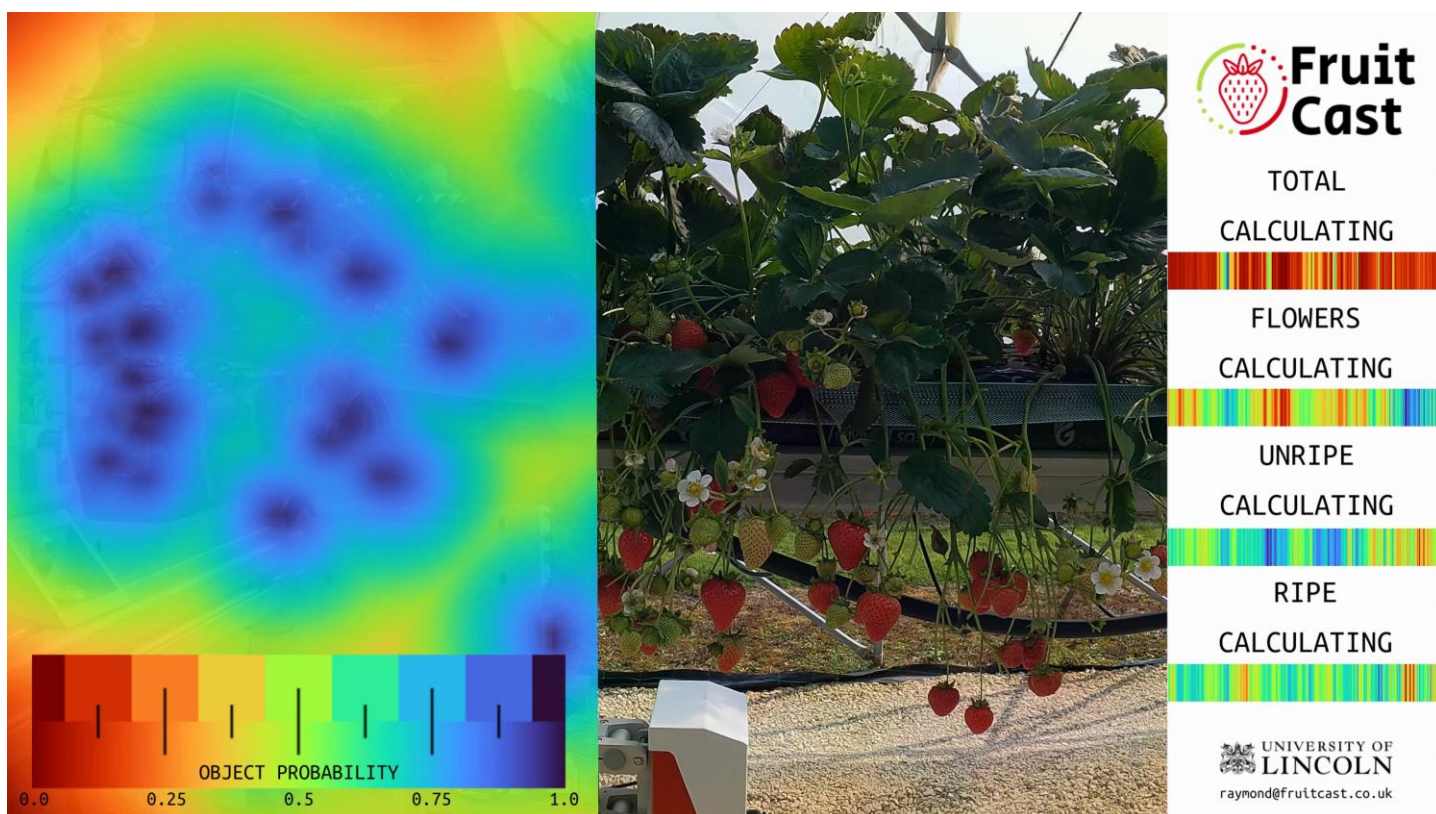
# YOUR NEWS & NATIONAL NEWS

*Continued...*

"The UK produces 120,000 tonnes of strawberries each year, with a retail value of £659 million," said Fruitcast founder Raymond Kirk. "Predicting the timing and yield of strawberries is critical for the industry – but extremely difficult to do accurately. Thanks to the support of Ceres, we are creating a system that will not only benefit strawberry growers through improved sales but also reduce supply chain friction and crop waste."

Led by Cambridge Enterprise, the commercialisation arm of the University of Cambridge, Ceres was launched in 2018, funded by Research England, to commercialise innovative agri-tech based on university research. The partners are the University of East Anglia, the University of Hertfordshire, the University of Lincoln and the University of Reading, as well as NIAB (National Institute of Agricultural Botany), Rothamsted Research and the John Innes Centre.

"The launch of our first three spin-out companies is evidence of the success of the Ceres collaboration and testament to the quality of agri-tech innovation in UK universities," said Ceres Agri-Tech director Dr Louise Sutherland. "Alongside our commercialisation work with other projects in our pipeline, we are now also embarking on the next phase of Ceres and exploring new funding opportunities to enable us to accelerate our supply of innovative solutions to address the agri-tech problems of today and tomorrow."



# YOUR NEWS & NATIONAL NEWS

## COTEMACO INTERREG PROJECT HELPS LINCOLNSHIRE FOOD BUSINESS AUTOMATE

The Lincolnshire Drizzle Company has been supported by the COTEMACO Interreg project to improve its efficiency through automation with a current production of around 500 units per week, projected to climb to 5,000 units per week within two years.

The support included reviewing the production processes, making recommendations on the changes which would help expand production in a cost-effective way and ensuring the company had the skills to automate. Whilst in many cases cobots (robots which work with humans) are a key step on the road to increased productivity, COTEMACO also helps SMEs adopt simple, often low cost, changes to their production systems through factory layout or process adjustments which can deliver improved efficiency.

Via the SME support programme, COTEMACO engages with SMEs from the automotive and food sectors through field labs. These regional field labs in the UK, the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany are showcasing key production steps in the automotive and food industries, in order to tackle current low sectorial awareness and knowledge gaps. In the COTEMACO programme, manufacturing SMEs are guided through the process of adopting collaborative robotic and shop floor digitalisation technologies, from the exploration of technological opportunities to the detailed definition of a business plan.

Food businesses who want to become part of [COTEMACO](#) are invited to visit the project website to find out more



## NATIONAL CENTRE FOR FOOD MANUFACTURING (NCFM) WELCOMES NEW STAFF

Two new team members have joined the National Centre for Food Manufacturing (NCFM) bringing a wealth of industrial experience to benefit students and the many food businesses which the NCFM supports.

*Continued...*



# YOUR NEWS & NATIONAL NEWS



## **Darren Bevan – Senior Lecturer in Food Operations and Supply Chain Management, University of Lincoln**

Darren has over 20 years of food industry experience supporting the growth of small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Before joining the university, Darren was Commercial Director for Industrial Sales at JDM Food Group Ltd, where he spearheaded the strategic development of the industrial sales team in exotic and short-life vegetables, leading across functional working and the management of national accounts for both private label and branded offerings.

With a deep understanding of the criticality of supply chain sustainability and with broad experience of UK food manufacturing at a senior level, Darren is looking forward to working with students to help them to develop their own skills and knowledge, and to using his commercial and leadership skills to help the many SME businesses that the NCFM supports on the South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone and further afield to grow and thrive in the years ahead.

## **Sarah Green – Senior Lecturer in Food Manufacturing (Programme Leader – Higher and Degree Apprenticeships in Engineering), University of Lincoln**

Sarah has over 27 years of experience in the food industry working within the chilled sector with businesses producing goods that include dips and dressings, chocolate, chicken slaughter and further processing, cooked meats, pork pies, and salads. Before joining the university, Sarah was Operations Controller for Greencore in Boston (formerly Freshtime Ltd), where she was instrumental in the site's transition from a family to group-controlled business, securing new business with three major retailers and the delivery of several large capital investment projects that saw major change, including the development of a dedicated vegan production facility.

Sarah's expertise covers all aspects of the operational function and the interdependency of engineering colleagues, supply chain and other support functional members at all organisational levels. Sarah is looking forward to working with the students to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of the industry. She is also keen to use her knowledge and leadership skills to develop relationships with all manufacturers that the NCFM supports both within Lincolnshire and further afield to create more opportunities.



# FUNDING & ADVICE

## BUSINESS LINCOLNSHIRE BRINGS AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE ADVICE ON TRADE AND NEW ENTERPRISES

Owing to ongoing issues with exports and imports, [Business Lincolnshire](#) has formed a panel of experts to help advise agricultural and horticultural businesses involved in exporting and importing goods.

The team is made up of Paul Ward, agricultural and horticultural adviser with over 30 years in the local and international produce sector; Andrea Collins, from the Export Department, who can answer very specific questions on importing and exporting relevant to your business; Jason Pollock, DEFRA delivery lead on exports, biosecurity, and borders and trade programme; Richard Hindley, Senior Local APHA adviser on plant health for South Holland and North Norfolk; Mike Stokes, Growth Hub Exports Adviser, Business Lincolnshire; and Sara Hutchinson, MD of freight forwarder, RISA, based in Grantham.

If you have a specific query, please contact Paul [paul.ward@bizlincolnshire.com](mailto:paul.ward@bizlincolnshire.com), Andrea [acollins@exportdept.co.uk](mailto:acollins@exportdept.co.uk), or Mike [exports@bizlincolnshire.com](mailto:exports@bizlincolnshire.com).

In addition, there is now a free government one-to-one online service for help & advice [here](#). To ask a question by phone, the export support team can also be contacted on 0300 303 8955 and text phone option: 18001 303 8955. The service operates Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.

There is increasing pressure on traditional food crop production in our area thanks to increasing costs, some of which have doubled in the last year and static or falling returns. At the same time, farmers will be losing EU subsidies from 2027, so Business Lincolnshire is looking at a range of alternative enterprises which can also fit with the environmental stewardship models being proposed currently by government. The focus is on combining sustainability, carbon accounting and regenerative agriculture while reducing the distances food travels from field to fork.

If you would like to be part of the programme to look at new farm enterprises, please contact [paul.ward@bizlincolnshire.com](mailto:paul.ward@bizlincolnshire.com)

---

## FARMING INNOVATION FUND LAUNCHED

On 20<sup>th</sup> October DEFRA launched the Farming Innovation Programme to boost the future of farming, with an initial allocation of £17.5 million to support agri-tech innovation.

The Farming Innovation Programme is made up of three funds: the industry-led R&D partnerships fund, the farming futures R&D fund, and the projects to accelerate adoption fund.

The Farming Innovation Programme, one of the new measures set out in the Government's [Agricultural Transition Plan](#), will support ambitious projects to transform productivity and enhance environmental sustainability in England's agricultural and horticultural sectors, while driving the sectors towards net zero.

*Continued...*

# FUNDING & ADVICE

## *Continued...*

In partnership with UK Research & Innovation (UKRI), DEFRA is making £17.5 million available for the first round of the three funds which make up the programme. The first fund to open is the R&D Partnerships Fund, where farmers, growers, foresters and businesses can bid for funding to develop new technologies and practices to exploit new opportunities in the sector such as the use of artificial intelligence and low-emission machineries to optimise the production process, and the development of climate-resilient crops.

Early in 2022, DEFRA will launch the Farming Futures R&D Fund, for strategic projects aimed at tackling climate change by reducing the environmental impact of farming, and the third of the funds, called Projects to Accelerate Adoption Fund, will launch later in 2022 to support farmer-led projects to trial the viability of new innovations on farm.

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State and former Lincolnshire County Councillor, Jo Churchill, said: "Innovation is vital to address the challenges facing the agricultural and horticultural sectors. New ideas, technologies and processes will play a key role in helping farmers, growers and businesses to become more productive. The Farming Innovation Programme will enable the sector to be more environmentally sustainable and resilient, while helping it achieve its net zero ambitions. I encourage all eligible businesses and individuals to apply."

The Farming Innovation Programme expands on DEFRA's partnership with UKRI for the recent [Farming Innovation Pathways competition](#), which saw huge demand from the sector and attracted many high-quality applications to innovate the horticulture and farming industry, when launched earlier this year. Links to all the competitions are in the agri-tech funding hotlist below.

## THE AGRI-TECH 'HOT FUNDING' LIST

If you are working in agriculture, farming or food production then these funds may help. The agri-tech research teams at the University of Lincoln are expert at working with industry to build practical solutions to productivity, transportation and growing challenges for food and farming.

If you have a process, resource or technology challenge inside your farm or food business, then get in touch at [LAR@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:LAR@lincoln.ac.uk) or for Innovate UK enquiries at the University of Lincoln at [mvals@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:mvals@lincoln.ac.uk)

- **Farming Innovation Programme - research starter pilot (DEFRA)**

This programme supports the development of early-stage ideas that aim to solve major challenges in the farming and forestry sectors. Funding covers up to 70% of the total eligible costs for projects with budgets worth between £28,000 and £56,000 and lasting up to one year. **Closing date 24<sup>th</sup> November 2021.** [Find out more here.](#)



# FUNDING

## THE AGRI-TECH 'HOT FUNDING' LIST

- **Farming Innovation Programme - small R&D partnership projects (DEFRA)**

This supports industrial research studies that will help England's farmers, growers and foresters to boost productivity, enhance sustainable practices, improve environmental outcomes and reduce carbon emissions in England's agricultural and horticultural sectors. Up to £11 million will be allocated to fund projects in this competition. **Closing date 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021.** [Find out more here.](#)

- **Farming Innovation Programme - feasibility projects (DEFRA)**

Feasibility studies investigating new solutions that will address major on-farm or immediate post farmgate challenges or opportunities. Grants are worth up to 70% of the total eligible costs for projects with budgets worth between £200,000 and £500,000 and lasting for up to two years. **Closing date 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021.** [Find out more here.](#)

- **Responsive Mode – Industrial Partnership Awards (Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council)**

These support academic-led research projects in collaboration with industry, where industrial partners contribute in cash funding. BBSRC covers 80% of the full project costs. **Closing date 29<sup>th</sup> January 2022 (forecast).** [Find out more here.](#)

- **Farming Equipment and Technology Fund: Round 1 manual**

This annex details the required Specification and Grant amount of eligible items, for sectors such as horticulture, forestry, livestock, and more. [Find out more here.](#)

- **Farming Investment Fund**

This fund provides grants to improve productivity and bring environmental benefits. FIF is made up of 2 separate funds: the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund (for grants between £2,000 and £25,000) and Farming Transformation Fund (for grants between £35,000 and £500,000). **Closing date 7<sup>th</sup> January 2022.** [Find out more here.](#)

- **COMING SOON: Industry-led R&D partnerships fund – large partnership projects DEFRA**

\*\*\* This opportunity will be available soon. The next call is expected to open in early 2022. The following information is subject to change. This call supports businesses and academics who want to carry out larger scale R&D for innovative solutions that have the potential to substantially improve overall productivity, sustainability and resilience of the farming sector. Projects are worth between £3 million and £5m for up to four years. \*\*\* **Closing date not known.** [Find out more here.](#)



**UK  
FOOD  
VALLEY**

**PIONEERING SUSTAINABILITY  
THROUGH INNOVATION**

[WWW.GREATERLINCOLNSHIRELEP.CO.UK](http://WWW.GREATERLINCOLNSHIRELEP.CO.UK)

