

## LEP CONFERENCE ONE YEAR ON

*In her latest blog for the UK Food Valley, Sarah Louise Fairburn reflects on the launch of the programme at last year's conference, and casts an eye on over the latest economic, social and business challenges which have since made our food and drink businesses even more resilient.*

It's a year since we launched the UK Food Valley at the LEP Conference in November 2021 and while we have much to celebrate, we have once again been exposed to extreme external events with a major impact on our food industry. Yet I remain inspired and prouder than ever of our determined, passionate, and resilient food and drink industries as we see them respond with tenacity, versatility, and a focus on getting the job done, come what may.

A new year brought new hope, and Covid was beginning to have less impact on our lives and businesses as we dared to welcome the start of greater stability which helped to make decisions on which we build our businesses.



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# LEP CONFERENCE ONE YEAR ON

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Russia's catastrophic invasion of Ukraine in February disrupted our food markets and energy intensive production costs. Fertiliser rose fourfold and has risen even higher this autumn, while gas and electricity climbed exponentially with fuel quotes of up to six times higher, meaning our businesses are again under very real pressure.

Against this backdrop, you could be forgiven for thinking that investment had slowed or even stopped. In contrast, our UK Food Valley has seen major industry and local government investments in support of our food chains. We have seen huge expansions of glasshouse fruit production, and multiple planned developments for fruit, salads, vegetables, and ornamental crops. We are also welcoming major investments in plant protein, including innovative new processes at Branston Potatoes and Naylor Nutrition to use lower grade fresh produce to extract proteins. Meanwhile, Plant and Bean, Europe's largest plant protein factory based its new site near Skegness, and a major development by Princes in pea facilities is another key investment in this area. And our first exciting local investment in insect protein production is nearing completion as we cement our role as a strategic location for all food proteins from meat and fish to eggs, plant, and insects.

We are also seeing key investments in cold store and emerging projects in food freight to spearhead the road to net zero and are very pleased to see our food chain investing in new low carbon innovations.

We also now have multiple fish farms in the planning process and are moving forwards quickly with some fantastic developments to drive forward the UK

aquaculture sector and over the coming months we expect to have major sector announcements, so watch this space!

For over a decade now we have supported the growth of skills, innovation, and commercialisation for technology adoption in the food chain. This year the University of Lincoln's food chain teams have gone from strength to strength. The UK Innovation Strategy highlighted the work of the university on food chain automation as a globally important cluster and Professor Simon Pearson chaired a government review with the former DEFRA Secretary of State on automation in horticulture.

The flagship South Lincolnshire FEZ Hub centre of excellence for SMEs and an Institute of Technology building opened this year with strategic UK Food Valley partners, and the UKFV team has been busy promoting our food cluster both regionally, nationally, and internationally, leading new partnerships, landing investments, and influencing policymakers.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the UK Food Valley businesses and strategic partners in collaboration with the Greater Lincolnshire LEP, in bringing the ambition to create a top 10 food cluster to reality.

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## LEP CONFERENCE ONE YEAR ON

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We are back at the LEP Conference next week on 10<sup>th</sup> November and will be making an exciting announcement. So please join us by [registering here](#) to hear more about the investments, projects and programmes underway in our sector, together with our other three game-changing sectors in ports, energy, and defence alongside discussions on labour and energy.

We are bringing improved food security, economic opportunity, and a greener food chain for the whole country, as well as high value opportunities for our communities and workforce, and we urge you to join us on this journey.

Thank you.



**SLF x**





# YOUR NEWS

## OUR GAME-CHANGING SECTORS ARE AGRI-FOOD, DEFENCE, PORTS, AND ENERGY

THURSDAY 10TH NOVEMBER 2022

EPIC Centre, Lincolnshire Showground



#LEPConference2022 #LeadingTheWay #GameChangers

*(Neil Collishaw, Worldwide Fruits speaking at last year's LEP Conference in November 2021)*

## LEP CONFERENCE: LEADING THE WAY

Our [Greater Lincolnshire – Leading the Way](#) conference takes place next week on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2022 at the EPIC Centre, Lincolnshire Showground and we'd love to see you there!

It is a fantastic opportunity for business leaders to pose questions and share views so please share with your colleagues, contacts, and networks.

Lincolnshire's four game-changing sectors will take centre stage at our Greater Lincolnshire LEP Annual Conference. Agrifood, defence, ports and energy are areas with enormous potential for growth and will be unpacked and discussed by a range of experts at the conference focusing on 'Building a Greater Lincolnshire'.

The conference will offer something for all business

sectors and will highlight and discuss the challenges posed by the cost-of-living crisis, rising energy prices, skills gaps, and labour shortages.

Delegates will be able to engage and take part in panel discussions and can expect some insightful and enlightening debate from our experts, as well as an opportunity to network and browse the exhibition during the day.

Greater Lincolnshire – Leading the Way takes place from 8.30am until 1.30pm on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2022. Register for your free ticket to the conference by visiting [the Eventbrite page](#).

Last tickets remaining so book now to avoid disappointment!

# YOUR NEWS

## DEFRA LAUNCHES BUSINESS SURVEY ON LABOUR SHORTAGES IN THE FOOD CHAIN

The review was announced under the Food Strategy in August 2022 to tackle labour shortages in the food supply chain. It will draw together data on the nature and scale of labour shortages, consider how automation, domestic and migrant labour can contribute to tackling labour shortages, and make recommendations to Government.

The review is chaired by John Shropshire, farmer and outgoing Chair of G's Group, supported by an expert panel. The purpose of the survey is to inform understanding of challenges in the following sectors:

- Farming including pigs, eggs, poultry, red meat, dairy, arable and edible horticulture.
- Primary processing, including meat processing and seafood processing.
- Food and non-alcoholic drink manufacturing.

The survey is being administered and processed by DEFRA analysts. Information will be stored securely, anonymised and collated in a report such that businesses and individuals cannot be identified. The survey is available [here](#).

Professor Sharon Green, Director of Apprenticeships and Skills at the University of Lincoln based at the National Centre for Food Manufacturing (NCFM), has stressed the importance of businesses responding to this consultation:

*“At the university, challenges on workforce supply have been a long-standing issue for many of the food chain employers we work with.*

*“At NCFM we have taken proactive steps with the industry to try to address these challenges, such as leading the creation of the Lincoln Institute of Technology which will have 1,700 students by 2026 with most focused on food chain, engineering and technology careers.*

*“But we know more needs to be done and it is important that the industry takes the time to feed into this important government review to explain the challenges you are having with labour supply.”*



(Above: Prof Sharon Green)

Professor Simon Pearson, Director of the Lincoln Institute of AgriFood Technology (LIAT) also welcomed the review, which builds on the DEFRA report on Automation in Horticulture published in summer 2022 which he co-chaired with the former DEFRA Secretary of State, George Eustice MP.

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# YOUR NEWS

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Simon said that: *"Throughout the horticulture automation review I saw first hand how labour challenges are impacting the growth of our industry right across the UK. With the University of Lincoln leading on agrifood automation nationally, I am keen for us all to understand what we need to do to turbo-charge automation in the sector and would urge the industry to feed into this review which covers the whole of the food chain."*

If you have any further questions, [please email the team](#).



## LEADING A FOOD REVOLUTION

In early September, Marketing Humber partnered with Team Lincolnshire for its latest bondholder breakfast event 'Leading a Food Revolution' at the DoubleTree by Hilton Forest Pines, Brigg. The panel of five speakers discussed some of the biggest challenges facing the sector, and highlighted stories of success and their visions for the future of food.

Martin Collison, Agrifood Advisor to the Greater Lincolnshire LEP in the UK Food Valley Team, hosted the event. Martin reviewed the national challenges, and commercial and policy agendas in the food and drink sector. He discussed the opportunities we have in the UK and more specifically in our region, noting the leading role Greater Lincolnshire and the Humber play in national food security.

Hilary Hamer, Chair of the Hull Food Partnership, gave an insight into the Rooted in Hull campaign, the city's urban farm, to support members of the community. She also discussed the work undertaken by the Hull Food Partnership, which works to combat food insecurity – something faced by 20% of the population.



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Grahame Dunling (right) created the UK's first vertical farm and joined the panel to share how he brought the concept to Hull, which is now in operation at Worldwide Local Salads, to produce tasty, nutritious salads that are full of flavour. Grahame explained how his business works to support the community, while placing sustainability high on the list of priorities.



Barton-based Chef and Cookery Academy owner Nigel Brown (left) shared his journey to becoming a renowned chef and why he chose to return to the region to share his passion with the community, which, he said, is full of people passionate about food. Nigel spoke about the need to attract young people into the food chain and to support them to fulfil their potential.

Completing the line-up was Simon Dwyer (right), Director of Seafood Grimsby and Humber Alliance, which represents the region's seafood processing and trading cluster. Simon shared fascinating insights about the region, from which 70% of the UK's seafood is sourced. Simon discussed the future of seafood, and the opportunities presented by freeports to maximise our seafood cluster.



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Organised by Marketing Humber in partnership with event sponsor Team Lincolnshire, the event saw a turn-out of over 100 delegates to hear the latest sector updates, network with faces new and old, and celebrate the fantastic food and drink our regions have to offer.

Refreshments were sponsored by Lincoln's Stoke's Tea and Coffee, and South Cave-based Drewton's created a deluxe grazing table comprised of some of the region's most outstanding, delicious and highest-quality local produce.

Twelve exhibitors from across the Humber and Greater Lincolnshire joined the event, to share their stories, products and produce with delegates. These included: AAK, Bluestorm, East Yorkshire Local Food Network, FareShare, Hull Food Partnership, The Original Cake Co., Optimum Safety, Raisthorpe Manor and Distillery, Stoke's Tea and Coffee, Tech Week Humber, and Yorkshire Media.

[Watch a video of the event here.](#) [A full report on the event is available here.](#)

## SOUTH LINCOLNSHIRE FOOD ENTERPRISE ZONE CELEBRATES OFFICIAL OPENING

The future of food production in the UK has taken a step forward after the official opening of the South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone (FEZ). The event, which marks the completion of the first phase of the FEZ, took place at the recently opened site just outside Holbeach on Thursday 22nd September and is a partnership between the University of Lincoln, the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Lincolnshire County Council and South Holland District Council.

This first phase of the FEZ includes the University of Lincoln's National Centre for Food Manufacturing (NCFM), Lincolnshire County Council's Hub for SMEs and The Institute of Technology Digital Food Manufacturing Centre and represent over £16m of investment to support Greater Lincolnshire's agri-food sector and help position it as the UK Food Valley, a top 10 global centre for international food trade. *Continued...*





# YOUR NEWS

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The Hub is a high-tech state-of-the-art business centre, designed to encourage and promote collaboration and innovation, whilst being flexible to suit the needs of all start-up businesses and SMEs in the agri-food tech sector. The building comprises of multi-use office and workshop space, as well as providing support services and networking opportunities and offers specialised, collaborative environments and flexible, cost-effective property solutions, enabling food industry participants to exchange knowledge, boost productivity and grow.

The Hub is excellently placed to ensure that businesses have the space, support and skills needed to innovate, and focus on the needs of the sector to ensure success and growth in the future. Office space can be tailored to suit needs, with offices and workshops available on flexible lease terms and inclusive rents.

Office space ranges from 11m<sup>2</sup> to 32m<sup>2</sup>, and workshops range from 33m<sup>2</sup> to 38m<sup>2</sup>, both available with inclusive rent and flexible lease terms. The Hub also offers virtual tenancies, helping to create a professional image for your business without the cost of physical premises. Visit the [South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone website](#) for more information. [To view the full story click here.](#)

## ANGLIAN WATER OPENS CONSULTATION ON SOUTH LINCOLNSHIRE RESERVOIR

Anglian Water has announced plans for two new reservoirs to serve the region, one in Lincolnshire, and another in the Fens. In partnership with Cambridge Water, these reservoirs will secure a reliable supply of water for the future and create new opportunities for the region to thrive, and will help protect the region from future climate events including hotter summers and potential future droughts.

A short video presentation on the new reservoirs can be viewed [here](#).

Hannah Stanley-Jones, Head of Future Resources Strategy at Anglian Water said:

*“Our water supplies are under pressure from climate change, the need to protect the environment, and from a growing population. We will need to supply hundreds of millions more litres of drinking water a day by the 2050s.*

*“At Anglian Water we’re never still and we never stop. We are constantly looking for new and innovative ways to improve and plan for our region’s future prosperity and water supply. In doing so we are confident we will create new places for people to visit and enjoy, economic opportunities for communities and protected habitats for wildlife.”*

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Anglian Water has committed to ensuring that the new reservoirs have a wider positive impact, including by ensuring they protect biodiversity and minimise risks from drought and flooding. It is also stepping up work to manage leakage and will be investing around £1.4 billion in water resources and the environment by 2025.

The reservoir in Lincolnshire has been proposed following a thorough multi-stage site selection assessment process. The proposals are still at an early stage and the phase one consultations for the two new reservoirs are now open.

To view the proposals for a new reservoir in Lincolnshire and take part in this consultation, visit the project website [here](#).

2022 will be remembered as the year when many temperature records were broken in Lincolnshire and across the UK, with the drought in Europe reported as being the most severe in 500 years. For future food security it is therefore essential that we invest in water security for the future. We would urge everyone in the industry to have their say in this consultation.

The UK Food Valley welcomes the proposals for increased reservoir capacity, with the need for more secure water supplies identified in the first Greater Lincolnshire AgriFood Sector Plan in 2014 and the Greater Lincolnshire Water Management Plan launched in 2016.

## APPLICATIONS OPEN FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD INVESTMENT READINESS PROGRAMME 2022



Innovate UK KTN is looking for innovative UK SMEs who wish to seek private investment to fast-track sustainable food innovation and would benefit from investment pitch training, mentorship, and an opportunity to present to investors at an Investment Showcase Event.

Supporting and building the AgriFoodTech investment community in the UK is a priority for [the Innovate UK KTN's AgriFood team](#) because private investment is often essential to help fast track innovative projects, in its own right or in tandem with funding from organisations like Innovate UK.

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The scope of the Sustainable Food Investment Readiness Programme includes:

- *AgriTech (defined as the use of technology for farming that is developed to improve efficiency and profitability. While most commonly used in horticulture and agriculture, AgriTech is also found in forestry, aquaculture and viticulture.)*
- Sustainable protein
- Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA)
- Low emission food production systems

The Sustainable Food Investment Readiness Programme is funded by Innovate UK and delivered by Innovate UK KTN.

Successful applicants to the Sustainable Food Investment Readiness Programme will receive online and in-person investment pitch training and mentorship from Innovate UK KTN. The aim of the Sustainable Food Investment Readiness Programme is to prepare SMEs to communicate their investment opportunity successfully and succinctly to investors and improve their chances of securing private funding for their innovation.

After the Investment Readiness training is complete, all participants will present their final pitch to an internal Innovate UK and Innovate UK KTN selection panel. Some (up to 14) participants from the training cohort will then be selected to present their investment pitch to a pool of private sector-relevant investors in the 'Sustainable Food Investment Showcase Event'.

Over 70% of the companies who provided feedback on previous programmes indicated that it significantly raised their profile and investor readiness.

The 2022-23 programme starts in November and application forms need to be submitted by midday on Wednesday 2nd November.

[Full details here](#). To apply, [complete the form here](#) - it should take between 30-45 minutes. If you need help please contact [Simon Baty](#) or [Jo Gosling](#) for further details.



# YOUR NEWS



## DEFRA COMMITS TO GREENHOUSE SECTOR R&D

The DEFRA Secretary of State Ranil Jayawardena has [announced plans](#) to boost home grown fruit and vegetable production and drive the growth of high-tech horticulture, as part of the Government's work to unleash the potential of British farming.

The UK Food Valley has already seen a big increase in the greenhouse area since 2016, when DEFRA reported 86 hectares in Greater Lincolnshire. With the units which have been developed since 2016 and those currently in planning, we now expect the area of greenhouses to have doubled by 2024 and are talking to other major investors who could lead to us seeing even faster growth.

The UK Food Valley is included as one of three core sub-sectors for growth, and a focus on greenhouses and controlled environment agriculture (CEA) in the investment proposition which we published in November 2021 is available [here](#).

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Commenting on the new support, DEFRA stated: *"Glasshouse growing, a form of Controlled Environment Horticulture, has multiple economic, food security and sustainability benefits, but the sector currently represents only 10% of English horticultural businesses.*

*"It means the United Kingdom only grows 25% of the cucumbers and 17% of the tomatoes supplied domestically, however businesses operating with this model are already reaping benefits, from extended growing seasons, efficient water usage and higher yields per square metre."*

To kickstart efforts to grow the horticulture sector and boost domestic production, DEFRA has committed a further £12.5m investment in automation and robotics through the Farming Innovation Programme on top of more than £70 million spent so far on industry-led research and development.

The fund opens in January 2023 with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and will match-fund projects that will drive economic growth, food security and deliver on environmental commitments. Previous funded projects include fruit scouting robots, automated vegetable harvesters and new types of fertiliser.

Environment Secretary Ranil Jayawardena said: *"We can increase home-grown fruit and vegetable production, which is why I am bringing in expert advice and match-funding robotics and automation projects. Technology offers huge opportunities to make farming greener and more productive, so we should harness it to help grow the economy, create jobs and improve food security too."*

## FRESH PRODUCE AWARDS WINNERS FEATURE LINCOLNSHIRE COMPANIES

On 16<sup>th</sup> September the Fresh Produce Award ceremony run by the Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC) was held at the Grosvenor House Hotel in London. With finalists in many categories, the UK Food Valley is pleased to celebrate the success of local businesses. These include...

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- **Karsten UK which won the category for Best Workplace.** Karsten UK is a unique employer which works with its staff to cater training to their individual needs. Understanding that one size does not fit all, the business goes the extra mile to develop bespoke in-house training programmes, interactive team building events and regular social functions. Employees are enrolled into an Employee Assistance Programme to help with their own wellbeing too. This inclusive spirit has led to several long-serving employees and temporary labour workers returning each peak season. The judges commented that Karsten UK is: *"A family-owned business that proudly treats its staff as though they are all part of one big family."*
- **Worldwide Fruit which won the Climate Award.** Worldwide Fruit has developed a truly impactful and long-term water management and stewardship project in South Africa, saving 6.8 billion litres of water each year. These vital efforts are not only contributing to safeguarding the future of farming and food supply in South Africa, but also serving as a blueprint for other global water projects supported by WWF and WRAP. The judges commented that: *"Worldwide Fruit's water engagement project in South Africa is cleverly revolutionising water production areas and water optimisation within water-scarce environments to drive sustainable change."* The Climate Award is based on the UN Sustainability Development Goals.
- **Flamingo Horticulture which won the Ethical Award.** Flamingo Horticulture, in collaboration with Coop Retail, has developed a ground-breaking two-year diversity and inclusion programme called Inua Dada to economically empower and raise the confidence and visibility of its female workers in Naivasha, Kenya, both at the workplace and within the community. Women are receiving life changing training in technical skills, leadership, finance, and health. The judges said that: *"Flamingo Horticulture is admirably delivering positive change for communities and empowering women."*

The awards won by companies who have major sites in the UK Food Valley shows the international nature of our food chain, as the awards recognise their work on development in their overseas supply chains as well as the support offered to their UK based staff. Full details of all the awards and winners are available [here](#).





# YOUR NEWS

## UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN SCORES HIGHLY IN ASSESSMENT OF ENGAGEMENT WITH BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY

The latest national assessment of the ways universities support society and the economy through knowledge exchange highlights the success of the University of Lincoln in working in partnership with industry, supporting graduate start-ups, and engaging the public in research.

The second Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF2) results were released on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2022 by Research England.

KEF2 illustrates the diversity of knowledge exchange activities of English universities with external partners across seven areas:

- Continuing professional development (CPD) and graduate start-ups.
- Intellectual property (IP) and commercialisation.
- Local growth and regeneration.
- Public and community engagement.
- Research partnerships.
- Working with business.
- Working with the public and third sector.

The KEF aims to compare universities on a like-for-like basis, grouping similar institutions into 'clusters' and universities receive a quintile score based on the average for their cluster.

The University of Lincoln demonstrated very high engagement (comparative to its cluster) in CPD and graduate start-ups, public and community engagement, Innovate UK income and

contract research income with the public and third sector, as well as high levels of engagement in working with business through contract research, consultancy and use of facilities and equipment.

The data also demonstrated high engagement in the role it plays in local growth and regeneration.

Times Higher Education (THE) has sited the University of Lincoln as being in the top quintile for Public and Community Engagement in results [here](#).

Professor Andrew Hunter, Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research at the University of Lincoln, said: "*The latest data from the KEF illustrates the strengths we have established at Lincoln to ensure the work that takes place on our campuses has real world benefits for society and the economy.*"

*"Whether that's collaborating on research projects with the food industry to enhance productivity, helping our graduates to launch and sustain their own businesses, or involving members of the public on research projects about local heritage."*

Results of KEF2 can be found online through the [KEF's interactive website here](#).



# YOUR NEWS

## THE FREIGHT PORTAL TO SUPPORT DECARBONISATION

The Freight Portal has been created by the Energy Saving Trust in collaboration with the Department for Transport and Zemo Partnership and offers links to a range of resources to help freight operators reduce their carbon footprint.

The portal supports the UK Government's [Transport Decarbonisation Plan](#) published in July 2021 and builds on the previous Department for Transport's [Road to Zero strategy](#), by providing advice to freight operators and directing them towards a range of schemes to help achieve lower costs and emissions.

The Freight Portal supports the UK Government's longer-term commitment to deliver a zero-emission freight and logistics sector. The UK Food Valley has over 14,000 employees in food wholesaling and distribution with major clusters on the South Bank of the Humber, on the A1 corridor and most notably in South Lincolnshire, centred on Spalding, which is now the UK's largest food logistics hub. It is vital to the future competitiveness of the UK Food Valley clusters to engage in decarbonisation of the food chain and the UK Food Valley therefore encourages anyone in the industry who uses road freight to look at this area.

Access the support available through the Freight Portal [here](#).

## FPC FUTURE: 16TH MARCH 2023

FPC Future has moved to a new date of 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023 in Peterborough and will feature a UK Food Valley conference session on how to raise finance for fresh produce businesses and the technology on which they depend.

This will feature keynote presentations from Allan Wilkinson, Head of AgriFoods at HSBC and Dr Iain Thomas, Director of CERES AgriTech and Head of Life Sciences at Cambridge Enterprise, University of Cambridge.

You can register for free [here](#).

INSIGHT  
INTO  
THE  
FUTURE  
OF  
AGRITECH

FPC 2023 EVENT  
**FUTURE**  
THURSDAY 16 MARCH 2023  
EAST OF ENGLAND ARENA AND EVENTS CENTRE





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