



TARGETED SECTOR SUPPORT

Barriers to funding are holding back Britain's innovative businesses from achieving their full potential, but working alongside similar businesses, sharing advice and securing business support in a specialised enterprise zone could provide an answer. This month we hear from Simon Wright, Funding and Business Support Critical to Innovators and Regeneration and Portfolio Manager at Lincolnshire County Council, about the part the South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone (FEZ) has to play.

Barriers to funding are holding back Britain's innovative businesses from achieving their full potential, according to innovation enablers Challenge Works. But working alongside similar businesses, sharing advice and securing business support in a specialised enterprise zone could provide one answer.

Continued..

SECTOR PROGRESS & HIGHLIGHTS

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Figures from Challenge Works' survey on barriers facing innovators, published on OpenAccessGovernment.org, show that only 44% of innovators know where to look to secure funding that will enable them to turn ideas into reality.

And with 65% of medium-sized businesses saying they need business mentoring, it is clear that SMEs are in need of clear pathways to funding and business support to deliver on innovation.

"We're at a tipping point," says Simon Wright, Regeneration and Portfolio Manager at Lincolnshire County Council (LCC). "Innovation is absolutely critical to the UK agrifood sector and achieving its net zero ambitions. We're experiencing a food, energy and climate crisis. Now is not the time for innovation to be stalled. We need innovative agri-tech and food focused SMEs and start-ups to be helped, not hampered. And while the Challenge Works survey is not sector specific, the outcomes are relatable to the experiences of innovators in farming and food production."

The survey also revealed that 57% of SME innovators worry about rejection when accessing funding because of a lack of track record; and 50% are concerned that funding will be rejected because of lack of testing, while 49% fear their idea will be considered too risky. Concerns over the shape of the funding landscape are not an overreaction, with 34% of innovators in medium-sized enterprises having their applications rejected because of untested ideas.

Innovation requires capital and robust business support, says Simon, and by working alongside businesses facing similar challenges, innovators can access the advice and support they need. Incubators like the South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone (FEZ) bring agri-tech and food-tech businesses

together, and help them to secure the funding, research and real-world testing that they need.

Located in the heart of the UK Food Valley, the South Lincolnshire FEZ has development plots with outline planning permission for purpose-built facilities, as well as pre-built flexible office, workshop, food processing, and R&D space. With links to the University of Lincoln and its National Centre for Food Manufacturing, it is supported by an internationally renowned R&D team.

Funding clearly matters for the development of agri-food products and services, says Paul Ward, Agricultural and Horticultural Adviser at Business Lincolnshire, which supports the growth of SMEs.

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The reception area at the Hub, South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone

TARGETED SECTOR SUPPORT

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"There's a freely accessible range of up-to-date funding and finance options on the Business Lincolnshire website," advises Paul. "It is also very useful for finding mentoring, training and other business support opportunities – but it is well worth contacting the team who can advise on the best routes to pursue."

"Ultimately, it circles back to people," he adds. "It's about understanding the whole paradigm and what shifts are happening from field to fork. Then join the dots by linking the right people with the right expertise and providing appropriate facilities for the optimal outcomes."

For more information about the South Lincolnshire FEZ visit the website [here](#).

For tenancy and general enquiries, email Jasper Caudwell at jcaudwell@pygott-crone.com

For more information on Business Lincolnshire visit the website [here](#).

Access the Grant and Support Finder [here](#).

UK Food Valley Comment:

The development of innovation support centres, such as the South Lincolnshire FEZ, and the importance of funding to support innovation is at the heart of the UK Food Valley's vision for how it can support the growth of the food chain. On 16th March in Peterborough the UK Food Valley will be running a conference session as part of the FPC Future event for the horticulture sector on how to raise finance for horticultural businesses and innovation in the fresh produce sector.

To sign up to FPC Future, which is free to attend and includes over 50 trade stands, a conference programme and a parallel careers event please visit the [website](#).



NEWS

SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD AS GRIMSBY FISH VAN FLEET GOES ELECTRIC

The sustainable transport of seafood in the UK took a major step forward on 23rd February at the launch event to celebrate the electrification pilot of Grimsby's fish van fleet. The project, which is being led by the University of Lincoln's National Centre for Food Manufacturing (NCFM) and the Seafood Grimsby and Humber Alliance, will trial electric vans for fish delivery around the country.

It is being supported and funded by the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership, UK Government and Toyota UK. The launch event took place at the Grimsby Port Office, following a demonstration of automated fish filleting by Marel.

The vans currently used by Grimsby are estimated to have a carbon footprint of 2,000 tonnes of CO₂ per year, and the project aims to reduce this for at least 10 vans through the length of the pilot scheme. Professor Val Braybrooks, Dean of the National Centre for Food Manufacturing, said:

"We are very pleased to be working with the Seafood Grimsby and Humber Alliance and partners on the delivery of this transformational project. The Grimsby seafood processing cluster is the largest in UK and makes a significant contribution to the UK agrifood industry, and it is encouraging to see it leading the way in terms of sustainability and carbon reduction."

Read the full story [here](#).



NEWS

SEAFOOD SKILLS FUND SUCCESS FOR GRIMSBY-BASED PROJECTS

In February, the Government announced the results of the first round of the [UK Seafood Fund Skills and Training Scheme grants](#), with two of the seven projects funded nationally being based in Grimsby.

The two Grimsby projects supported were:

The TEC Partnership in Grimsby – which has been awarded £20,561 to support its £27,4000 Step-into-Seafood project, which will introduce the seafood processing sector to new entrants and provide career opportunities.

The University of Lincoln – which has been awarded £248,000 as part of its £331,000 project addressing the acute shortages of skilled junior and middle managers in the seafood processing sector.

Read the full story [here](#).

The successes in the UK Seafood Food Skills programme build on the delivery of the UK Food Valley Seafood Pilot delivered with Community Renewal Fund (CRF) support in 2022, which has now been extended into 2023 with UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) support. In 2022, the CRF project supported 80 businesses in the seafood and hospitality industry with a range of short courses, master classes, one-to-one business support and innovation support, complemented by the award of small capital grants to help business adopt new technology.

View these short promotional videos to experience the real impact of these projects:

[Regal Fish](#)

[Tap House](#)

[Chapman's Seafood](#)



NEWS

LINCOLN AGRI-ROBOTICS NETWORKING EVENT AND BARCLAYS EAGLE LAB ACCELERATOR LAUNCH

Barclays Eagle Lab and the University of Lincoln hosted a successful Lincoln Agri Robotics (LAR) networking event and launch event for the third Barclays Eagle Lab AgriTech Accelerator at the Riseholme Campus on 15th February, supported by Greenborough Management Limited which facilitates the accelerator programme.

The event brought together alumni from earlier accelerator programmes, with some of those joining the new programme, the LAR and LIAT teams in Lincoln and some of the mentors who support the accelerator programme.

The event included an introduction about the work of LAR by David May (Deputy Director of the Lincoln Institute of AgriFood Technology), and case studies from agritech companies including Casey Woodward of Agrisound and Kelly Price of Agreed Earth. Professor Louise Manning spoke about the opportunities to partner academic research and James Trotman, Agri Tech Lead at Barclays Eagle Labs, explained the range of support Barclays provides for agritech start ups.

The event concluded with a lively panel Q&A session featuring all the speakers and Martin Collison who supports the Greater Lincolnshire LEP and UK Food Valley team on agrifood development.

As Barclays Eagle Lab continues to expand its range of services, it is offering new accelerators in areas such as [carbon management](#) which are important to the food chain.



NEWS

FRESHLINC LTD IN SPALDING LEADS UK ADOPTION OF INNOVATIVE WIND TURBINES

Leading UK food logistics company FreshLinc has become the first site in the UK to install Ventum Dynamics innovative wind turbine which can be mounted on buildings or the ground to provide on-site electricity. This project builds on other investments the company has been making, for example in solar panels at its headquarters in Spalding and a suite of innovation projects it is progressing with partners to streamline and decarbonise the food supply chain.

Lee Juniper, FreshLinc CEO, said: “*FreshLinc is determined to be a leader in the decarbonisation of the food chain and alongside other investments in projects on solar, clean fuel transition and supply chain efficiency, we are delighted to working with Ventum on the installation of a new design of roof mounted wind turbine.*”

More details are available at [FreshLinc Ltd LinkedIn](#)



NEWS

BRITISH FROZEN FOOD FEDERATION VISITS NATIONAL CENTRE FOR FOOD MANUFACTURING

The Lincolnshire-based British Frozen Food Federation (BFFF) visited NCFM on 8th February 2023 with BFFF Chief Executive Rupert Ashby and BFFF Head of Technical Denise Rion, who met Professor Val Braybrooks, Professor Mark Swainson and Professor Janet Bellamy from NCFM, Day May from the Lincoln Institute of AgriFood Technology (LIAT), Simon Dwyer of the Seafood Grimsby and Humber Alliance (SGHA) and Martin Collison of the UK Food Valley team at the Greater Lincolnshire LEP.

The discussions centred on the continued growth of the frozen and cool chains in the food sector and how the growth can be sustained. This includes the potential to work collaboratively on applied R&D, deliver industry updating and skills courses and work to promote the case for the cool chain with Government.

The UK Food Valley team stressed that they expect to see substantial growth in the cool chain, logistics and frozen foods sector and that for this reason it is one of three sectoral growth priorities in Greater Lincolnshire. With major investments from Magnavale at Easton to build on its site in Scunthorpe, HSH Cold Stores and Lineage both in Grimsby and Americold in Spalding, as well as many smaller developments by food and farming businesses, Greater Lincolnshire is seeing a lot of investment in the cool chain. It is very keen to see this continue and to work with the BFFF and its members to support continued growth.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN FEATURES REVERSE COAL

The Environmental Improvement Plan, the first revision of the 25-Year Environment Plan published by the Government, has featured the Reverse Coal project run by the Lapwing Estate in North Lincolnshire and north Nottinghamshire as a case study of innovative environmental action in practice. This project has been supported by the University of Lincoln, which has worked with the Lapwing Estate, and the Greater Lincolnshire LEP, which has helped connect the project to partners in other sectors. The Environmental Improvement Plan is available in full [here](#).



Case study: The Lapwing Estate - Reverse Coal

The Lapwing Estate covers 5,000 acres of land near Doncaster, crossing the county borders of Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and South Yorkshire. Home to one of the country's leading organic farms, the estate is now being used to rethink how lowland agricultural peat soils can be more responsibly managed.

A project called "Reverse Coal" is underway to abate emissions, store carbon and produce food. The project has received funding from BEIS as part of its Greenhouse Gas Removal project and academic support from the UKCEH and University of Lincoln. Using water from an onsite reservoir, the project is seeing lowland peat fields re-wet to reduce and potentially reverse emissions. On the re-wetted peat, short willow coppice is set to be grown and pyrolyzed to create biochar, then buried in a contained waterlogged condition to store carbon. The energy released from this reaction will be used to power a vertical farm to house food crops displaced from the peat. The project operates on a closed system.

We are encouraging farmers to introduce agroforestry systems



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2023

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MITIGATING AND ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

NEWS

TESCO LAUNCHES UK'S LARGEST LOW-CARBON FERTILISER ROLL-OUT TO INCREASE FOOD SECURITY AND CUT THE CARBON FOOTPRINT OF ITS VEG

Tesco is partnering with five of its largest field vegetable suppliers to launch the commercial roll-out of low-carbon fertilisers to boost UK food security, while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The roll-out is expected to reduce GHG emissions by up to 20% in the first year alone, at no extra cost.

Suppliers including Lincolnshire-based Branston and TH Clements are working alongside other UK leading suppliers Huntapac, Stourgarden and G's to trial a range of innovative fertilisers including products developed or supported by businesses in the UK Food Valley including:

- **R-Leaf chemical composite** from atmospheric nitrogen dioxide from Lincolnshire start-up Crop Intellect
- **Fibrophos chicken litter derived fertiliser** from Lincolnshire-based biosolids spreading business JSE Systems

Other national products being trialled include:

- POLY4 from **Anglo American Crop Nutrients based in North Yorkshire**
- **Algae-derived product** from Imperial College London's Bio-F Solutions
- **Processed food waste/AD digestate-based product** from Swindon-based CCm Technologies
- Phosphate and sulphur product from **expired fire extinguisher powder waste** from Phos Cycle of Birmingham
- Fertiliser from **food waste/AD digestate** from Veolia

The trial will cover 1,500 ha in the 2023 growing season. If successful, it will increase to 4,000 ha or more in 2024.

Sarah Bradbury, Group Quality Director at Tesco, said: *"Delivering more affordable, sustainable food means finding innovative, new ways to grow basket staples like potatoes, salad vegetables and carrots. Fertilisers are a large source of emissions in farming, but high prices and uncertainty have made it hard for farmers to take advantage of low-carbon alternatives. We hope that by working with our suppliers, our learnings from this roll-out of low carbon fertilisers can prove their potential to cut emissions and demonstrate what it would take to scale up production in the UK. It's vital we keep costs manageable for farmers facing the most challenging market conditions in a generation and help our customers to eat in a way that's good for planet and pocket."*

Read the full story [here](#).

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Following hot on the heels of the announcement of nearly £50m of agrifood innovation funding in January (as featured in our last newsletter), further calls have been announced which can support the agrifood industry. It is important for businesses and organisations in the UK Food Valley to be proactive in bringing projects for what in most cases are competitive national or international funds. This month we feature four more programmes which have been launched.

Protected and Controlled Environment Horticulture - the Biotechnology and BioSciences Research Council (BBSRC) has announced a call on Protected and Controlled Environment Horticulture.

This new grant call will have £5,000,000, with grants of between £250,000 and £750,000 for research into Protected and Controlled Environment Horticulture. To be eligible you have to be a UK research organisation eligible for UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funding, but all projects will need to have industry partners and contributions of match funding through cash or in-kind contributions.

There is a single call for this fund in 2023 for projects which run between 2023 to 2027, with projects lasting for to four years. The deadline for submissions is 19th April and you are advised to make contact with a research organisation now if you want to apply.

Find out more [here](#).



FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The **Sustainable Bio-based Materials and Manufacture Collaborative Research and Development (CR&D) Competition** was launched on 7th March for a share of up to £12 million for projects under the [Sustainable bio-based materials and manufacture programme](#). This funding is from Innovate UK, BBSRC and EPSRC jointly. The aim of this competition is to develop the design and delivery of new and disruptive sustainable biomanufacturing by 2050. Projects must address the challenge of developing innovations in sustainable biomanufacturing processes as underpinned by biotechnology in displacing fossil-derived products and may include:

- Increasing the use of bio-based feedstocks
- Using biotechnology for alternative bio-based chemical replacements including low carbon polymers and liquid and gaseous fuels (*except sustainable aviation fuel) for transport, heating and renewable energy
- Enhancing the sustainability profile of biotechnology processes
- Innovative use and re-use of renewable feedstocks
- Biotechnology-based manufacture processes for sustainable and circular products with whole systems approach (consideration of broader life cycle thinking)

This funding call closes on 3rd May.



FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The **Good Food Institute** has launched a programme of [Alternative Protein Research Grants](#) supported by donations the Good Food Institute (GFI), which funds open-access alternative protein research. An international programme, the GFI Research Grant Programme supports open-access research that addresses the organoleptic properties, cost, or scale-up of alternative proteins. Each RFP includes two funding mechanisms:

- Field Catalyst Grants (up to 24 months and \$250,000)
- Discovery Grants (up to 12 months and \$100,000)

The [Farming Equipment and Technology Fund](#) round two is now open for new applications for grants up to £25,000 and closes on 4th April for grants focused on productivity and slurry management in agriculture. There is also a 2023 a call under the FETF on animal health.

UKFV comment:

The UK Food Valley is pleased to see new grants coming forward for a wide range of areas from controlled environment agriculture, to new proteins, sustainable materials and small capital grants in the agricultural sector.

Building on the calls announced in January on Better Food for All, Novel Low Emissions Food Production and Automation and Robotics, this means there are now funding opportunities under all the main areas the UK Food Valley strategy focuses on.

All of these calls are competitive and require collaboration in most cases. The more bids we can submit from Greater Lincolnshire, the more support we can secure to invest in our food chain. We therefore urge everyone to look at the areas you want to invest in and to contact the UK Food Valley team, the University of Lincoln or the Greater Lincolnshire Growth Hub if you want help or want to identify partners to work with.



FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The other calls closing shortly, which we featured in more detail in the last newsletter, are:

Better Food for All: Innovation for improved nutrition: Early-stage with £20m available for innovative solutions to address significant nutrition challenges, which closes on 29th March 2023.

Novel, low-emission food production systems: Industrial research with £16m available to support the development of novel food production systems that create new sources of resource efficient, low-emission foods, particularly proteins to deliver healthy and sustainable diets, which closes on 19th April 2023.

Farming Futures: automation and robotics, industrial research and experimental development with £12.5m to support the development of innovative solutions for automation and robotics, which closes on 15th March 2023.

Farming Innovation Programme round two of the Large R&D Partnerships programme which provides funding for large-scale research, development and demonstration of solutions that will improve farming methods and help the environment in England. Round two provides grants of £3-5m for projects of up to four years and closes on 19th April 2023.



EVENTS

ROYTHORNES FOOD BUSINESS BREAKFAST



Roythornes next Food Business Breakfast focuses on supporting businesses involved in food production with advice and promotion and is all about building your network.

On 30th March, at the Kingsgate Conference Centre in Peterborough, the keynote speaker Professor Simon Pearson from the Lincoln Institute of AgriFood Technology (LIAT) in the UK Food Valley will be talking about agri-robotics and how they may be able to solve some of the challenges the food sector faces.

To register please visit: <https://roythornes-food-business-breakfast-march-23.eventbrite.co.uk>



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