



Dear all

As we near the end of this tumultuous year, with many challenges still to navigate, we must not forget the bedrock of successes that the Welsh Food and Drink industry is based upon.

We entered 2020 with the industry on a record-breaking growth trajectory that surpassed all targets. It is the principles behind that success that will take us through the challenges and difficulties that we now face due to the legacy of Covid19 and Brexit as we look ahead to 2021.

The collaboration between industry and government has been vital in building a strong and successful food and drink industry to date. Work in key areas including branding, marketing, skills and finance will continue to help the industry to weather the current storm and to flourish once more.

Of course, there is no doubt that the Covid19 pandemic has had a widespread impact on our industry. While some food and drink businesses have been able to continue as normal or even thrive in 2020, many more have struggled desperately, especially those connected to hospitality. Unfortunately, the impact of the pandemic has also made businesses less resilient to the challenges of Brexit and with less resource to prepare for the future.

With that in mind, what are our priorities as a Board and the voice of the food and drink industry in Wales?

Our C19 recovery plan was published earlier in the year, outlining the key routes forward to help businesses with a practical road map supporting businesses throughout the months ahead with tangible advice on encouraging and developing online sales, building resilient business models, risk management, adding value to supply chains, affordable finance, industry accreditation and training and developing skills.

Now, as we look ahead to the coming weeks and months, monitoring and influencing trade deal negotiations will become vital opportunities for the Welsh food and drink industry as the talks and deals evolve.

It is our role to stay connected and help influence those deals where we can, and ensure that Wales sees tangible benefits. To do that we must all stay informed and ensure government and industry representatives in Wales make a valuable and insightful contribution to those in Westminster who

have the responsibility to negotiate these trade deals. We need to be clear as an industry on what we want out of those negotiations and work together to make that heard.

We must also be clear about what Welsh Food and Drink stands for in both a UK and global context. Our sustainable brand values and our USPs must be able to give us a competitive advantage on that stage and we must work to communicate these to diverse audiences.

Finally, we must not lose sight of the development of our new Food Strategy in 2021, which will play another important role in helping our industry to grow and develop.

We certainly have something special in Wales, with food and drink as one of our biggest assets and opportunities. I remain convinced that our collaborative spirit in Wales will see us through these difficult and challenging times and the Board will do all we can to maintain and develop this ethos through 2021

I would like to sign off by thanking all of those in the industry who have worked tirelessly this year to keep the nation fed and their businesses afloat under the current challenging business environment. We will continue to do all we can to support and advocate for you in 2021.

Andy Richardson, Chair of the Food and Drink Wales Industry Board