

# Rural Economy Growth Review

## Supporting Agri-food sector

### What are we doing to support the agri - food sector?

Food and farming businesses contribute approximately £84.7bn pa to the UK economy (6.9% national GVA in 2009) and employs 3.7 million people. There has long been a food trade 'gap' (£18.4bn in 2009) and removing obstacles to exports will help re-balance this. We are announcing:-

• **A joint government/industry food and drink export action plan** in January 2012, to include:-

- development of a **cross-Government strategy** on removing animal health trade barriers in key markets
- a series of **"Explore Exporting" regional road shows**, run by UK Trade & Investment in early 2012, for first time food and drink exporters.
- extending the **Business Ambassador** network to include a food and drink sector representative

• An **'Innovation for Growth' summit** to highlight opportunities for growth through innovation in the agri-food sector and to showcase support available, e.g. from the Technology Strategy Board. This will include a number of regional events and launching a £0.5m competition to support agri-food innovation in Small and Medium

Enterprises (SMEs).

### How will this help growth?

#### Exports:

As well as being good for the economy, exporting also makes good business sense. Cross-sector research indicates that firms that export see their productivity increase, achieve stronger financial performance, and are more likely to stay in business than those that don't. However, research also indicates that SME exporting activity is lower in the agri-food sector than across other sectors in the UK or the EU. The action plan is aimed at addressing the barriers faced by exporters, particularly SMEs.

Innovation is vital to competitiveness and growth. There is a wide range of Government support available but this is not always well understood, particularly by SMEs. The sector could be missing out, so the Summit planned for March 2012 brings researchers and businesses together to showcase the resources provided, in particular, by the Technology Strategy Board. It will include real-world examples of the benefits of innovation, networking opportunities and practical support in accessing funds.



### Useful Links

- [Defra](#)
- [Technology Strategy Board](#)
- [UK Trade & Industry](#)