



LEP – Sub Committee

LEP - Joint Scrutiny Committee

Private and Confidential: No

Date: Wednesday, 8 March 2023

Food & Agriculture Summary

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Executive Summary

Lancashire's Food & Agriculture Sector has been identified as one of the six pillars of growth in the LEP's Strategic Economic Framework.

The sector group established by the LEP has identified policy agendas and external forces driving change in the sector, which has resulted in the development of a vision and four strategic objectives to effect change and increase the efficiency and productivity of the sector to achieve growth.

This report of is an overview of the work to date.

Recommendation

The LEP Joint Scrutiny Committee is asked to note and provide feedback on the contents of the report.

Background and Advice

In December 2020, the board approved the LEP's Strategic Economic Framework which prescribes a system leadership approach which brings together both the public and private sectors to address the underlying economic challenges of the county, as well as responding to existing and emerging opportunities.

Within the Framework system, a series of inputs will start to determine evidence-based strategies and priorities for action, which will deliver strategic impact for Lancashire with respect to the following:

- New and sustainable jobs for everyone
- Improved productivity across Lancashire's business base
- A vibrant ecosystem which supports new business start-ups and growth



- Investment and growth in new industries for Lancashire
- Significant contribution to net zero carbon targets across all sectors
- Enhanced sustainable, internationally competitive businesses

At the heart of the framework are six pillars of growth, which identifies key industry sectors for employment and productivity growth and a set of enablers, essential to the success of those industry sectors where barriers to growth may need to be addressed and enabling factors fuelled for greater impact. A sector development approach is being taken for the pillars of growth, which has resulted in sector groups being established and which are led by business-leaders in their respective sectors.

Each sector group has been tasked with developing a long-term sector-specific strategy which will achieve and sustain a competitive position on both the national and international stage. Competitive advantage will be achieved by:

- Increasing the productivity of indigenous businesses
- Driving the direction and pace of innovation within businesses
- Stimulating the formation of new businesses and growth of existing businesses
- Identifying the county's differentiators and unique capabilities within each of the industrial sectors and the identification of new growth pathways

The sector plans will also determine which enablers (such as skills, infrastructure and inward investment) are the most important for the successful development of the sector.

The Lancashire Food & Agriculture Sector Plan – Emerging Themes

Context

Lancashire's food and agriculture sector has significant untapped growth potential, which when combined with the technical expertise of other prominent sectors within the county, creates a compelling narrative in an era when policy and disruptive trends are requiring a step-change in traditional practices.

Covid, Brexit, Net Zero, changes to consumer behaviour and expectations and the impact of the war in Ukraine on global supply chains and energy are just some of the agendas which are driving change in the sector. Whilst the county's businesses have the capabilities to respond, there are a number of restraining forces which need to be addressed if the sector is to become more efficient, increase productivity and create jobs in a sustainable manner.

Overview

Under the chairmanship of David Hall, Regional Director for the NFU, the Food & Agriculture Sector Group is comprised of business leaders and educationalists



operating in the sector to identify what was needed to maximise the opportunities and mitigate the accompanying risks arising from the above agendas.

The group first began meeting during the pandemic, and whilst as a sector the impact of Covid was mixed, it quickly became apparent that both Covid and Brexit provided significant growth opportunities for the sector. The group also discussed how changes to the policy environment within which they were operating, mostly notably the Agricultural and Environmental Acts, would act as drivers for change. More recently, the impact of the war in Ukraine on global supply chains and energy are also providing the impetus for change.

Vision

The vision for the sector is for (by 2030) *'Lancashire's food & agriculture sector to be a world-leading network of researchers, educationalists, farmers, growers, manufacturers, retailers, technologists and entrepreneurs. This network will drive improvements in agri-food productivity, animal health, food security and profitability whilst working towards net zero targets.'*

To achieve this, a whole system approach will be established through an ambitious programme of investment in skills and knowledge to increase innovation and the take-up of new technologies to drive productivity and growth.'

Opportunities and Strategic Objectives

To achieve the vision for the sector, the group has identified county's capabilities and how they may be effectively deployed to capitalise on opportunities which include:

- Increased awareness of food provenance
- Export opportunities arising from Brexit
- Capitalising on Lancashire's technological strengths and capabilities to improve efficiencies and increase productivity

To enable the realisation of the vision, capitalise on the identified opportunities and mitigate risk to the sector, four strategic objectives have been identified:

- **Strategic Objective 1:** To improve the productivity and innovation of the sector through the adoption of technology
- **Strategic Objective 2:** Skills and workforce development; the retention and attraction of talent
- **Strategic Objective 3:** Market growth and supply chain development
- **Strategic Objective 4:** Realising the sector's contribution to net zero

The Food & Agriculture Labour Market Information Study

Whilst the importance of the sector has been identified in the LEP's Strategic Economic Framework, during the course of the sector group's work it become



apparent that a better understanding of the sector was required. Consequently, in 2022 AMION Consulting was commissioned by the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub, using Department for Education (DfE) Skills Advisory funds, to produce a Labour Market Information (LMI) report to undertake a 'deep dive' of the sector to establish the skills implications of key drivers and local growth trends affecting the sector.

The findings of the study have been used to support a range of careers activities (aligning with Strategic Objective 3) following an award of funds from the Lancashire County Council Rural Recovery Funds to the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub. The programme aims to inspire young people about opportunities in the sector. The programme has included:

- Development of sector pages on the 'Start in Lancashire' digital careers platform used by secondary schools and colleges, including case studies and videos with local Lancashire businesses: <https://lancashire.startprofile.com/page/food-agriculture-overview>;
- Local labour market intelligence sessions with careers professionals providing careers advice and guidance and employability support to young people and adults;
- Teacher placements in Food and Agriculture businesses in West Lancashire and the subsequent development of curriculum materials;
- Production of VR films showcasing Food and Agriculture businesses, to be used as part of Myerscough College's outreach activities with schools; and
- Two 'Bitesize Events' in West Lancashire, which enabled young people from secondary schools to visit multiple employer sites and experience a chef demonstration at West Lancashire College.

Next Steps

- The Food & Agriculture Sector Plan is currently being finalised, and it is anticipated this will be presented to the LEP Board for approval in March.
- The essential next steps thereafter will be to translate the plan into a detailed action and implementation plan aligned to the four strategic objectives.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
None		
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate		
N/A		