

## Chair's update

As we begin to approach autumn it's amazing to think how quickly this year is passing. It seems like just yesterday we were celebrating the epic success of Taste Wales / Blas Cymru in March and now we're recovering from the sweltering temperatures that welcomed us at this year's Royal Welsh Show - another highlight of Wales' food and drink event calendar.

The Royal Welsh Show is always special, it's a showcase of Wales' agricultural delights and each year it wows thousands of visitors, including royals, celebrities and politicians alike. This year was particularly special for the Board as we jointly announced the launch of a new consultation, setting out our ambition to further develop Wales' food and drink sector in partnership with the Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths AM.

The launch not only marked the start of the next phase of our strategic growth but also gave us the opportunity to look back at all that has been achieved since we launched the first strategy back in 2014 and the tremendous growth the industry has experienced in Wales since then. As an industry, we've always been ambitious and that was the theme of our initial 2014 - 2020 Action Plan. We established a target growth of 30%, or £7bn in sales by 2020, which we are within a hairs breath of reaching. It's important that we keep the momentum of success going which is why we announced at July's launch the plans for our new mission which aims to sustain and further this growth.

But in talking about our successes and plans for the future, it's impossible not to consider the potential challenges that could hinder such growth. And it's not just about Brexit. We face fundamental challenges such as how can we improve productivity? How can we attract skilled workers to the industry? How can we add value in our local supply chains? Brexit adds additional questions but they all require the same level of commitment; we must not delay. We should refocus our vision, appraise the journey we've been on as an industry and be confident to take steps that are necessary to continue our long-term success.

But these questions also have the potential to help us build a profitable and sustainable industry that contributes to the wellbeing of our people, our communities and our shared environment. The backbone of our strategy and as an industry as a whole is collaboration and industry feedback during this consultation period is the key to future success.

The consultation is as a result of collaborative working between Welsh Government and the Board alongside industry colleagues and we need to hear from as many voices as possible to help shape the final new strategy. Our aim is to produce a new and ambitious strategic plan to further the development of the sector and the benefits it delivers for Wales. Your opinions are vital and will help shape a finished strategic plan which we hope to launch in early 2020.

The [consultation](#) is now live and the deadline for responses is the 15 October 2019 – we would welcome any feedback you are able to provide. We've already achieved so much as an industry and I look forward to seeing what we can achieve going forward.

**Andy Richardson,**

## **Chair of the Food and Drink Wales Industry Board**