

# Food for Thought

A Covid-19 update from the Food and Drink Wales Industry Board



1 May 2020

“The Food and Drink Wales Industry Board exists to champion food and drink in Wales and the current unprecedented crisis caused by Covid-19 has shown that role to be more vital than ever. The aim of this update from the Board is to provide regular and concise information to the industry and crucially, to signpost to the information that is needed, right now.



Having exceeded the industry’s growth target, as laid out in the Welsh Government’s action plan for 2014-2020, to grow from £5bn to £7bn, it is crucial we protect this success throughout this pandemic, maintaining the quality of Welsh food and drink products and creating stronger resilience for when we emerge from the lockdown period.

There will be many aspects of the industry to consider in the future including the role of finance and technology, which markets we target and capitalising on any beneficial new ways of working that have resulted from this crisis.

But for now, we recognise that times are extremely difficult for many, many businesses in the sector. I encourage you to connect with the Board and share your concerns and insights so that we can provide the best solutions for your business and the sector at large. It is our mission, in partnership with Welsh Government, to work closely with food and drink businesses to ensure we continue to have a sustainable, resilient and profitable industry.”

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

## Key actions from the week \*some but not all actions

- Throughout the week, we have hosted daily conference calls with our Board members and senior Welsh Government colleagues to highlight and discuss key areas of the industry impacted by Covid-19. The meetings also benefit from the voices of industry experts providing additional insight to the issues.
- This week we reviewed key sectors including dairy, beef and lamb, pig and poultry, seafood, horticulture, bakery and ready to eat, to identify key issues faced resulting from the pandemic. Sector-specific insight helps the Board and government better understand and solve the varied issues affecting each of these individual areas.
- Our Chair attended a virtual meeting with ministers, senior government policy makers and industry leaders to discuss the issues with the dairy industry to explore the best solutions.
- Together with Food Innovation Wales, we have been working on a survey to be shared with food and drink businesses to better understand the needs of the industry and determine the best resolutions to problems many businesses are facing.
- We have begun to consider a checklist for furloughed and mothballed businesses ahead of a return to normal production following the lockdown.
- We met with BIC (Business in the Community) to discuss the Investor Ready Programme and the implications on finance for food and drink businesses.
- We are currently working with Food Sense Wales to have an increased understanding of the food insecurity issue resulting from Covid-19. We are working with Welsh Government colleagues to determine the most effective and efficient way forward on this.
- On a daily basis we liaise with the Food and Drink Federation and other partner organisations to share insight and determine the best solutions for the food and drink sector on a national scale.
- We’ve continued to share links to information, support and toolkits via [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) as well as supporting Welsh Wine Evening with social media toolkits.
- The [Facebook Workforce Group](#) continues to post and share useful workforce opportunities and information for the industry.

## Top news stories of the week

- [Cywain map points shoppers to Welsh food and drink amidst coronavirus pandemic](#)
- [Farmers' markets reopen with click-and-collect service](#)
- [Fisheries grant announced in Wales to help fishing sector](#)
- [Wales becomes first country in UK to guarantee funding for holiday school meals](#)

## Covid-19 support

Click through for additional information on resources available



## Voices from the industry

With James Wright, Managing Director at Aber Falls Whisky Distillery



Founded in 2017, Aber Falls Whisky Distillery is located in North Wales and is the first of its kind in the region for more than 100 years. The team distil award-winning gins and liqueurs and will soon be adding whisky to the portfolio.

Like most businesses, Aber Falls is facing numerous challenges as a result of the coronavirus outbreak. We have maintained distillery operations but with a skeleton staff, in order to keep supplies running to customers nationwide.

The outbreak really has impacted all corners of our industry and will continue to cause disruption over the coming months. The closure of pubs, restaurants, hotels and clubs has had a massive knock-on effect on the sector’s wholesalers which are temporarily closed as there is no demand, and consequently our on-trade sales have come to a halt. Our international sales have been affected, with our partners across Europe and East Asia not able to get imports over borders. We’ve also had to delay the reopening of our newly-built visitor centre until autumn.

Our spirits production is the foundation of our business, so the team and I will do everything in our power to ensure production levels are maintained during these unprecedented times. We’ve put new measures in place in accordance with government guidelines so we can keep the distillery operational, whilst practicing social distancing and ensuring hygiene processes are strictly followed.

This has included enrolling individuals from across the team, who would otherwise occupy a role within marketing or events, to put their hand to learning the art of distilling and support spirit production.

We’ve also been producing hand sanitiser in bulk for local authorities, as well as looking at the possibility of packaging it in a bag-in-box solution, for ease of use. The distillery has also started to offer a home delivery service to locations across North Wales, to help take the pressure off our local stockists and give our local community access to their favourite gins and liqueurs during lockdown.

Despite the uncertainty due to the pandemic, at Aber Falls we will continue to be ambitious and put our community front and centre. We’ve always strived to become a keystone business for Wales, and we won’t falter on our objectives to create a strong community of Welsh producers to help put the region on the foodie map and support the country’s economy.

The supply chain disruption has caused cashflow implications that cannot be underestimated. To respond to the immediate challenge, we need clear support from Government to continue our operation and keep the momentum going so we have a fighting chance for the future.

Stay connected for updates



[Join our Facebook Group to collaborate workforce](#)

Get in touch with us via email: [Chair.FDWIB@gov.wales](mailto:Chair.FDWIB@gov.wales)