

Press release: Food and drink companies fuel passion for innovation with share of £50,000 prize

Tackling food waste with natural composters beneath Glasgow city centre, using grains from breweries to boost milk production and improving packaging for pickled eggs are among the latest ideas to be awarded grant funding at industry event celebrating innovation.

[The Food Innovation Network](#) (FIN), which is sponsored by Defra and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, connects food producers across the country with world-class facilities such as test-kitchens and laboratories to help them create new products and production methods.

Yesterday (Wednesday 7 March) food entrepreneurs from across the country showcased their ground breaking solutions to day-to-day problems at a special [Food Innovation Network](#) (FIN) Awards event, which was run by Innovate UK and the Knowledge Transfer Network to encourage companies to examine ways in which they can revolutionise the food and drink sector.

Micro, small and medium sized businesses pitched their projects to a panel of industry experts and ten companies secured £5,000 grants to turn their pioneering ideas into reality. The winning entries all demonstrated unique ways in which they could increase productivity, enhance the environment, improve sustainability or aid our health and wellbeing.

Congratulating the winners, Food and Farming Minister George Eustice said:

Innovation is key to ensuring Britain's successful food and drink industry continues to grow, which is why it was great to see such an exciting display of ingenuity from smaller businesses – who often do not have the same research resources available to them as larger companies.

The FIN Awards voucher fund is designed to support small businesses with bright ideas to develop their concepts in partnership with these research organisations. The ten winners of the Food Innovation Network grant are:

- Scratch Meals Ltd -Healthy Pies, Grimsby: The winning proposal from Scratch Meals Ltd will transform one of the nation's favourite meals: pies. Hoping to access new markets, the innovations will help the company redesign pies to improve their nutritional content, sustainability and reduce packaging.

- Crafty Tech Ltd, Active Transfers, Aylesbury: Crafty Tech Ltd wish to transform the effectiveness of conveyor belts to enhance the production line. They will be testing the automation with the view to patent their concept and access the global market.
- Central Stems, Urban Greens by Sustainable Means, Glasgow: Hidden underground in the heart of the city under Central Station, Central Stems will use their award to trial food production that combines hydroponics and natural composting to address the issue of food waste and agricultural emissions.
- LA Brewery, Non-Alcoholic Kombucha Brewery, Kettering: Kombucha – a fermented tea – is experiencing a surge in popularity due to its potential health benefits. This business will be developing a technique to improve the shelf-life of kombucha. Working with Huddersfield University, the LA Brewery will experiment with bacteria and yeast resulting in a product with longer shelf-life which retains healthy bacteria and remains non-alcoholic.
- PyroGenesys Ltd, Converting Energy From Waste By-Products to Animal Feed Ingredients, Birmingham: Bread waste and used grains from breweries are being incorporated into cattle feed to identify whether this can boost milk production, whilst decreasing methane emissions from cows. If the trial is successful bakers and brewers would be able to transform their waste into animal feed.
- Purely Pickled Eggs Ltd, Bringing Pickled Egg to the People, Gloucestershire: This business is identifying novel ways of packaging pickled eggs to make sure they are in plentiful supply to go with our fish and chips. They will be exploring new methods of applying current application and preservation methods for in new ways.
- Drink Baotic Ltd, Validating New Health Markets, Glasgow: Working with the Glasgow Caledonian University, Drink Baotic Ltd are proposing a pilot to identify how their drink, impacts on health. It is hoped the product will relieve the symptoms of gut issues and constipation.
- Afrique FoodPro, Powdered Mix for Bean Fritters, London: This company has produced a bean mix to create bean fritters, saving time compared to the conventional preparation method which includes soaking black eye beans. In partnership with Greenwich University, they aim to develop their mix into a commercial product and design a manufacturing process. It is estimated the value of this market will be worth £200,000 within the first year.
- Booch & Brine, Scale up Kombucha!, Manchester: The Scale Up Kombucha!

Project aims to research best practice, from Canada, with partner Manchester Metropolitan University and turn this into practical resources, processes and guidance that will enable Booch & Brine to scale up production, grow their business and potentially benefit other UK SMEs via knowledge transfer to academia.

- The Cheshire Saffron Company, Multiple Saffron Harvests via Hydroponics
Cheshire: Saffron has massive health benefits including treating depression and this project will explore improving the efficiency in how saffron is grown in the UK. In collaboration with Farm Urban, hydroponics will be used in a creative and innovative way to grow saffron, increasing the yields and changing the way saffron is grown.