

Speech: Shaping the future of food and drink

It's fantastic to be with you today here at the British Museum.

If you asked someone on the street, 'what's the best-known item in this building?', some might mention the mummies, some might name the Elgin Marbles...

But I think some would say the Rosetta Stone.

Found by one of Napoleon's Lieutenants during his Egypt campaign of 1799, it was undoubtedly a great discovery.

Yet – just a few years earlier – in 1795 Napoleon was at the centre of what I think was an even greater discovery.

That year, Napoleon offered a prize of 12,000 francs to anyone who could solve an age-old problem and give his army an edge over his enemies.

Not a new weapon to outfight them.

Or new tactics to outsmart them.

But the ability to outlast them by keeping his army's food fresher for longer.

In just over a decade a confectioner named Nicolas Appert had found the answer.

Through his method of heating, boiling and sealing food in airtight glass jars.

The same basic elements which keep canned goods fresh today.

It just goes to show that when political leaders create the right conditions for individuals and businesses to innovate the results can be astounding.

And I truly believe that when government and business work together in the right way we can do things we could never do on our own.

So today – I want to talk about how, through our [Industrial Strategy](#), we are working with all of you in this room to help this amazing sector do even more.

Impact of sector

I've always appreciated the importance of this sector.

I was born and raised in the food and drink business with my father and

grandfather's dairy delivery round supplying our neighbours in Middlesbrough with fresh Yorkshire milk 7 days a week.

I know this same dedication exists all across the country.

Food and drink is the most geographically dispersed industry there is.

The FDF's Ian Wright has a great fact, that there's a food or drink manufacturing plant, with more than 50 employees, in every single UK constituency apart from Westminster.

From Scottish salmon farmers on the Isles of Mull and Harris in Scotland...

To workers in McVities' Stockport factory, which makes 2 billion Jaffa Cakes a year...

The food supply chain employs nearly 4 million people.

The food and drink industry is the biggest manufacturing sector in the country, larger than automotive and aerospace combined.

And in the last 10 years UK food and drink exports have skyrocketed growing by well over 50%.

Every year, I hear these statistics at conferences like these.

But, ultimately, these statistics, and the impact they demonstrate, need to translate into respect and engagement.

Simply put – you deserve the same level of engagement, with all parts of government, that other successful industries, like automotive, aerospace, life sciences and financial services, have come to expect.

One way we're putting this right is through the [Food and Drink Sector Council](#).

I really think this is the beginning of something important.

Bringing together government departments, farmers and growers, food and drink manufacturers, the logistics industry, the hospitality industry, and others with a stake in this flourishing sector.

Everyone sitting around one single table agreeing one single set of goals and working together to achieve them.

The FDF has played an absolutely pivotal role in bringing this council to life.

And we'll need your support to build its credibility.

So I'd encourage all of you here today to engage with its working groups. Make your voice heard and help transform the sector.

The next steps

One of the Council's early tasks is to propose a [Sector Deal](#) to drive forward each aspect of our Industrial Strategy as it reflects food and drink.

I take this personally.

Michael Gove and I will jointly lead for the government on negotiating this.

And I'd like to thank Ian Wright and Tim Rycroft for the crucial co-ordinating role the FDF has played.

I want this to be a totemic deal that establishes the food and drink sector as an essential part of this country's economic future.

Building on some big opportunities, which I know this sector is already seizing.

New technologies like AI and robotics are at the very heart of our Industrial Strategy.

And they're already transforming this sector.

For example, a potato processing company is already using AI to work out which spuds would work best for chips and which for crisps.

Cutting waste and saving money.

While in Milton Keynes, The Co-op is using robots to deliver up to 10kg of shopping to homes within a 2-mile radius.

With the company's 10 robots despatching around 1,000 orders since the app went live a month ago.

And – through our Industrial Strategy – we're already supporting this sector in adopting new technologies.

Back in February, I announced £90 million of Industrial Strategy money, bringing together AI, robotics and earth observation to improve supply chain resilience in the agri-food sector.

This includes support for 'innovation accelerators' charged with exploring the commercial potential of new tech ideas at pace.

And alongside new technologies the deal should also have a strong focus on new markets.

With just 1 in 5 food and drink companies exporting there's a big opportunity here.

Of course, many British brands are already renowned.

Ask people from around the world what food and drink they most associate with

the UK and I think Scotland would come out on top.

Scotch whisky. Or Scottish salmon, for example.

And the way that Scotland has blended food and drink with tourism and hospitality is a great British success story in its own right.

Yet – increasingly, the world is taking interest in British brands from south of Greta Green.

Last year, London Popcorn firm ‘Propercorn’ was the fifth fastest-growing independent business anywhere in Europe.

Within 6 months of launching in Germany they were stocked in 1,000 locations.

And are now the number 1 premium popcorn brand anywhere in the country.

While in the South West, Wyke Farms are encouraging dairy farmers within 50 miles of their Bruton dairy to partner with them to satisfy the growing demand from a Cheddar-hungry global middle-class.

We need to look at how we can help other firms tickle customers’ taste buds the world over.

Staying competitive

But let’s not forget that 7 of your top 10 export destinations are in Europe.

And Brexit is one area, where it’s so important that we not only listen to your concerns, but act on them.

After all – you are the ones who, day in – day out – actually live the million complexities which make up the reality of food and drink trade.

I know that this morning you heard from Michael Creed from the Irish government.

And last month, I travelled to Belfast to hear from companies, including food and drink firms whose supply chains span the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland.

One of those companies was Diageo who make Bailey’s Irish Cream.

Bailey’s manufacturing process works on an all-Ireland basis.

With ingredients and packaging materials crossing the border multiple times.

Milk travels from Northern Ireland to Ireland for processing into cream, some of which is sent back to Northern Ireland.

Whiskey goes from south to north, and back again, while bottles go from north to south.

With such highly integrated supply chains it’s no surprise that companies

like Diageo are concerned about the delays and costs that could be created by new customs processes.

And as we negotiate our new relationship with the EU, securing continued frictionless trade between Northern Ireland and Ireland, while avoiding hard border infrastructure, will be paramount.

I know that many of you are also concerned about the potential challenges of 'Rules of Origin' rules which determine a product's economic nationality.

This issue was raised in a recent, insightful report commissioned by the FDF and the National Association of British and Irish Flour Millers which I read with great interest.

One case study in the report features a loaf of wholemeal bread sold under a household brand in the UK and exported to Ireland, an EU member state.

The wholemeal and white flour it contains is milled in the UK from a blend of grains from growers in Canada, the US and the UK reflecting both global price and harvest quality.

Yet in one post-Brexit scenario, the use of UK-milled flour, including any quantity of wheat grown outside the UK, would automatically disqualify the loaf of bread from preferential import tariff treatment into the EU single market.

We need to take concerns like this into account, avoiding any unnecessary barriers to trade, including from 'Rules of Origin'.

Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen, I truly believe that – together – we can do more.

And our Industrial Strategy offers so many opportunities to do just that.

From the Sector Council bringing together the whole 'farm to fork' industry like never before...

To agreeing an ambitious Sector Deal...

And listening to you as we negotiate a new relationship with the European Union.

This is a sector which has lived through change before and – indeed – has driven change before, and I believe that – together – we can do that again.

Thank you for inviting me here today.

News story: Drug-related harms in homeless populations: public evidence gathering day

The public evidence gathering day will take place on Tuesday 3 July in Manchester.

The day will commence at 10.30am and the working group will hear presentations from a number of invited stakeholders. The public session is expected to finish at 3pm.

This evidence gathering day will be open to members of the public who wish to observe the day's proceedings. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions of ACMD Recovery Committee members.

If you would like to attend please email the ACMD secretariat to reserve a place: ACMD@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk.

For further details read the [request for evidence for this working group](#) (PDF, 563KB, 2 pages) .

News story: ACT Summer Security – Know The Game Plan

Former England stars Alan Shearer, David Seaman and Paul Parker have teamed up with Counter Terrorism Policing to offer football fans security advice ahead of the World Cup.

The ex-internationals video messages explain how fans can keep themselves and others safe while gathering to watching games. The move is part of a summer long security campaign aimed at protecting crowded places.

With the tournament kicking off this evening, (Thursday 14 June) when hosts Russia take on Saudi Arabia, thousands are expected to watch matches on screens in city centres, football grounds and fan parks up and down the UK.

Police security experts will again be working in partnership with local authorities and event organisers to ensure that safety and security remains top of the agenda, and they've enlisted the help of pundits Shearer and Parker and former Arsenal goalkeeper Seaman to help deliver this messaging to fans.

Alan Shearer said:

Security is a team effort. If you're going to see the game have a great time and look out for each other. Know your game plan and we can keep everyone safe.

[Alan Shearer: Know the game plan](#)

[Paul Parker: Know the game plan](#)

[David Seaman: Know the game plan](#)

While there is no intelligence to indicate an increased threat to World Cup screenings or any other summer events, the new National Coordinator for Protect and Prepare Policing, Chief Superintendent Nick Aldworth, wants the public to know the game plan for better security.

CT Policing's 'Know the game plan' messages have already been adopted and supported throughout the season by the Premier League and English Football League (EFL).

Speaking at Millennium Square in Leeds City Centre, Chief Supt. Aldworth said:

We all know Alan Shearer and Paul Parker support the game plan and David Seaman is a safe pair of hands, so who better to inform people how they can keep this summer's footballing events safe and secure?

Our Summer Security messaging is designed to remind everyone that our security, just like a World Cup-winning campaign, is a team effort and we all have a part to play.

Sadly we have seen that these big public events and crowded spaces can be targeted by those who want to cause harm, but I want to reassure the public that the police, partners and the event organisers are doing all we can to keep them safe and secure. Some of that protection can be seen with visible security guards and local officers and a significant amount of the security measures will be less obvious and are deployed for extra protection.

Fans can help us by watching these new videos to make themselves aware of the existing safety advice and to be ready to [ACT if you spot suspicious behaviour and activity](#).

Don't think you might be wasting our time, it is always better to be safe than sorry. If something doesn't look or feel right, tell someone. We want you to enjoy the games, enjoy the atmosphere and by remaining vigilant we can all stay safe.

Specialist advice for companies operating in [crowded places](#), split into different sectors such as major events, sport stadia, visitor attractions, bars, theatres and shopping centres, is available on the National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NACTSO) website.

Key advice for anyone attending an event this summer

- Arrive early and minimise what you carry. Fewer bag searches speed up entry in events.
- Be vigilant: If you see anything suspicious, tell a member of staff straight away.
- If you see anything which could pose an immediate threat to safety, all 999.
- In an emergency, listen to and follow public address instructions.
- If told to evacuate, do not wait around or film on your mobile phone.
- Move right away from the area quickly to allow emergency workers access.
- Once you are safe, follow the local police force on social media for updates.

[Please visit the CTP Twitter channel for CTP updates](#)

News story: May timetable disruption: launch of inquiry

Following Transport Secretary Chris Grayling's [decision to hold an independent inquiry into the disruption caused by the May timetable change](#), the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) has today (13 June 2018) published the [terms of reference for the inquiry \(PDF, 375KB\)](#).

The ORR will scrutinise the roles played by all parties involved in the process, including train operators, the Department for Transport and Network Rail to establish what went wrong and ensure it does not happen again. The Department for Transport has promised its full co-operation.

The inquiry will be given full access to all the information available at each organisation involved and evidence from passengers will be collected from the consumer interest group Transport Focus.

Professor Stephen Glaister will lead the inquiry in his capacity as Chair of the ORR. A respected transport and regulatory expert with experience in both the road and rail sectors, Stephen Glaister is Emeritus Professor of Transport and Infrastructure at Imperial College and a Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers.

Rail Minister Jo Johnson said:

GTR and Northern are rightly focused on improving services for passengers, who will receive compensation for the unacceptable disruption experienced in recent weeks, and that is our overriding priority.

This independent inquiry will at the same time ensure we also learn all the lessons from what has happened.

The interim report will be published in September and full report in December. Separately, the department will be investigating whether GTR and Northern have breached their contracts and will take appropriate action if they have.

Press release: UK responds to OPCW report on chemical attacks in Ltamenah, Syria

Today the OPCW confirmed that the town of Ltamenah, in northern Syria was attacked on 24 March 2017 with sarin and on 25 March 2017 with chlorine. This is confirmation of a spate of chemical attacks in the town in just one week, the OPCW having previously confirmed that a sarin attack took place on 30 March 2017.

Tragically there is still no international mechanism to attribute responsibility for these attacks on Ltamenah. Just a few days after the OPCW confirmation of sarin use on 30 March in Ltamenah, the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism was shut down, putting an end to their ability to investigate responsibility for such attacks.

Repeated chemical attacks within Syria in such a short space of time only serve to underline the grave threat to the integrity of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Close to 90 countries have recognised that threat, and supported a call for an urgent Special Session of the Conference of States Parties on 26-27 June. The international community should come together and strengthen the OPCW's capability to prevent the further use of chemical weapons, including by attributing responsibility for these heinous crimes.