

MINUTES - The future of UK food and drink manufacturing

Food and Drink Manufacturing All-Party Parliamentary Group meeting
Thursday 04 November 2010

Summary:

The Food and Drink Manufacturing All-Party Parliamentary Group met on Thursday 04 November to discuss the future of UK food and drink manufacturing.

The session was chaired by John Stevenson MP. Finbarr Livesey from the Institute for Manufacturing at Cambridge University and Lord Henley, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at Defra each gave short speeches to open the meeting before a roundtable discussion on the topic.

Summaries of the presentations:

Finbarr Livesey gave a short presentation on a recent report commissioned by the Food and Drink Federation (FDF) on Future Scenarios for the food and drink sector. The report provides a set of possible scenarios for the future of the industry in the UK in 2025. They are based on a series of interviews and workshops with relevant industry stakeholders. The aim is to provide senior decision makers in industry and government with a common basis for discussion on the issues surrounding food production and what can be done to achieve positive outcomes for the industry and the country. The report concludes that there is a willingness and awareness across the industry and government that business as usual will not be sufficient for the food and drink industry. Only through positive cooperation can the industry prosper and overcome the challenges it faces in the coming ten to twenty years.

Lord Henley summarised the Government's work to support the food chain and praised FDF's work, especially on increasing sustainability across the industry. He welcomed the progress demonstrated by FDF members in the joint Defra / FDF waste survey, which was released on the same day as the meeting as an excellent example of businesses taking the lead in developing effective, sustainable ways of managing their waste. Lord Henley also reminded the mix of Parliamentarians, officials, members and other stakeholders at the meeting that Defra is an economic department while admitting that better communication between departments is necessary to make sure they are aware of the important role we play.

Key points from the discussion included:

- There is a need for government departments that cover aspects of food policy (BIS, DECC, Defra, DH) to work together more effectively to consider and determine how food fits into wider topics such as manufacturing strategy and retail.
- It is essential for the industry to have clarity and consistency from Government, with a level playing field to ensure effective competition. Sometimes regulation is the answer to ensure this is the case.
- The industry needs to do more to promote itself and the image of the sector to address the severe skills shortages that are predicted for the future.

Mission Statement:

To consider the issues of concern to the food and drink manufacturing industry and to raise awareness of these matters in Parliament.

Attendees:

Nina Blunck, Public Affairs Manager, Food and Drink Federation

Jo Bray, Food Policy Unit, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

James Clark, Public Affairs Manager, Coca-Cola

Abigail Cross, Public Affairs Executive, Food and Drink Federation

Lord Dykes

Pat Foreman, Chief Executive, Food North West, representing the English Food and Drink Alliance

Ian Hagg, CSR Director, Findus

Chris Heaton-Harris MP

Lord Henley, Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Defra

Andrew Kuyk, Director of Sustainability and Competitiveness, Food and Drink Federation

Finbarr Livesey, Director, the Institute for Manufacturing at Cambridge University

Jack Matthews, Chief Executive, Improve

Jon Neal, Communications Manager, the Institute for Grocery Distribution

Sean Roberts, Policy Director, Food Ethics Council

Mark Spencer MP (Parliamentary Researcher)

John Stevenson MP (Chair)