

Food

Introduction

Farming in Wales is dominated by beef and sheep production and the dairy sector, with the arable sector only accounting for some 10% of agricultural output (see Topic Brief on Agriculture).

The food processing sector in Wales is increasingly seeking to add value to agricultural production through a number of means including:

- ◆ Branding aimed at improving quality around a number of brand values that are in line with consumer needs;
- ◆ Investment in innovative approaches in terms of product, market and process developments.

There were some 22,900 employees in the Food, Drink and Tobacco manufacturing sector in 2001, accounting for 2.1% of total employment (1.8% GB).

- ◆ The fruit and vegetable processing sector in Wales is both growing and over-represented compared to GB;
- ◆ The bakery, meat, poultry processing and dairy processing sectors are over represented in Wales but have seen declines in the number of people employed within them;
- ◆ The fish processing sector is very small and under-represented, but growing;
- ◆ There is an under-represented drinks sector in Wales compared to GB;
- ◆ The highest rate of growth is within the 'other' sector that includes oils and fats, farm animal and pet feeds and niche products such as condiments and pasta.

The Welsh Assembly Government provides support for the agri-food sector in Wales through a number of Rural Development Plan schemes including the Processing and Marketing Grant Scheme, the Quality Food Scheme and the Farming Connect and Farming Advisory Service.

Responsibility for public health and food safety in Wales is devolved to Welsh Ministers. There are numerous initiatives in Wales aimed at encouraging healthy eating including Health Challenge Wales, the Nutrition Networks for Wales and the provision of school breakfast clubs.

Overview of current statutory powers of the Assembly

"Food" is Field 8 of Schedule 5 of the *Government of Wales Act 2006*. This means that the National Assembly for Wales can seek Measure-making powers over food matters through Legislative Competence Orders.

European Commission Regulation 1698/2005 provides a framework for rural development through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development for the next programming period 2007-2013. Under this regulation the Assembly Government has prepared and submitted a draft Rural Development Plan for 2007-2013ⁱ.

Food safety law is largely contained in three statutes: the *Food and Environment Protection Act 1985*, the *Food Safety Act 1990* and the *Food Standards Act 1999*. The *Food and Environment Protection Act 1985* makes provision in relation to the contamination of food. The *Food Standards Act 1999* provides for the establishment, functions and powers of the Food Standards Agency (FSA).

Food law enforcement officers are employed by local councils (food authorities) to ensure compliance with the *Food Safety Act 1990*.

Powers to enable the FSA to monitor and audit local authorities are contained in the *Food Standards Act 1999*. Food safety and standards powers are devolved to Welsh Ministers and the FSA is accountable to them for its activities in Wales.

EU policy

EU legislation has ensured that since 1 January 2005 food and feed businesses have had to guarantee that all foodstuffs, animal feed and feed ingredients are traceable right through the food chain. Updated food hygiene rules followed on 1 January 2006.

The EU has also adopted targeted legislation on specific food safety issues and foodstuffs, such as use of pesticides, food supplements, colourings, antibiotics and hormones in food production, addition of vitamins, minerals and similar substances to foods, products in contact with foodstuffs, such as packaging, meat, gelatine and dairy products.

The growth of Genetically Modified (GM) crops in Wales is regulated by EU legislation. EU regulations also govern the labelling of foods containing GM organisms. The Welsh Assembly Government endorsed taking the most restrictive approach possible to the commercialisation and growing of GM crops in Wales within current UK and EU legislation.

A White Paper for an EU strategy on nutrition and physical activity is expected in June 2007.

Key Assembly Government strategy documents and action plans from the Second Assembly:

Agri-food partnership action plans:

[Dairy](#)

[Fisheries and aquaculture](#)

[Horticulture](#)

[Lamb and beef](#)

[Organic](#)

Welsh Assembly Government, Strategic action plan for Welsh Dairy Industry, Consultation, Jan 2007:
<http://new.wales.gov.uk/consultations/closed/envandcouncilscons/1226862/?lang=en>

Food Standards Agency and Welsh Assembly Government, Nutrition strategy for Wales, February 2003
<http://www.food.gov.uk/wales/nutwales/nutritionstrategy/>

E.Coli public inquiry:

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/ecoliinquiry/?lang=en>

Legacy issues from the Second Assembly

The Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee's legacy paper highlighted progress and delivery of the Rural Development Plan 2007-2013 and food and market development as issues for the attention of the Third Assembly:

The Health and Social Services Committee identified the European Commission's White Paper on Nutrition.

Useful links

Welsh Assembly Government food and market development web pages: [food and market devt](#)

Welsh Assembly Government public health and food safety team: [public health and food safety](#)

True Taste Wales website: [True Taste Wales](#)

Food Standards Agency Wales: [food standards agency](#)

Health Challenge Wales: [health challenge wales](#)

Nutrition Network for Wales: [nutrition network for wales](#)

Further information

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ⁱ Welsh Assembly Government, *Consultation on the Draft Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007 – 2013*, May 2006 [RDP consultation](#)