

Funding to help food and drink sector recover from Covid impact



A fund to help regional food and drink ventures recover from the impact of Covid-19 has awarded £200,000 to a range of projects across Scotland.

The Regional Food Fund (RFF), one of the Scottish Government's 100 Days commitments, will help producers and event organisers showcase quality regional food and drink products.

Managed by industry organisation Scotland Food & Drink, the fund is designed to contribute to the sector's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and assist the development of food tourism-related projects.

A total of 42 grants of up to £5,000 have been made to stimulate creative, innovative and collaborative projects.

Ayrshire Chamber were grateful to be included in the funding awards to expand the Food and Drink section of the new Ayrshire Connect digital platform. Working in collaboration with Ayrshire Regional Food Co-ordinators, they would encourage local Food and Drink producers to get in touch to include a listing on Ayrshire Connect.

Val Russell, CEO said: “We are delighted to be one of the 42 groups who have received an award and look forward to spreading the word further about the exciting Food and Drink businesses from Ayrshire. The Ayrshire Connect platform will also help local hospitality businesses to find exciting, local products.”

Other ventures include a regional food group of more than 30 businesses in Argyll and Bute where funding will support the growth of off-island sales, while in Fife, the Bowhouse market will expand to help more local food and drink producers gain access to an alternative route to market.

The grants were announced by Rural Affairs and Islands Cabinet Secretary Mairi Gougeon during a visit to the Shetland Rural Centre in Lerwick.

She said: “This funding underlines our continued commitment to this important and exciting sector and I am delighted to see the involvement of such a diverse range of projects.

“A combination of Covid-19 and Brexit have dealt a significant blow to many of our high-quality food and drink producers and recognising this, we doubled the initial funding to £200,000 to help more projects.

“We know that consumers are increasingly interested in where their food comes from and are looking for high welfare and production standards, as well as taking into account environmental issues including food miles and are increasingly buying local.

“These collaborative projects will also showcase the incredible range of food and drink produced in Scotland and deliver unique and memorable eating and drinking experiences as we look to welcoming more international visitors.”

Fiona Richmond, Head of Regional Food at Scotland Food & Drink, said:

“Since its launch in February, the demand for the Scotland Food & Drink Partnership Regional Food Fund has been incredible and we are delighted that it has resulted in the funding allocation being doubled to £200,000.

“The fund provides vital support to 42 excellent collaborative projects and initiatives that will contribute to the recovery and growth of the food, drink and tourism sectors countrywide.

“This increase in support comes at a critical time as local economies get back on their feet after a challenging year.

“We look forward to seeing the awarded projects come to life over the next six months.”

To be included in Ayrshire Connect, contact connect@ayrshire-chamber.org or visit www.ayrshireconnect.co.uk for more information