

Growing Scottish Food and Drink Manufacturing:

FDF Scotland's 2026 Manifesto



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Our priorities to support the growth of Scotland's food and drink manufacturing industry:



Foreword

Food and drink manufacturing provides jobs and economic growth in communities all over Scotland. Our members support food security across the country and put Scotland's food and drink sector on the map, exporting iconic brands and produce the world over.

We need to ensure Scotland has an evidence-based regulatory environment supporting investment and growth, that businesses have the people and skills that they need, and that our industry is supported on its journey to net zero.

This document sets out our priorities for the Scottish Parliament election in 2026. Work with us to support the future success of Scotland's vital food and drink manufacturing industry.



David Thomson
CEO, FDF Scotland



James Macsween
Chair, FDF Scotland

Spotlight on Scottish food & drink manufacturing



Scotland's **1,220** food and drink manufacturers employ **47,000** people and contribute **£5.2bn** to Scotland's economy every year. The industry is

Scotland's largest manufacturing sector and supports jobs throughout the supply chain from farm to fork.



Food & drink manufacturing accounts for:



30.8% of total manufacturing GVA

31.1% of total manufacturing turnover

Scotland delivers:



14.4% of total UK food & drink manufacturing GVA

11.1% of total UK food & drink manufacturing turnover

Exports

Top markets by value

Beverages	£4992.5m -4.8%	US £975.2m	France £393.1m	Singapore £243.3m
Fish	£1206.2m +16.9%	France £721.2m	US £139.3m	China £69.0m
Cereals	£227.2m -7.5%	US £38.5m	Ireland £36.9m	Netherlands £24.1m
Meat	£139.3m -3.6%	France £72.9m	Ireland £16.6m	Netherlands £13.6m
Fruit & veg	£91.1m +29.4%	Egypt £42.6m	Ireland £7.2m	Netherlands £5.0m

£6.8bn of exports

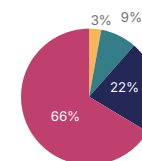
28.0% of total UK food & drink exports come from Scotland

Business

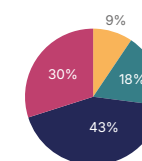
Top sectors by # of businesses:

Bread & pastry	260
Spirits	235
Beer	115
Fish production	110
Meat	95

% of businesses by employment:



% of businesses by turnover:



Number of businesses grew **12.4%** between 2019 & 2024

Legend: Large (Orange), Medium (Teal), Small (Dark Blue), Micro (Pink)

97% of our businesses are SMEs – accounting for **91%** of Scotland's food & drink manufacturing turnover

Employment

Food & drink **manufacturing** makes up:
27.0% of total manufacturing employment
1.8% of total employment

Top sectors by employment:	
Spirits	10,000
Fish	7,000
Bread and pastry	7,000
Meat	5,500
Biscuits	4,000

We added **4,000** jobs since 2017

PRIORITY ONE:

Supporting business growth



We need a supportive regulatory environment where businesses can grow and thrive. This means:

A consistent policy environment:

- Working closely with other UK nations on developing regulation related to food and drink. Minimising divergence reduces cost and complexity for businesses and consumers.
- Coordinating food policy across Scottish Government departments and public sector agencies, ensuring business engagement as early as possible and throughout the process. Consistent, informed and long-term policy ensures business confidence.

Helping businesses to grow:

- Ensuring multiyear ring-fenced grants are available for food and drink businesses to support them to invest in projects that will make their processes and facilities more efficient, productive and sustainable.
- Continuing to support the Scottish Food & Drink Partnership – a unique collaboration between industry organisations from across the food supply chain, Scottish Government and its agencies.



Ensuring a healthier, safer food system:

- Continuing to support and work as a vital partner in our Reformulation for Health Programme to ensure Scottish food and drink manufacturers are helped to continue to make their products healthier.
- Helping industry continue to provide healthy, safe food that builds consumer trust based on a strong food safety system. This includes supporting Food Standards Scotland on a pragmatic redesign of our food law delivery and assurance framework.

PRIORITY TWO:

A highly-skilled, resilient workforce



We need a highly skilled and motivated workforce. This means:

- Reforming and restructuring the skills delivery model in Scotland. This will simplify the funding and delivery landscape to reduce fragmentation and complication and improve alignment with the needs of the labour market and businesses.
 - Ensuring meaningful engagement is maintained with the industry, including food and drink manufacturers, when developing and implementing skills policies. This will help shape policies which are deliverable, effective and responsive to the changing needs of businesses.
 - Reintroducing targeted employer support to aid modular, work-based training and career progression across all ages and skills levels. This will help develop a highly-skilled workforce that is able to maintain pace with changing technology, as well as allowing businesses to adapt more easily.
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- A photograph of a woman, likely a food manufacturer, smiling at the camera. She is wearing a white lab coat, a black hijab, and a clear hairnet. She has her arms crossed and is wearing blue nitrile gloves. The background shows shelves filled with various types of cheese in a cheese aging room.
- Working with Westminster on the creation of the Growth and Skills Levy, allowing for a clear line of funding that is consistent across UK nations. This will enable food and drink manufacturers to invest Levy funds in training that can address skills needs and improve productivity.
 - Ensuring public sector support prioritises investment in process efficiency rather than an increase in headcount. This will help deliver an increase in productivity and higher paid jobs.

PRIORITY THREE:

Working together towards net zero



We need to support and enable the industry's journey to net zero – from de-risking to building experience and confidence in future technologies and skills. This means:

- Supporting and engaging with our Net Zero Programme including:
 - Using our research with businesses to understand business barriers to developing net zero transition plans.
 - Supporting the development and implementation of a national food and drink climate transition plan.
 - Supporting research on emissions in the food and drink sector in Scotland, tracking a headline figure for carbon emissions and how to approach identifying sectoral emissions.
- Supporting increased climate change innovation in the sector, driving widespread adoption of net zero solutions. This could be delivered through targeted business support that meets the needs of SMEs.



- Ensuring Extended Producer Responsibility funds are ring-fenced for recycling and waste improvement by local authorities, and including the Producer Responsibility Organisation and the Deposit Management Organisation in the co-design of the statutory Code of Practice for household waste recycling in Scotland.

How we can help you

Meeting the industry

- Shape policy – bring together the food and drink industry to discuss ideas and opportunities.
- Meet food and drink manufacturers – on a one-to-one basis or as a group – we can advise you on who the food and drink manufacturers are in your local area and put you in touch.
- Our annual Scottish Parliamentary reception – arguably one of the best receptions in the Scottish Parliament! We host an annual reception in the Garden Lobby where you can network with our industry and key stakeholders.

Supporting your work

- Provide policy briefings, industry insights and statistics – we have a team of experts who produce industry-specific data and economic insights.
- Committee witnesses – we and/or our members are always keen to help support the work of our Scottish Parliamentary committees.
- Cross-Party Group on Food – we provide the secretariat for the Cross-Party Group on Food in the Scottish Parliament, we can provide you details of the current work of the group, and you are welcome to attend.
- Work with us on reserved matters and on a four UK nations basis – we work closely with all at Westminster, the Senedd and with colleagues in Northern Ireland.





Supporting the growth of
Scotland's food and drink
manufacturing industry



Food and Drink Federation (FDF) Scotland is the voice of the food and drink manufacturing industry – Scotland's largest manufacturing sector.

We contribute £5.2 billion to the country's economy, supporting 47,000 jobs in Scotland, and producing products that are loved at home and around the world.

Find out more about our latest news and the work we do at:

[fdfscotland.org.uk](https://www.fdfscotland.org.uk)

X: [@FDFScotland](https://twitter.com/FDFScotland)

<https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/fdf-scotland/>