

# THE FANTASTIC FUTURE OF FOOD: 50 YEARS OF FOOD SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY



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*The Institute of Food Science and Technology (IFST) this year celebrates its 50th Jubilee. While we will not miss the opportunity to celebrate the past, the focus for the Institute's celebrations is on looking to the future.*

The important role of food science and technology in ensuring a sustainable supply of safe and nutritious food seems never to have been so critical. Barely a month goes by without at least one significant news story hitting the headlines on a related subject. In the recent past we have seen a plethora of stories relating to the horse meat scandal and its

Sadly these stories often pick up on negative aspects of food, nutrition and health. As an institute and an independent professional membership body involved in this sector, we do not see this as a threat. These stories reinforce the important message that food science and technology lie at the heart of the **solutions** to these issues rather than being the **cause**.

which have evolved as a result of being used under crisis. Indeed, some of the technologies which are now being utilised on a routine basis have only become available on a mass and economical scale in the last few years.

It is only through effective scientific research that we can continue to advance the profession and continuously improve the quality, production and safety throughout the supply chain. IFST has recently published a new Information Statement entitled *Modern Techniques Used in Food Authenticity Testing*. This was written and peer-reviewed by our members, and is available on our website.

## *... ensuring a safe and reliable food supply chain ...*

implications in terms of food authenticity and ensuring a safe and reliable food supply chain. Similarly, the number of stories relating to obesity, diet, nutrition and health is increasing faster than the UK waistlines on which they are reporting.

Slightly slower burning news items but just as critical include the sustainability of our food supply – within the UK but also on a global scale. Other subjects related to sustainability and which also regularly vie for headline status include the introduction of new technologies such as genetic modification and nanotechnology.

Many of our members are involved in critical research and development targeted at reducing the prevalence of food-borne diseases and ensuring the production of food that is safe

## *... safe from chemical and physical contaminants ...*

from chemical and physical contaminants. This highly complex work often goes unnoticed by the general public. During the horse meat scandal, food analysts were responsible for testing meat samples using a number of techniques, some of

In reality, even given the recent horse meat scare, consumers generally do not fear going into a supermarket. Consistently safe and reliable food is considered a hygiene factor – something which the public expects. From time to time we hear of food

product recalls. Some of these are voluntary, and are just one further course of action at the end of a very thorough testing process that aims to ensure that the food we eat is reliably safe and of the highest quality.

That said, food scientists are in no way complacent. They know that the increased complexity of a globalised food supply chain along with increasing food prices may lead to more opportunities and greater temptation for food fraud. This is a subject at the heart of the recent *Elliott Review into the Integrity and Assurance of Food Supply Networks* due for final publication in early summer 2014. There is no doubt that the horse meat incident has highlighted some important issues and further steps that can be taken to tighten the food supply chain.

One unintended consequence of many of these news stories has been the negative impact they have put on the image of the food industry. As with many other sectors, food – from farm to fork – struggles to attract high

### *... recognised code of conduct around food safety ...*

quality young people needed both today and for the future. This is especially acute in terms of attracting the next generation of food scientists and technologists. This is even harder to do against such a negative backdrop of reporting.

In our 50th Jubilee year, IFST is focusing on the future needs of the sector and is pleased to be delivering two important new

projects in support of these issues and the food sector.

## **REGISTER FOR FOOD SAFETY PROFESSIONALS**

The first of our Jubilee projects is our planned Register for Food Safety Professionals. Currently EU Regulation 852/2004 (Article 5) requires all food business operators to implement and maintain hygiene procedures based on

### *... greater temptation for food fraud ...*

HACCP principles. HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) is an internationally recognised way of managing food safety and protecting consumers.

Food business operators are required to identify Critical Control Points (CCPs) and then establish procedures to monitor these and take corrective actions where needed. All of this, of course, must be recorded and HACCP procedures carefully verified on an ongoing basis. HACCP principles are normally established at a senior, strategic

level in a food business, then carefully managed, and delivered on a day-to day basis by those responsible for production.

IFST's new voluntary register aims to provide a four tier framework that will recognise and encourage the professional development of all levels of food safety professionals. It will also establish a recognised code

of conduct around food safety which we believe will support the Food Standard Agency's principles of risk-based enforcement and assessment. Ultimately this register will ensure that those involved in delivering food safety are recognised as having the necessary level of knowledge, skills and experience required to deliver HACCP processes at the level at which they are working.

Prevention of food fraud, as highlighted in the Elliot Review, is often the responsibility of food safety professionals. Our new register will ensure that a focus on the prevention of food fraud is incorporated within the assessment criteria for attaining accreditation. All food safety professionals will then be required to maintain a record of their continuing professional development – critical for scientific professionals in such a fast moving subject.

## **FoodStart – IFST'S LEGACY PROJECT**

Celebrating the *Fantastic Future of Food* is the main theme for our 50th Jubilee year. But, as highlighted earlier, pivotal to the future of food is the need to attract sufficient talent to deliver this. A second key project for IFST is the development of our *FoodStart* project. We are designing and building a website which will provide a single point of contact for students wishing to experience working in the food sector. Food employers will be able to post work experience

placements, graduate placements and internships free of charge for students to browse and apply.

Provided placements meet minimum standards set by IFST, students will be awarded achievement 'badges' which they can include within their CV, building their profile and improving their employability. To deliver this ambitious legacy project IFST is currently raising funds from its members as well as directly from employers. We already have some major food brands supporting us but need further support to bring this to reality.

Our *FoodStart* project is being formally launched at our Jubilee conference on 14-15 May and our Register for Food Safety Professionals will be formally launched at our House of Lords Reception on 2 July hosted by Lord Rooker, an event which will also be a celebration of our 50th Jubilee theme – *the Fantastic Future of Food*.

For more details of both of these projects and our Jubilee events please visit our website: [www.ifst.org](http://www.ifst.org) or email Jon Poole, Chief Executive, [j.poole@ifst.org](mailto:j.poole@ifst.org).

