

SFDF Parliamentary Reception 8th September 2010

***SFDF showcases its schools programme – A Future in Food
Keynote Address from Flora McLean, SFDF Director***

A successful food and drink manufacturing industry is a vital component of a healthy Scottish economy.

It is an exciting industry to work in. It relies on science and technology to drive growth, deliver innovation and promote future development. It is diverse, fast moving and consumer facing. It is local, national and it is international.

All of this means we need to attract a stream of highly-skilled and innovative people to our industry.

So there are career opportunities ranging from food science, new product development and process efficiency to environmental science, regulatory affairs, and logistics and many more besides.

However, with many young people unaware of the opportunities, we have an obligation as an industry and as employers to inspire and encourage young people to come into the food industry.

Therefore, as the representative body of food and drink manufacturers, the Scottish Food and Drink Federation has made it a priority to promote our industry as a career destination of choice.

To succeed in this ambition, we need to paint a picture of a vibrant industry. An industry that offers rewarding opportunities and in which many companies are investing in the development of their people.

Therefore, as a first step, last year SFDF produced a short careers film called “*A World of Opportunities*”. The film has been widely commended and is available to schools across Scotland and is now regularly used in college and university Open Days.

But we continue to build on that work.

One of our guests here tonight – Julie Cross – is fond of saying: “If you think you can...you will.” And she has a point

We think that given the chance to work with schools, we can show young people how an interest in business studies, marketing, engineering or IT, for example, can be linked in with the food and drink industry.

So we sought and secured grant funding from the Scottish Government and earlier this year we launched a national schools programme that is currently being built up and rolled out in primary and secondary schools across Scotland.

A Future in Food takes a collective approach and so, through our Advisory Group, we are working in partnership with, amongst others, Learning and Teaching Scotland, Determined to Succeed, Improve, the Scotland Food and Drink Skills Academy, Scotland's Colleges, the Scottish Qualifications Authority, Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish Government.

A Future in Food has been established to encourage young people to think about the food on their plates.... How is it produced? Where did the ingredients come from? How does it get to consumers? What type of skills are needed?

Due to the diverse nature of the food and drink industry and themes such as sustainability, ethical trading, new product development and health and wellbeing, there are opportunities for engagement with many subjects including maths, the sciences, IT, technology and home economics. There are also exciting possibilities for cross curricular activities.

So SFDF's Moira Stalker is now travelling around Scotland, meeting with schools and food manufacturers to facilitate the creation and development of valuable educational partnerships.

In bringing food companies together with schools, pupils will not only gain a better understanding of the production and processing of food but, crucially, will gain practical skills via real life experiences and active engagement with industry.

These partnerships also support teachers because the experiences companies are able to provide fit in with and support all 8 Curriculum for Excellence outcomes.

Having also secured a grant from Skills Development Scotland, SFDF has now produced a short film which, as you will soon see, clearly demonstrates the passion and commitment to working in our industry that is shown by many young people.

We have also produced a series of mini film case studies charting the education and career experiences of a cross section of people – some very young and others a wee bit more mature – just like myself!

Having said all of that, if the food and drink industry is to become a career destination of choice there is still a lot of ground to cover and we all have a role to play.

Therefore, to help you play your part the films are all available as a resource for you on the SFDF website. You can also pick up a copy of the film to take away today.

However, we need more companies, more schools and more foot soldiers on the ground so we hope you will give your support to our programme and become an ambassador for the food and drink industry so that more people can experience "A Future in Food".