

Food & drink manufacturers' response to the Queen's Speech

Thursday 28 May, 2015

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Commenting on the Government's first Queen's Speech, **Ian Wright, Director General of the Food and Drink Federation, the voice of the largest manufacturing sector – food and drink, said:**

"Food and drink manufacturing is a great British success story and we will be a key partner in helping the Government to raise the productive potential of the UK economy. The Government's efforts to ensure a sound and stable economy are essential so our members continue to invest, innovate and create highly skilled jobs and apprenticeships."

"We will be looking closely at the measures announced today. Food and drink manufacturers make a huge contribution to the UK economy, adding £22 billion each year. We want to work with Ministers to unlock further value through a new industrial strategy."

"Of the Bills that are of particular importance to food and drink manufacturing:

- Regarding the Full Employment and Welfare Benefits Bill, food and drink manufacturers offer some of the most exciting and creative apprenticeships and careers in the UK. Following our new apprenticeship pledge launched earlier this year, we want to work with Ministers to ensure that apprenticeships are employer-led and create the highly skilled workforce our high-value sector needs.
- We will be looking closely at the Enterprise Bill, as all regulation must be evidence and science-based. We have supported the deregulatory steps already taken under the last Parliament and look forward to further measures that will make it easy for small food and drink businesses to start up and succeed.
- FDF is also interested in ensuring that the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill results in a thriving 'Northern Powerhouse' and strong local economies, as food and drink manufacturers are based in every corner of the country and are often some of the most significant employers.
- UK food and drink manufacturers want to be part of a strong, outward facing, competitive EU that leads through innovation supported by science and evidence based policy making. We call on the Treasury to publish full economic assessment of the options as part of the European Union Referendum Bill.
- On the Scotland Bill, we will work with the UK and Scottish Governments to ensure that our members' interests are represented. We will also work to ensure the negotiations for further devolution minimise business uncertainty allowing Scottish food and drink manufacturers to continue to flourish and provide tasty, safe, nutritious and affordable products for consumers.
- On the Immigration Bill we support the drive to home-grow talent and have taken steps as an industry to develop our pipeline at all levels so our industry can thrive. However, there remains a serious skills shortage in our sector and we need to ensure that industry has the talent it needs to remain competitive.
- We also welcome the Government's call for an enhanced partnership with India and China, as these are key markets for our members. UK food and drink exports around the world have doubled in the last decade and consumers in these countries are snapping up high quality British products, leading to an increase of a third in the volume of tea we sell to China."

More information

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