

NW Agri-Food & Nutrition HortiTech Growth Hub (AFN-NW)

Overview

[The University of Manchester](https://www.manchester.ac.uk) (UoM) is building an alliance between industry and academia with the objective of boosting the competitiveness, productivity, growth and sustainability of Agri-Food & Nutrition businesses, large and small and across the entire supply chain, through the development, adoption and scale-up of industrial digital technologies. The alliance's strategic regional focus is the North of England. The North West will act as an incubator for the launch phase, with an emphasis on Horticulture and Dairy & Ruminant Meats producers in order to align with the region's farming sector.

Objectives

Academia, rural colleges and industry will collaborate to co-develop innovative solutions and training to achieve the following: **[1] Digitalisation** - Assist farms in the region throughout a phased transition towards precision agricultural techniques & robotics. **[2] Circularity and Clean Growth** – Design processes to maximise waste valorisation across the supply chain and improve the feasibility of closed-loop, vertical or urban farming. **[3] Economic regeneration** – Enhance the agility of businesses, resilience of supply chains and security of home-grown food supply; Exploit economic opportunities and government investment in the post-COVID, post-Brexit era; Strengthen the engagement between higher education, further education and industrial sectors through knowledge transfer, training and joint R&D activities.

Mechanisms

The Hub will bring together academicians, educators, small and large businesses from across the supply chain, investors and local authorities, to marry up the needs and requirements of industry (e.g. technological, logistical or skills challenges) with innovation capabilities and competences that are able to address such challenges through the following avenues: **[1]** Bringing together a broad science, education and business research community to help industries restructure and deliver new value. **[2]** Inform and implement the co-creation of training/upskilling programmes, and instigate the development of innovative business models and feasibility studies utilising academic expertise. **[3]** Feed into wider regional or national initiatives and help businesses and academia mobilise to gain from strategic or long-term funding opportunities such as government and international investment.

