**What is the future of work in food?**

After a series of global shocks, and shifting geopolitical conditions, the food ecosystem is under pressure to engage in rapid transformation. These shocks - COVID-19, pressures on supply chains from sustainability directives, the energy crisis stemming from the Russian/Ukrainian war to name a few - have highlighted the precarious nature of the food supply chain, the importance of food security, the need for a strong sustainability focus, and the implications of labour shortages on food supply. In this context, we ask the question what is the future of work in the food ecosystem? This event draws on a series of projects spanning the breadth of work in food, starting with the value chain and agriculture, shifting into food processing, followed by the warehousing and retailing of food. While each of these areas of the food ecosystem faces their own distinct challenges, this event seeks to start a conversation about the implications of broader trends for the future of work in food.

Date: Tuesday 16th April 2024

Time: 1pm – 5pm.

Register for attendance details on <https://www.ticketleap.events/tickets/work-and-equalities-institute/future-of-the-food-ecosystem> .

The event will be held in person at Alliance Manchester Business School and will be offered hybrid.

Speakers:

Sophie Van Huellen, *University of Manchester*

Adrian Smith, *University of Sussex*

Peter Carter, *Nottingham University*

Cassandra Bowkett, Huw Thomas, Laura Jarvis King, Jill Rubery, *University of Manchester, University College Dublin*

Jo Cutter, Gabriella Alberti, *Leeds University*

Charles Umney, Abby Winton and Gabriella Alberti, *Leeds University*

Alejandro Castillo Larrain, *University of Manchester*

Presentations:



*Sophie Van Huellen (University of Manchester)* – Sophie’s presentation focuses on the case of Ghana, examining upgrading opportunities and the dependence of the entire economy on cocoa, and the implications for cocoa farmers and the Ghanaian government. Her talk will contextualise the financial challenges faced by the sector, and the implications of new EU regulation on deforestation-free products



*Adrian Smith (University of Sussex)* – Adrian’s presentation examines the ways in which ‘AgTech’ and digitalised automation are being deployed in the UK glasshouse agrifood sector in the context of the migrant labour regime and inter-firm power relations that dominates the agrifood value chain.

*Peter Carter (University of Nottingham)*– Peter will present on an ethnography, exploring the use of agency work in a UK salad factory, and the experiences of these agency workers.



*Cassandra Bowkett, Huw Thomas, Laura Jarvis King, Jill Rubery (University of Manchester, University College Dublin)* – This presentation explores technology adoption in food processing in the UK and Ireland, exploring early findings around the challenges faced by firms, and the implications for skill, and employment.



*Jo Cutter, Gabriella Alberti (Leeds University)*– This presentation will be providing early evidence from a survey conducted in UK Food Manufacture as part of the Labour Mobilities in Transition post-Brexit (LIMITS) project, discussing employer responses



*Charles Umney, Abby Winton and Gabriella Alberti (Leeds University)*- This paper looks at how local government engages with questions around technological change in the warehousing industry in Yorkshire. It examines the dilemmas that local state actors face in mediating between the need to facilitate investment and innovation, and the need to mitigate the potential risks of technological change for jobs and job quality.

*Alejandro Castillo Larrain (University of Manchester)* – Alejandro’s presentation will discuss trade union legal mobilisation in the Chilean retail sector, as a response to one multinational supermarket chain’s adoption of new logistics and sales technologies. Adopting a social shaping of technology approach, this paper addresses legal mobilisation as one trade union strategy in unfavourable regulatory contexts and where trade unions' bargaining power is low.