Midlands Engine
Opportunities in Agri-food
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The Midlands at a Glance

£200bn+
GVA

10m+
Population

20
universities

2m+
educated to
dergade level

20-24
year olds largest
demographic group
75% of the UK within 2 hours travel time of the region

UK’s largest concentration of food processors and supply chain companies, including Princes, Mondelez and Müller

World Class centres of excellence supporting the agri-food industry, such as Harper Adams University and The National Centre for Food Manufacturing

Primary production of a vast range of raw materials

“Field-to-Fork” supply chain across agriculture, horticulture and food production
Welcome to the Midlands

With an economy worth more than £200 billion, generating 13% of the UK’s Gross Value Added (GVA), the Midlands Engine is at the heart of UK growth.

The Midlands is a region with ambitious plans, intending to build on the 18% growth that has taken place over the past five years to achieve an economy worth £260 billion and create 300,000 more jobs over the next 15 years.

The region is home to 15% of the UK’s population, with 20-24 years olds comprising the largest demographic group among its 10 million citizens. 500,000 students come to the region each year adding to its great diversity. Plans to house this growing population include the need to build 600,000 new homes over the next 15 years in cities such as the UK’s second city – Birmingham – Nottingham, Coventry, Derby, Hereford, Leicester, Lincoln, Stoke-on-Trent, Wolverhampton and Worcester.

There are 800,000 businesses in the Midlands. According to HMRC regional trade in goods data, the Midlands contributes to 16% of UK goods exports and businesses are engaged in a number of innovative sectors providing the technologies for trains, planes and automobiles as well as life sciences and agri-food and drink.

Businesses are able to take advantage of the central location and international connectivity of the region, with access to 92% of the UK’s population in under four hours and the UK’s busiest pure cargo airport, East Midlands, handling over 320,000 tonnes of cargo a year. In addition, Birmingham Airport handles over 13 million passengers across 50 airlines flying to 150 destinations annually and the Port of Grimsby and Immingham on the east coast is the UK’s largest port by tonnage, handling around 55 million tonnes of cargo each year.

The Midlands is brimming with opportunity for investors. The region has Europe’s fastest improving rail network. It is at the centre of HS2, the country’s new £55 billion high speed rail network. This will increase capacity and bring people and goods to and from London in less than 50 minutes to give global Midlands companies the connectivity they need to continue to grow.
Global Issue: Midlands Opportunity

With anticipated world population growth over the next 30 years, increasing urbanisation, changing dietary habits, the challenge of more volatile climatic conditions and stalling outputs in some areas of agricultural production, there is a need to develop new ways to increase farm productivity and profitability.

With this comes many business opportunities to transform food production with innovative technologies, able to improve productivity while also reducing the environmental impact of farming. Delivering food security will require new and exciting ways of thinking which will present substantial business opportunities for companies and investors - some already established in this sector and others that may not previously have considered themselves as being in the business of agri-food production.

The new world of food production is moving rapidly - involving more data analysis and information systems, software development, new sensor technologies, robotics, artificial intelligence, battery technologies, novel food packaging materials and many other innovations.

Current and future trends in consumer habits are being capitalised on, resulting in multi-million pound expansion projects by existing investors. For example, DeliFrance has recently invested £4m in doubling the capacity of its UK headquarters in Leicestershire to meet growing demand for Viennoiserie - driven by factors such as increased interest in breakfast and convenience snacking products in the UK. Meanwhile, British shoppers took home an additional 103.6 million litres of bottled water in 2017, increasing the annual value of the market by 8% to £510m - a trend which has led Nestlé to continue the expansion of its water bottling plant in Buxton, Derbyshire. These are just two of the Midlands’ success stories, with new entrants to the UK Agri-food sector also realising the potential the region offers their businesses.

We have the knowledge and expertise in the Midlands to support companies to make the most of these opportunities, building on the region’s long history of being home to those who are already leading the way in Agri-food. Such businesses continue to flourish here while they also help address one of humankind’s greatest global challenges.
Case Study: RCMA

“This is a milestone in UK oilseed processing. Not only are we adding the first brand-new large-scale rapeseed processing facility in the UK since the 1980s; we have commissioned a highly sustainable approach to processing, reflecting our commitment to a more environmentally-friendly industry.”
Doug King, Chairman, RCMA Group

In 2017, Singapore-based RCMA Group began construction of its state-of-the-art rapeseed processing plant near Stratford-upon-Avon, investing £25million in the project and creating in excess of 30 local jobs.

It is the first new large-scale rapeseed plant to be built in the UK since the 1980s, responding to the increasing market demand for UK-sourced food ingredients.

The new facility will process 100% UK-grown seed to meet growing demand from UK buyers for a fully traceable supply chain and high-quality ingredients for the food industry. Rapeseed oil consumption continues to grow, fuelled by health-conscious consumers.
The Midlands offers the complete package for the Agri-food sector - from primary production of a diverse range of first class raw materials to world-renowned Centres of Excellence and university expertise to drive forward innovation in collaboration with the region’s businesses.

Global brands, such as Müller, Heineken, Mondelez, Pepsico and Arla, have combined with a strong indigenous industry to create a research, processing, distribution, packaging and agri-technology base delivering world-class products and services from farm to fork and trawler to table.

The region has a rich agricultural heritage, providing high quality produce to the industry. Due to its diversity, the region can supply nearly every product capable of being produced in the UK. In the east, there is extensive arable and vegetable production and the largest seafood processing centre in the UK centred around Grimsby. In the west, horticultural production is a specialism, while a strong meat and dairy industry supplies major processors, including many large overseas investors. The region also benefits from its seven Food Enterprise Zones (FEZs), which are supported by a world leading education and training offer.

The region’s major concentration of end-users - from farmers to food manufacturers - provides a ready market for businesses located here. In addition, the Midlands Engine sits geographically at the heart of the UK, with extensive distribution and logistics hubs that move produce to shelves throughout the UK and overseas with the speed essential to the sector.
Road transport is the main mode for movement of foodstuffs within the UK. The region's food and drink producers therefore benefit from being well served by the motorway network which extends into the main cities and to the distribution centres of the major retailers. The UK’s leading supermarkets have regional distribution centres in the Midlands, including Tesco (Lichfield), Sainsbury’s (Tamworth), ASDA (Lutterworth) and Morrisons (Northamptonshire) along with others including Coca-Cola and AG Barr.

The central location of these distribution centres is strategically important both for suppliers and retailers, providing access to over 50% of the UK population within two hours by road.

Markets further afield are easily accessible from the Midlands through several major seaports on the east and west coasts of the UK.
Everything you need to succeed
The world-class Centres of Excellence and universities in the Midlands have a proven track-record of collaborating with the region’s businesses to keep them at the cutting edge of innovations and latest developments in the Agri-food sector – helping them to stay competitive and at the top of their game.

Successful businesses in the Agri-food sector also recognise the importance of recruiting a highly skilled workforce to drive growth and competitive advantage. The region’s universities provide the talent such businesses require. In fact, four Midlands universities are noted in the Top 20 for the UK’s 2018 The Complete University Guide. Three also feature in the top 100 globally, according to QS University Rankings 2018. All three - the University of Warwick, University of Birmingham and University of Nottingham - have world-class expertise in Agri-food, both through the courses they offer and through the research and innovation they undertake with industry to shape the future of the sector. They form an important part of the Midlands offer to businesses, but there is much more.

The full range of expertise, in areas such as food security, addressing food trends (e.g. lowering sugar and fat content, ‘free from’ and developing functional foods) through to implementing automation and robotics in the sector, exists in the Midlands, adding an extra element which attracts forward-thinking businesses to locate here.

Those at the forefront of advances in Agri-food in the region are identifying opportunities that other, seemingly unrelated, sectors can also tap into to diversify and expand their businesses.

The networks that exist across the Midlands Engine, including Local Enterprise Partnerships, private sector businesses, academic institutions and Government departments create the environment to help to share this cross-sector knowledge and insight into new opportunities.

This connectivity and creativity has established an environment where Agri-food companies can access leading UK capability in complimentary sectors in the Midlands too, such as engineering, automotive and aerospace, providing expertise in transferable technologies around light-weighting, battery technology and autonomous vehicles, for example.

With a strength in manufacturing, including over half of the UK’s automotive activity being based in the Midlands, assets such as Warwick Manufacturing Group (WMG) and the Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC), both located in Coventry, and the Marches Centre of Manufacturing and Technology (MCMT) in Bridgnorth, Shropshire are key elements in the sector’s success story and future growth. These and other organisations are increasingly demonstrating the transferability of their expertise into the Agri-food sector, which is a growing focus for the MTC, in particular.
The Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC) is part of the High Value Manufacturing Catapult, supported by Innovate UK. It develops and proves innovative manufacturing processes and technologies in an agile, low risk environment, in partnership with industry, academia and other institutions. The focus is on delivering bespoke manufacturing system solutions for their customers.

The MTC’s areas of expertise are directly relevant to companies of all sizes and are applicable across a wide range of industry sectors - including Agri-food. The MTC now has more than 100 members, ranging from SMEs to some of the biggest brands in the world. They are working with the likes of Sainsbury’s, Unilever, Greencore and Crown, along with technology experts such as Siemens and Beckhoff. Research partners include the University of Birmingham, University of Nottingham and Loughborough University. In 2017, the MTC joined the Food and Drink Federation (FDF) as part of its drive to spearhead technology adoption in the sector.

Nearby Stoneleigh Park is home to a cluster of over 60 businesses with an emphasis on food production, equine and livestock husbandry, sustainability, renewable energy and the wider rural economy. A number of nationally significant organisations associated with the Agri-food sector are based at the Park, including the Agriculture & Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) - a statutory levy board, funded by farmers, growers and others in the supply chain which equips levy payers with independent, evidence-based information to help them become more competitive and sustainable. Stoneleigh Park is also the location of the national headquarters of the National Farmers Union (NFU) and the Royal Agricultural Society (RASE), while neighbouring Abbey Park is home to AGCO and the British Horse Society.

Also in close proximity is Campden BRI’s Consumer Centre in Leamington Spa. With its main site in nearby Gloucestershire, the organisation provides the food and drink industry with the practical scientific, technical and advisory services needed to ensure product safety and quality, process efficiency and product and process innovation. Clients can hire the facility in Leamington Spa as a venue to convene consumer focus groups and in-depth interviews for both qualitative and quantitative consumer research.

Case Study: Nestlé

“Thanks to realising these hard fought investments at Tutbury we now have one of the most productive Nescafé factories. Our top quality coffee, made by our highly skilled local workforce, is exported to over 70 markets around the world - it’s a real success story for British manufacturing.”

Eric Heusler, Nestlé Tutbury Factory Manager

Nestlé, the world’s largest food and drink company, has invested upwards of £350m in its South Derbyshire factory in Tutbury over recent years.

Home to the iconic Nescafé brand, Nestlé Tutbury employs over 900 people and produces 35,000 tonnes of coffee a year for customers across the UK, the EU and the rest of the world. This equates to enough coffee for over 4 million cups every day.

Investments in 2012 and 2013 included high tech pod development, making Tutbury the home of Nescafé Dolce Gusto. 2014 saw the construction of a brand new freeze-dried coffee production line. In 2015, biomass technology enabled waste coffee matter to be collected and incinerated on site to produce power for the factory.

Tutbury vied with other Nestlé sites around the world for the new investments, and was ultimately successful because of its established track record, the scope for expansion at the site, its dedicated, very local workforce and the UK’s developed infrastructure for onward export.
To the east of the Midlands region is the University of Lincoln's National Centre for Food Manufacturing (NCFM) - an internationally recognised provider of education and research in the food manufacturing and technology sector, offering graduate courses as well as post graduate MSc and PhD degrees in Food Manufacturing and Technology. Located at Holbeach, The NCFM also leads in part-time study for food industry employees and innovation with businesses.

NCFM is dedicated to helping food industry employees advance their careers. Balancing work and study commitments, it offers part-time apprenticeships and distance learning degrees providing flexible study options for those working in Quality and Technical roles and Operations Management. NCFM is also committed to helping the sector innovate. It works with employers and partners towards this goal, aided by partnerships with leading equipment suppliers. Research areas include Robotics and Automation, Food Microbiology & Chemistry, Advanced Food Processing Technologies and optimisation of the Food Supply Chain, reflecting the priorities of the food manufacturing sector.

The University is also home to The Lincoln Institute for Agri-Food Technology (LIAT), based at the 200-hectare Riseholme campus. As a specialist research institute of the University, LIAT aims to support and enhance productivity, efficiency and sustainability in food and farming through research, education and technology. LIAT’s multi-disciplinary team brings together sector-leading expertise in a diverse range of subjects and includes the UK’s first dedicated Professor in agri-robotics. Through its cross-sectoral membership LIAT can access world leading specialisms in agriculture, artificial intelligence, robotics, ecology, hydrology, animal welfare, biology, genetics, food manufacturing, mechanical engineering, microbial resistance, new product development, supply chain management and economics.

Both the NCFM and LAIT are ideally situated in Greater Lincolnshire where Agri-food is one of the largest industries, strongly supported by the Local Enterprise Partnership who recognise it as one of their priority sectors. Future plans in the county include a proposal to develop a Food Automation Centre to address the issues of labour supply, wage cost pressures and developing and applying new technologies.

The area is also home to The Humber Seafood Institute which supports seafood, agriculture and food logistics companies, enabling research in cutting edge frozen food technologies.

In addition, Lincolnshire boasts three Food Enterprise Zones and is responsible for producing 12% of England’s food, with the Agri-food sector employing 75,000 people in the area. As the largest food producing region in the UK, over 30% of all UK food transport starts or ends in Lincolnshire, with the area benefitting from access to international markets from its port in Grimsby and Immingham - the UK’s largest port by tonnage.
Also in the East Midlands is the University of Nottingham which has a long-standing reputation for transformative, world-class research. The University, together with its campuses in China and Malaysia, offers one of the largest groups of plant, crop, nutrition, animal, consumer and food science experts in the UK. The pioneering, multidisciplinary and collaborative approaches deliver sustainable solutions to global food challenges and the university is ideally placed to undertake high-calibre multidisciplinary research from seed to digestion and find new ways of feeding a hungry planet. The University’s internationally acclaimed research is also focused on the sustainable provision of a safe and secure supply of nutritious food and its cutting-edge research in global food security helps feed the world’s growing population – work which encompasses everything from growing more crops with less fertiliser, to improving the nutrition, safety and taste of food on the plate.

The School of Biosciences is located on the Sutton Bonington Campus and is home to a centre for research in Animal, Food, Plant and Crop, Nutritional and Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. Through established industry links with large multinationals, such as Unilever, PepsiCo, Mondelez, ABInBev, Molson Coors, AB Agri and Dairy Crest, as well as small local manufacturers, the University is internationally renowned for research on the fundamental understanding of food structure and flavour delivery and its perception.

The campus is also home to the International Centre for Brewing Science (ICBS), whose scientists work with the brewing industry to meet the challenges of the 21st century by applying contemporary science and pioneering sensory understanding.

Opened in May 2018, the £6m Centre for Dairy Science Innovation is a state-of-the-art extension to the University’s longstanding dairy facilities and offers the latest research technologies for studying a range of dairy-related topics including mastitis control, antimicrobial resistance, feed efficiency, environmental emissions and new so-called wearable technologies for the herd. The new centre will position the University of Nottingham at the forefront of research into the health, nutrition and welfare of dairy cows.

Case Study: RAS-Berry

“We are delighted that Lincoln’s research has been recognised as a trailblazer for AI. Our work is focussed on the agri-food chain and this sector is now entering the digital age.”
Simon Pearson, Professor of Agri-Food Technology, Lincoln University

At the start of 2018, the University of Lincoln, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Saga Robotics UK and Berry Gardens Growers Ltd began a two-year project (RAS-Berry) to develop advanced autonomous systems to support the production of soft fruit. The project is the largest of its kind in the Europe.

The machines can transport heavy boxes of fruit from the picking point to the collection point, relieving agricultural workers from the heavy work. Ultimately, the machines are designed to increase productivity at the point the fruit is picked.

The venture, seen as revolutionary for Greater Lincolnshire as an agricultural region, is being strongly supported by the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership.
Also helping companies respond to changing consumer tastes and food trends, is the University of Birmingham which has significant expertise in the development, formulation and application of novel food and beverage technologies and strategy. Their interdisciplinary approach to research, both in terms of policy and science, enables organisations collaborating with the University to benefit from the latest technological developments set within a broader regulatory and socioeconomic context.

The University’s expertise covers primary production, with technologies which have a positive impact on the quality and quantity of crop yields being developed, with a particular focus on sustainable agriculture and food security.

The Centre for Formulation Engineering carries out research that provides underpinning support to the food industry and drives innovation in areas that are demanded by consumers and policy makers, such as healthy foods that are both convenient and safe, and the design of food processes with zero waste and thus lower environmental impact. The Eating Behaviour Research Unit (EBRU) at the University combines expertise in psychology, human nutrition, neuroscience and experimental medicine.

Food engineering and processing research expertise is a multidisciplinary effort drawing on knowledge from across the physical, life, and social sciences at the University, in the area of food safety and hygiene, for example. Meanwhile, the University’s research in the field of intelligent manufacturing, automation and robotics covers a significant range of technologies.

Collaboration with industry is key, with research carried out in the School of Chemical Engineering leading to the adoption of novel process techniques by a range of multinational food businesses (including Unilever, Cargill and PepsiCo) to engineer a series of fat-reduced foods such as low-fat spreads, dressings, margarine, sauces and mayonnaise.
Located in Shropshire in the West Midlands, Harper Adams University is world class specialist university at the forefront of future food production, processing, animal sciences, engineering, land management and sustainable business. In 2017 it was the recipient of the most prestigious honour open to UK universities - The Queen's Anniversary Prize - for its work leading innovation in agricultural engineering. Close to 60% of the research by Harper Adams in Agriculture, Veterinary and Food Science is deemed to be internationally excellent or world leading according to the UK’s Research Excellence Framework (REF).

Through its ‘Hands-Free hectare’ project in 2017, the University undertook ground-breaking research and became the first in the world to plant, tend and harvest a crop with only autonomous vehicle and drones.

The University's Agricultural Engineering Innovation Centre provides a physical base around which university/industry collaboration can be stimulated. It is home to The National Centre for Precision Farming which researches, evaluates and promotes the technologies that provide solutions for modern farming and is a proving ground for innovations that make farming more efficient and productive.

The national Agricultural Engineering Precision Innovation (Agri-EPI) Centre also has one of its flagship hubs at the University, providing a global centre for agricultural engineering and precision farming. The centre delivers research, development, demonstration and training on precision agriculture and engineering for the livestock, arable, horticulture and aquaculture sectors.

The Agri-EPI Centre is owned by a consortium of key organisations in the field of precision agriculture and engineering, bringing together expertise in research and industry. A further 69 companies support the Centre, including large supermarkets, food producers, farmers, processors and engineering and technology firms.

The development nearby of Newport Innovation Park by Telford & Wrekin Council will provide a 10 hectare science park offering incubation and high specification manufacturing and research units, offering ideal grow-on space for Agri-food companies.

Harper Adams University and Keele University in Staffordshire have confirmed plans to establish a joint veterinary school – the 9th in the UK – which is set to take its first students in 2020. The vet school will offer a five-year programme, leading to a degree in Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine and surgery which will be accredited by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

The research specialisms in agriculture and animal sciences at Harper Adams University will complement Keele University’s established track-record in the fields of life sciences and medicine.

The joint Harper and Keele Veterinary School will enable agricultural students and trainee veterinarians to have greater awareness of the issues facing both professions. It will also open up new avenues for livestock research, advanced veterinary training and knowledge exchange, ultimately to the benefit of the farming sector.
Case Study: Müller

“Müller’s approach in the UK within the yoghurt and desserts and milk and ingredients sectors is to grow our capabilities so that we can reduce the UK’s dependence on imported dairy products, and build a vibrant future for the British dairy industry.”
Bergen Merey, Managing Director, Müller UK & Ireland Group

In September 2017, dairy giant Müller announced that it will invest at least £100m in its Midlands sites over the course of three years to further expand its yogurt and desserts range.

The firm will develop, manufacture and market new products made from milk produced by British farmers.

Müller’s first plant outside of Germany was opened in 1992 in Market Drayton, Shropshire. Since then, the company has expanded massively – including entering the UK butter market in 2013 with a £17m investment - and now employs 1,000 people across Shropshire and Telford.

To accommodate their latest growth plans, Müller’s three sites in The Midlands will be upgraded and their Telford site will double in size by 2020.

Case Study: Avara

“Through initiatives like this with Harper Adams, Avara is focused on developing the management capabilities and skills needed to grow and thrive as a successful food business in the years ahead.”
Andrew Brodie, People & Communications Director

Avara Foods is a joint venture between the fresh chicken businesses of Faccenda and US company Cargill, bringing together a workforce of 6,000 people in a fully integrated supply chain.

Avara have formed a partnership with Harper Adams University to develop new Food Engineering Degree Apprenticeships. The business is consistently working with University researchers, looking at methods of reducing the environmental footprint, in operations, on farms and as part of manufactured food packaging products.

Avara has also enrolled 12 of its managers on a post-graduate qualification in Poultry Business Management at Harper Adams University, having worked closely with the University to develop the course.
The University of Warwick Crop Centre, based at Wellesbourne, near Warwick, is an internationally recognised centre for translational research in sustainable agriculture, horticulture and food security. As part of the University’s School of Life Sciences, its research team’s expertise includes crop breeding, plant pathology, entomology, agronomy, crop nutrition and environmental research.

Warwick Crop Centre works extensively with UK and overseas industry partners across the entire food supply-chain, from seed and agro-chemical companies, through primary producers and processors, to food retailers. The University also maintains the UK Vegetable Genebank, in which over 14,000 accessions are conserved. The Genebank is a resource open to all businesses, funded by DEFRA and used by companies such as Syngenta, Monsanto and Elsoms.

In creating a new Innovation Campus at Wellesbourne, the University is offering an opportunity for businesses of all sizes to locate alongside them in a hub that encourages collaboration between academic and industry excellence, initially focusing on sectors aligned with the University’s academic and commercial strengths. The ambition is to attract inspiration and investment which can tap into the University’s leading-edge research, to help create an environment that challenges everything that is expected from an innovation campus. With c.450 acres of land and 73,000sq ft of offices and work spaces in Wellesbourne, there is great potential for investors to benefit from the opportunity to co-locate on campus.

Agri-food companies can also benefit from the expertise of Warwick Manufacturing Group (WMG), based at Warwick University’s main campus, providing research, education and knowledge transfer in engineering, manufacturing and technology.

Case Study: Corteva

“Our long standing relationship with the University of Warwick has yielded significant research findings, playing a key role in the development of agricultural innovations that are essential for farmers to meet both UK and global challenges.”

Rebecca Hilton, Field Scientist, Corteva Agriscience

Corteva is the new company that has emerged from the merger of US Agri-chemicals giants, Dow and DuPont. The combined company is now the third largest agri-chemicals and seeds company in the world.

Dow have been collaborating with Warwick University Crop Centre for over a decade and the field trails they conduct at the Wellesbourne campus will continue under the new company.
With the latest DEFRA data showing that the value of home produced vegetables, fruit and ornamentals is increasing in the UK, the Midlands is well-placed to take advantage of opportunities in this sector, with strong clusters in both the east and west of the region.

A key asset which supports this regional specialism is Pershore College - a national centre for horticulture situated on a 60-hectare site near Evesham in Worcestershire, offering the very best in land-based learning, attracting students from across the UK and overseas.

A recent £5.8m scheme has transformed the college, with a key feature being the addition of a state-of-the-art Collections House where exotic plants can thrive, featuring permanent and seasonal collections. The systems used to control the Collections House are readily accessible to students as a living demonstration of modern greenhouse technology.

A new STEM centre (science, technology, engineering and maths) and agri-tech lab has been developed, supported with a £0.5m investment from the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership, where students can learn about the newest innovations in the field, such as sustainable horticulture, aquaponics and the use of UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles) in supporting horticulture processes and growing techniques.

The transformation also included building a higher education suite for students on degree programmes, including animal science, veterinary nursing, horticulture and arboriculture. A dedicated agri-tech applications laboratory now houses electronic, robotic and computer-based technologies that will be used to educate and train students and employers on modern applications of agri-tech and provide a centre for simulation of application.

The college has also developed of a suite of “Horticulture Technology and Innovation” courses and will embed technology-focused learning into all Pershore College programmes to attract more new entrants to the industry and allow progression from school through to Higher Education, employment routes and apprenticeships. This specialist suite of programmes will deliver training in higher level skills to provide technology experts for the agriculture and horticulture industries.
Increasingly, space-based technology is of value to farmers, agronomists, food manufacturers and agricultural policymakers who wish to simultaneously enhance production and profitability. Remote sensing satellites provide key data for monitoring soil, snow cover, drought and crop development. Rainfall assessments from satellites, for example, help farmers plan the timing and amount of irrigation they will need for their crops. Accurate information and analysis can also help predict a region’s agricultural output well in advance and can be critical in anticipating and mitigating the effects of food shortages and famines.

Recognising a future where there is increasing adoption of such technology, the Leicester Space Park is a collaboration between the University of Leicester, the City of Leicester and the Leicester and Leicestershire Economic Partnership (LLEP). When fully open, the Park will combine University research and teaching facilities with a range of research institutions and international commercial partners. Alongside the development of a new generation of cutting-edge satellite technology, the site will be home to detailed analysis of space-enabled data that can transform sectors such as international communications, resource management, environmental monitoring and disaster relief. Collaboration between the University and the agri-tech industry has led to the development of space-based monitoring services for high value UK crops - potatoes and sugar beet, which are worth over £1bn per year.

Using earth observation data is has been possible to accurately estimate key canopy variables and then to map and identify areas of low crop growth as a result of disease, nitrogen deficit, poor seeding and water stress. Such intelligence can provide a service to farmers resulting in increased yield and productivity and have a positive impact on food security.
Industry Networks

Agri-Tech West (ATW)

Agri-Tech West (ATW) is the alliance formed within three Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas: The Marches (covering Shropshire, Herefordshire and Telford & Wrekin), Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire and Worcestershire - and neighbouring Cheshire and Warrington - demonstrating the importance placed on Agri-tech in these areas.

In addition to the LEPs, the alliance also includes Agri-food and supply chain businesses, trade bodies and further and higher education institutions. ATW promotes and supports companies within the sector with the following: Application of Innovation; Collaboration Opportunities; Knowledge Transfer; Investment opportunities and Skills Development.

Agri-Tech East

Agri-Tech East is an independent network organisation bringing together growers and farmers with researchers and technology developers, investors and funders, with the aim of becoming a global catalyst for open innovation in agri-tech and entrepreneurship.

Agri-Tech East’s extensive and diverse membership includes world leading universities and research institutes, multinational agribusinesses, leading grower groups, farming estates and businesses providing on-farm technical and commercial services. They coordinate the Agri-Tech Week initiative and host the annual REAP conference.
Events

LAMMA

The Midlands is home to the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) which hosts the UK’s largest agricultural machinery show, LAMMA. The annual event attracts over 850 exhibitors from the UK and overseas to showcase the latest farm machinery, equipment and agricultural services. Of the 40,000+ visitors to the show, the majority are decision makers from across arable, dairy and mixed farm types.

Foodex

The NEC is also home to the biennial Foodex event - the UK’s leading trade event for the food and drink processing, packaging and logistics industries. The show covers every food production sector, providing a platform for professionals from the bakery, beverage, dairy, fresh, logistics, meat and seafood industries to meet, do business and gain unparalleled industry insights.

Cereals

Lincolnshire is regularly home to the two-day annual Cereals event. This annual show attracts over 20,000 farmers, agronomists and industry professionals and is the arable industry’s leading technical event. Situated on a working farm each year, Cereals is unique in offering working demonstration areas for manufacturers, distributors and dealers of cultivation equipment.
UK Dairy Day

UK Dairy Day is a dedicated annual one-day event for the dairy industry held at the International Centre in Telford each September - a key time of the year when plans and decisions are being made for the winter. The event has Trade Stands representing UK, European and International businesses, attracting over 8,000 visitors each year, along with a cattle show, seminars and practical demonstrations.

UK Seafood Summit

The annual UK Seafood Summit, organised by Seafish, brings together a panel of respected speakers and delegates to discuss and debate the burning issues in the global seafood industry. Hosted in North Lincolnshire, the event draws interest from key players in the seafood industry including processors, distributors, foodservice and retail operators and it is open to all businesses and organisations with an interest in seafood.

National Agricultural and Exhibition Centre (NAEC)

The National Agricultural and Exhibition Centre (NAEC) at Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire is the location for a variety of popular exhibitions and conferences, attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. Events include Dairy-Tech, a show held in February which is aimed at modern dairy professionals, allowing them to gain maximum exposure to new and exciting industry innovations relevant to their businesses.
The Midlands – A Great Place to Live and Work

From small independent shops, to iconic retail stores and designer outlets, the towns and cities in the Midlands provide a distinctive experience, packed with modern attractions, great restaurants, pubs, bars and green spaces.

It’s not just the eleven Michelin-starred restaurants that makes the Midlands a great place to eat and drink, its vibrant food and drink scene will suit most tastes. There is so much to experience from Artisan cheeses, to food festivals and craft beers and ciders.

Enjoy classic performances by the celebrated Royal Ballet, or experience vibrant contemporary productions alongside modern artists at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre.

The Midlands has some of the finest living and working landscapes in the UK with five Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and over 33 nature reserves.

From ancient deer parks to the 10,000 acre Sherwood Forest, which is home to over 1000 ancient oak trees and the legend of Robin Hood, whether it’s walking, abseiling, or cycling, the Midlands offers a great environment to enjoy physical activity and a wide range of sporting experiences.

We’re home to major football clubs Aston Villa, Leicester City, Nottingham Forest, West Bromwich Albion, and 6 of the 12 clubs who founded The Football League in 1888. As the birthplace of Rugby, the Midlands has a strong affinity with the game, and hosted the Rugby World Cup in 2015.

This is an excellent place to play golf, with courses throughout the Midlands, including The Belfry, a former host of the Ryder Cup. Home to many of the F1 teams, F1 racing has been thrilling an international audience at Silverstone for 65 years, providing a world-class motorsport experience at one of the fastest racing circuits in the world. Meanwhile Formula-e, the low carbon alternative, is based locally at Donington Park.

And the Midlands offers a range of options for schools and study, including a number of the finest private schools in the UK.
Support for Investors

The Department for International Trade (DIT) helps businesses export and grow into global markets. We also help overseas companies locate to and grow in the UK.

We can help with information on how to set up in the UK, provide sector specific information about the materials industry in the UK, and support you to identify the right location here for you and introduce you to local partners and supply chains.

Our network of UK specialists includes a team who are based in the Midlands, providing expert local knowledge of projects, potential public and private sector partners and other local business support.

Across the Midlands, there are 8 government-designated Enterprise Zones. Benefits available to investors range from simplified planning to business rate discounts for up to 5 years. Individual zones have specific support packages for occupants, related to their sector focus.

For example, MIRA Technology Park in Leicestershire is a national centre of automotive R&D excellence. Also, there are 22 science parks across the Midlands all contributing to its cutting-edge research.

The Midlands attracted over 1,000 Foreign Direct Investment projects between 2012 and 2017, creating almost 57,000 new jobs and safeguarding a further 40,000. The region accounted for over 16% of the UK’s overall exports in 2017.

Large economy
UK ranked 5th in the world in GDP

Low Corporation Tax
UK Rate at 19%

Ease of doing business
UK Ranked 7th globally by the World Bank
DIT
The UK’s Department for International Trade (DIT) has overall responsibility for promoting UK trade across the world and attracting foreign investment to our economy. We are a specialised government body with responsibility for negotiating international trade policy, supporting business, as well as delivering an outward-looking trade diplomacy strategy.

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