

# Progression of food industry technical and food safety support for manufacturing and processing small and medium-sized enterprises in Wales, UK.

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## Introduction

A key priority in European Union, UK and Welsh Government strategic plans and policies includes increased sales/growth of the food and drink sector by 30% by 2020<sup>1</sup>. In response to the lack of sector technical support in Wales, UK, the KITE (Knowledge Innovation Transfer Exchange) feasibility project was developed and implemented between 2008-2015<sup>2</sup>.

KITE was designed to meet food and drink sector business and Government strategic needs and outputs were significant including 1861 new jobs/retention, £103.1m increased sales, 859 new products developed and 83 third-party accreditations<sup>2</sup>. Post-2015, the KITE model was further developed to continue technical support to the food/drink sector in Wales.

## Purpose

The aim of this study was to determine Welsh food-sector technical needs post-KITE and identify optimised delivery mechanisms for food safety and technical support in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

## Methods

- Interviews with SME managers (n=8) and review of >90 KITE knowledge transfer programme documentation/reports enabled collation of qualitative data evidencing business need for continued food safety/technical support post-KITE.
- Priority actions for industry engagement were determined from consultations with Welsh FDMP SMEs (n=>45), knowledge based technologists (n=9), Pan-Wales Food Centres (n=3) and Welsh Government strategists.

## Results

Welsh food industry need for continuation of KITE was informed by the following:

- The success of the KITE Project, with outputs associated substantial SME growth, increased employment, NPd, technical accreditation and increased food safety/technical knowledge<sup>2</sup>.
- Establishment of an effective knowledge transfer mechanism and accessible technical support for SMEs.
- Direct feedback from the Wales Food Industry Board and qualitative research with private sector industrial partners (for examples of quotes see Figure 1).

Overall, KITE evaluation findings<sup>2</sup> indicated the critical need and demand for continuation of the KITE project with a secondary transition, post 2015.

Figure 1. Food industrial partner quotes about KITE impact on businesses and need for continued support.

"Without KITE we couldn't maintain SALSA and could not push for BRC accreditation; meaning we would lose retail contracts. The consequence would be that we'd lose business, lose staff and wouldn't be here (as a company) for very long." SME Managing Director A

"I believe the benefits [of KITE] for our business have been immense and it has upskilled our employees and our procedures / documentation / controls etc. We would certainly be interested in working with any future possible KITE (or similar) programme as I firmly believe it would allow us to develop and improve our workforce and business." SME Managing Director C

"I would be very interested in signing up for a new [knowledge transfer] programme. With the growth we are seeing, I am no longer able to keep up with all the technical demands .....so a big fat YES, we would definitely be interested." SME Managing Director B

"With KITE it's a well thought through good idea - execution is excellent and creates business growth and consequently creates employment in Welsh companies and the Welsh Government should definitely, definitely continue to support this programme." SME Managing Director D

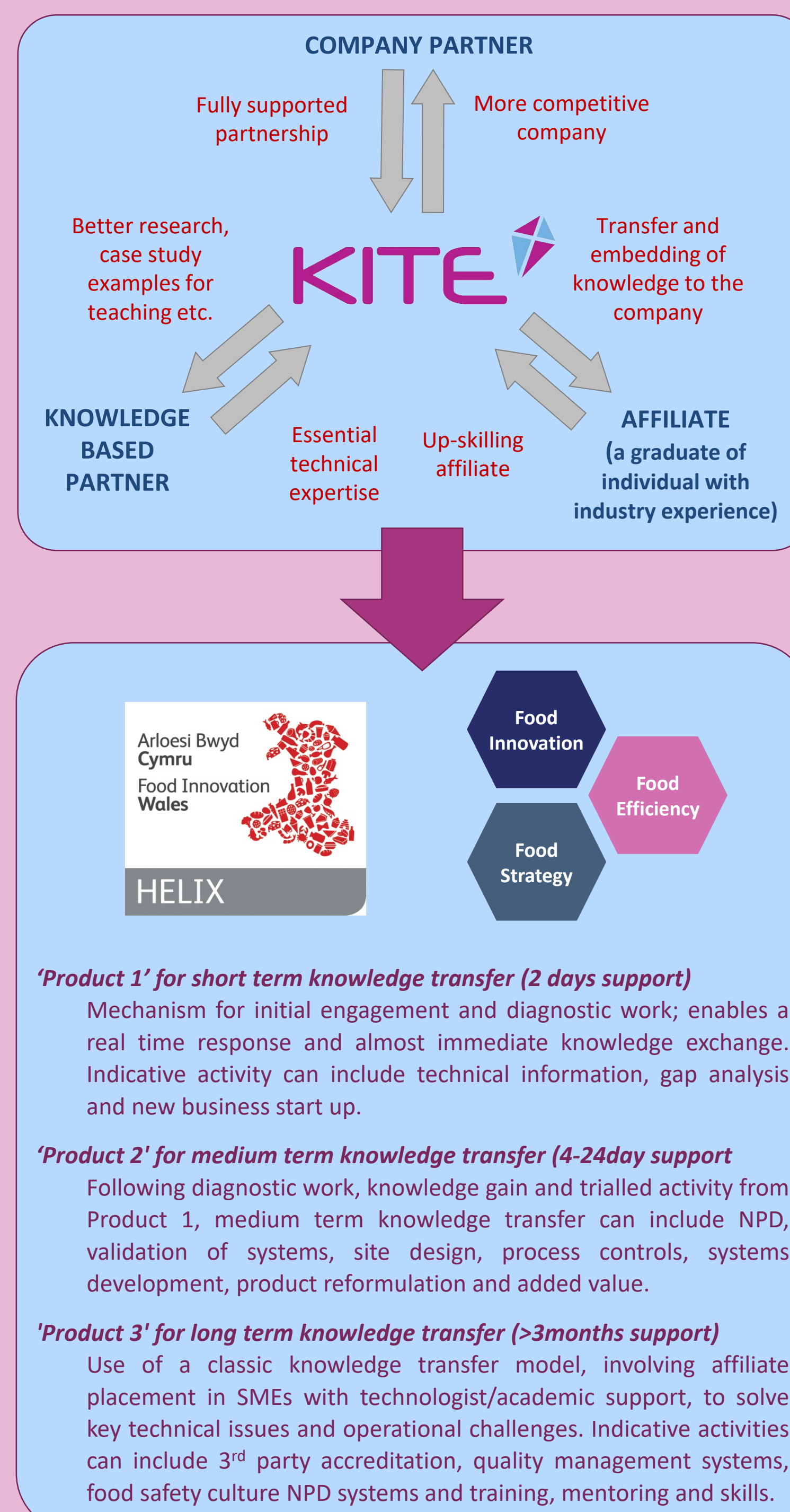
## Progression from KITE to the HELIX Project

Post-KITE, continued food safety/technical support occurred through the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020<sup>4</sup> within the framework of the Pan Wales 'Helix Project', developed and implemented by Food Innovation Wales (Food Industry Centre at Cardiff Metropolitan University, The Food Technology Centre at Grwp Llandrillo and Food Centre Wales at Horeb)<sup>5</sup>.

"Project HELIX's strategic approach enables food producers in Wales to benefit from best practice and industry intelligence from across the world. For example, companies can receive help to achieve third party accreditation such as BRC and SALSA, and thus open up new markets for their products"<sup>5</sup>.

Project HELIX was based on three core categories for project delivery including food-innovation, food-efficiency and food-strategy and 18 associated activities<sup>6</sup>. Consultation analysis and KITE evaluation resulted in identification of three products to facilitate engagement with food-sectors encompassing 'short', 'medium' and 'long term' knowledge-transfer this, plus the continued delivery structure for food industry support can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Progression of KITE structure to Project HELIX to meet industry needs and optimise project delivery.



KITE and Project HELIX delivery structures found in Figure 2 illustrate the single knowledge transfer mechanism implemented by KITE feasibility study<sup>2</sup> and the transition to the Project HELIX framework, designed to engage with Welsh FDMPs with increased flexibility to respond to an individual business needs.

Key priority actions related to HELIX activities were identified as food innovation, food strategy and food efficiency (see Figure 2); these concepts provide core pillars for 18 Project HELIX activities<sup>5</sup>. Activities aim to increase SME growth, jobs, regeneration, innovation / sustainability, increase NPd, embed technical knowledge / skills, reduce waste production and improve environmental impact associated with the food sector.

Project HELIX management, operations and monitoring systems<sup>3</sup> evolved by incorporating 'lessons learned' from the KITE feasibility study. Required Project HELIX Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and output targets are found in Table 1.

Table 1. Project HELIX KPIs and output targets.

KPIs	Targets
Financial impact	£70million
No. of new products developed	228
New jobs created	200
Jobs safeguarded	1141

## Conclusions

- The innovative progression of the KITE model with Project HELIX has facilitated continued SME food-safety/technical support to enable business growth, innovation and sustainability.
- Project HELIX implementation also matches Welsh Government strategic objectives for the food-sector and is prototypical for international application.

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