

PRESS RELEASE

Campden BRI helps food and drink industry bridge the microbiological skills gap

In response to feedback from some of the world's leading food and drink businesses that there is a microbiology skills gap in the industry, Campden BRI has published a brand new report identifying the key areas of microbiological training that need to be addressed to plug the gap and ensure employees have the skills and knowledge to do their jobs effectively.

Through a 'first of its kind' extensive industry consultation specifically looking at microbiology and the food and drink sector's microbiological training needs, a number of challenges were identified indicating an industry-wide shortfall in the required practical skills and knowledge of microbiologists, technologists and managers.

Bertrand Emond, Head of Membership and Training at Campden BRI, said: "Our needs document comes at a time when pathogenic organisms are one of the greatest threats to food safety and product spoilage continues to be a major contributor to food wastage and financial loss. Microbiology is therefore an absolutely essential area which requires the highest levels of specialist skills and expertise.

"It is very concerning that a significant number of our members are reporting that the level of practical experience of newly qualified, and even some established microbiologists, technologists and managers is not sufficient to meet the changing and ever more demanding needs of the food and drink sector. Our report tackles this issue head-on, pinpointing the crucial areas that need to be tackled to bridge the microbiological skills gap and improve knowledge throughout the industry."

Devised in close collaboration with leading food and drink industry representatives from companies including: Tesco, Sainsbury's, Marks and Spencer, Tulip, Greencore and Two Sisters Food Group to name a few, the report will be used by Campden BRI to inform the development of industry training provision and related continuing professional development (CPD). It will also be used to promote the sector's training needs to other training providers and relevant organisations which support microbiological training and continuing professional development.

The report recognises that microbiological training needs differ depending on job roles, for example, the training requirements of laboratory staff will be quite different from that of food technologists. Acknowledging these differences and tailoring microbiological training to sector specific needs is much more effective than a 'one size fits all' and this is now reflected in Campden BRI's microbiological training provision.

Gayna Quinn, Group Technical Director at Tulip, said: "The microbiology skills gap represents a potential food safety risk for the global food and drink industry. With many experienced food and drink microbiologists either leaving or retiring from the industry, or their roles expanding to include additional areas of responsibility, there is a real concern that much of the applied industrial microbiological skills base is being eroded. New staff coming into the industry often lack the appropriate knowledge and practical skills required.

"Food safety is paramount and it is vital that food and drink employees have a thorough understanding of the hazards and risks associated with microbial agents. Food industry requirements are constantly evolving – changes in the use and storage of food materials, together with global sourcing and the impact of climate change mitigation are all placing additional challenges on the control of microbiological risks in the global food and drink supply chain. This means that now, more than ever before, we need to invest in microbiological training to up-skill existing employees and lay the foundations of good working practice for the next generation."

Margaret McPheat, Head of Technical Services at Greencore, added: "We welcome this report and see it as a significant step forward in improving the microbiological knowledge and skills base for the worldwide food and drink industry. The sector relies upon the skills of its workforce to develop and manufacture high quality, authentic products that are safe for consumers. Focused, specialist microbiological training that equips staff to do their jobs across the diverse range of roles within food manufacture and retailing is not a 'nice to have'; it is absolutely essential."

To download a free copy of Campden BRI's report: 'Practical microbiology training needs of the food and drink manufacturing and retail sectors' go to: www.campdenbri.co.uk/knowledge/practical-food-microbiology.php or E-mail auto@campdenbri.co.uk with the subject: send microbiology.

Campden BRI (www.campdenbri.co.uk) provides technical, legislative and scientific support and research to the food and drinks industry worldwide – with a comprehensive "farm to fork" range of services covering agri-food production, analysis and testing, processing and manufacturing, safety, training and technical information services. Members and clients benefit from industry-leading facilities for analysis, product and process development, and sensory and consumer studies, which include a specialist brewing and wine division.

*** Ends ***

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Notes to editors

1. An accompanying photograph is available from Mr Tim Hutton, Campden BRI, Station Road, Chipping Campden, Glos. GL55 6LD, UK. tim.hutton@campdenbri.co.uk +44(0)1386 842047
2. [Campden BRI](#) specialises in the practical application of technical excellence to support the food and allied industries through analysis and testing, operational support, research and innovation, and knowledge management. It is the world's largest membership-based food research organisation, with nearly 400 staff based at its three sites: Chipping Campden (Headquarters), Nutfield (Surrey - brewing division), and Budapest (Hungary).
3. Its activities include assuring the safety of food and drinks, [food processing and manufacturing](#) support, [food analysis and testing](#), [training](#) and [publishing](#). Each year it hosts hundreds of business visits and trains around 6,000 people from food and drink companies worldwide. Further information on its activities can be found at www.campden.co.uk
4. Expertise at Campden BRI includes:
 - a. [manufacturing technologies](#) - food processing (heating, chilling, freezing), aseptic technology, [microwave heating](#), [malting and brewing](#), [milling](#), [baking](#) and extrusion technology, and process control and instrumentation, [packaging technology](#)
 - b. safety assurance - including [hygiene and sanitation](#), [microbiology](#) and preservation, processing technologies, analysis and testing (microbiological, chemical), and quality and safety management,
 - c. [product development](#) and quality, [consumer studies](#), market insights, [sensory science](#), [authenticity testing](#), shelf-life evaluation, labelling and [legislation](#)
 - d. [agri-food production](#), ingredients, raw materials, raw material technology,
 - e. underpinning science - [cereal science](#), [microbiology](#), [chemistry and biochemistry](#), molecular biology
5. Facilities at Campden BRI include:
 - a. 3,000 sq m of laboratories for food and drink microbiology, hygiene, chemistry, biochemistry, molecular biology, brewing and cereal science, and packaging technology
 - b. 3,500 sq m food process hall and [pilot plant](#) including malting and brewing, retorting, chilling, milling, baking, hygiene and packaging
 - c. 800 sq m of dedicated training and conference facilities