# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Visit to Catalonia and the Basque Country – June 2018** |
| **DATE** | **12 June 2018** |
| **BY** | **Lesley Griffiths, Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs** |

Last week I visited Catalonia and the Basque Country, to share experiences, learn from the success of their pioneering clustering initiatives and explore future collaborative opportunities.

In recent years, the Welsh Government has invested in the establishment of dedicated Food Clusters, covering important sectors such as drinks, seafood, nutrition, fine food and exports. These fledgling Food Clusters are already engaging with over 450 businesses, encouraging collaboration and joint working, providing a powerful engine for driving growth and opening up new market opportunities across our ‘foundation’ food and drinks industry.

Alongside representatives from the Welsh Food Clusters, I met with ACCIÓ, the Catalan Agency for Competitiveness; TCI Network, which supports the development of cluster-based economic development; IRTA, the Catalonia Food Technology Centre; SPRI, the Basque Business Development Agency; Orkestra, the Basque Institute of Competitiveness; and the Basque Country Food Cluster. The meetings provided the Welsh Food Clusters with a valuable insight into the Catalan and Basque cluster policy (recognised as one of the oldest of its kind in the world), which will support the future development of our Welsh Food Clusters to support increased trade and competitiveness.

During the visit to the Basque Country, I met with the Basque Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, to discuss the development of a new EU network of ‘renowned food regions’ – the REGAL network. The network, which includes Wales and the Basque Country, is focused on developing food culture and supporting entrepreneurship and innovation. This meeting was also part of an ongoing exchange of Ministerial visits between Wales and the Basque Country as we continue to strengthen collaborative links between the two.

Overall, the visit provided practical insight to inform the future development of our support for the Welsh food and drinks industry, further raised Wales’ profile in these key markets, and demonstrated our firm commitment to continue to work closely with our European partners in areas of common interest, thereby supporting our efforts to secure a resilient and thriving industry in Wales after leaving the EU.