

Rob Ward Profile



Background

I was farming for the first 30yrs of my life, where learned about the importance of the relationship with production to consumption, or farm to fork.

The farming business not only became one of the largest commercial soft fruit berry farmer in the UK at that time, but we also pioneered the revolution in Farmers Markets and Farm Retail Stores, specialising in fruit and vegetables. By 20 years old, I lead the commercial side of this family partnership. Nationally supplying the major Grocery Stores, located in Shropshire, West Midlands, UK.

The combination of connecting with consumers with farm produce and producing farm produce has always been a crucial part of the DNA of who I am. Never has there been a time of greater urgency than now, that the entire food supply chain is transparent and aligned with consumers nutritional needs to values from environmental and ethical obligations.

Commercial Character:

I have created, built and sold five business relating to the food industry. These range from Grocery Retail; Grocery Wholesale; Food & Drink CPG/F&B; CPG food Business Accelerator, AgTech and FoodTech.

This wide experience places me someone that has a full understanding of the entire supply chain, particularly in launching businesses in the CPG and Food & Beverage sector. This includes wide and influential contact throughout these trade channels.

Following a world study tour, sponsored by HSBC Bank, researching where the innovation in grocery retail and food and beverage, I developed a significant international platform for trade contacts internationally.

WORK HISTORY

2019 today

Forward Food.Tech Ltd - CEO & Founder

Creating opportunities for international Food business to receive support to grow their businesses with new commercial food trade channels in the UK and Europe this can investment from relevant investors:

Key Activity

- Advising businesses how to best align their brand for growth in the UK and Europe CPG and food and beverage sectors
- Specialising in emerging dynamic sectors such as meat-free and trading platforms underpinned by UN Sustainability Development Goals (SDG's)

2014 to 2019

Grocery Accelerator Ltd - Director & Co-Founder

- World's first CPG investment business accelerator for food & drink seed businesses
- **Shareholder & Advisory Director** for 17 invested businesses

Key Activity:

- Assessing many 100's of applicant businesses to select a few that have the potential success
- Building a network of trade sales contacts

WORK HISTORY cont.

2010 to 2014

Food Marketing Network:

Business consultant to the fresh food industry - specialising in New Product Development and routes to market for food manufacturers supplying national multiples, independent retailers and foodservice clients.

Key Activity:

- Developed new products to supply national and independent retailers and foodservice market
- Redefined and launched new brands for food producers
- Built a network of over +40,000 international food business

2008 to 2010

International Food Innovation study tour - Nuffield Scholarship Foundation

UK Funded by HSBC Bank Plc.

Key Activity:

- Travelled over 120,000 miles, visiting USA; Canada; Australia and Europe
- 10-week study tour focused on discovering the latest ideas in innovation for food grocery and foodservice markets
- Discovering and building new trade and food professionals contacts

2007 to 2009

Created **Grocery Wholesale** / Broker hub of regional food - Appointed by ASDA Stores Plc (Walmart UK Grocery Retailer) to be the sole supplier of local food to their West Midlands, UK retail stores.

Key Activity:

- Listed over 240 lines
- Grew the business from zero to over £2 million in 18 months
- Setup EDI (Electronic Ordering and payment process) compliant trading and accounts platform

2007 to 2009

Food Marketing and Business Development Consultant - Bidwells Agribusiness

Key Activity:

- Worked in advising food businesses using data from Dunnhumby, TESCO Plc consumer insights data
- Coached many food producers and supported them on how to develop their new products to grow their business
- Lead a research project for the London Development Agency to assess the demand for regional and British food into London and the South East

1999 to 2009

Founder & Managing Director and Owner - Green Fields Farm (Retail) Ltd, Shropshire, UK

Key Activity

- Creating a highly profitable independent food retail grocery business
- Building self-managing teams
- The business sold to a private equity group in 2009

Professional Associations:

Judge for:

- 'The Grocer' Trade Journal - Own Label and Private Brand new product awards
- 'Guild of Fine Food', Great Taste Awards
- 'Food World Innovation' Awards