

# PRESS RELEASE

## Small local suppliers to gain valuable insight from Sodexo through EU-funded programme

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**Sodexo, the world's largest services company, has partnered with Access 6, an innovative EU-funded export programme which will help SMEs break into the foodservice market and supply chains.**

Sodexo is the only foodservice organisation to become a Channel Partner for the Access 6 programme, other organisations include leading food retailers.

The Access 6 initiative, led by the Scottish partner - Scotland Food & Drink - is part of a wider cross-border programme funded by the European Regional Development Fund under the INTERREG IVA programme.

The programme aims to increase export sales by €22million (£19million) across 90 food and drink manufacturers in western Scotland, the border regions of the Republic of Ireland and across Northern Ireland whilst creating an additional 90 new jobs within the participating businesses, and up-skill a further 400 SMEs across the region as a whole. To date 12 businesses have signed up to the programme.

**Michelle Hanson, commercial director at Sodexo UK & Ireland said,** *“As a large-scale purchaser Sodexo is committed to the principles of sustainable food procurement, and the Access 6 programme fits perfectly with our approach to supplier diversity. Through providing these businesses with an insight into our business and the challenges many SMEs encounter when trying to enter into the market, we will be enabling them to adapt their businesses accordingly and ultimately open doors into the foodservice market.”*

Levercliff Associates, a leading food & drink market consultancy, also join the programme as an industry mentor, sharing insights into consumer trends, and opportunities, and help SMEs develop their propositions, marketing and sales plans.

**Amanda Brown, Industry Development Director of Scotland Food & Drink, commented** *“Developing Scotland’s export activity is key to the continued growth of the food and drink market, so it’s essential we support those small to medium sized businesses that will make an important contribution towards meeting the targets set by the industry.”*

*“With the first London & South England Cluster now in place, and support from Sodexo and Levercliff Associates secured, we hope to equip those businesses with the key knowledge, tools and confidence to be competitive and take their share of this market.”*

Beyond the UK, additional clusters will also be established targeting export markets in France, Benelux, Germany, Scandinavia and North America, offering further opportunities to other SME’s across the focus regions.

**Ends**