

## **2001 Research Assessment Exercise**

### **Overview for Unit of Assessment 16: Food Science and Technology**

The sub-panel for Food Science and Technology assessed 11 Units, which ranged in size from 1 to 33 active researchers. Although 11 Units were assessed a total of only 127.5 active researchers were submitted with the result that many submissions consisted of very small numbers of researchers. The panel felt that many Units were below the critical mass necessary for effective research within what is, by its very nature, a multidisciplinary subject. Focussing research effort into fewer centres of excellence would be to the benefit of the UK. It was though noted that some of the Units were integrated into larger groups, including Agriculture, enabling them to contribute to research along the whole food chain, from farm to fork (and beyond). This was seen as an encouraging and necessary development.

Within the diverse spread of research submitted it was apparent that, within the Universities in the UK, there are several areas which are at the cutting edge of the subject with groups acknowledged world wide as being of the highest quality. Areas of special strength included many areas of microbiology (from molecular aspects to more classical areas), aspects of human nutrition (both applied and fundamental) as related to food science and technology and food macromolecules and their relationship to ingredient functionality and raw material quality. It was also noted that although first rate research was being undertaken into the science underpinning many novel and traditional food processing operations (thermal, pressure, rheological and acoustic properties of foods and food ingredients) there was little quality research being undertaken in the processing/engineering aspects to allow commercial exploitation of this work or in areas to enable it to underpin regulatory requirements. Many of the submissions showed a commendable level of strong support to local, national and global food companies: this support, highly valued by the food industry, may have reduced the amount of genuinely international quality research seen.

Though the University sector is not the only supplier of research in Food Science and Technology it was noted that very little research was going on in sensory and consumer sciences. This was seen as a potential weakness in the portfolio of research currently taking place in Food Science and Technology in the UK.