



The 2017 annual N8 Agrifood conference, organised jointly by Durham University and University of Leeds, attracted 200 attendees from the UK, Europe and beyond to the City of Durham, debating, not only how nutritious foods can be generated from resilient and sustainable agricultural systems, but also how the N8 initiative can assist in delivering solutions.

Forty speakers showcasing key academic expertise in their specialist subjects, discussed the topics of health & infectious disease, nutrition and sustainability with industry, government and NGOs over two information-packed days. Early career researchers and project leaders also discussed their posters during the drinks reception held in Durham Cathedral Cloister, which was followed by a networking dinner at Durham Castle.

*“What fascinating and wide-ranging science – fabulous! I thoroughly enjoyed the conference, as did everyone I else I spoke to.” Anna Gregson, Mathys & Squire*

At the close of the conference, session chairs, keynote speakers and participants discussed the challenges and opportunities for the N8 AgriFood programme.

In terms of practice, listening closer to farmers’ needs and working with them on sustainable solutions, both at home and overseas, will remain a priority.

Furthermore, fostering a genuine connection and understanding between producers and consumers is deemed crucial to sustainability. The conference also concluded that involving more social scientists in the implementation of knowledge produced, as well as ensuring effective impact on policy making with the view of genuine change were areas to concentrate on.

When asked what the N8 AgriFood Resilience Programme could do to become stronger, participants highlighted the need to develop a common vision on a specific topic under a concrete regional goal.

Another suggestion was to align with and integrate in the programme the Sustainable Development Goals which will allow N8 AgriFood to collaborate more effectively internationally, with governments and funders are already aligning to them.

Finally, technology uptake in farming is swift when there is real need for it, but overall change can take time. Therefore working towards a long term horizon of 15 years would be realistic, even if it means starting with small scientists-farmers collaborations initially, which can subsequently form larger ones.