

Skills Development Award

The three finalists for the first FP Skills Development Award are set for take off after a prestigious panel of judges recently selected them. They've been named as Kerry Foods, Unilever and Warburtons.

By **DAVID STRYDOM**

KNOWN OFFICIALLY as The Award for Skills Development, the award is the newest addition to FP's collection of titles, which will culminate at Appetite for Engineering on 23 June at the Hinckley Island Hotel in Leicestershire.

A joint effort by Festo, The University of Lincoln's National Centre for Food Manufacturing; and the National Skills Academy for Food & Drink, has resulted in a brand new award, which will for the first time be presented at the next FP Awards dinner on 23 June at the Hinckley Island Hotel in Leicestershire.

The Award for Skills Development came about primarily owing to the industry's passion for skills as personified by Gary Wyles, Festo MD; Jonathan Cooper, business development manager at the NSA; and Mike Dudbridge of

the University of Lincoln, and John Craig, MD of Halo Software.

Nominations would, according to the founding document proposed by Gary Wyles, be open to food producers and processors in the UK for training and skills development initiatives focused on automation and engineering related topics.

Its primary objective will be to help highlight the significance of skills development in the pursuit of modern engineering and manufacturing techniques in the sector by presenting and recognising quality examples of successful training and skills development initiatives from the sector.

KERRY FOODS

Kerry Foods says it decided to embark on a new training initiative after it had gone through ten chief engineers in as many years. In addition,

the company wanted to provide more training than it was currently doing. During this training, it used practical examples based on real issues in the factory. The recipients valued the fact they were being invested in, and the training developed based on real need. Kerry Foods says the impact was profound, including a change in attitude among the recipients, a culture change, and the recipients felt valued.

UNILEVER

An earlier manufacturing scheme met standards for today but not tomorrow. Changing it required aligning 14 UK sites' varying schemes, and ensuring high-calibre, next-generation engineers. The company formed a UK team to share best practice and review processes; shareholder discussions identified business and individual needs and feedback on gaps.

Performance monitoring followed, and the impact has been impressive: the company's mindset is focused on recruiting and retaining home-grown talent to meet manufacturing needs in 5-10 years, providing Unilever with high-calibre, competent individuals.

WARBURTONS

The operations and maintenance manager of Warburtons says while it was undertaking training, the company decided it needed a bespoke course. She spoke to the trainees to ascertain their learning requirements and their skill level. They were split into three groups: basic, intermediate and advanced. Discussions were held with tutors for course content and a training plan was devised. Training needs analysis was carried out during appraisals to fully develop all engineers.

