

# Join the county's growers

It's not hard to see why nearly **2,300** food and drink companies have chosen to relocate to **The Garden of England**. We're part of a **British success story**.

The food & drink industry is the **biggest manufacturing sector in the UK**, contributing **£104.4 billion** to the economy and employing around **520,000 people**.

Here in Kent, we are proud of the contribution the county is making. This is a sector that is going from strength to strength from supplying **1 in 4.5 British apples to UK supermarkets** and all the strawberries for Wimbledon to **innovations in new foods and sustainable packaging**. We're also the region for a growing number of **award-winning wine estates**.

Home to some of the **UK's leading food and drink manufacturers, producers and distributors**, the county has a rich heritage and is renowned for its **innovative approach and high-quality natural assets**. One of the leading horticultural innovation and research establishments, NIAB EMR, is also based in Kent, along with four universities and Hadlow College, a specialist, land-based college with outstanding facilities.

The sector is well supported, with organisations dedicated to promoting products and services, industry focused events and a host of professional services firms offering specialist advice and guidance. And thanks to its **strategic geographic location** and **fast, direct links to London and European markets**, Kent offers a strong supply and distribution infrastructure, meaning it has all the right ingredients to lead the way in taking the food and drink industry forward.





**2,295**

The number of food and drink production enterprises across Kent and Medway as at 2023, accounting for **3.1% of all enterprises** in the region.



Around **1 in 4.5**

British apples come from farms owned by **AC Goatham & Sons** in Medway.



**11,585**

The number of food and drink production companies located in South East England.



**410**

The number of food and drink enterprises in Ashford borough, the highest number for Kent and Medway. British food manufacturer, **Premier Foods** and English wine producer, **Chapel Down** are based here.



**18,500**

The number of people employed in the food and drink production sector in Kent and Medway.



**NIAB at East Malling** is the UK centre for innovation and research on horticultural crops and plants and their interactions with the environment, with an international reputation for research on perennial fruit crops.



**Berry Gardens** based in Kent is the **UK's leading grower-owned co-operative**, growing berries, cherries and plums since 1972.



The largest greenhouse complex in the UK, **Thanet Earth**, covers **90 hectares of land** and grows tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers across **six greenhouses**.



# Case studies

## NIM'S FRUIT CRISPS

Manufacturing healthy snacks from a state-of-the-art British factory in the heart of Kent

Nim's Fruit Crisps set up a production facility in Sittingbourne, Kent, and chose the area because of its access to Kent fruit farmers and the transport links to London and Europe. Nimisha uses local products as much as possible and values being able to visit Kent farms to look at produce to ensure it is as fresh as possible.

The company's aim is to become the leading healthy snack manufacturer in the UK for both the domestic and export market.

***"The team at Locate in Kent spent a good few months searching for the right premises for us, making sure they met all of our requirements. They also helped us secure funding that we didn't realise we were entitled to."***

**NIMISHA RAJA**  
FOUNDER OF NIM'S FRUIT CRISPS



## MACKNADE FINE FOODS

Macknade Fine Foods, a family-run business, has been rooted in Faversham, Kent for over 170 years. What began as a family farm in 1847 has evolved into a 10,000 sqft food & drink retail space and café. The current food hall was introduced over 40 years ago and has thrived ever since.

Stefano Cuomo, the sixth generation Managing Director, continues the legacy started by his great-great-great-grandfather Fredrick Neame Sr. Macknade Farm was once a leading regional grower, famous for its fruit, hops, and livestock.

Notably, pears from their orchards were served at Princess Elizabeth's wedding in 1947.

Today, the site features a food hall offering local craft beers, exotic fruits, a florist, fishmongers, butchers, a café, and an outdoor Deck area for live music and alfresco dining in warmer months.

Macknade's growth is driven by its proximity to a significant population and the London market, attracting those seeking a better work/life balance. The unique experience they offer keeps both tourists and regular customers coming back.

***"Our focus is on maximising the many assets we have here in Kent. Over the years the quality of local produce in the county has grown considerably and this has contributed massively to our success."***

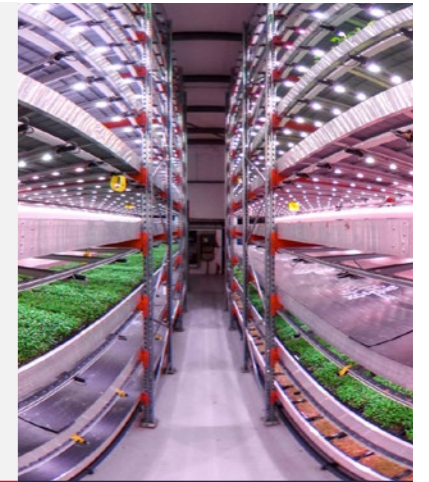
**STEFANO CUOMO**, MANAGING DIRECTOR



## GROWUP FARMS

GrowUp Farms, based in Kent, is showing the way for the UK's vertical farming industry. This innovative B-Corp business harnesses advanced hydroponic systems and LED lighting to cultivate leafy greens and herbs indoors, achieving year-round production without pesticides. By optimising space and resource efficiency, Grow Up Farms has significantly reduced water usage and carbon footprint compared to

traditional farming. Their produce, known for its freshness and quality, is supplied to local supermarkets and restaurants, illustrating a scalable and sustainable model that addresses food security and environmental concerns. With more than £100 million invested in the county and a growing customer base, Grow Up Farm's success highlights how vertical farming is revolutionising horticulture as we know it.



## CHAPEL DOWN WINES

Fifteen years ago, Chapel Down Wines set out to transform the public's perception of English wine. Today, they are achieving global recognition and part of a UK wine industry worth over £10bn in 2022.

Ten years ago the Tenterden-based producer raised £4.35 million through an equity issue, boosting wine and beer production, upgrading systems, and enhancing marketing efforts. The next year, Chapel Down became the first UK company to use crowdfunding, securing over €5 million. This funding

supported new vineyards, a winery, a brewery, a visitor attraction, and extended hospitality facilities.

Over the past decade, Chapel Down has earned critical acclaim, including three gold medals at the 2013 Decanter World Wine Awards. It is a giant in the sector, leasing and sourcing from 1,023 acres of vineyards in the south east of England, making it the largest UK producer with 1.41 million bottles sold in 2022.

***"Kent is the Garden of England. In every sense. It's a beautiful place to create, to grow, to nurture and to enjoy. Being a wine company that tries to do things other people can't, Kent is the place to be."***

**FRAZER THOMPSON**, RETIRED FOUNDER / CEO AT CHAPEL DOWN GROUP PLC

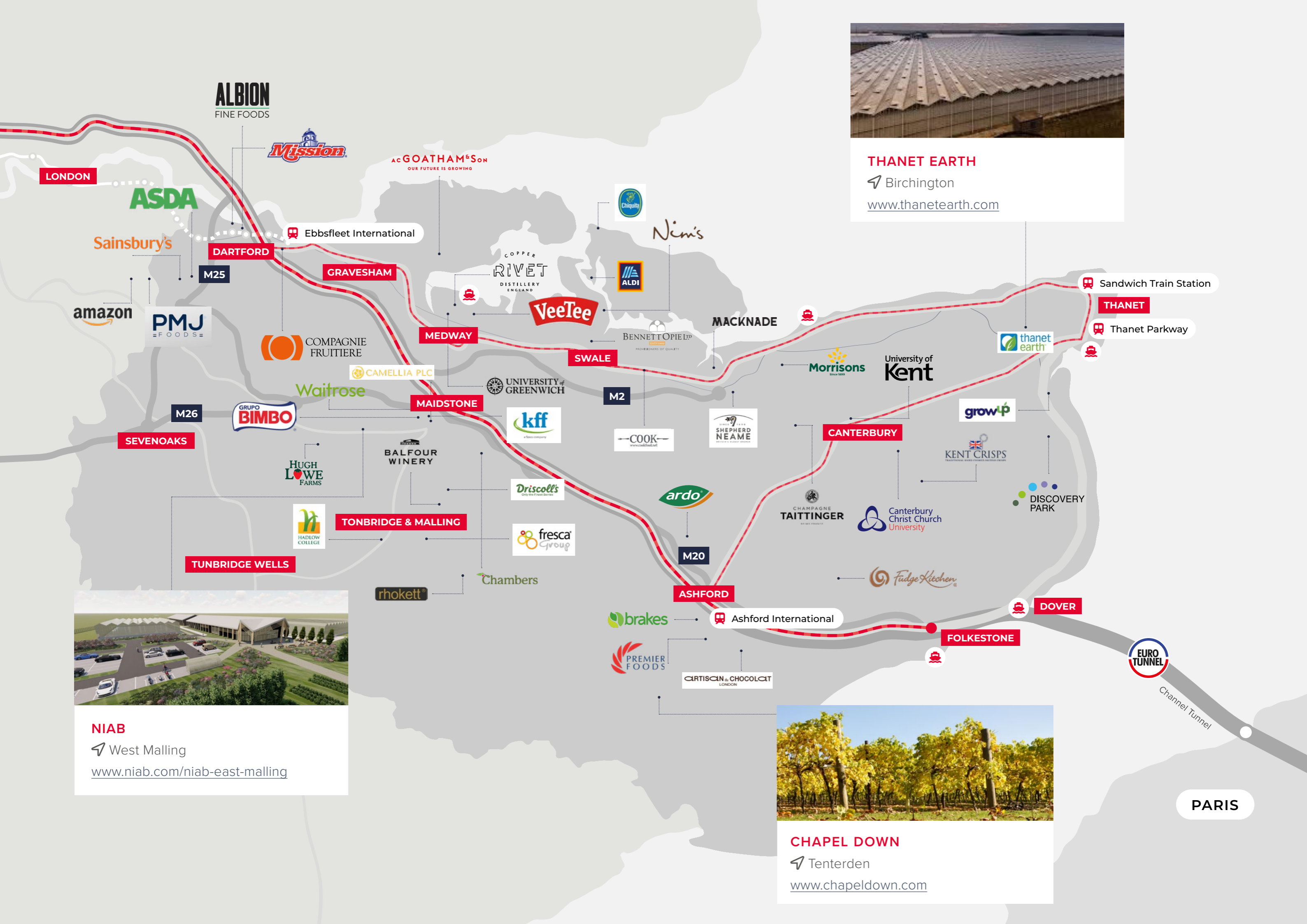


## THANET EARTH

Thanet Earth, located in Kent, is a market leader in sustainable agriculture and high-tech horticulture. Launched in 2008, this vast greenhouse complex is the largest of its kind in the UK, covering over 90 hectares. Thanet Earth employs cutting-edge hydroponic systems and advanced climate control technologies to produce a variety of crops, including tomatoes, cucumbers, and peppers, all year round. This innovative approach significantly reduces the need for pesticides and optimises water use, aligning with environmentally friendly

practices. In addition, Thanet Earth contributes significantly to the local economy by providing jobs and supporting local businesses in the supply chain. Its integration of renewable energy sources, like combined heat and power (CHP) plants, further underscores its commitment to sustainability. This combination of technological innovation, economic contribution, and environmental stewardship has made Thanet Earth a model for modern agricultural practices and a testament to the potential of combining technology with traditional farming.





**THANET EARTH**  
Birchington  
[www.thanetearth.com](http://www.thanetearth.com)



**NIAB**  
West Malling  
[www.niab.com/niab-east-malling](http://www.niab.com/niab-east-malling)



**CHAPEL DOWN**  
Tenterden  
[www.chapeldown.com](http://www.chapeldown.com)

PARIS



## Join us in Kent for the right quality of life

Located on the doorstep to London and the closest part of the UK to mainland Europe, **Kent and Medway** has all the benefits of the capital but with more room to breathe, think and inspire. Easily accessible, competitive on cost, forward looking and full of opportunity. From vibrant seaside towns and stunning countryside to culturally rich urban living, the county is one of the most visited, filmed and photographed locations.

People choose to live in this region for good reason. Access to high quality jobs, extensive transport connections and more space for your money compared to London and other parts of the southeast. With thousands of new homes on the way hand in hand with new job opportunities, demand is being met like never before.

Add in some of the UK's best public and state schools, vibrant cultural scene, restaurants, rich heritage and top visitor attractions it's easy to see why Kent and Medway remains a popular destination that not only provides businesses with the best prospects for success but reflects who they are.

## Access to leading talent

Kent is home to a highly skilled pool of talent and boasts a strong pipeline of life science graduates. With four top Universities within the county and a further 25 within an easily commutable distance, including University College London, Imperial and Kings College London, Kent opens its doors to approximately 35,000 graduates each year.

4

Kent has four universities: **Canterbury Christ Church University**, the **University of Greenwich**, the **University for the Creative Arts** and the **University of Kent**, which is ranked in the top 25 of all universities in the UK.

### NIAB

NIAB in Kent provides exceptional access to leading talent in agricultural research and innovation. As a premier organisation in crop science, NIAB employs a team of renowned scientists, researchers, and agronomists who drive advancements in plant breeding, genetics, and sustainable farming practices. Their collaborations with universities, government bodies, and industry leaders facilitate cutting-edge

research and development projects. NIAB's state-of-the-art facilities and extensive field trial sites offer a dynamic environment for pioneering work. In addition, their commitment to knowledge transfer through training programs and consultancy services ensures that both current professionals and future generations benefit from the expertise of top-tier agricultural talent.

### HADLOW COLLEGE

Hadlow College in Kent excels in land-based education with access to leading talent through its experienced faculty, industry partnerships, and research initiatives. The college's educators are industry professionals who bring practical knowledge and academic expertise, while strong ties with businesses and organisations provide students with internships and work placements. Advanced research projects, particularly in agriculture, horticulture, and animal science, attract top researchers and offer students hands-on experience. Additionally, the college's continuing professional development courses and robust alumni network ensure ongoing engagement with leading industry talent.

150

There are over **150 state-run secondary schools** in Kent and Medway – offering a range of provision from **selective grammar** and **university technical schools** to **industry sponsored academies**.

# Grants and Funding

## PRODUCED IN KENT

Trade organisation Produced in Kent will help you to promote your products and services across the county and beyond. When you register, you will be able to use the Produced in Kent trademark logo as a quality of mark for customers, and tap into a range of specialised services which complement Locate in Kent's offering.

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)



## GROWING KENT & MEDWAY

Growing Kent and Medway offers essential grants and funding support to food and drink businesses in the region, serving as a catalyst for economic growth and innovation. With a focus on nurturing local enterprises, the program provides financial assistance to businesses looking to expand, invest in new technologies, or develop their workforce.

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)



## KENT AND MEDWAY BUSINESS FUND

With a focus on stimulating innovation, job creation, and investment, the Kent and Medway Business Fund offers a range of financing options tailored to meet the diverse needs of local enterprises. Whether it's providing loans for start-ups, assisting with expansion projects, or facilitating access to working capital, the Kent and Medway Business Fund plays a crucial role in empowering businesses to thrive and succeed. By offering accessible and flexible funding solutions, the fund contributes to the resilience and competitiveness of Kent and Medway's business community.

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)



## KENT AND MEDWAY GROWTH HUB

The Kent and Medway Growth Hub is a vital resource for regional businesses, providing expert advice, support, and networking opportunities to foster economic growth. Situated in the heart of Kent and Medway, the Growth Hub offers tailored guidance to help businesses navigate the complex funding landscape, identify suitable grants, and develop compelling funding applications. Whether it's accessing grants for innovation, expansion, or skills development, the Growth Hub acts as a trusted advisor, connecting businesses with the resources and support they need to secure vital funding and drive success in Kent and Medway's vibrant business community.

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)



## BRITISH BUSINESS BANK

The British Business Bank plays a pivotal role in supporting the growth and development of businesses across the UK through its diverse range of grant and funding programs. As a government-owned economic development bank, it provides crucial financial support to businesses at various stages of their journey, from start-ups to established enterprises.

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)



# Kent and Medway the right location

**72%**

cheaper commercial property\*

*\*compared to London*

**1.8 million**  
potential customers

**68**

infrastructure & commercial development sites



4 universities



Gateway to London and Europe

**47%**

lower house prices\*

*\*compared to London*



17 minutes from the capital by train

**70,000 +**  
companies already here



350 miles of coastline

**Join us in Kent**  
Get in touch today:

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-  [www.locateinkent.com](http://www.locateinkent.com)

