Abstract: A major challenge facing Welsh specialty Small and Medium-sized Agri-food Enterprises (SMAFEs) is how to sustain growth in a global market. This can be enhanced through e-commerce and the marketing of Agri-food products through the Internet to an international audience. From recent research carried out by the Welsh Enterprise Institute (WEI) it was found that there may only be 10% of SMAFEs in Wales using the Internet to market their products. The challenge, therefore, is how to enable SMAFEs to market effectively their products; to put these small firms not only in contact with local markets but also international markets; to ensure a range of 'authentic' food products is available to Welsh communities in other countries and those people with affinity to Wales and 'all things Welsh'; and to establish channels that facilitate repeat purchase by visitors to Wales. This challenge can be responded to by enabling SMAFEs to gain access to the Internet and to gain confidence in the use of it, to develop 'user 'friendly' Web sites, to link to overseas markets through the Internet, and to establish a long-term customer base.

The WEI has undertaken a two stage survey involving a short five question return to measure SMAFE usage of e-mail and the Internet in Wales, followed by a four page questionnaire for a more in-depth study of those enterprises using the Internet. The buying habits of Welsh Affinity Groups (WAGs) on the Internet in the USA, Canada and other countries has also been studied and it is planned to establish network links between the SMAFEs and the WAGs, and communities overseas.

This paper describes the survey of SMAFEs in Wales and reports on the analysis of the findings together with recommendations for the establishment of a comprehensive Welsh food portal.
This is related to the study of the W AGs in the USA and Canada and a proposal for the development of a virtual 'market place' between the SMAFEs and the W AGs is explored.

The WEI has joined forces with Web design companies WebA ware and MA WR Ltd., to offer high quality consultancy and advice to provide Web site and e-commerce solutions relevant to SMAFEs to create an anticipated multi-million pound net gain to Wales and the Welsh Agri-food sector through world-wide sales. A Welsh food portal is therefore of immense importance as a marketing entrepreneurship interfacing tool not only to Agri-food enterprises in Wales but also to customers from across the World.

The paper concludes by arguing for the need for appropriate support to be provided for specialty Welsh SMAFEs to make them aware of the importance of the adoption of e-commerce including the Internet and Web sites.