

Catherine Fenwick



Catherine is a Technical Manager at Greencore. The company is a leading manufacturer of convenience foods, employing around 11,000 people at sites in the UK. One of its roles is to provide a range of chilled foods to major retail customers such as Marks and Spencer, Sainsbury's and ASDA. When CFA met her she was on secondment as Technical Controller.

What is your current job title and what does it involve? What are your responsibilities and how many people report to you?

I'm currently on secondment as Technical Controller and I'm responsible for the processes, hygiene, food safety and quality on our Kiveton site. I ensure that Greencore products are safe, legal and of good quality.

I have five direct reports and am responsible for a department of 30+ people.

Thinking back to school days, did you know what you wanted to become?

I had no idea but I always loved food!

What qualifications do you have? GCSEs? A Levels? Degree(s)/other?

I grew up in France where I studied maths and biology and always enjoyed the science. I have an MSc in agronomy.

In rough outline what was your job pathway – companies and job titles, plus anything of particular note, e.g. level of responsibility, exposure to any particular developments/issues?

My career began as an intern in a food importer in London, we imported specialist French food such as cheese. I became Quality Manager before moving to an organic food importer in a QA role (we specialised in sauces and condiments). I then moved to Leatham's who supplied speciality products to food manufacturers. All these jobs involved lots of travel to countries including Japan, China and Italy.

I joined Greencore in 2015 as Quality Manager for a soup factory at the company's Kiveton site in Sheffield. After being promoted to my manager's role as Technical Manager I worked in the soup and bakery section for three years and I'm now seconded to be Technical Controller, which I've done for the last three months – and I'm loving the job.

What were your aspirations when starting your career and what are they now?

My first aspirations were to travel and learn about food – so I've certainly done that. I enjoy working on projects, especially multidisciplinary ones involving colleagues from other departments. My current aspiration is to succeed at my secondment!

What single piece of advice would you offer someone curious about working in the Sector?

Don't be afraid to jump in or ever feel this industry is not for you. If you are flexible, can think on your feet and have common sense you will go far. Yes, there's a lot of science but you can learn that. It's also OK not to know the answer to everything. Just ask, and then listen. Greencore has so many experts who are willing to help by sharing their knowledge.

I'm still learning every day – it keeps my mind fresh.

What would you say to encourage them further? i.e. what are the best bits?

The teamwork – any problems of whatever size can be sorted by colleagues willing to help. The industry is full of exciting ideas and you will see the results. It's very tangible and so rewarding to be able to see, and be proud of, what you've produced. Even after all my years in the industry I'm still excited by it and still cannot resist checking out the quiche aisle!

