

Jackie Carter



Jackie Carter is Group Technical Director for Cranswick plc

What does your current role involve? What are your responsibilities and how many people report to you?

My role is to ensure that everything we produce is safe, legal and of the quality that our customers require. I have five direct reports, the Head of Food Safety & Quality, Head of Supply Chain Assurance, Head of R&D, Head of Health & Safety, and Group Compliance Training Manager, plus 39 in total in the food central team.

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

Growing up I always wanted to be a vet and our house was full of animals of all shapes and sizes. I spent most of my free time at the stables which is sadly the reason why I did not achieve my required 'A' levels for vet school due to lack of revision!

Also thinking about school, did you have a particular teacher who inspired you to take the career path you've followed?

My most inspirational schoolteacher, Miss Simmonds, was at primary school in what are now called Years 3 and 5. She made lessons so interesting, and I just loved learning. However, I think that my passion for animals, nature and science came from my father.

What were/are your main interests – e.g. science in general, food technology, microbiology, nutrition, or something else?

My favourite lesson at school was Biology, particularly the practical lessons. I enjoyed Home Economics, but I was never a particularly good cook.

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

I did Biology, Chemistry and Maths at A level (and failed Maths miserably) but went on to do an Agricultural Animal Science degree at Leeds University, followed by Meat Science M.Sc. at the Meat Research Institute, now part of Bristol University, located at the Bristol Vet school.

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?

With a Master's in Meat Science and no clear idea of what I wanted to do after leaving Bristol, I applied to all the big meat processors. I had lots of interviews but with no experience and no thoughts on where I wanted to be, I struggled. I was offered a six-month placement as a butchery quality assurance operative at Pork Farms in Nottingham where I gained a lot of experience working in a factory environment in a male-dominated department, which set me up for my career.

I had a career break to have my son and was then offered a role as a QA with Cranswick in 1992, at their primary processing site in Hull. My career has developed as the business has grown, moving through QA to site technical manager, divisional technical manager responsible for four sites, to controller deputising for our technical director, and then being promoted to my current role in 2018. I am now responsible for 22 manufacturing sites and four farming businesses.

I also sit on the board of Meat Business Women, an organisation for women working across the meat industry, whose aim is to ensure the sustainability of our industry by attracting and retaining the best possible talent.

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

When starting out on my career I had no clue as to what I wanted to do or where I wanted to be. I was lucky enough to join a business that has continued to grow and develop throughout my time with them, which has allowed me to also grow with the business.

I have a very strong moral compass so being in technical and ensuring that everyone is doing the right thing all the time suited me perfectly. I have since added health and safety to my armoury (doing a NEBOSH Diploma along the way) and also oversee R&D for the group, which is fascinating.

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

Be open minded – there are so many different opportunities within the food industry including operations, technical, commercial, marketing, new product development, HR and finance. Research the company and make sure it aligns with your ideals. Go along to your school or college careers fairs and talk with people who work for the business if you can and ask lots of questions. Choose a business that invests not only in its infrastructure but is also willing to invest in your personal development.

What would you say to encourage them further? ie: what are the best bits?

My personal 'best bits' are the people I work with. I have made lifelong friends during my time at Cranswick. Every day is different, no two days are the same which definitely keeps me interested. There are so many opportunities for developing, so if you have an inquisitive mind and like to learn about new things, then I would say the food industry is one for you.