

## ***Basque Culinary Center and AgroBank join forces to drive synergies between the gastronomic and agri-food sectors***

- ***The Basque Culinary Center and AgroBank are designing a project to highlight – and give a voice to – new generations of the agri-food sector in order to create a community that will serve as a source of inspiration, knowledge and networking.***
- ***GastroXperience will take a unique, knowledge-based experience to different cities in Spain to bring new trends in gastronomy, through the professionals of the Basque Culinary Center.***
- ***AgroBank, CaixaBank’s agri-food business line, joins the board of trustees of the Basque Culinary Center.***

**Donostia-San Sebastián, 20 July 2023**

The Basque Culinary Center and AgroBank, CaixaBank’s agri-food business line, are joining forces to develop synergies between the agri-food and gastronomy sectors, and to drive them forward through promotional initiatives that help to raise the profile and value of the agri-food sector. One of the various projects to be undertaken through this new partnership is an initiative geared towards raising the profile of young people who are transforming the agri-food sector.

Both AgroBank and the Basque Culinary Center are actively committed to fostering talent of the next generation, through establishing an initiative that serves as a source of inspiration, knowledge and networking crucial for the future of the agri-food sector. In the upcoming months it will be presented and launched, offering a response to a problem that is of increasing concern for the sector.

Furthermore, the agreement between the two entities will allow for the development of the GastroXperience programme: a culinary tour that will take a unique knowledge-based experience to different cities in Spain, showcasing new trends in gastronomy through the expertise of the Basque Culinary Center professionals. It is for this reason that CaixaBank has proposed the creation of a series of experiences that offers its customers a fresh culinary insight.

The first stop of GastroXperience was in Logroño, featuring a presentation by Adela

Balderas, coordinator of the Master's Degree in Restaurant Innovation and Management at the Basque Culinary, as well as a lecturer at Oxford University and the University of Deusto; a showcooking session by Luis Arrufat, coordinator of the Basque Culinary Center's Master's cooking area, and an interview with Carlos and Iñigo Echapresto who, besides hosting the event in their Venta Moncalvillo Restaurant, offered a cocktail reception for all those attending the event.

These events, in short, are geared towards networking, collaboration between different sectors, the development of new business ideas, and creativity. One of the upcoming tours will take place in Vigo, while the capital of Gipuzkoa will host an event of this tour at the Basque Culinary Center.

Through the signing of this partnership, AgroBank joins the board of trustees of the Basque Culinary Center. In addition to different companies in the sector, the board of trustees also includes prestigious chefs such as Juan Mari and Elena Arzak, Eneko Atxa, Karlos Arguiñano, Martin Berasategui and Hilario Arbelatiz, among others. The signing of the agreement, held at the Basque Culinary Center, was attended by Joxe Mari Aizega, Director of the Basque Culinary Center, and Juan Pedro Badiola, Northern Territorial Director of CaixaBank.

"We are proud to be able to join such a disruptive and innovative project as the Basque Culinary Center. In addition, we are doing so from our AgroBank line and with a clear aim to provide solutions to problems encountered not only in the agricultural world, but also in the gastro world," stated Badiola. In turn, Aizega highlighted "the incorporation of AgroBank into the Basque Culinary Center's board of trustees means advancing in our 3602 approach to gastronomy, being able to delve deeper, placing the focus especially on young talent, into the agri-food sector from a culinary perspective".

### **A unique ecosystem**

The Basque Culinary Center constitutes a unique ecosystem where training, innovation, research and entrepreneurship all converge with the goal of developing and fostering gastronomy, and the understanding of what we eat and how we eat it. Our mission is based on values such as passion, innovation, a commitment to excellence, and our social commitment. Located in San Sebastian since 2011, the Basque Culinary Center is a groundbreaking institution comprising of the Faculty of Gastronomic Sciences and BCC Innovation and the Gastronomy Technology Centre: an interdisciplinary research centre that researches and innovates in the design of products and services, while supporting companies, new entrepreneurs and young people with meaningful projects.

## AgroBank, financial and social commitment to the agri-food sector

AgroBank, the leading financial institution in Spain's agri-food sector by branch presence and market share, has been working for many years on a value proposition that embodies its commitment to the agri-food sector and the rural world from a financial, social and digitalisation standpoint.

AgroBank's commitment to the agri-food sector has been further strengthened following 2022 in which it financed 29,479 million euros, 95.6% up on the previous year. This underscores CaixaBank's ongoing support for an essential sector such as the agri-food sector.

This is all made possible by the fact that CaixaBank has the most extensive branch network in Spain, making it the financial institution with the greatest presence in small municipalities. This consequently strengthens its social commitment to boosting these localities, being present in 95% of municipalities with less than 5,000 inhabitants, and in 482 of them as the sole bank.

Furthermore, CaixaBank has a strong commitment to sustainability and the digitalisation of the sector, with the goal of driving its transformation. With this in mind, it has launched 'AgroBank Tech Digital INNOvation', an acceleration programme for start-ups in the agri-food sector. This initiative, which is being run in partnership with Innsomnia, positions the bank as the main start-up benchmark for offering the sector technological solutions.