



Session 1

Date: 4/3/25

Coaches: Kate Cawley and Dr Pippa Gibson

Session: Health & Sustainable Nutrition

Action items

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Overview

We covered the significance of healthy and sustainable diets, food system challenges, consumer behaviour and the importance of product reformulation. Further, the current policy landscape was reviewed, highlighting opportunities for collaboration across the food industry.

Watch again

Recording:

https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/CDOMuc6dLMerzgpTMikMruXuVJU6oRLzZON8gxGVEJgmjlk4_ykKE7oiv7q9j7Yj.loSK04L95Vb91hrb

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Summary of Key Points from Kate and Dr. Pippa

Kate's Key Points:

1. The Changing Food Landscape:

- a. The food industry is experiencing rapid disruption due to major global events like COVID-19, Brexit, cost-of-living crises, climate change and geopolitical tensions.
- b. There's an increasing expectation for the private sector to drive change with declining trust in government action.

2. The Need for Systems Thinking:

- a. The food industry can no longer work in silos - companies must take a holistic, systemic approach to tackling food sustainability and climate challenges.
- b. There's a clear demand for progress from multiple stakeholders including consumers, employees and investors.

3. Responsibility for the Next Generation:

- a. A younger generation expects businesses to step up and take responsibility for fixing food system issues.
- b. "We are the first generation to know there's a problem and the last generation that can fix it"—highlighting the urgency of action.

4. The Role of Business in Driving Change:

- a. There's a shift in responsibility from government to businesses when it comes to ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) initiatives.
- b. Businesses need to be proactive in sustainable food system transformations to remain relevant and future-proof themselves.

Dr. Pippa's Key Points:

1. Why Healthy and Sustainable Diets Matter:

- a. Poor diets are a leading cause of health issues like obesity, heart disease, cancer and diabetes in the UK.



- b. The food system is responsible for about one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions and contributes significantly to biodiversity loss and land degradation.
- 2. The National Food Strategy's Role:**
- a. Henry Dimbleby's National Food Strategy highlights the urgent need to reshape the UK's food system to promote health and sustainability.
 - b. The strategy identifies key areas such as reducing sugar and salt in processed foods, shifting toward plant-based diets and increasing access to healthier foods.
- 3. Key Industry and Policy Trends:**
- a. Proposed **sugar and salt reformulation tax** aims to encourage companies to improve the nutritional profile of their products.
 - b. Targets include **30% more fruits and vegetables, 50% more fibre and 30% less meat by 2032** to align with both health and environmental goals.
 - c. Increased government support for **low-income families** such as expanding free school meals and healthy start schemes is needed to improve access to nutritious food.
- 4. Bridging the Gap Between Science and Industry:**
- a. The British Nutrition Foundation aims to provide **evidence-based, science-backed information** to ensure everyone has the knowledge and confidence to make informed food choices .
 - b. The goal is to **empower businesses and individuals** to take meaningful action toward a sustainable and healthy food system.

Guest Questions & Insights

- 1. Balancing Health and Consumer Demand**
- a. Guests discussed the challenge of reformulating products to be healthier while maintaining consumer preference for taste. There was concern that making drastic health-driven changes could drive consumers toward competitors instead of encouraging dietary shifts.
- 2. Challenges with Retailer Strategies**
- a. There was a discussion around how retailers often resist stocking lower-fat, lower-sugar product variations due to SKU duplication concerns. Businesses struggle to introduce healthier alternatives without cannibalizing sales.
- 3. Health by Stealth Approach**
- a. Some guests suggested that gradual reformulation (e.g., slowly reducing sugar or salt content over time) might be more effective than launching separate "healthier" product lines, which tend to have lower sales and risk being delisted.
- 4. Role of NPD (New Product Development) in Driving Change**
- a. A point was raised that NPD teams are typically focused on sales-driven initiatives. For businesses driven by investor expectations, allocating resources to sustainability or health improvements that don't directly boost sales is a significant challenge.
- 5. Bridging the Gap Between Farmers and Consumers**
- a. There was enthusiasm for strengthening connections between growers and consumers, particularly in terms of communicating the challenges of sustainable food production. The idea was to build demand for food that is both better for people and the planet.
- 6. Advocacy and Policymaking Engagement**
- a. Some guests discussed the need for the food industry to be more proactive in policy engagement, ensuring that sustainability and health priorities are better reflected in government strategies.
- 7. Collaboration Across Businesses**



- a. Several guests highlighted the importance of businesses working together rather than in silos. Cross-sector collaboration was seen as a way to create more impactful change within the food system.

Solutions and suggestions from Dr. Pippa Gibson

1. Reformulation Strategies – ‘Health by Stealth’

- a. **Gradual Reduction Approach:** Instead of making drastic changes, she suggested slowly reducing sugar, salt or fat content in products over time to help consumers adjust their taste preferences without noticing a stark difference.
- b. **Ingredient Substitutions:** Using alternative ingredients such as natural sweeteners or umami-rich components to maintain taste while improving nutritional profiles.

2. Navigating Retailer Resistance to Healthier Products

- a. **Data-Driven Justification:** She recommended using consumer insight data to demonstrate the demand for healthier alternatives and how they could drive long-term loyalty.
- b. **Retailer Education:** Engaging with retailers to showcase how stocking better-for-you products can align with their corporate responsibility goals.

3. Aligning NPD with Business Growth & Health Goals

- a. **Embedding Health Targets into NPD KPIs:** Ensuring that nutrition and sustainability improvements are not just seen as “nice to have” but are core performance metrics for innovation teams.
- b. **Leveraging External Partnerships:** Collaborating with health organisations or academic institutions to access funding, research and credibility for health-focused innovation.

4. Farmer-Consumer Connection & Sustainable Sourcing

- a. **Transparent Storytelling:** She suggested that brands should make sustainability efforts more visible to consumers using packaging, digital platforms and marketing campaigns to highlight farmer partnerships.
- b. **Incentivising Sustainable Agriculture:** Encouraging brands to support regenerative farming initiatives and work directly with suppliers to ensure ethical sourcing.

5. B Corp & Ethical Procurement Integration

- a. **Supplier Scorecards:** Developing robust sustainability criteria for procurement teams to assess suppliers based on environmental and social impact.
- b. **Tiered Transitioning:** Gradually phasing in stricter ethical and sustainability sourcing requirements to avoid supply chain disruptions.

6. Advocacy & Policymaking Engagement

- a. **Industry Coalitions:** She recommended that businesses join forces with industry bodies to advocate for policy changes that support sustainable and healthy food systems.
- b. **Consumer-Led Policy Pressure:** She highlighted the power of consumer-driven demand to influence government regulations and the importance of clear, science-backed communication from brands.

7. Cross-Sector Collaboration

- a. **Pre-Competitive Collaboration:** Encouraging businesses to share best practices on reformulation and sustainability rather than treating them as competitive advantages.



- b. **Joint Investment in Innovation:** Suggesting that companies pool resources to accelerate progress in sustainable packaging, alternative proteins and food waste reduction.