



Session Six: HSD Food Design

Date: 01/04/25

Coach: Lucy Wager, Future Food Movement

Action items

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Overview

This masterclass with Lucy Wager focused on how to design climate-smart food and embed health and sustainability into product development. Lucy shared her extensive experience across retail, manufacturing, startups and consultancy, offering practical insights into balancing innovation, cost, taste and impact. A central theme was that designing for healthy, sustainable diets (HSD) isn't a silver-bullet process but a holistic, iterative journey that requires cross-functional collaboration, strategic use of tools and systemic thinking. She emphasised the importance of realistic prioritisation, starting small, upskilling teams and aligning KPIs across businesses to drive meaningful change.

Key Takeaways

1. Food Design as a Catalyst for Change

- HSD food design is where action happens - the point where values translate into tangible products.
- Consider food as "designed with care" rather than just developed - adding intentionality, sustainability and long-term thinking.
- Balance health, environmental impact and taste while working within technical and regulatory constraints.

2. Ingredient Impact and Sourcing

- Ingredients have the greatest sustainability impact, more so than packaging or production methods.
- Tools like the sustainability hierarchy and "now/soon/future" impact maps help teams prioritise what can be done quickly vs. long term.
- Smart sourcing (e.g. seaweed-fed cattle or regenerative dairy) can dramatically cut emissions.

3. Examples of Climate Smart Food

- **Golden Hooves:** Regenerative dairy offering high-quality cheese with reduced impact.
- **Natura:** Uses fresh/dried herbs depending on seasonality for environmental and flavour optimisation.
- **Spoon:** Uses spent oats from oat milk manufacturing, showcasing circularity.
- **Dunia Bora:** Kenyan cactus-based enterprise supporting climate resilience and female-led farming.
- **Sea Forest & Morrisons:** Cattle feed from seaweed reducing methane emissions.
- **Fibre-Focused Innovation:** Shelf-stable smoothies with reusable bottles and biodegradable sachets.



4. Mindset and Business Structure Shifts

- Conflicting KPIs across teams often stifle innovation - unified mission statements and aligned metrics are essential.
- Teams need clarity on how sustainability goals link to their day-to-day work.
- Businesses should enable calculated risk-taking and reduce innovation paralysis.
- Development teams are at the centre of conflicting KPIs (quality, cost, speed, sustainability).
- Build cross-functional alliances - from agronomists to engineers to marketers -to unlock innovation.
- Provide training, education and tools for teams to understand the “why” and “how” behind HSD principles.

5. Consumer Perception and UPF Challenges

- Lack of legal clarity around Ultra Processed Foods (UPFs) causes confusion and hampers innovation.
- Tools like the Zoe app and Yuka help consumers assess healthiness, but risk oversimplifying complex nutrition.
- Communication and education are vital to helping consumers understand why ingredients are used.

Questions Asked and Lucy’s Responses

Q: How can we align conflicting KPIs across departments?

- Lucy: Start with a clear mission statement and break it down by team. Ensure everyone understands their part in delivering health and sustainability outcomes.

Q: How do we manage consumer perception around UPFs while innovating?

- Lucy: Transparency and education are key. Use stories and explain why ingredients are used (e.g. for shelf life or safety). Tools like the Zoe app help but shouldn't replace nuanced communication.

Q: Is innovation realistic within the cost constraints of big manufacturers?

- Lucy: It’s a challenge, but collaboration and prioritisation help. Some change must be systemic, but even small wins build momentum.

Q: How do we bring the consumer on the journey?

- Lucy: Incremental shifts work best, just as salt reduction did in the 2000s. Taste and accessibility must remain priorities.

Further Reading

- [The Big Food Redesign](#) (Ellen MacArthur Foundation)
- [Mondra](#): A platform for carbon and health impact tracking in food development
- [Zoe app & Yuka](#): Tools to understand UPFs and nutritional content
- [Sea Forest / Earthshot Prize](#) Case study in methane-reducing feed

Lightbulb Moments and Practical Advice

- **Design vs Development:** Reframing food development as "design" encourages more intentionality.



- **Training Product Teams:** NPD teams need tools, cross-functional support and upskilling to navigate complex priorities.
- **Stakeholder Mapping:** Use tools to identify internal influencers and map who needs to be engaged early.
- **Data-Driven Decisions:** Tools like Mondra and lifecycle analysis can demystify impact and guide smarter ingredient choices.
- **Bravery in Innovation:** Risk aversion in the current climate is stifling creativity - companies need safe-to-fail pilots to test climate-smart solutions.

Next Session:

Close out 2nd April, Midday