



FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION: TECHNOLOGY

INSIGHTS AND ACTION STEPS FOR FOOD LEADERS SHAPING HEALTHIER, MORE SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

We're not short on innovation - we're short on integration. Technology is a powerful catalyst, but only when used well. This session challenged the industry to stop treating tech as a bolt-on and start using it as a lever for value, resilience and climate and health progress. The real challenge? Knowing what to scale, where to focus and how to connect tech to real-world impact.

1. START WITH WHAT YOU ALREADY KNOW

You don't need perfect data, just enough to make progress. Most businesses already have a good sense of the right direction. Use data to spot gaps, stress-test assumptions and align teams around action. Prioritise simplicity and scalability when time and resources are tight.

Takeaway: Stop chasing perfection - start using data to build momentum, align teams and accelerate action.

2. DATA IS A TOOL FOR INFLUENCE

Data isn't just for measurement - it helps shape stories that influence outcomes in your business. Share data across teams - it sparks conversations; with investors - it drives strategy, builds credibility and amplifies impact. It lends weight to your efforts, creates momentum and helps make sustainability a shared priority.

Takeaway: Use data to amplify your message, validate impact and build trust across the value chain. Get inspired - [Cool Farm Tool](#).

3. LEAD WITH THE PROBLEM, NOT THE PRODUCT

Digitise the things that waste your time. Identify your biggest pinch points and use technology to solve them - tech for tech's sake doesn't work. 53% of attendees said technology drives progress by boosting operational efficiency.

Takeaway: The best results come when you identify the biggest friction point in your business, then find the right tech to fix it.

4. TECH SHOULD SPEED UP ACTION, NOT SLOW IT

Technology should make decisions faster, not add complexity. Choose tools that reduce admin, support clear action and scale easily without adding friction.

Takeaway: Choose tech that reduces admin and drives faster decisions at scale.

5. JOIN THE TECH CONVERSATION NOW

The food tech ecosystem is moving fast - from AI and sensors to open data platforms. Join pilots, shape standards and collaborate across the value chain to build credibility, attract investment and stay ahead.

Takeaway: Influence the future now. FFM helps food businesses turn insight into implementation and build capability.

WE HEARD FROM PIONEERS USING TECH TO:

- Unlock traceability and supply chain insight
- Automate production and reduce Scope 3 emissions
- Prove the value of farming with nature
- Support smarter decisions with real-time data and AI



"We're finally seeing data flow between suppliers, manufacturers and retailers. The impact is starting to trickle through, and we should make the most of it. You don't need perfect data to make smart decisions - just the confidence to start."

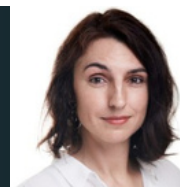


Foodsteps

Anya Doherty, Founder And Director, Foodsteps



"We're using AI to turn millions of global product data points into actionable nutrition insights - not to add complexity, but to move faster, simplify decisions, and embed public health into how businesses and investors act."



Aurélie Reynier, Head Of Mel And Data, Access to Nutrition Initiative



"From planting wildflowers to improving pollination - technology helps turn that into measurable insight, capturing data at a scale no clipboard ever could. It not only proves impact, but boosts yield, flavour, shelf life and commercial value. That's farming with nature, powered by data."

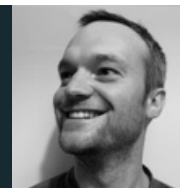


AgriSound™

Dr. Casey Woodward, Founder, AgriSound



"The farms that started with finding out what the problem was and then finding the solution are the ones that have succeeded and the ones that were solutions looking for a problem to solve, those are the ones that have failed."



Gillon Dobie, Impact Director, GrowUp Farms



"In food, we're not just decarbonising - we're living the climate impacts already. That's why we're building digital twins of our supply chain, not just for compliance, but to make faster, better decisions. Tech delivers most when it saves time, adds value, and builds resilience all at once."



Tom Maidment, Group Product Sustainability Senior Manager, Hilton Foods

WHAT YOU CAN DO NEXT

1

Solve a real problem - not a theoretical one.

Start with what's slowing you down: data overload, Scope 3 complexity, disconnected teams. You don't need perfect data - you need a clear problem to solve and confidence to act.

2

Align your core functions.

Tech won't scale in silos. Bring sustainability, procurement, operations and digital together around a shared problem and a commercial case. That's how you unlock real ROI.

3

Collaborate with your suppliers

Many are already trialing nature-based, regenerative or traceable solutions. The opportunity is to scale that innovation together - not control it from the centre. Want advice and guidance on how to do this? [Let's talk.](#)

3 COMMERCIAL MOVES TO MAKE AN IMPACT

RESPONSES FROM 50 INDUSTRY LEADERS INCLUDING ABEL & COLE, GREGGS, QUORN FOODS, COOP, LEPRINO FOODS & ARLA

Most businesses see value in tech for operational efficiency (53%), but poor data quality and silos block deeper transformation. Leaders aim to invest in sustainability - Scope 3 data, biodiversity tracking, farmer resilience - but cultural resistance and lack of buy-in hold them back. Only 2% of respondents cite environmental impact today, yet many want to invest there, revealing an aspiration-reality gap. The challenge is clear: the will and ideas exist, but unlocking tech's full value needs better integration, stronger data infrastructure and braver leadership.

WHERE IS TECH DELIVERING MOST VALUE RIGHT NOW?

Operational efficiency came out top, with the majority of attendees citing it as the key area where technology is driving progress in their business.

- 53% said: Improving operational efficiency
- 25% said: Enhancing supply chain visibility
- 14% said: Supporting product innovation
- 2% said tech is most useful for reducing environmental impact
- 6% said it isn't delivering much value yet.

TAKEAWAY:

Businesses are still leaning on tech to streamline rather than transform. There's a big opportunity to shift that focus toward sustainability and innovation as ROI cases strengthen.

WHAT'S HOLDING TECH BACK FROM SCALING?

The top barrier was clear: **data silos and poor quality**. But budget constraints and culture also weigh heavily.

- 38% said: Data silos / poor data quality
- 25% said: Cost and budget constraints
- 14% said: Cultural resistance to change
- 11% said: Lack of leadership buy-in
- 6% said: Tech complexity or integration issues
- 6% said: Other.

TAKEAWAY:

The biggest tech challenge isn't tech - it's people, data and leadership. Cross-functional alignment and better internal communication are critical next steps.

IF YOU HAD £1 MILLION TO INVEST, WHERE WOULD IT GO?

Free text responses revealed recurring priorities:

- Data: "Better primary data collection," "Clearer metrics," "True Scope 3 accuracy"
- Resilience: "Agriculture resilience," "Tools to support farmer adaptation"
- Tech for transformation: "Replacing gas with electric pasteurisers," "Regenerative farming verification," "AI for biodiversity tracking"
- Consumer impact: "Tools that empower informed consumer choices"

TAKEAWAY:

There's a clear hunger for technology that delivers strategic transformation - not just compliance. Data that drives decisions, farmer-aligned tools and nature-based verification top the wishlist.

The vision is clear: better data, stronger systems, smarter investments in nature and resilience. What's needed now is follow-through - bold leadership, trusted partnerships and sustained action to turn insight into transformation. Let's move from pilots to progress.

As a food manufacturer, we know ingredients drive most of our emissions - but it's the innovations at farm level that are truly exciting. This event showed how technology can help us surface that impact and communicate it with authenticity. The stories worth telling start in the soil - tech just helps us tell them better."

Brand & Marketing Manager, Global Food
Manufacturer from the FFM network



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