Expert Event July

Power, Policy and Accountability in Food. Who Really Shapes Change?

FUTURE FOOD MOVEMENT

What does it take for food leaders to read the system, not just respond to it?

Industry needs to move earlier, engage more honestly and treat policy, disclosure, investment and innovation as part of the same resilience challenge. The risk is the gap between what is already understood privately and what is being acted on publicly.

From policy certainty and investor pressure to pension power, disclosure gaps and market design, this session explored where influence really sits in food, and what leaders can do now to shape clearer rules, stronger accountability and more resilient business decisions. Hannah Brinsden of The Food Foundation, Catherine Howarth of ShareAction, Ana Cuddeford of Inside Track and Polly Mackenzie of Zinc Innovation Partners brought sharp, practical perspectives across policy, responsible investment, systemic risk and innovation.

Featuring perspectives from:

Polly Mackenzie
CEO, Zinc Innovation Partners

zinc INNOVATION PARTNERS

Hannah Brinsden
Head of Policy and Advocacy, The Food Foundation

The Food Foundation

Ana Cuddeford
Head of Investor Engagement, Inside Track

InsideTrack

Catherine Howarth
Chief Executive, ShareAction

ShareAction»

Kate Cawley
Founder and CEO, Future Food Movement

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What we heard

- **The system knows more than it shows.**
Risks are understood inside businesses, but not always visible to investors, policymakers or the public. Ana Cuddeford was clear that reporting can become a compliance exercise: "We're only disclosing what we have to disclose." The challenge for leaders is to bring the difficult conversations into the right rooms earlier, before risk becomes crisis.

- **Investor pressure needs to move upstream.**
Company-by-company engagement matters, but it will not shift the system alone. Catherine Howarth challenged investors, especially pension funds, to think beyond individual company risk and ask how capital can help create resilient food systems. The role of pension schemes, policy engagement and long-term stewardship came through as under-used levers.

- **Policy certainty is now a business need.**
The strongest signal from the room was the need for clearer direction. 50% said legally binding national targets would give their organisation the most certainty to invest, while 44% pointed to a cross-government food strategy. The Good Food Bill speaks directly to that need: clearer targets, stronger policy direction and a level playing field businesses can plan against.

- **Good evidence can still lose.**
The food system is full of well-evidenced problems that have not become urgent enough to act on. The challenge is not just to be right, but to be heard by people who do not already agree. That means framing change as resilience, growth, innovation and commercial relevance, not just as a sustainability imperative.

- **Agency sits closer than leaders think.**
53% of people in the room said their greatest agency to shape change sits inside their organisation's strategy and decisions. Leaders may want clearer policy and stronger external pressure, but they also hold influence through what they prioritise, disclose, fund, challenge and defend inside the business.

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What leaders can do now:

1. **Back smarter policy, not just better intent.**
   Support clearer frameworks like the Good Food Bill survey so the realities of business help shape the policy conversation. If industry wants targets, certainty and a level playing field, it needs to make its voice heard before the rules are set.

2. **Put pension power into the conversation.**
   Look at your own pension scheme as a strategic lever, not a separate financial issue sitting outside the food system.

3. **Ask what the board is really discussing.**
   Bring long-term risk, resilience and disclosure gaps into the room before they are forced in from outside.

4. **Invest earlier in the solutions the market needs.**
   Look beyond today's operating model and get closer to the ideas, ventures and conditions that could reshape the food system.

5. **Use the agency already inside the business.**
   53% of people in the room said their greatest agency sits inside their organisation's strategy and decisions. Start there.

How Future Food Movement can help

Systemic Risk & Readiness Briefing

Policy, investor pressure and insurer risk models are moving on different timelines, but they're converging on the same businesses. Our Systemic Risk & Readiness Briefing helps your leadership team see where they intersect and what that means for commercial, brand and supply chain decisions.

We translate regulatory change, investor expectations and emerging insurance risk into one clear picture, so your team can move from three separate conversations to a single strategic plan.

Reply to book a briefing for your leadership team.

You can watch the session again here.

Kate Cawley
Founder, Future Food Movement

The next Expert Event session

Thursday
11
August

The theme:
When appetite changes - How food brands grow in a market that's being rewritten