

# Virtual GFSI Conference Executive Summary



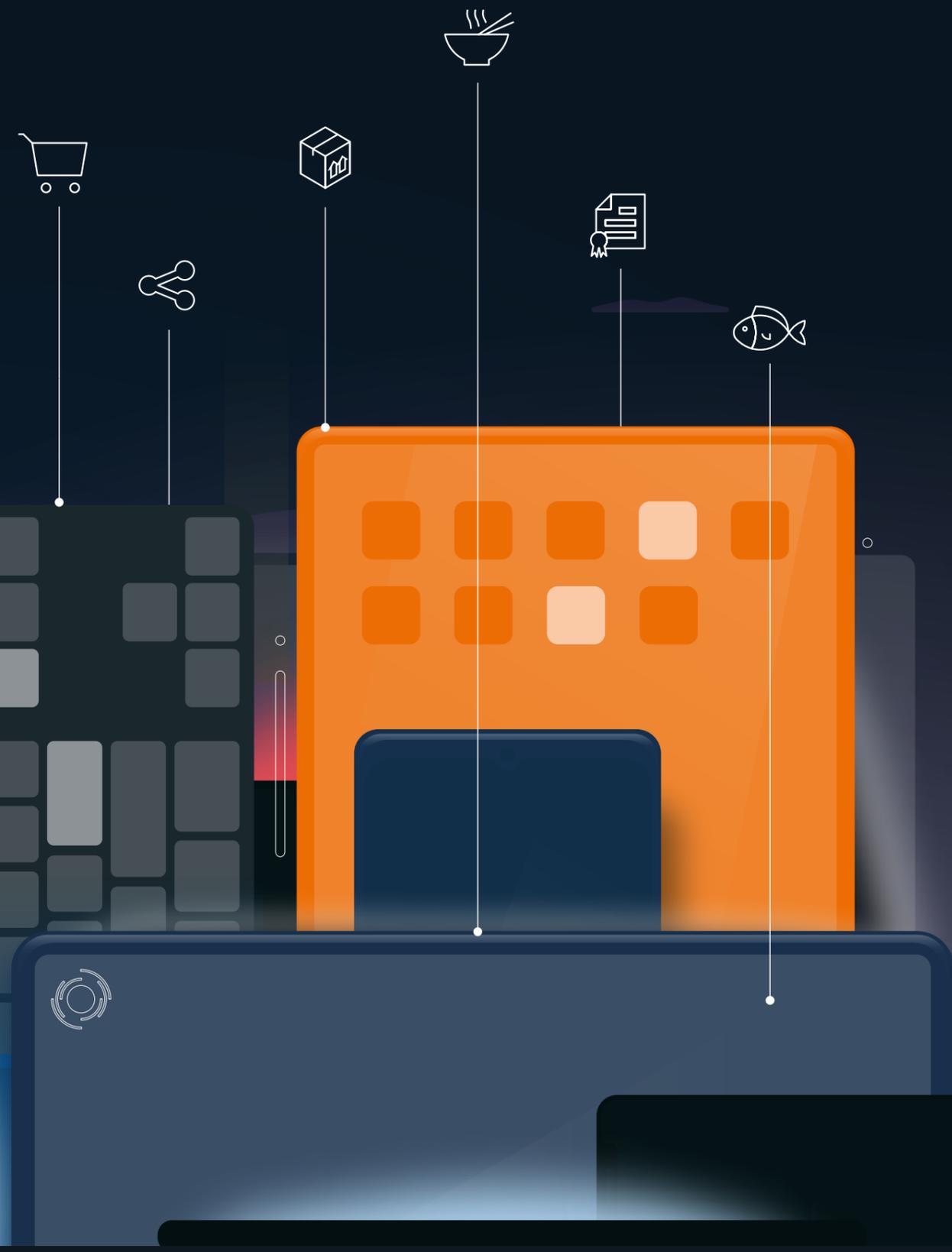
**GFSI**  
CONFERENCE

**FOOD  
SAFETY**

Rethink,  
Reset,  
Recharge

**23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>**  
MARCH 2021 **VIRTUAL**

[conference.mygfsi.com](https://conference.mygfsi.com) #gfsi21



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# #gfsi21 in numbers



 **85+**  
speakers

**50+**   
countries

 **10**  
media  
partners

**3 days**  
of conference  
and sessions

**1,000+**  
hours  
of audio/video chats

THE TALK ABOUT  
**#gfsi21**

**95,000**  
post impressions

**1,000**  
engagements

exhibitors  
**x 25**

special  
sessions  
**x 11**

  
tech talks  
**x 9**

## Introduction

In the two decades since its first iteration in France, the GFSI Conference has become known as one of the world's most important conversations around food safety. The 20th annual GFSI Conference, centred around the theme **Food Safety: Rethink, Reset, Recharge**, again proved this reputation. Speakers and attendees alike represented every inhabited continent and every sector involved in the supply chain, from manufacturing and retail to academia and the public sector.

The 2021 GFSI Conference differed from those of previous years in one conspicuous way: rather than taking place in a busy conference hall in one of the world's capitals of food and innovation, such as Seattle (2020), Nice (2019) or Tokyo (2018), the event was held entirely online. The plenaries and other sessions that made up the event were streamed to countless workplaces and homes around the world. This format was adopted due to the coronavirus pandemic, whose far-reaching effects on the global food supply chain were a frequent topic of discussion.

There were benefits to the change, however. Thanks to the relative ease of access, the delegation included many first-time attendees who would otherwise be unable to travel to the event, and the majority of the speakers had never before appeared on the

GFSI Conference stage. During their talks, many noted the silver linings that they had found in their own pandemic adaptations.

Though geographically distant, the delegates found ample opportunities to connect during the online event. They joined a purpose-built platform, created 3D representations of themselves, and used these avatars to explore an immersive virtual venue complete with an exhibition floor, conference rooms and seating areas for casual chats. The experience allowed the delegates to rethink what a conference could look like, reset their understanding of the supply chain and recharge to surmount the challenges they were there to discuss.



## Plenary Sessions

DAY 1 OPENING KEYNOTE

The opening keynote of the GFSI Conference is often an opportunity for a representative from the host country to welcome delegates to the locale and its food safety culture. For this virtual edition, streamed concurrently to every inhabited continent, the keynote was fittingly provided by **Dr Qu Dongyu, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations**. After opening remarks from **Wai-Chan Chan, Managing Director of The Consumer Goods Forum** — making his first appearance at the GFSI Conference in this role since he took over from former Managing Director Peter Freedman last year — Dr Qu delivered a keynote that placed food safety in a global context and emphasised its relevance to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Dr Qu began by praising the food industry's efforts to maintain a safe food supply during the pandemic. 'All of you stepped up to the challenges at the front lines and did the very best possible to minimise disruptions in the production and supply chain, a true achievement for which I applaud you', he said. 'Yet much remains to be done.' He pointed to rising levels of food insecurity, malnutrition and unemployment, as well as to the 37 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions that is contributed by the agrifood system.

'The future of our agrifood systems define the future of humanity', Dr Qu urged. He outlined three main steps to make that future better for all: understand and minimise the tradeoffs that exist between competing policy objectives; harness the power of innovation and digital technology; and strengthen governance, human capital and institutions. All three steps are key to FAO's work with the private sector, accelerated through the UN Food Systems Summit and the online Connect portal.

'Ladies and gentlemen, food safety comes first', he said in closing. 'If it's not safe, it's not food.' The latter remark became a mantra for the conference, echoing from plenary to plenary.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- If it's not safe, it's not food.
- The agrifood industry has the responsibility to work towards a safe, nutritious and sustainable food supply for all.

### ACTION STEPS

- Understand and minimise the tradeoffs that exist between competing policy objectives.
- Harness the power of innovation and digital technology.
- Strengthen governance, human capital and institutions.



**DR QU DONGYU**  
DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE  
ORGANISATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS



## GFSI AND THE RACE TO THE TOP: STRATEGIC PRIORITIES IN THE CURRENT FOOD SAFETY LANDSCAPE

The first plenary was a conversation among three GFSI insiders, **Director Erica Sheward** and **Steering Committee members Roy Kirby and Howard Popoola**, and served as a refresher on the organisation's latest moves and plans for the future.

**GFSI Director Erica Sheward** began by looking back on all that had passed since the last GFSI Conference in Seattle, which took place just weeks before that city enacted a lockdown to stem the spread of COVID-19. 'The challenges this year has brought the food and beverage sector, as every other sector, are legendary', she said. 'However, in my humble opinion, out of every challenge comes the most amazing opportunities, and our community certainly stepped up.'

**Roy Kirby, Global Director of microbiology, food safety and toxicology at Mondelez International**, delved further into history with a retrospective on the development of international food safety standards, from the National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods recommending HACCP in the 1980s to GFSI's birth in 2000. 'GFSI went from strength to strength as recognition and trust in the scheme ruled, and all was good in the world', he recounted. 'However, nothing stands still forever, and consumers' expectations of food safety have grown along with the regulators' vigilance.' GFSI's **Race to the Top** — a term which Roy is credited with coining — is designed to allow GFSI to evolve in step with this growth.

The Race to the Top is a conceptual framework that entails a suite of initiatives designed to drive continuous improvement in the food safety system. Roy explained how he conceived the term: 'Without a level playing field and somebody to enforce the rules, you can end up with behaviours that undermine confidence...and can force, even though it is with a good intention, a race to the bottom', he said. 'And that's where the origin of the Race of the Top came from. It was to make sure that what we were engaged in was a race to the top and not a race to the bottom.'

**Howard Popoola, Vice President of Corporate Food Technology and Regulatory Compliance at The Kroger Co.**, focused on the Global Markets Programme (GMaP) and its role within the Race to the Top. The programme has the potential to impact food safety in the most vulnerable parts of the world, he said, but must be rethought in order to truly do so.



ROY KIRBY

'Due to a variety of reasons, including communication, suppliers have struggled to understand what (the Global Markets Programme) stood for, and how to differentiate it from certification, what truly makes it global in its extent', said Howard. An optimised GMaP, however, could be life-changing for suppliers in developing regions — 'in those places described as countries of opportunity, producing niche products, who just need an opportunity to be able to sell their products into the world stage', he said. To that end, GFSI is currently undergoing a strategic review of GMaP, using feedback from a recent survey and stakeholder consultation.

**ERICA SHEWARD**  
GFSI DIRECTOR

**ROY KIRBY**  
GLOBAL DIRECTOR OF MICROBIOLOGY,  
FOOD SAFETY AND TOXICOLOGY AT  
MONDELEZ INTERNATIONAL

**HOWARD POPOOLA**  
VICE PRESIDENT OF CORPORATE FOOD  
TECHNOLOGY AND REGULATORY  
COMPLIANCE AT THE KROGER CO.



HOWARD POPOOLA

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- All actors in the food supply chain must continually adapt to meet challenges and changing demands.
- Benchmarking creates a level playing field in which all players can understand and abide by the rules.

### ACTION STEPS

- See how you can get involved in GFSI. Join a stakeholder consultation, answer a survey or apply to join a Working Group.
- Subscribe to the GFSI newsletter to receive alerts when calls for participation are announced.



## LEADING IN TIMES OF CRISIS: STORIES OF RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

**Dirk Van de Put, Chairman and CEO of Mondelez International**, shared a leadership perspective on the pandemic in this session, while offering takeaways that could apply to professionals at any organisational level.

Mondelez International, one of the world's largest snacks companies, is among the small class of businesses that gained market share in 2020. Customers bought more chocolates, biscuits and other snacking foods that year in pursuit of 'emotional support', said Dirk. (Erica noted that her support mechanism of choice was Toblerone.) The company nonetheless encountered significant challenges during the pandemic. Dirk outlined three learnings from the year that may come in handy in any crisis. First, have an infrastructure in place that is ready to deal with special situations; second, adopt a strong leadership style; and finally, be clear on priorities.

In Mondelez International's case, the priorities fell into four main categories: protecting colleagues and consumers; maintaining business continuity; supporting communities; and emerging stronger. Dirk related the last point to the 'burning platform'

philosophy that he learned from a former boss. 'A burning platform makes things possible that in normal circumstances are not possible', he said. 'As you're dealing with the crisis, it also is an enormous opportunity to do things, create things that normally for an organisation are going to be much more difficult.'

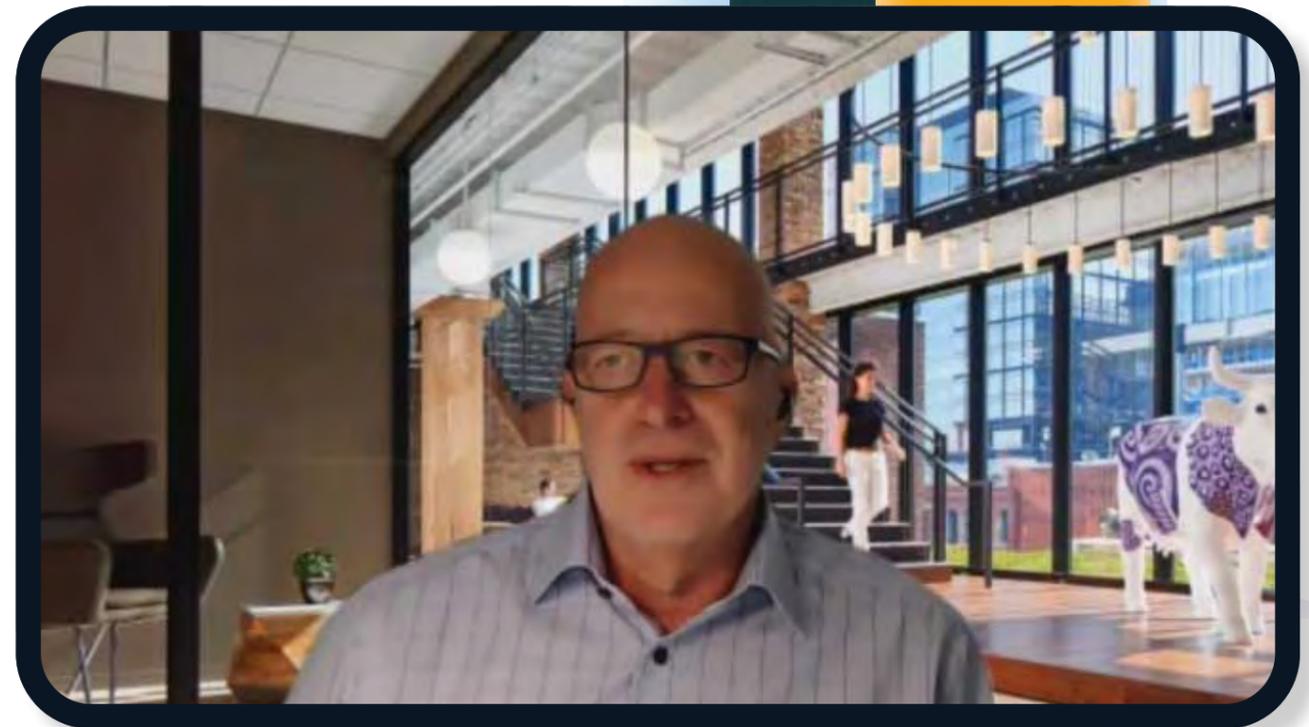
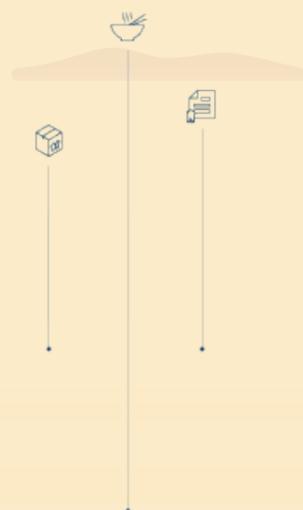
Above all, Dirk emphasised the importance of communication during a crisis, both within the organisation and externally — 'First of all, to keep everybody informed and clear on those priorities, but also to be reassuring to give them the feeling that the company has things under control.' This communication must be a two-way channel, with opportunities for people throughout the organisation to share their concerns and help the company address them.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A crisis makes things possible that would not otherwise be possible. Don't let it go to waste.
- Clear communication is key to success, both internally and with the public.

### ACTION STEPS

- Open the channels of communication in your company. Create opportunities for employees to share their concerns and to understand leaders' priorities.
- If you don't have one already, build a crisis management plan and a team to carry it out.



**DIRK VAN DE PUT**  
CHAIRMAN AND CEO OF MONDELEZ  
INTERNATIONAL



## THE EVOLUTION OF E-COMMERCE: HOW COVID-19 HAS IMPACTED FOOD SAFETY OPERATIONS

Many businesses in food e-commerce experienced exponential growth in 2020, even as other businesses in the food and beverage sector struggled to stay afloat. In this session, food safety professionals from three major players in grocery e-commerce explained how they adapted their practices to shifting demands and government requirements during the pandemic.

The first presenter was **Elaine Jia, Senior Security Operations Expert at Freshippo**, a grocery chain owned by the Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba. Freshippo, also known as Hema in China, has positioned itself at the forefront of New Retail with innovations including unmanned checkout kiosks and an integrated e-commerce mobile app with 30-minute delivery service. This model proved popular during the pandemic, but Elaine's team had to put in place further innovations to maintain safety and allay customers' fears, such as QR codes on frozen foods that linked to their food safety certification information. Soon, all products in the stores will be required to join Freshippo's traceability plan.



ELAINE JIA

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Sales growth in a food company must be accompanied by proportionate growth in the teams who are tasked with keeping that food safe.
- Processes must be designed to allow for continual evolution, especially in times of crisis.

### ACTION STEPS

- Consider ways to use ICT tools not only to keep food safe, but to inform consumers of the safety of their food.
- Arrange regular check-ins with all markets and geographies.



CAROLINE EASTERBROOK

Next, **Caroline Easterbrook, Head of Food Safety for Amazon Europe, Middle East and Africa**, explained how another e-commerce giant maintained food safety during a year of record-shattering growth. The food safety team implemented more than 150 major process changes over 75 working days during the pandemic, including remote audits and other technological solutions. 'As I think probably most of us did, we learnt as we went', Caroline said. 'We built our solutions and scaled them, country by country, region by region, and joined them up with our approach in North America as well to create a global response.' She listed the three factors that her team keeps in mind when developing new mechanisms and processes: predicting risk, maintaining speed of response, and allowing space for continual evolution.

**Janet Cox, Associate Director of Food Safety & Compliance for HelloFresh International**, represented another subsection of grocery e-commerce: meal kit delivery services, a model that was on the decline in early 2020 but regained popularity during the pandemic. HelloFresh, the market leader, grew enough to require expanding its international FSQA team from three people to 11, including Janet herself.



JANET COX

**ELAINE JIA**  
SENIOR SECURITY OPERATIONS  
EXPERT AT FRESHIPPO

**CAROLINE EASTERBROOK**  
HEAD OF FOOD SAFETY FOR AMAZON  
EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA

**JANET COX**  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF FOOD  
SAFETY & COMPLIANCE FOR  
HELLOFRESH INTERNATIONAL

Like Caroline, Janet noted that one of the major challenges of the pandemic was adapting to meet shifting government requirements in different locations. 'The impact we experienced on food safety across our 14 geographies was really driven by the level of community transmission and the ever-changing local restrictions', she said. 'We were really strict about the requirements that we put in place, and, in fact, the majority of time they were more stringent than some of the countries we work in required.' Some of HelloFresh's requirements included air filtration systems at all locations and paid isolation periods for infected employees.

Erica took the last moments of the session to ask the three presenters what career advice they would give their younger selves — a fitting touch for an all-women plenary taking place during Women's History Month. 'Work hard for a better life', adjured Elaine, while Janet said 'anything is possible if you really want it.' Caroline recommended looking for role models and mentors in one's early career. 'They are wise. Listen to them', she said.



## KEEPING FOOD MOVING: SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTIONS IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

While pandemic-fueled shifts in consumer demand were a boon to some companies, supply chain disruptions impacted every player in the food scene. This session looked at those disruptions from two angles: the first a helicopter view over the UK context, the second from Canada's largest supermarket chain.

The first speaker, **Chris Tyas OBE, Chairperson of GS1 UK**, was uniquely positioned to speak to supply chain disruptions in his home country. In March 2020, the former Nestlé supply chain head was appointed Acting Director of Food Supply by the British government. In this role, he led the Food Resilience Industry Forum, a 'war room' focused on unifying the agrifood supply chain. Early this year, he was awarded an Order of the British Empire for his leadership of this group.

'The creation of the Food Resilience Industry Forum, or FRIF, was a critical part in maintaining food security for the country, because it created true farm-to-fork collaboration', Chris said. 'This is something that we in The Consumer Goods Forum and GS1 have long argued for, but have not seen enough of until now.' Through daily meetings

with about 160 senior operational professionals across retailers, manufacturers, logistics providers and growers, the forum allowed the industry to reach shared decisions on topics such as the standard design of Perspex screens at tills. 'The challenge is how we're able to retain that spirit of collaboration and heads-on problem solving after the pandemic is over', he said.

**Vaneska Mattos, Vice President of Food Safety, Quality Assurance and Regulatory Affairs at Loblaw Companies Ltd.**, then explained how her company likewise leveraged public-private partnerships to maintain a safe food supply. She listed three main factors that led to Loblaw's success in the pandemic: a well-structured crisis management process and crisis management team; strong relationships with industry associations and regulatory authorities; and consistent communication with customers. She also credited the company's data-driven, risk-based and GFSI-enabled vendor management programme with helping the company to focus resources and attention on the highest-risk facilities and products. 'The continuous communication that our vendor partners showed

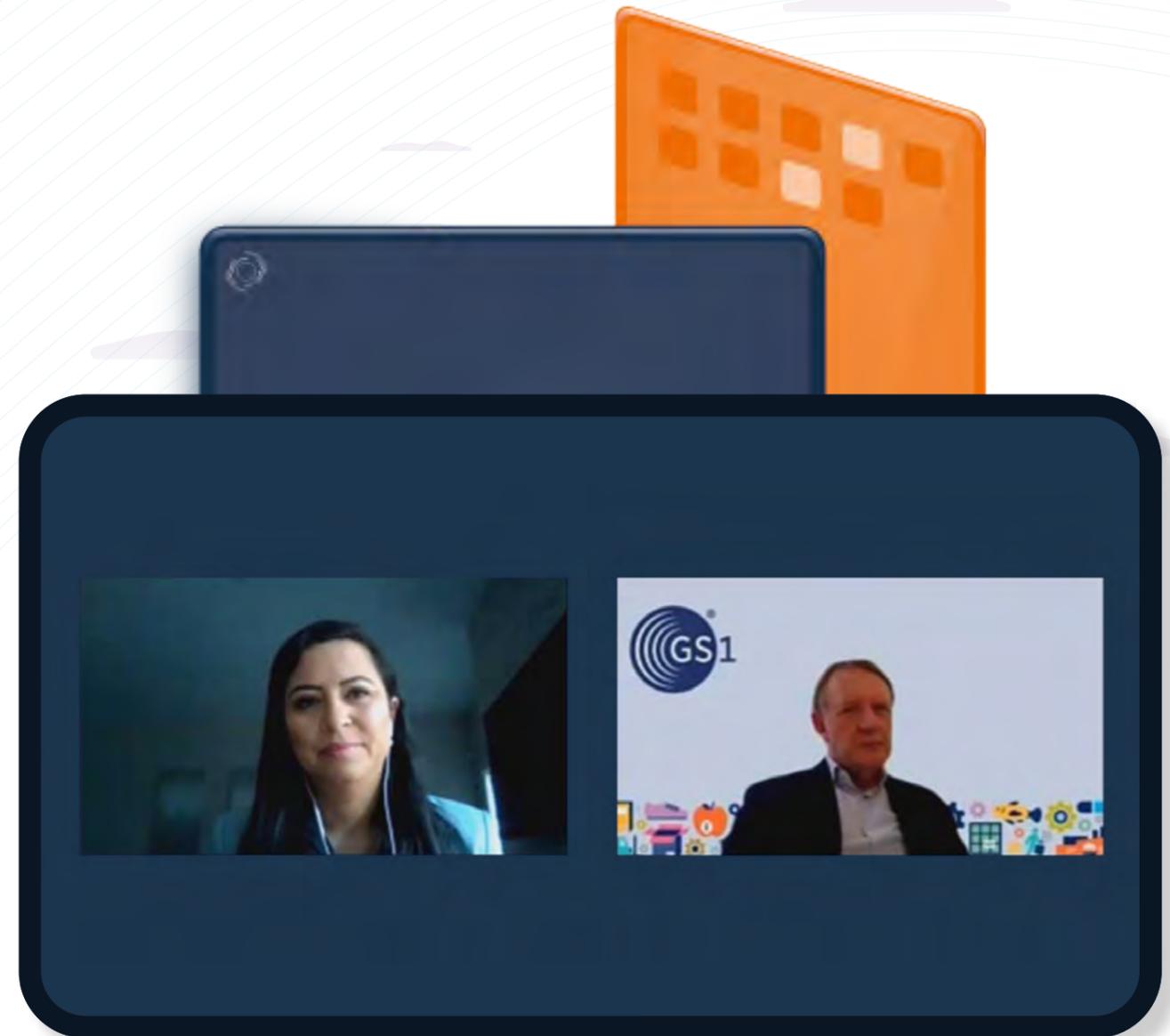
in maintaining the food safety certifications and programmes was indispensable', she said.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Collaboration among businesses and across the public-private divide is key to solving major problems in the food supply chain.
- Data-driven, risk-based vendor management programmes allow companies to focus resources and attention on the highest-risk facilities and products.

### ACTION STEPS

- Open the channels of communication with other businesses in your sector to see how you can collaborate. There is no competition in food safety.
- Connect with your local health authorities, regulators and legislators to understand how you can work together towards safe food.



**VANESKA MATTOS**  
VICE PRESIDENT OF FOOD SAFETY,  
QUALITY ASSURANCE AND  
REGULATORY AFFAIRS AT LOBLAW  
COMPANIES LTD

**CHRIS TYAS OBE**  
CHAIRPERSON OF GS1 UK



## CRISIS COMMUNICATION: FEAR MARKETING AND HOW IT DRIVES CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Combatting misinformation and negative press is a major challenge for the food industry under all circumstances. It became especially critical during the pandemic, as wary consumers cast a suspicious eye on supermarket shelves in an effort to protect their families. In this session, representatives from two of the sectors that were the subject of negative press last year — the meat industry and the frozen food industry — explained how they pursued the truth and stayed focused on safe food.

**Dr Donna Garren, Executive Vice President of Science and Policy at the American Frozen Food Institute (AFFI)**, had to address sheaves of bad press and fake news in 2020, including reports out of China that the coronavirus could persist on frozen food. Her organisation and its member companies had science on their side: authorities and scientists at organisations including the WHO hold that food and food contact services are not major vectors for SARS-CoV-2 and that there is very little possibility of the virus having been imported to China via frozen food.

AFFI relied on three steps for combatting this and other rumours:

monitoring consumer concerns; maintaining allies in academia and public health organisations; and ensuring a consistent message across all its member companies. 'My biggest frustration was the potential to really erode trust, and so that's why we really came out swinging', Donna said. 'We're here to protect our industry, our manufacturers who are working 24-7 to keep us all with food on our tables.'

**DR DONNA GARREN**  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF SCIENCE AND POLICY AT THE AMERICAN FROZEN FOOD INSTITUTE (AFFI)

**DR SCOTT BROOKS**  
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE AT TYSON FOODS

**DR BARBARA VAN RENTERGHEM**  
SESSION MODERATOR  
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR AT FOOD SAFETY MAGAZINE



DR. DONNA GARREN



DR. SCOTT BROOKS

**Dr Scott Brooks, Senior Vice President of Food Safety and Quality Assurance at Tyson Foods**, agreed that staying on top of the science is key to maintaining consumer trust in a crisis and keeping to an ethical 'true north'. As part of his role, Scott receives reports of consumer feedback submitted through Tyson's call-in hotline, social media and other venues. 'It is quite encouraging and it actually warms my heart to know how many consumers out there actually do pay attention to the science and appreciate the efforts of the food industry to keep the world fed during the time of a pandemic crisis', he said.

He also encouraged small companies to join a trade association like AFFI to gain a powerful ally against negative press. Though 'it may seem like an investment to join some of those groups...it can be incredibly valuable to have that industry resource on your side.'



DR BARBARA VAN RENTERGHEM

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Always pursue the truth in your efforts to combat negative press and misinformation.
- Scientists and other authorities can inform your business and serve as allies in times of crisis.

### ACTION STEPS

- Join a trade association that is relevant to your organisation.
- Set up social media, call-in lines and other venues to understand and assuage consumer concerns.



## BUILDING CAPACITY AROUND THE WORLD: THE GLOBAL MARKETS PROGRAMME AT WORK

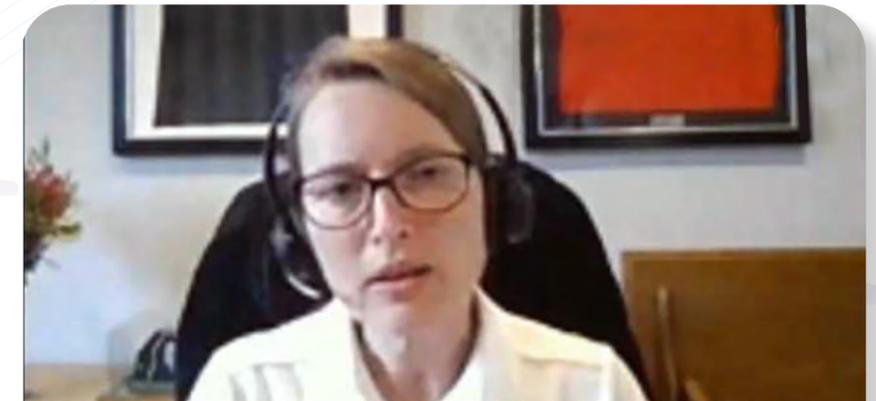


MARTHA BYANYIMA

Established in 2008, the GFSI Global Markets Programme (GMaP) is a capability-building tool designed to support smaller, less-developed food businesses as they work towards full food safety certification. The programme has helped numerous SMEs around the world achieve certification since its inception. With further development, it has the potential to make a widespread impact in emerging markets, as the speakers in this session discussed.

The session began with a premiere of a GFSI Web Series episode featuring past recipients of the Global Markets Awards, a prize that recognises exemplary companies leveraging GMaP. The video took viewers on a journey through some of the colourful landscapes where the programme is in action, including Mexico, Nigeria and Argentina. The Global Markets Awards winners are 'a new generation of food safety leaders standing up and being those ambassadors in their regions', said **Petra Wissenburg, SVP of Global Brands at Greenfence**, in the video.

**Martha Byanyima, Chief of Party of the USDA-Land O'Lakes Venture37 TRASE Project in East Africa**, shared her first-hand experience leveraging the Global Markets Programme in developing markets. She first encountered GMaP through her harmonisation work with the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and continues to use it at Venture37. 'It's a good tool, but there's a lot more that can be done for it to be a more useful tool', she said. She suggested acquiring institutional support for the programme, clarifying its purpose and scaling up training using applicable tools and technology. 'Education is very critical, but the delivery of messages, and taking into account the context of those communities, is most critical and most important', she said.



ABIGAIL STEVENSON

**Abigail Stevenson, Vice President of the Mars Advanced Research Institute**, also has a long history with capability building in developing markets, leading back to her previous role as director of the Mars Global Food Safety Centre. She identified three key building blocks with which to develop capability: a network of interdisciplinary technical experts; mutual areas of interest among partners; and collaborative relationships in which all parties benefit. An example of the latter was a partnership between Mars and the World Food Programme in which Mars helped WFP develop an internal culture of quality within its food supply chain, and in return WFP shared knowledge on local markets. 'You can't put monetary value on the sharing of knowledge, on the building of this kind of operational expertise', Abigail said.

**MARTHA BYANYIMA**  
CHIEF OF PARTY OF THE USDA-LAND O'LAKES VENTURE37 TRASE PROJECT IN EAST AFRICA

**ABIGAIL STEVENSON**  
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE MARS ADVANCED RESEARCH INSTITUTE

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Collaborative relationships in which all partners benefit are often more useful than one-way beneficiary relationships.
- Capability-building and educational projects must be adapted to the unique cultural contexts for which they are intended.

### ACTION STEPS

- Are you or an SME in your food supply chain leveraging the Global Markets Programme? Consider applying for the next Global Markets Awards!



## THE NEW CLASSROOM: DEVELOPING THE NEXT FOOD SAFETY PROFESSIONALS THROUGH VIRTUAL EDUCATION

Like the GFSI Conference, food safety education went virtual to adapt to the pandemic. In this session, two educators who made the shift discussed the benefits and challenges associated with virtual food safety training and predicted the role it will take in the future.

**Wendy White, Industry Manager for Food & Beverage at the Georgia Institute of Technology's Manufacturing Extension Programme,** is used to major shifts. Before moving into academia in 2019, she was the Director of Corporate Food Safety and Quality for Golden State Foods — a transition Erica called 'trading a white coat for a nice suit'. Wendy adapted to the virtual classroom through work-arounds such as smaller class sizes, novel engagement exercises and careful planning. 'I really believe that the advantages of virtual education — convenience, cost effectiveness and increased access to a wide variety of topics and instructors — will really permanently cement its place in continuing professional education', she said.

**Jon Poole, Chief Executive of the Institute of Food Science & Technology (IFST)** agreed that virtual education will have a lasting place in food safety CPD, but cautioned that elements of learning such as hands-on training, testing and networking will be harder to adapt to the online classroom. He envisioned a future for blended learning in food safety education: Core knowledge will be presented online, but students will be able to join physical classrooms in order to develop practical skills. One-on-one mentoring could also continue in the virtual space.

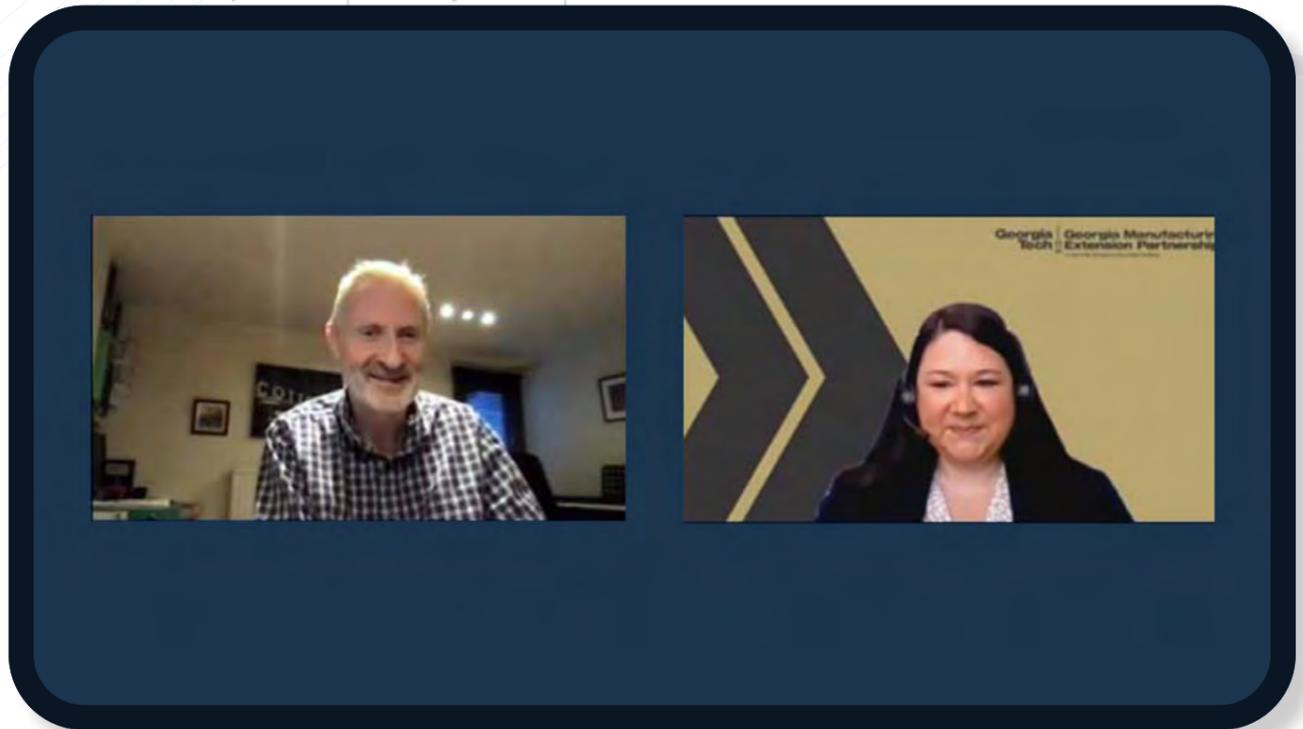
Jon also touched upon the importance of attracting young people to careers in food safety, one of the concerns of GFSI's Race to the Top initiative. 'You can come through university education, direct entry from school, through apprenticeships where they exist, so there's a great number of routes in, and there are also a huge range of opportunities', he said. 'Most young people considering their careers don't realise the range of opportunities that are out there to them.'

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Virtual education is here to stay, especially in continuing professional education.
- Adaptations such as smaller class sizes, novel engagement exercises and one-on-one sessions can improve quality of learning in the virtual classroom.

### ACTION STEPS

- Are you due for a round of CPD? See what professional development opportunities are available at your local universities or online.
- Connect with educational institutions and professional organisations and offer to serve as a mentor for students coming up in the science and technology fields.



**WENDY WHITE**  
INDUSTRY MANAGER FOR FOOD & BEVERAGE AT THE GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY'S MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PROGRAMME

**JON POOLE**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE INSTITUTE OF FOOD SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (IFST)



## DAY 2 COVID-19, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY: A CALL FOR LEADERSHIP AND RESILIENCE

The second day of the conference, like the first, began with a call to action for the food industry on behalf of global public health. Now more than ever, the industry has the responsibility to work in collaboration with the public sector to promote the health and wellbeing of its consumers.

This session's call to action was delivered by **Dr Naoko Yamamoto, Assistant Director-General of Healthier Populations at the World Health Organisation**, who oversees initiatives related to food safety, nutrition, environmental health and other concerns at WHO headquarters in Geneva. 'Unsafe food is simply unacceptable because it is a path to disease, disability and even death', she said. 'Every year, almost one in 10 people around the world, about 600 million, fall ill after eating contaminated food, resulting in more than 400,000 premature deaths.' She added that these numbers could fall short of reality due to poor reporting systems and a lack of accurate data.

To reduce those grim figures, Dr Yamamoto said, stakeholders must adopt three principles: First, food safety is a public health priority and a basic human right; second, food safety is a shared responsibility; and

third, public-private partnerships can lead to new opportunities and innovative solutions for food safety. She listed a number of potential areas for joint effort, including data sharing, training programmes and capacity building.

'The public sector and the private sector have different roles and responsibilities, but they have a common goal for food safety', she said. 'We need to seek more collaborative approaches to be inclusive and innovative when working across sectors to achieve food safety.'

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The public sector and the private sector have different roles and responsibilities, but they have a common goal for food safety.
- Food safety is an issue of equity. There is no such thing as food safety for the rich and food safety for the poor.

### ACTION STEPS

- Consider ways your company can share data to help the food system to become more transparent and collaborative.
- Learn more about One Health, a multisectoral, collaborative approach to designing food safety and other programmes with the goal of improving health outcomes.



**DR NAOKO YAMAMOTO**  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF HEALTHIER POPULATIONS  
AT THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION

**KAZUAKI MIYAGISHIMA**  
SESSION MODERATOR  
ADVISOR, AEON CO., LTD



## DOING THE RIGHT THING: FOOD SAFETY TRUST AND TRANSPARENCY

As part of its Race to the Top initiative, GFSI has developed a code of ethical conduct that is embedded in the newly-crafted GFSI governance rules and which will bind all stakeholders in the food safety ecosystem and help earn consumer trust. In this session, two speakers trained to consider trust from two disparate perspectives discussed this new code and the role of ethics in food safety.

**Helena Leurent, Director General of Consumers International**, discussed trust within the context of consumer rights, informed by her background in marketing and her leadership role in a member organisation comprising over 200 consumer advocacy groups. Consumer rights, she said, are at their core about providing the right information, listening to consumers and giving them agency. These rights must be protected in the e-commerce world as well as offline.

The time is right for GFSI's new Governance Rules; Consumers International's surveys demonstrate that food safety and food security are top issues for consumer advocates around the world. Helena urged that any promises must be backed up by delivery. 'I was always taught that

trust equals competence, multiplied by repeat performance, multiplied by delivery, divided by your self-interest', she said. 'It's keeping things simple for the consumer, but keeping them informed in relevant ways, showing that you're delivering on your promises.'



HELENA LEURENT

**HELENA LEURENT**  
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF CONSUMERS INTERNATIONAL

**PROF CHRISTOPHER HODGES OBE**  
PROFESSOR OF JUSTICE SYSTEMS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD



PROF CHRISTOPHER HODGES

**Prof Christopher Hodges OBE, Professor of Justice Systems at the University of Oxford**, who has a side pursuit writing ethical codes of conduct for industries, approached the concept of trust from an academic point of view. 'If you spend some time, as I have, reading long philosophical treatises on what is trust, you come out, actually, with fairly simple propositions that one needs to ... do the right thing' in order to be trustworthy, he said, positing that trust derives from a genetic mutation that allowed our ancestors to develop into a social species. A code of ethical conduct can help to ensure that trust and serve as 'an internal reminder or conscience' for a company.

Transparency is a key step towards building trust, which involves not only releasing data but ensuring that it is relevant, reliable, properly-audited and clearly presented through intermediaries. Sharing this information 'demonstrates what your values are', he said, while 'the outcome demonstrates that you can be trusted.'

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Trust equals competence, multiplied by repeat performance, multiplied by delivery, divided by your self-interest.
- An ethical code of conduct can function as a company's conscience.

### ACTION STEPS

- If you don't already have one, consider drafting a code of ethical conduct for your own organisation.
- View GFSI's new Governance Rules and understand how they apply to you.



## READY FOR ANYTHING: HOW RESILIENCY AND TECHNOLOGY WILL BUILD CONSUMER TRUST AND HELP US MITIGATE DISRUPTION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated that in today's food and beverage industry, crises can come in many forms. Companies must be ready not only to mitigate disruptions but to communicate these strategies with consumers. In this session, three industry experts, including two multinational CEOs, discussed how they responded to the Covid-19 pandemic and how they used the experience to become better prepared for anything that may come next.

**Christophe Beck, President & CEO of Ecolab**, was uniquely positioned to respond to the pandemic; his company is a major global provider of cleaning and hygiene solutions for the food industry and others. 'Infection prevention is what we do for a living, so we had to be here for our customers', he said.

Christophe listed three key capabilities that Ecolab uses to remain resilient against disruptions. First, they surveil and predict emerging risks, leveraging their global network of 24,000 field experts in 172 countries to do so. Second, they help their customers respond to disruptions by connecting them with organisations including the CDC, the



FDA, and 1,200 scientists worldwide. Third, they provide real-time control capabilities through cloud-enabled, digital monitoring systems. 'The more data we gather, the more crises we go through, the more we learn, and the more we're prepared as well to help our customers address those challenges that are coming up', he said.

The next speaker — **Natasa Matyasova, Head of Quality Management at Nestlé S.A.** — counts herself among Ecolab's customers. A network of experts and suppliers like Ecolab was one of the keys to managing supply chain disruptions at Nestlé during the pandemic, she said. Another key was identifying

clear priorities at the highest level so that employees could be empowered to take appropriate decisions locally. Success is enabled by 'global rules, global strategy, and local execution with empowered and trusted people', she said. 'Nobody can manage, as a global company, the crisis only from the centre.'

She also agreed that the pandemic had accelerated supply chain digitisation, with promising results. Rather than flying in experts to plants that encounter issues, Nestlé can now visit sites via smart glasses and virtual reality. 'We feel we are in the plant, we feel we are with the people, we see exactly the problem, we help solve it on the site without any delay', she said.

For his part, **David MacLennan, Chairman and CEO of Cargill**, said he was astounded by the current pace of digitisation and technology adoption. When Cargill's 80,000 office workers began working at home, 'I thought our IT systems would crash, and they didn't', he said, adding that he had never used Zoom before last year.

'Agriculture has been a little slower as an industry to adopt technology, but the pace of change and the pace of disruption in agriculture and food production is increasing very, very rapidly', he said. He listed three areas in which technology is causing a sea change in the industry. First, it can be used to improve traceability and ensure consumers can trust the safety and sustainability of their products. Second, it can scale up training, as Cargill did when it provided a training session to 300,000 dairy farmers in China simultaneously. Finally, he noted great potential for the application of artificial intelligence. His example — a facial recognition software Cargill uses to monitor cows' health — prompted impressed chatter in the chat box.

'When it comes to food, we've got to use more technology to get it to where it's needed, to where it can be

most productive and to where people can see where their food is coming from', he said.

**CHRISTOPHE BECK**  
PRESIDENT & CEO OF ECOLAB

**NATASA MATYASOVA**  
HEAD OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT AT NESTLÉ S.A.

**DAVID MACLENNAN**  
CHAIRMAN AND CEO OF CARGILL

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Nobody can manage a crisis only from the centre. Employees must be empowered to make decisions at the local level.
- The pandemic has accelerated supply chain digitisation, but there is still room for growth.

### ACTION STEPS

- Consider steps in your supply chain that digital tools can make safer and more efficient.
- Take stock of the adaptations you made to adapt to the pandemic. Determine which are stopgaps and which should be carried into the future.



## THE FRONTIER OF FOOD SAFETY: NEW SCIENCE, DISCOVERIES AND INNOVATIONS

This session brought together two sides of the world of food science — an ‘established name’ and ‘a new kid on the block’, as moderator and journalist Tom Heap put it. Together with a GFSI insider, they discussed the cross-sector collaboration required to facilitate innovation and safely bring novel foods to market.

The established name was **David Crean, Vice President of Corporate R&D and Outgoing Chief Science Officer of Mars, Incorporated**, who has developed several novel analytical techniques, research platforms, and business and product innovations during his 35-year career. Though much has changed since he first entered the food industry, food safety hazards have remained largely the same. What is changing is the way the industry mitigates these hazards. ‘Digitalisation is having a profound effect on how we think about food safety and how we implement food safety, and actually getting us to the point where we can see genuine transformational change just around the corner’, he said.

However, there is a discrepancy between how safe food is and how safe consumers perceive it to be. The industry also falls short of the

sustainability commitments that consumers increasingly demand. ‘As they say when you’re going on the train, watch the gap’, David warned. ‘We’ve got to be very careful about this trust gap between the food industry, food businesses and consumers.’

The ‘new kid on the block’, **Yuan Cheng, Founding Director of Shrimply Blue**, offered one way to bridge the sustainability gap. His startup, which is developing a dog treat made from Lake Tahoe’s invasive mysis shrimp, aims to become a new kind of consumer-funded nonprofit. ‘We’re nonprofit because we’re focused primarily on environmental restoration, but it comes full circle’, he said. ‘We work to reduce the invasive mysis to create a dog treat, use the dog treat to engage consumers, and then the profits from those treat sales go right back to supporting scientific research, which can improve the lake.’

In developing his product, however, Yuan has encountered roadblocks from both food safety and environmental regulations. His team is tasked with convincing both sets of regulators ‘how is this a win-win for everybody involved.’

**Anne Gerardi, Senior Project Manager at GFSI**, works to help businesses and regulators get past roadblocks like those facing Shrimply Blue. She serves as a mediator between sectors, looking for areas of mutual interest among all parties through public-private partnerships, capability building programmes and other efforts. Public-private collaboration ‘is going to be even more important and decisive for the future, because transformational products are going to be there to help answer challenges and to help us attain the SDGs in the next few years’, she said. ‘We need to all play the music at the same rhythm...and see more eye-to-eye together.’

David agreed, and added that collaboration and data-sharing within the private sector are also key to success for all parties involved. ‘The rising tide really does float all boats’, he said. ‘How can we make sure that people can access the essential information? How can we share that appropriately so that we raise the level for everybody?’



### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- When it comes to food safety, the tide raises or lowers all boats. The industry must work together to ensure the success of all.
- Novelty is vital to the food industry, but innovation must be accompanied by an understanding of safety requirements and regulatory hurdles.

### ACTION STEPS

- Learn more about GFSI’s public-private partnerships and how your business can get involved.
- Stay up to date on novel developments in food science and technology. The latest invention may be right for your business.

**DAVID CREAN**  
VICE PRESIDENT OF CORPORATE R&D AND OUTGOING CHIEF SCIENCE OFFICER OF MARS, INC.

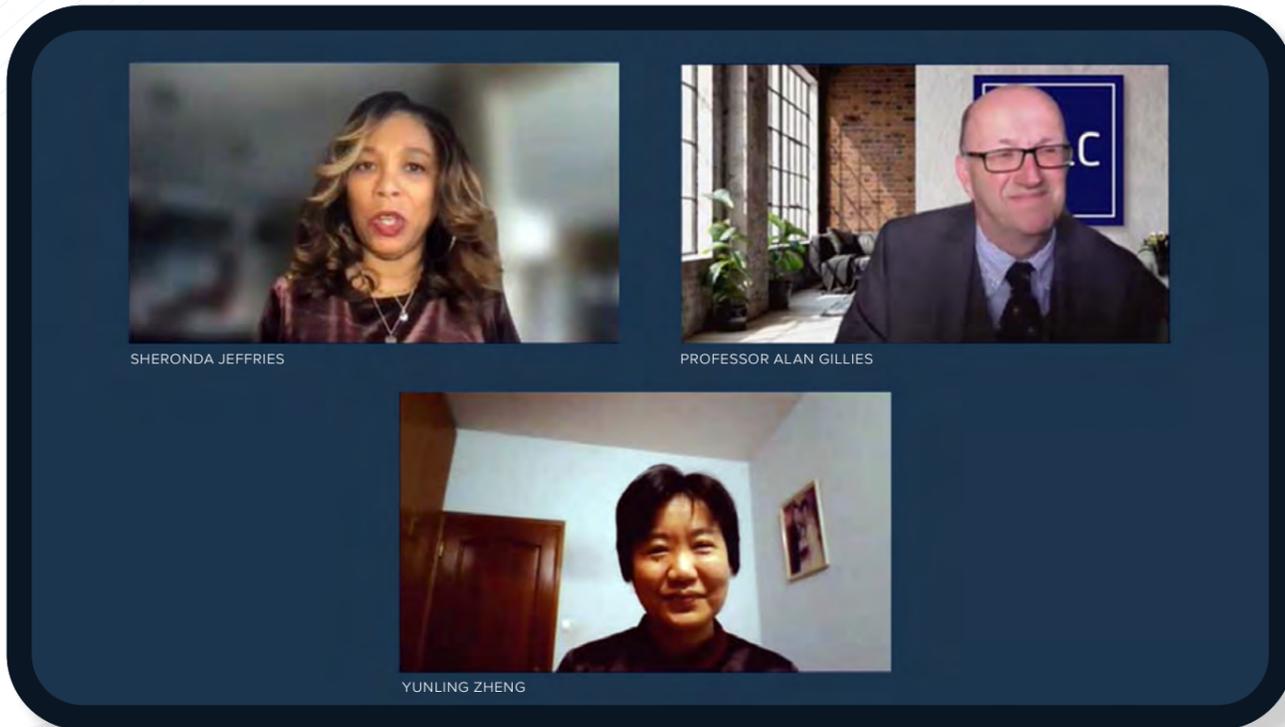
**YUAN CHENG**  
FOUNDING DIRECTOR OF SHRIMPLY BLUE

**ANNE GERARDI**  
SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER AT GFSI

**TOM HEAP**  
SESSION MODERATOR  
FREELANCE BROADCASTER & JOURNALIST  
BBC



## AUDITING TOMORROW: HOW TECHNOLOGY IS TRANSFORMING THE FOOD SAFETY AUDIT



SHERONDA JEFFRIES

PROFESSOR ALAN GILLIES

YUNLING ZHENG

**SHERONDA JEFFRIES**

IAF DIRECTOR REPRESENTING USERS AND INDUSTRY AT TIA QUEST FORUM

**YUNLING ZHENG**

PROCESS STANDARDISATION LEAD AND PROJECT MANAGER FOR CARGILL AT THE CHINA FOOD SAFETY AND TECHNOLOGY CENTRE

**PROFESSOR ALAN GILLIES**

MANAGING DIRECTOR AT AGLC LTD.

Food safety audits are among the many operations that went remote to prevent the spread of Covid-19 last year. Moderated by **Sheronda Jeffries, Technical Leader at Cisco Systems** and a champion of ICT in auditing and assessment, this session took stock of a year of experiments and considered whether video streaming, real-time monitoring and other innovations could augment or even replace the day-to-day work of auditors.

**Yunling Zheng, Process Standardisation Lead and Project Manager for Cargill at the China Food Safety and Technology Centre**, first explained one experiment that her team carried out to test the efficacy of remote audits. A Cargill auditor in China went to a supplier site and carried out a virtual audit from the site's meeting room, then left the room to verify those results in person. Between the two audits, she said, 'the audit purpose is the same: The purpose is trust, but verify.'

Yunling noted that the process behind in-person and video-facilitated audits is essentially the same, just as an in-person interview is no different than one that takes place in a Zoom meeting. The industry will truly evolve when it discovers ways to adapt remote auditing beyond an imitation of in-person audits. 'The industry is learning. The industry is improving', she said.

**Professor Alan Gillies, Managing Director at AGLC Ltd.**, then shared some of the work that he has done to understand and quantify experiments like Yunling's through his role as Chair of the GFSI Working Group on the Use of Information and Communication Technologies in Food Safety Auditing. GFSI convened the group to answer a simple question: Is there valid scientific evidence to show that video-facilitated remote audits can deliver the same level of assurance as a site visit? 'The simple answer to that question, having been through a fairly rigorous search exercise, is no', he said.

However, the group saw promise in the innovative practices that companies had put in place through their remote auditing experiments. 'Video-facilitated remote audits are very much at the start of the journey of the use of technology for food safety. We're very much at the beginning of that journey, and some of those interesting things we found were where that might lead.' One promising development is the rise of real-time monitoring technology, which allows companies to move beyond the snapshot model that is inevitably part of traditional auditing.

In response to some agitation in the chat box, he clarified that he did not predict these technologies would replace the human auditor. 'The purpose of technology is to help people do their job better, more efficiently, but I also think it makes

their job more interesting', he said. 'We can actually increase the job satisfaction of auditors, give them a more interesting job to do, by taking some of the more mundane activities out of the role. That can be done by technology...and the more intellectually challenging parts can be given to human beings.'

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Video-facilitated audits are not a replacement for site visits, but remote auditing technology has the potential to improve the accuracy and efficiency of human auditors.
- Continuous monitoring technology can help companies move beyond the 'snapshot view' that is inevitably involved in traditional audits.

### ACTION STEPS

- Consider ways to use remote auditing and continuous monitoring technology to supplement your auditing process.
- Try replicating Yunling's experiment: Conduct a remote audit, then verify the results with a site visit.



## THE RISING STARS OF FOOD: INTRODUCING THE TECHSTARS FARM TO FORK ACCELERATOR

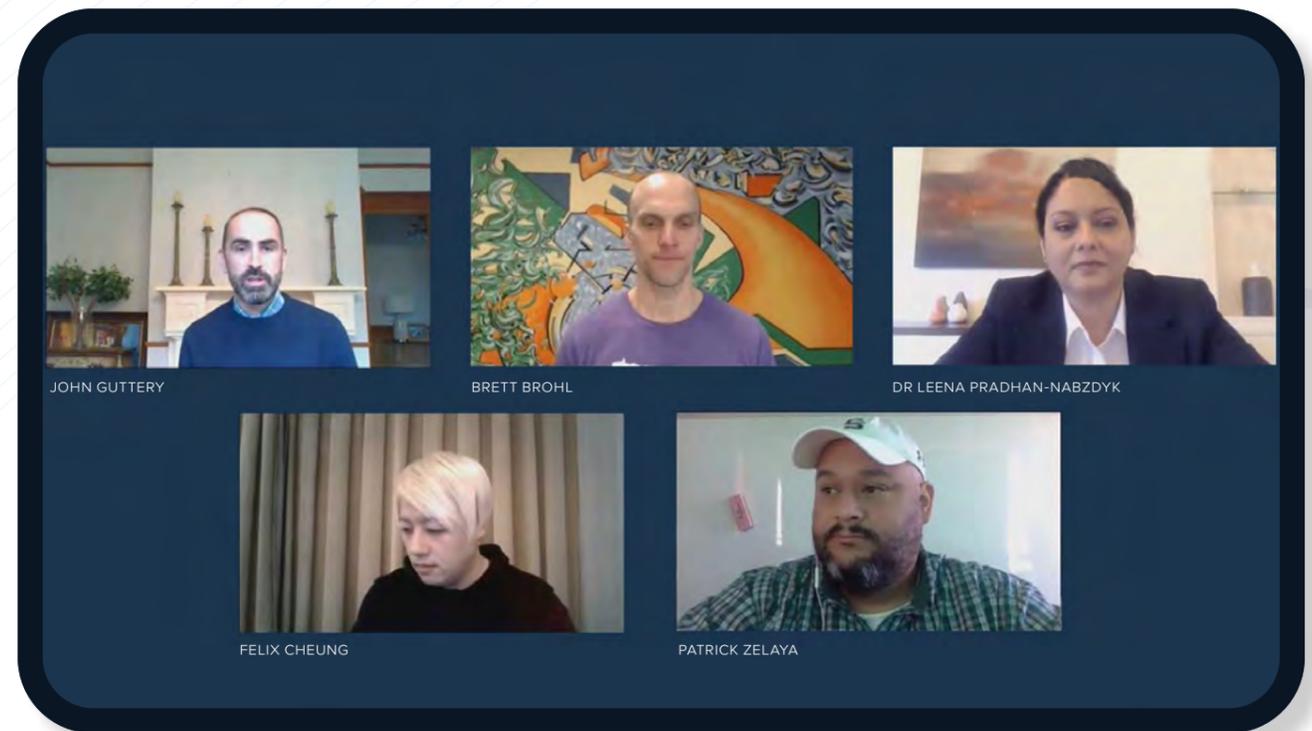
The theme of innovation continued into this session, which introduced a batch of emerging entrepreneurs poised to disrupt the way work is done in the agrifood system. The three founders were alumni of the Techstars Farm to Fork Accelerator, a mentorship-driven programme that connects startups with large enterprises that can leverage their innovations. Moderated by **John Guttery, Senior Vice President of Enterprise Initiatives at Ecolab**, the session dared delegates to consider ways to use self-disruption to their advantage.

**Brett Brohl, Managing Director of the Farm to Fork Accelerator**, opened the session with an introduction to the programme and its philosophy. The programme is sponsored by Cargill and Ecolab, which provide 40 mentors for the participants from their network of senior leaders and subject matter experts. This mentorship flows both ways; 'Founders can really provide a tremendous amount of expertise to big enterprises on how to innovate, how to go fast, how to think different, how to think about what the world looks like in 10 years, not just what it looks like next quarter', Brett said.

The alumni joining him were **Dr. Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk, CEO and cofounder of Canomiks Inc.**, a B2B company that uses a genomics and AI-based platform to verify the efficacy of ingredients in functional food, supplements and skin care; **Patrick Zelaya, CEO and founder of HeavyConnect**, a mobile platform for all-in-one compliance, including first-mile food safety compliance; and **Felix Cheung, CEO and founder of IXON**, which has created a sous vide-based sterilisation method that keeps meat shelf stable for up to two years. (Brett said Felix mailed him pork chops packaged this way from Hong Kong to Minnesota; he cooked them and declared them delicious.)

The founders shared their positive experiences with the accelerator, placing an emphasis on the benefits of one-on-one corporate mentorship. 'We went through another accelerator programme...and it's just really night and day, the amount of attention that we got and the access that we got, the quality of the mentor network', said Patrick. 'I would recommend the Techstars Farm to Fork programme to any entrepreneur in the ag tech space that's looking for that kind of global expansion opportunity.'

John, representing the corporations that partner with Techstars' entrepreneurs, expressed similar satisfaction with the programme. Ecolab 'is extremely pleased with the investment we've made', he said. 'What we've gotten back, it's beyond any dreams we would have had in terms of payback. This is making us a better company, this is helping us make our customers better, and ultimately helping them improve the experience for their customers, which makes us increasingly valuable to them as a provider.'



- JOHN GUTTERY**  
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF ENTERPRISE INITIATIVES AT ECOLAB
- BRETT BROHL**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE FARM TO FORK ACCELERATOR
- DR LEENA PRADHAN-NABZDYK**  
CEO AND COFOUNDER OF CANOMIKS INC.
- PATRICK ZELAYA**  
CEO AND FOUNDER OF HEAVYCONNECT
- FELIX CHEUNG**  
CEO AND FOUNDER OF IXON

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Startups can help large companies learn how to innovate, how to think differently and how to prepare for the future.
- The most successful companies believe deeply in innovation.

### ACTION STEPS

- Don't be afraid of disruptors: Look into startups working to change your sector and see how you can collaborate.
- If you or a company in your supply chain is a startup making a difference in food or ag tech, consider applying for Techstars Farm to Fork or another accelerator.



## FOOD SAFETY AND BEYOND: GAME-CHANGING INITIATIVES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The penultimate plenary shifted focus to the intersection of food safety and food waste — two concerns that are more intertwined than they may first appear. The speakers, both of whom work at the confluence of food safety and food waste, shared ways to reduce food waste without compromising food safety. The differences between their approaches highlighted the importance of tailoring solutions to specific regulatory and cultural contexts.

**Toine Timmermans, Managing Director of Food Waste Free United**, a Dutch public-private partnership, approached food waste within a European milieu, where both consumers and governments have agreed on the importance of the issue. Over the course of six years, Food Waste Free United successfully reduced food waste in the Netherlands from 48 kilograms per person annually to 34 kilograms through efforts including advertising campaigns and commitments from retailers and other companies.

Toine's next priority is to increase the circularity of the food supply by converting food waste into animal feed. Though this occurs in other

countries, outbreaks of bovine spongiform encephalopathy and other animal diseases prompted the EU to outlaw any products of animal origin in feed. This is unnecessary and unsustainable, Toine argued. If Europe could convert all of its food waste into feed, thereby removing the need to import soy and other feed ingredients, 'you can instantly reduce the footprint of animal meat production with 60 percent', he said.

Another initiative of Food Waste Free United — and another cause of conflict with regulators — involves smart labels which list the accurate shelf life of a product. Retailers have been hesitant to test these labels because they go against food legislation to prevent consumer confusion. 'That is something that Europe is stuck in', Toine said. 'Millions of euros have been spent in innovation and research, but it never gets to application...That's a challenge for many of the legislators at the moment.'

**Tony Heredia, Senior Vice President of Compliance & Ethics at Target**, discussed the ways he has worked to reduce food waste within his food safety and quality assurance responsibilities. 'The pieces of the

value chain in which we can really focus on prevention of food waste happen to correspond with the same places that we can implement safety and quality standards', he said.

To reduce waste, Target puts detailed measures in place to ensure compliance at every stage in the value chain, from the vendor to transportation to the distribution centre and finally the store. At that point, the company empowers local managers to create promotions to push products that might otherwise be wasted. Food that ultimately remains unsold can be donated to food banks — important institutions in the United States, which lacks a uniform social safety net, Tony said.

'We could all easily stick to our food safety roles and make sure that things met all the high quality standards, but to take it beyond that and ask ourselves how we maximise community benefit — in this case, that was the number one solution for us', he said. 'How do we divert what might become food waste to people who need it, while it is still very, very edible?'



**TOINE TIMMERMANS**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF FOOD WASTE FREE UNITED

**TONY HEREDIA**  
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF COMPLIANCE & ETHICS AT TARGET

**TOM HEAP**  
SESSION MODERATOR  
FREELANCE BROADCASTER & JOURNALIST AT BBC

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Food safety is intrinsically connected to food waste and other sustainability concerns, and initiatives to improve sustainability and safety must not be siloed.
- Without the cooperation of regulators and legislators, the most innovative ideas may go nowhere.

### ACTION STEPS

- Look for places across your entire value chain where you can reduce waste by improving quality.
- 40-50 percent of food waste takes place in the home. Where can you cut down in your own kitchen?



## AGELESS: THE NEW SCIENCE OF GETTING OLDER WITHOUT GETTING OLD

The final keynote of the GFSI conference traditionally serves as an opportunity for experts with a finger on the pulse of emerging trends to share an optimistic glimpse of the future. There could be few talks more optimistic than this inspirational keynote, which introduced a class of drugs that aims to end ageing and potentially increase the human lifespan tenfold.

In 20 jam-packed minutes, **author and scientist Andrew Steele** shared a synopsis of his book, 'Ageless: The New Science of Getting Older Without Getting Old'. 'The thesis of my book is that ageing is the single largest humanitarian challenge of our time', he said. 'That might be a depressing thesis, apart from the fact that we now have this exciting phase in the history of biology, where we're developing entirely new treatments that can potentially slow down or even reverse the ageing process.'

Andrew explained that some animal species, such as hydras, tortoises and naked mole rats, are negligibly senescent; that is, they do not grow frailer or lose reproductive activity as they age, and their likelihood of dying does not increase with age (up to a certain point).

If humans could take cues from these animals and become less senescent, we could eradicate age-related diseases such as stroke, dementia, glaucoma and many others.

Ageing biologists are currently researching a class of drugs called senolytics that may be able to make humans a bit more like tortoises. One class of molecules already under drug trials removes senescent cells — cells that have aged beyond the ability to divide. Mice given these drugs live longer and develop less cancer and other diseases, and they could have the same effects in humans.

Until senolytic drugs are widely available, Andrew recommended the usual: 'trying to maintain a healthy weight, doing some exercise, not smoking...All basically slow down your ageing, because they have this global effect on all those different age related diseases.'

In her closing remarks, Erica recommended that delegates take the above advice so that everyone could stick around a bit longer. 'In the food science community, we have an awful lot to do to make things better together', she said.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Senolytics are an emerging class of drugs that may be able to eradicate diseases and other symptoms associated with old age.
- Exercise and a healthy diet will remain key to staying well in old age until senolytics arrive on the market.

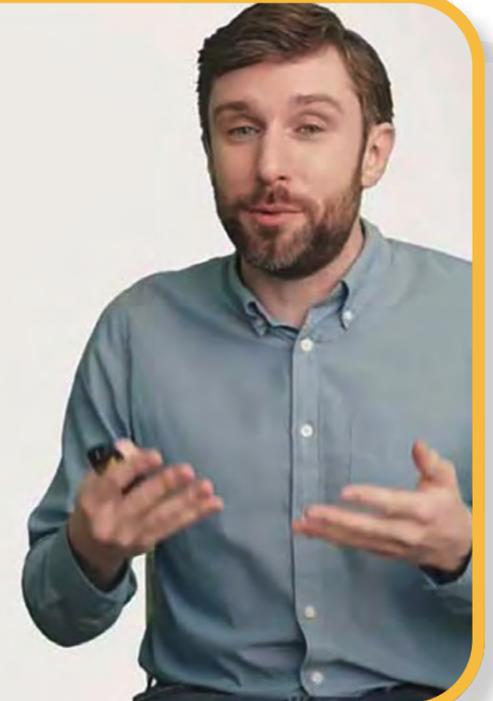
### ACTION STEPS

- If you would like to learn more about senolytics, look for 'Ageless: The New Science of Getting Older Without Getting Old' at your local bookseller or online from Bloomsbury Publishing.

## Galápagos tortoise



**Lifespan: 177 years**



### ANDREW STEELE

SCIENTIST AND AUTHOR OF 'AGELESS: THE NEW SCIENCE OF GETTING OLDER WITHOUT GETTING OLD'



## DAY 3: Ask GFSI

The final day of the 2021 GFSI Conference featured a new kind of programming: the Ask GFSI Sessions. Held on Zoom, these open, audience-led conversations offered delegates an opportunity to connect with GFSI leadership, learn about the organisation's current projects and discover how they can get involved.

The first Ask GFSI session, **All About Asia**, was geared specifically towards Asia-based delegates, but also served as a useful introduction to the Asia-Pacific's food safety context. Yang Ying Xu, General Manager & Chief Representative of CGF China and GFSI China, shared insights from her experience leading food safety efforts on the ground, while GFSI Director Erica Sheward, CGF Senior Technical Manager Marie-Claude Quentin and GFSI Senior Project Manager Anne Gerardi were on hand to answer questions about GFSI's ongoing projects in the region.

The session on **The Race to the Top**—a collaborative enhancement of the oversight of the GFSI ecosystem with the aim of improving trust, transparency and confidence in GFSI-recognised certification and audit outcomes—was especially popular. Delegates had many questions

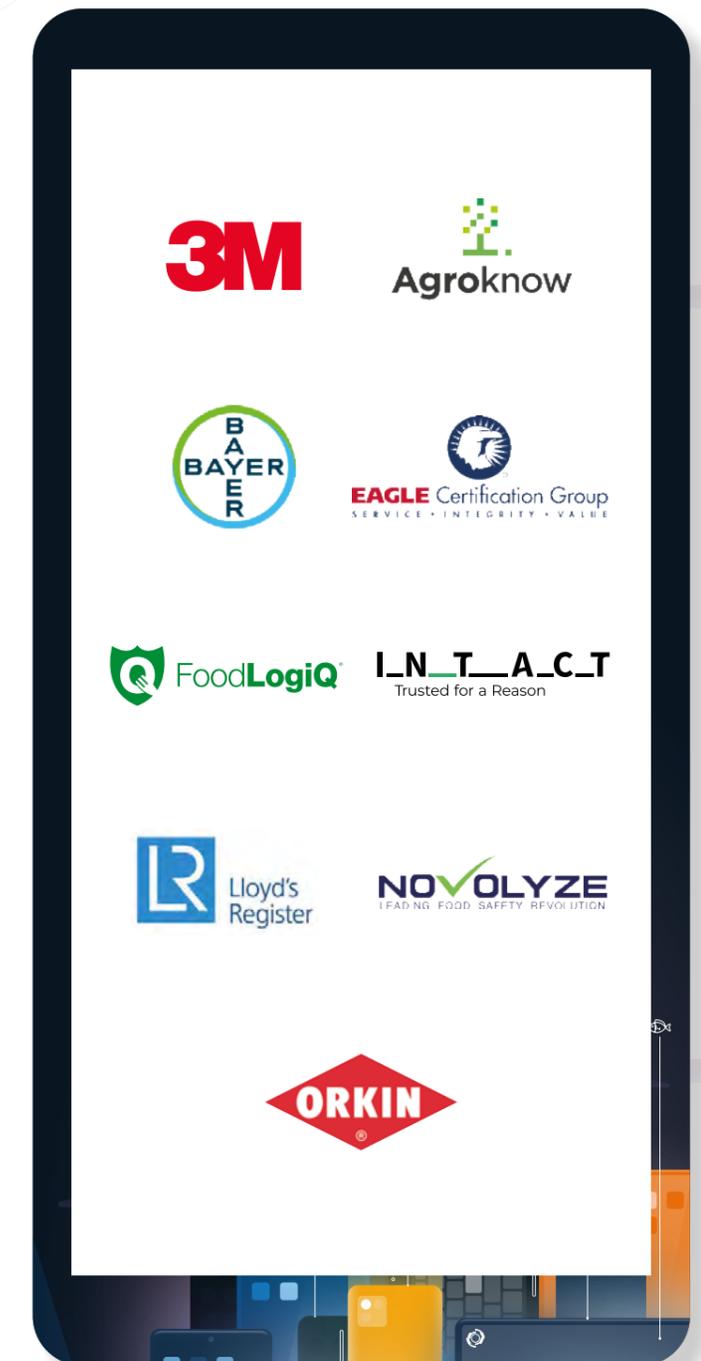
about the philosophy behind the framework and the suite of initiatives that it consists of. Erica, Marie-Claude and longtime GFSI collaborators Sara Mortimore (Walmart), Roy Kirby (Mondelēz International) and Gillian Kelleher (Wegmans) helped to flesh out the framework and explain how it has already begun to change the way companies work together to keep food safe.

The session on **The Global Markets Strategic Review** addressed the work GFSI is undertaking to rethink the Global Markets Programme, a capability tool first released in 2008 that supports small or less developed companies as they work towards full certification. As mentioned in previous plenaries, GMaP has the potential to help achieve SDGs and make a lasting impact in the safety of the global food supply, but must be further developed before it can do so. Cindy Jiang (McDonald's) and Howard Popoola (The Kroger Co.), both of whom have leveraged the programme with their own suppliers, discussed the GMaP stakeholder consultation then underway and expressed their hopes for what the programme will become.

The final Ask GFSI Session discussed **G2B and Public-Private Partnerships**, areas in which GFSI has a unique advantage. Since 2016, GFSI's Government-to-Business meetings have brought together hundreds of representatives from leading businesses, regulatory bodies, NGOs and IGOs to discuss food safety challenges and areas of mutual interest. As part of the Race to the Top, GFSI is working to strengthen the bonds forged by this and other cross-sector work. Erica, Anne and Monique Pellegrino (Danone), a previous G2B meeting attendee, answered questions about the outcomes of these meetings and their potential to help achieve the SDGs.

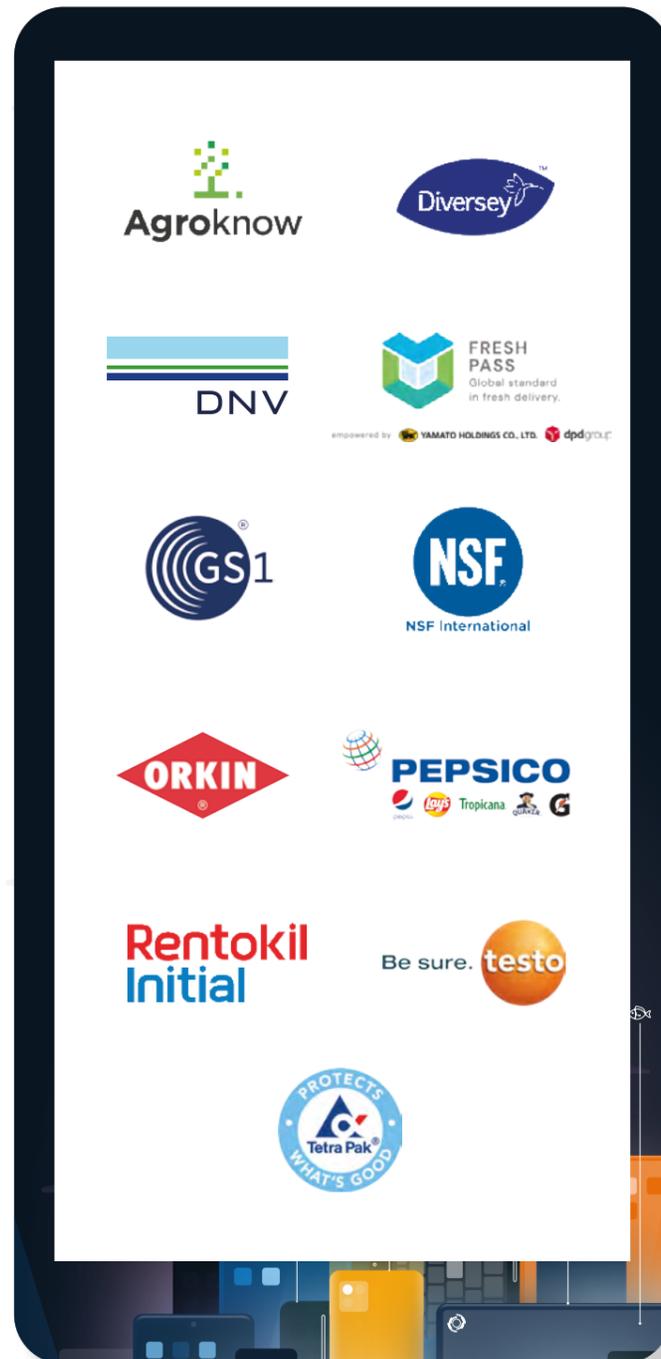
## Tech Talks

The final day of the conference also featured nine Tech Talks — brief, tightly-focused presentations that introduce the cutting edge of food safety technology. Traditionally held on a small stage in the GFSI Village, this year's Tech Talks took place on Zoom between the Ask GFSI Sessions, allowing for a larger audience and easy delegate participation. Tech experts shared food safety applications for Big Data, artificial intelligence, digitisation and more, and discussed how the pandemic has accelerated the adoption of these technologies.



## Special Sessions

The 2021 programme included 11 Special Sessions hosted by businesses leading the charge in food safety. Topics included some of the most pressing food safety challenges facing the industry today, including chemical hazards, pest management, new traceability regulations and more. Held on Zoom, these inter-plenary sessions allowed for open conversation among speakers and delegates, who came away with concrete solutions and the connections needed to make them happen.



## Virtual GFSI Village

The exhibition areas of the GFSI Conference are known for their vibrancy and community atmosphere — hence the sobriquet ‘GFSI Village’. This year’s virtual exhibition retained all of the energy that the village is known for. The purpose-built venue included four 3D exhibition halls, where delegates (in avatar form) could explore, visit booths sponsored by leading food safety companies, take webcam photos in a dedicated ‘selfie booth’ and even network with peers at microphone-enabled seating areas and camera-enabled meeting rooms. The exhibition also hosted a quiz competition, which challenged delegates to answer questions about the facts on display at the various booths. Five top entrants won complimentary passes to the 2022 GFSI Conference, which is projected to be held in person and promises to maintain the event’s reputation as the world’s biggest conversation around food safety.



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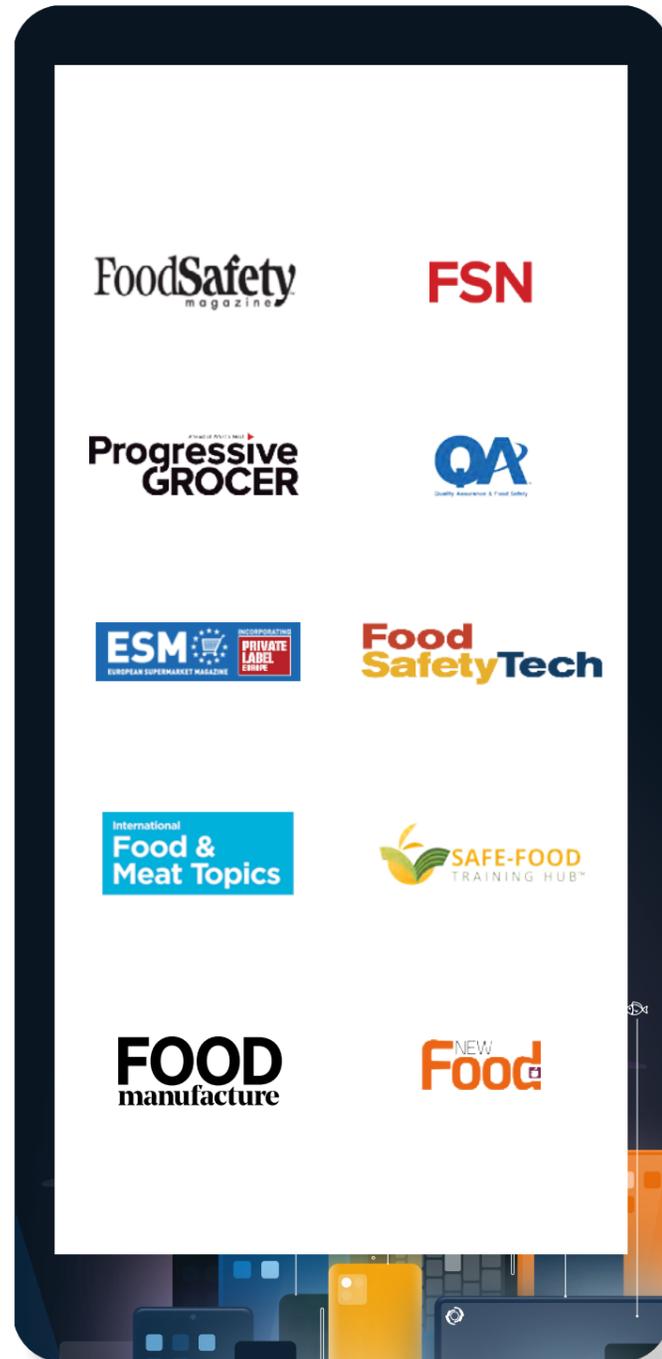




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