

Executive Summary

GFSI Annual Conference

24th-27th
APRIL 2023

ATLANTA
USA

conference.mygfsi.com #gfsi23



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Introduction

The Power Of Change

Now more than ever, we who are responsible for the safety of the world's food face change. Confronted by turmoil from supply chain disruption, climate shocks, and a shrinking food safety workforce, we must work even more effectively to safeguard our fellow citizens. For the food safety community, swift action and new approaches are needed to tackle these 21st century challenges.

More than 700 food safety experts from 50 countries at the 2023 GFSI Conference agree. They convened in Atlanta on 24th-27th April 2023 at the 23rd annual event, which had the theme "Delivering Safe Food in Turbulent Times: The Need for Agility and Resilience". Their objective was to seek out, share and get answers to problems common among those striving to ensure safe food for everybody. They heard from a jam-packed speaker line-up that brought together top experts from industry, regulatory bodies, intergovernmental organisations and academia.



GFSI doubled down this year on its commitment to more technical content, highlighting science-based decision-making, in an exposition by food safety “rock star” Dr. Julian Cox of the University of New South Wales. Nineteen breakout sessions spanned capability building, benchmarking and harmonisation, as well as public-private partnerships. The 2023 programme provided five times as many sessions as last year.

Public-private partnerships and capability building took centre stage this year. A new framework announced by GFSI and USAID will support small food business operators in Africa and other emerging markets to help them shoulder their vital role in re-

ducing hunger, poverty and disease. In a partnership underpinned by a [Memorandum of Understanding](#), USAID will work with GFSI to build capabilities that will help transform supply chains and budding food businesses — which are often women-owned firms. The new Global Markets Programme capability-building effort unveiled at the conference will buttress that work along global supply chains.

Benchmarking and harmonisation sessions gave updates on Race to the Top Feature 2 as well as Technical Equivalence. Attendees learned as well about what’s hot in food safety research from the GFSI Science and Technology Advisory Group.

After thought provoking keynotes, panels, TechTalks and sponsored special sessions, the GFSI community returned home recharged and relentlessly determined to fulfil the GFSI purpose and mission to ensure safe food for people everywhere. Results will flow into the next GFSI conference on 8-11 April 2024 in Singapore.

Erica Sheward
GFSI Director



GFSI in Numbers

700
Delegates

40
Countries

37
Sponsors,
Partners &
Exhibitors

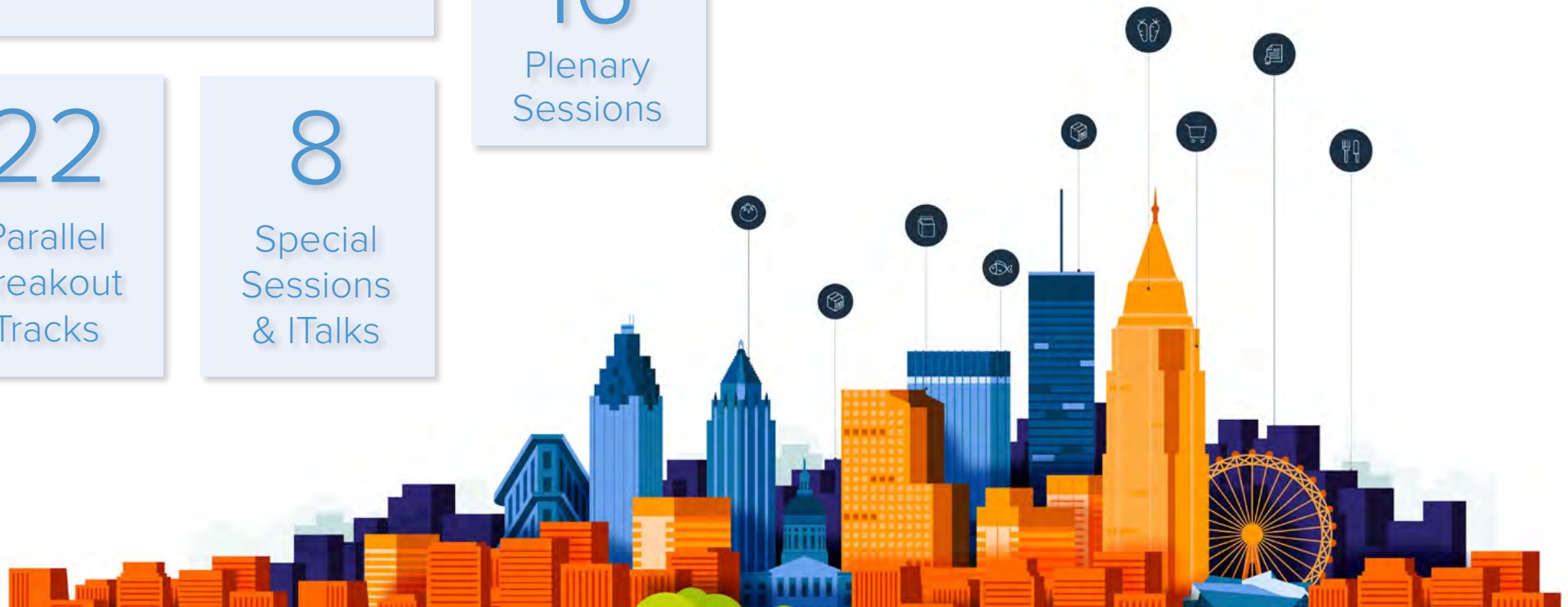
16
Plenary
Sessions

See the GFSI Conference
2023 photo gallery



22
Parallel
Breakout
Tracks

8
Special
Sessions
& ITalks





Day 1

April 25th



TOPLINE TAKEAWAYS

GFSI and CGF: planning mode completed; focus turns to implementation in the years ahead.

Food safety outcomes for companies go well beyond the bottom line.

Leaders must adapt to food safety threats such as supply chain woes, skyrocketing prices, labour and energy crunches, and climate change.

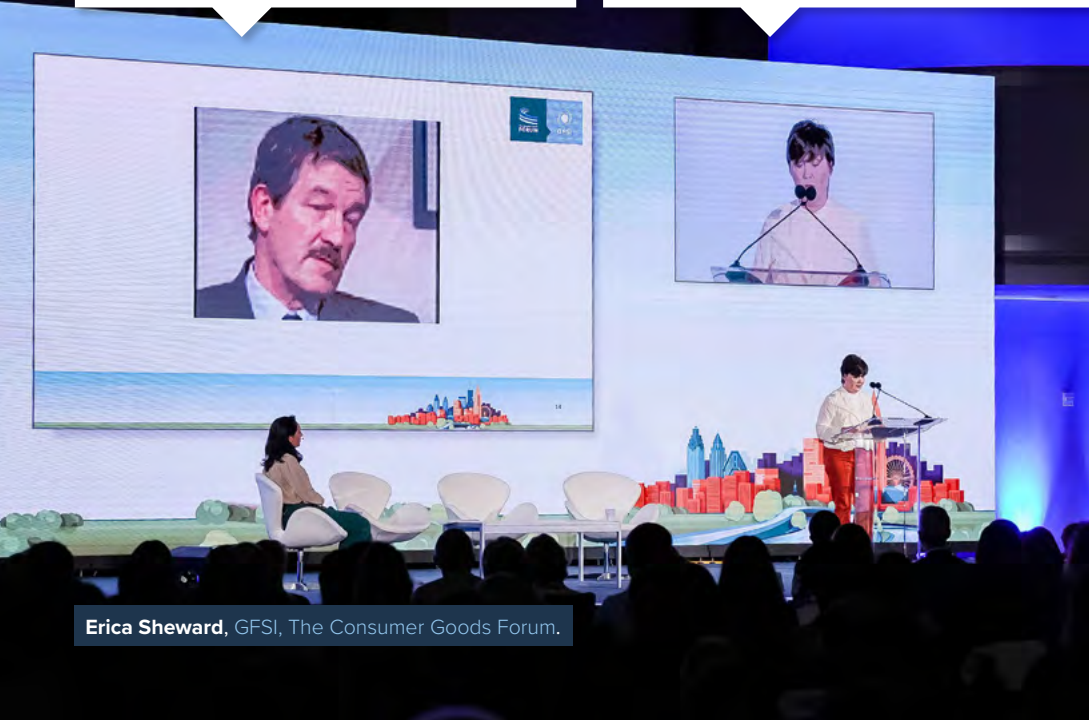
DAY 1

Knowledge Fuels Food Safety

“We have the knowledge, we have the power to make safe food for people everywhere,” said GFSI Director Erica Sheward during the opening of the first plenary session. “For those of you who still feel inclined to act to thwart our progress, we ask you to reconsider whether you really have the interests of food safety at heart.”

Sheward painted a clear picture of a world reeling from the pandemic, soaring inflation and supply chain hits arising from the war in Ukraine. She also gave a first-hand account of the greatest tragedy in aviation food safety history: the “November Oscar” incident. Captain William Glen Stewart was found guilty of gross pilot negligence for errors when landing an airliner in fog single-handed after food poisoning suddenly struck his crew mid-flight and they were incapacitated. His wings stripped, Captain Stewart hit rock bottom, later committing suicide. Sheward was aboard the flight.

Her story provides a stark warning that food safety mishaps can have grave consequences. Millions of people on the ground and in the air must be spared from the threat of lives unexpectedly and unnecessarily cut short by unsafe food.



Erica Sheward, GFSI, The Consumer Goods Forum.



Consumer Goods Forum Managing Director Wai-Chan Chan gave hope for the future with a refresher course on GFSI and the mission and priorities of its parent body the CGF. The CGF and its fellow Coalitions of Action continue to press ahead with programmes designed to advance civilisation. Those coalitions include in addition to GFSI: Collaboration for Healthier Lives, Food Waste, Forest Positive, Human Rights, Product Data, Plastic Waste and the Sustainable Supply Chain Initiative. Together they spur CGF work in these fields and now shifting from planning to action.



Dirk Van de Put, CEO and Chairman of Mondelez, the CGF Board Co-Sponsor of GFSI, fully backed the Coalition of Action and echoed the conference theme that the GFSI community must stay agile and resilient to deliver safe food in turbulent times. He concluded: “Playbooks go out the window when facing such fast, complex environments.”

Breakout Sessions

Concurrent breakout sessions at the 2023 GFSI Conference expanded the amount of learning during the three-day programme compared to years past. Delegates chose from three tracks that addressed GFSI priorities: Benchmarking and Harmonisation, Capability Building and Public-Private Partnerships. Nineteen breakouts were held covering aspects across three tracks. Overall, the 2023 programme provided nearly five times as many sessions as the prior conference.





Left to right: **Tracy Burton**, Unilever and **Cliona Murphy**, PepsiCo.



Capability Building Track

Meet the SteerCo: How is GFSI Building a New Approach to Supporting Food Safety Capability Building for All?

Safe food for everyone everywhere means not leaving suppliers behind, no matter how small. But a host of challenges get in the way, including lack of awareness of the programme, cost challenges for users, data transparency, and a self-assessment tool missing the mark for Food Business Operators (FBOs). To flip the script, five members of the GFSI Steering Committee on stage say they have taken learnings from companies to make further progress towards high-impact capability building. The input has flowed into a proposed capability-building approach, which takes into account the needs of SMEs, and their wish that regulatory information such as Co-dec be woven in. It also looks to give bigger buyers an element of verification. It is an ambitious and complex framework, nourished by input from U.S. development agency USAID. This helps all sizes of food business operators as they work towards GFSI-recognised certification. The work will enable improvements in Food Safety Management Systems of non-GFSI certified FBOs to bring them towards certification from a GFSI-recognised programme and/or regulatory compliance resulting in safer food for consumers everywhere.





Left to right: **Frances Freeman**, GFSI; **Monique Pellegrino**, Danone; **Mark Fryling**, General Mills and **Pierre de Ginestel**, Auchan.



Mark Fryling, General Mills.

Public-Private Partnerships Collaboration Track

Meet the SteerCo: How is GFSI Enabling Regulatory Public Private Partnerships?

Achieving food safety is a shared responsibility between the GFSI community and regulators, said members of the GFSI Steering Committee who kicked off the public-private partnerships (PPPs) track. Addressing a full room, they explained that through dialogue and collaboration, trust can be built with food safety regulators so they take into account GFSI certification for risk-based resource allocation. SteerCo members on stage also shed light on their work, including on setting up the stakeholder engagement strategy, building partnerships with government and intergovernmental bodies, and providing guidance to deliver GFSI strategic outcomes on PPPs. GFSI's G2B programme and Local Groups play a big part,

so too the GFSI engagement with Codex. With a food safety world in constant flux, the need for dialogue and information can help supply chains and businesses work and adapt faster than ever. Transparency with regulators includes the in-progress Blueberry IT solution to confirm business operators have a GFSI certificate. Grasping regulator needs and challenges can ease delivery of food safety around the world.

Meet the Regions

GFSI's seven Local Groups support efforts to share knowledge and promote a harmonised approach to managing and improving food safety across geographies. In this session, representatives from GFSI Local Groups in Japan and in US-Canada discussed

the overarching agenda of the groups and their work aligning with local governments to support public-private partnerships. Local Group work in Japan brings representatives from a government ministry to the table where they learn from FBOs. Collaboration with government is happening, and has scope to develop further. Public Private Partnerships take time to develop in Japan and other countries. In Canada, the regulatory approach is more market-driven, and rules and regulations are based upon outcomes. Governments seem open to innovation such as the remote audits reported by the NZ-Australia Local Group. The strong industry experience that Local Groups have is helpful to governments and feeds into the Codex process. Local groups also exist in China and Mexico as well as the South Latam, US-Canada, and EMEA regions.

Benchmarking and Harmonisation Track

Meet the SteerCo: From Concept to Execution — How is GFSI Moving the Needle on Governance and Harmonisation?

GFSI Steering Committee members discussed proposed changes in the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements Version 2020 – the centre of the initiative’s work on harmonising third-party food safety standards since its founding in 2001. Panellists reflected on the progress made in the requirements, including around auditor training and continuing professional development, alignment with Codex, and looked towards the future development of a new version in 2024. The panel included committee members leading delivery of the benchmarking and harmonisation strategy as well as those responsible for GFSI Governance. Since the creation of GFSI as a Coalition of Action within the CGF in 2021, GFSI has been on a journey of modernisation and improvement in every aspect of their work.

Science and Technology Advisory Group (STAG): How Science and Evidence Informs GFSI Strategy and Implementation

The highly experienced and forward-thinking academic minds from GFSI’s Science and Technology Advisory Group shared thoughts on what’s hot and what’s not in the world of food safety research. Drawn from academics all over the world who are supporting GFSI strategy and informing GFSI decision-making, STAG members detailed work done already to support GFSI and outlined what needs to be done moving forward. Presentations explored areas including microbial community interactions and risk prediction. Their work brings rigour and independence to GFSI efforts to make science- and evidence-based decisions informed by the latest food safety research. Every aspect of the work that GFSI does to improve food safety is founded upon science and evidence. Changes to the benchmarking requirements, enhancements to our capability building programme and horizon scanning for new food safety hazards all require a science and evidence base.

ASK GFSI: UPDATE ON ‘RACE TO THE TOP’, WHAT’S AHEAD AT GFSI

Conference attendees swarmed to the Presentation Theatre during the Ask GFSI session to meet and exchange with GFSI leaders who work behind the scenes to facilitate and implement key priorities. The panellists delved into topics previously discussed on the plenary and breakout stages, such as third-party audits and the relaunch of the Global Markets Programme.



Left to right: **Tsutomu Okubo**, GFSI; **Esther Diaz**, GFSI; **Lalaina Randriamanantsoa**, GFSI; **Isabel Kumar**, moderator; **Erica Sheward**, GFSI and **Anne Gerardi**, GFSI.

Automation Can Relieve Staffing, Supply Chain Kinks

Worker shortages and climate change present two big challenges for food safety at retail, production and manufacturing levels. Leaders face two complex threats: high levels of employee turnover and a supply chain squeeze. Three GFSI Steering Committee members shared top-of-mind concerns and sector-specific responses to solve the people and supplier crunch.

Quickly locking in new suppliers helps ease supply chain woes, said **Mark A. Fryling, Vice President of Global Food Safety and Quality at General Mills**. Fryling now finds his company supply constrained. To tackle supply chain disruption, GFSI-recognised certification programmes play a role to help quickly onboard new suppliers while upholding food safety levels. The rise of omnichannel delivery systems has prompted his company to redesign products to be more proof against potential abuses.

TOPLINE TAKEAWAYS

Automation can help food manufacturers, primary producers to overcome food safety workforce shortages, staffing kinks.

Omnichannel retail world means food manufacturers must design products resilient to uses, potential abuses, crunches, and climate change.

Climate change threats: risk-based models help companies cope.



Looking through a primary production lens, **Natalie Dyenson, Vice President of Food Safety and Quality at Dole Food Company** views climate change as the single biggest threat. Unlike manufacturing-based food production, fruit-focused producers like Dole depend on Mother Nature to manufacture the product. Water shortages in the American Southwest, flooding in California's Salinas Valley, and grape failures in South America show climate change-induced weather events undercut the

business bottom line. Risk-based models built in-house help tackle threats, enabling companies to react better to climate-driven events while keeping food safe. Labour shortages have become another major blow to the agricultural sector. Heavy investment in automation can help tackle this troubling workforce trend.

Climate change poses clear threats to food safety in the retail sphere, noted **Howard Popoola, Vice President of**

Corporate Food Technology and Regulatory Compliance at The Kroger Co. Shortened shelf lives caused by rising temperatures, coupled with weather events and crop failures translate to empty shelves in retail stores. Kroger finds new suppliers and vets their food safety systems. GFSI plays a useful role along the way and can get more involved in "behind-the-glass" food safety in retail stores — in-store prepared food departments. High-level food safety risks and staggeringly high employee turnover means shifting some in-store preparation to commissary kitchens.



Law and Order: Putting Food Poisoning Behind Bars

“**Law and Order must prevail in the food safety world**”, said acclaimed food safety rockstar **Dr. Julian M. Cox, Scientific Director of Australia’s Food Safety Information Council**. Cox closed out the action-packed Day 1 morning plenary with a masterclass that urged everyone – from producers to consumers – to “battle against” foodborne disease.

Armed with figures, Cox cited World Health Organisation data covering foodborne disease tracked worldwide that show 600 million cases and 420,000 deaths every year. He spotlighted the problem, saying: “What we need to do is put foodborne illness, food poisoning, behind bars. It is criminal in the 21st century to see those numbers.”

The quest to rid the planet of foodborne disease faces daunting threats. Salmonella enteritidis, for example, is a form of Salmonella that infects hens’ reproductive tissue and makes food safety professionals sweat at night; some forms can produce a hydrophobic surface structure. That allows them to survive better in the environment, evade the immune system and colonise extraintestinal sites in the body. Some have also evolved resistance to antimicrobials and antibiotics. Those struck with it have died within four hours.

Food industry must evolve to combat more virulent, more evasive foodborne pathogens.

Ignoring food safety concerns for gain is tantamount to murder, should be litigated.

Consumer education: puzzle piece needed to prevent foodborne disease.

TOPLINE TAKEAWAYS

Julian Cox, Food Safety Information Council (AUS).





Given such virulent pathogens, both industry and consumers must evolve in step. Whole genome sequencing and metagenomics proved useful tools against food-borne illness and these technologies may soon become available in handheld devices.

Consumer education plays a big role to combat the threat. Cox applauded groups like The Partnership for Food Safety Education for spreading awareness of personal and food hygiene. “Food safety is people,” he said, referencing the 1973 film *Soylent Green*.

“We can get out of food safety jail,” he concluded. “It’s not going to be free; it’s not going to be easy, but we can do it together.”



DIAMOND-SPONSORED SPECIAL SESSIONS

The GFSI Conference’s Diamond Sponsors hosted expert panel discussions that shared actionable solutions to some of the food system’s most pressing challenges. Six sessions held in two concurrent blocks covered topics including food system resilience, the impact of climate change on pest risks, and digital technologies that improve consumer trust.



FOOD SAFETY INCIDENT TRENDS INCREASING ACROSS BEVERAGE INDUSTRY



4 Key Drivers for Increase

- Regulatory advancement in digital reporting
- Enhanced diagnostic testing capabilities

FORUM **GPSI**

Nuba brand Carob (drink) recalled due to potential presence of dangerous bacteria

LYONS **Lyons Magnus Voluntarily Recalls 53 Nutritional and Beverage Products Due To The Potential For Microbial Contamination**

Costa Coffee recall and 'do not eat' warning over undeclared allergen

Capri Sun drink recalled because of cleaning solution issue found after consumer complaints

Pickle flavored vodka recalled in Canada because of glass in product

Starbucks Drink Recall for "Metal Fragments" Confirms 7 US States

Coca Cola Recalls Minute Maid Products in 8 States Due to Possible Metal Contamination





DAY 2

The USDA Food Safety Vision

Salmonella is one of many rising challenges facing food safety professionals, said **Dr. José Emilio Esteban, Under Secretary for Food Safety at the USDA Office of Food Safety**. In the United States, the Salmonella contamination rate in poultry in the last 15 years has dropped 75%, but the number of salmonellosis cases remain unchanged. The USDA combats this discrepancy by focusing on the most pathogenic serotypes, and it plans to require poultry that contains these serotypes to be removed from commerce as an adulterated product.

“We need to actually have an engagement with people like you to give us the feedback that we need to come up with the best proposal that fits not only in the United States, but also the world,” said Esteban of the project. “I don’t know how you guys work unless you tell me.”

Esteban praised GFSI’s role as a bridge between the food industry and regulators and a platform for public-private partnerships. The U.S. bureaucrat with 30 years in government spotted roadblocks that hinder, not help, action in the regulatory sphere. He sees ways the GFSI can help the USDA and its counterparts move ahead. Innovation will play a big part, he noted, “Unless you’re innovative and you move with the world, you become stagnated and obsolete.”

The much-talked about One Health approach calls for “the collaborative efforts of multiple disciplines working locally, nationally, and globally to attain optimal health for people, animals and our environment,” Esteban noted. “Everybody talks about One Health, but nobody acts One Health,” pointing to stagnation around Salmonella vaccines as an example.

On GFSI’s role in OneHealth, he noted: “I do think that we will have at some point, through working with people at GFSI, a series of proposals that provide integrated approaches to risk assessment and analysis done to include all phases of the production process.”

The One Health approach cannot mature without transparency and communication at all points in the food ecosystem.



TOPLINE TAKEAWAYS

Industry work with the public sector needs to be more agile.

GFSI, Codex Help Planet Reach UN Sustainable Development Goals

Collaboration between Codex and GFSI can help to deliver UN Sustainable Development Goals, said **Steve Wearne, Director of Global Affairs at the UK Food Standards Agency and Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission**. GFSI's newly announced capacity building programme and certification database show real upside in that work.

Involved in GFSI projects like G2B, Codex seeks to learn about both efforts, which could buttress Codex and FAO efforts to support safe, sustainable food systems and promote modern trading relationships in a rapidly changing world. Wearne noted: "We are a global body, and this is a shared global endeavour."





The Codex Alimentarius Commission marks its 60th year, Wearne said, giving the commission an opportunity to revamp its website, digitised its back-catalogue and further showcase the benefits of Codex to stakeholders and consumers. He noted that Codex membership has swelled from 24 countries in 1963 to 188 today. He added that it lists 200 observer organisations, with GFSI being “one of our most active observers helping us to identify priorities, to develop, check and test the technical content of our standards, and to advocate for their adoption by member states and use them in the work you do.”

Wearne evoked the drive for a one-tent approach with stakeholders, concluding “some of the most important developments in Codex relate to how we delivered on inclusivity, which remains one of our core values.”

TOPLINE TAKEAWAYS

Opportunities for Codex and GFSI to collaborate, deliver UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Capability Building Programme and certification database can play a part.

Codex Alimentarius Commission 60th anniversary: all stakeholders can help celebrate.

Inclusivity: a key priority of Codex, which now includes 188 member countries, one member organisation and more than 200 observer organisations.

Breakout Sessions

Capability Building Track

Race to the Top Feature 1: Auditor Competence and Professional Development

Food safety auditing isn't a profession, but it should be, said the Day 2 opening panel that tackled growing concerns about the shortage of skilled auditors. With no recognised professional development framework, unlike other safety critical professions, Race to the Top Feature 1 aims to fix that. By bringing together and harmonising skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to be a great food safety auditor, GFSI can build capability in food safety auditing. GFSI tackles issues around auditor competence and invites stakeholders to get involved to maximise auditor effectiveness. This matters because audit outcomes hinge on competent and proficient food safety auditors. Issues such as recruitment, professional development and retention of food safety auditors undermine the process. To fine-tune RTTT, GFSI listens to feedback and reflects and pivots if necessary. Good auditors first need knowledge of the food industry and the technical elements of the audit process. They also need people skills.

Relaunch of the GFSI Global Markets Programme

This session heralded the planned launch of a new updated version of the current Global Markets Programme. The aim is to facilitate a transition from the current toolkits to the future capability building blueprint until its deployment. The steering committee and GFSI team presented the context, the plan for the updated toolkit and what the future governance requirements will be. The revamp was commissioned in response to a 2020 consultation which demonstrated that the current GFSI Global Markets Programme fell short of its outcome in supporting those on a journey towards GFSI-recognised certification. Updated later this year and available online, the toolkit will be aligned with Benchmarking Requirements Version 2020, monitored for unauthorised use, and will have a strictly enforced branding policy. To be merged into the capability building framework, the toolkit will further the drive to help small and less-developed food business operators work towards GFSI-recognised certification.

Burkholderia cocovenenans: The Gruel Pathogen

Opening keynote 'rockstar' Dr. Julian M. Cox resurfaced to share his research on *Burkholderia cocovenenans*, a barely known but lethal pathogen that leads to high fatalities when ingested because it produces a lethal toxin, Bongkrelic acid. The toxin is named after the Javanese fermented food tempe bongkrèk, and most cases of Bongkrelic acid poisoning are reported in Indonesia and other developing regions where GFSI's food safety capability building work can save lives.



Vaneska MATTOS, *Loblaw.*

Public-Private Partnerships Collaboration Track

How GFSI, Codex and FAO Collaborate to Address Current and Emerging Food Safety Risks While Further Securing the Food System

Through Codex, the world comes together. When GFSI and Codex work together, food safety works better. Members of the panel that included leaders from FAO and the Codex Alimentarius Commission see value in GFSI's science-based approach to certification, which buttresses risk-based resources within national food control systems. Dialogues play a big part, as GFSI and the public sector have borne fruit in areas like benchmarking, capacity building, and public-private partnerships. GFSI sits on three Codex Committees to provide feedback, identify gaps, and provide technical expertise on rules and their use on the ground. The GFSI Codex Committee enjoys a natural partnership too. The Codex Alimentarius Commission secretariat seeks feedback from stakeholders like GFSI and regulators to track how Codex texts are being used. A new push for more sustainability is now high on the Codex agenda.

Food Safety E-Commerce

The Covid pandemic sped up the adoption of food e-commerce both for retailers and restaurants. To stay apace, food safety professionals and government regulators have had to evolve. In fact, regulators play a big role in promoting food safety in e-commerce. An example was Germany's innovative e-commerce control unit G@ZIELT. It showed that food safety can be built into the spheres of e-commerce strategy at retail level and the strategic importance of e-commerce for retailers. Food safety requirements change as retailer connections to consumers are more direct, outside the space of brick & mortar stores.

Digital Technology Use in Regulating Food Safety in Dubai

The future is now in Dubai, as authorities there tap into data and analyse it to predict where food safety risks need to be addressed. The Dubai Municipality Food Safety Department's digital approach to food safety regulation helps it manage food imports into Dubai Port from 160 countries and 300,000 food handlers. Its "smart" inspection dashboard, called "Foodwatch", uses emerging technologies such as AI and Big Data, a dashboard and mobile app. An innovation-rich case study, Dubai authorities have found in-house solutions that harness data to connect food trade, food inspection, laboratory testing and food safety management systems to better inform decision-making. Working together, government, citizens and FBOs get an easy-to-use, fast, high-performing digital solution that works. It not only goes deep into places like restaurant kitchens, but predicts where trouble might surface to keep people safe – and fed.



Sultan Al Taher, Dubai Municipality.



to issues including lack of accurate data. The panel looked forward to its implementation and its potential to revolutionise food safety supply chain assurance. Part of Feature 4 of the Race to the Top, the project creates transparency about who is, and who is not, certified against a GFSI-recognised programme. GFSI is developing an all-new certification platform which will host a database of all GFSI-recognised sites. Access to this information is vital to enable multiple stakeholders tackle the burgeoning issue of certificate fraud and also enables ease of access to a one-stop shop for food safety certification. The new programme will improve food safety outcomes by making this type of data transparent and easy to access.

Benchmarking and Harmonisation Track

Accelerating the Pace to Strive for Excellence: The Coca-Cola System Approach for Resilience and Agility

Hosted by The Coca-Cola Company, global leaders from the world's most valuable soft drink brand gave an inside perspective on its adaptive approach to food safety and quality. The company has moved to a "Quality 4.0" model that leverages preventative controls and emphasises top-down culture. The model tackles a challenging and ever-evolving environment that requires a continued laser focus on food safety to stay resilient and agile across the value chain. Trust, transparency and network alignment play a big part. Even in the most volatile times, the safe supply of food remains the galvanising force in

mitigating volatility and risks. Food safety across a global enterprise requires investment in a culture of excellence for food safety to create value and drive performance and progress.

Race to the Top Feature 4: Design and Development of the GFSI Certification Platform

Soon after launching Race to the Top in 2020, GFSI announced that it would develop a certification platform to host a database of all sites holding a certificate issued against a GFSI-recognised programme. Session panellists gave an update on the platform, saying it would not be completed by its projected deadline due

Allergen Risk Assessment

Allergic consumers need allergen labelling to reflect risk, but the benefit for allergic consumers will only be realised if consistent application happens across food operators, says one of the findings from a recent FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on Risk Assessment of Food Allergens. Attendees at this breakout heard presentations on latest research, including about PAL– precautionary allergen labelling – showing it should be simple, clear, and unambiguous to the consumer, not false or misleading. Another study shared tells of a growing expectation that the food business apply reference data to qualitative risk assessment, but it is only appropriate and possible to use this tool in specific circumstances. The group also gave an overview of the practical guidance for food businesses. Attendees also expanded their understanding of the benefits of using allergen quantitative risk assessment. When appropriate and possible, this tool complements existing allergen management practices.

Basics Done Right: A Food Safety Story from Africa

TOPLINE TAKEAWAYS

Food safety and food security: big concerns in Africa.

Lab capacity and food safety education needed for African Union food safety strategy.

Any strategy to improve food safety or security in Africa must fold in its vast diversity.

Food safety in Africa took centre stage on Day 2 – a region where GFSI work continues to expand its work.

The continent holds vast diversity while facing food challenges, said **Lucia Anelich, Managing Director of Anelich Consulting** as he set the scene. A food microbiologist and one of South Africa's best-known food safety experts, Anelich said: "When we talk about food safety in Africa, we cannot isolate it from hunger, because the two go closely hand in hand."

Home to 1.3 billion people and 35 countries – 33 of which are among the 46 least-developed countries in the world – Africa faces food safety setbacks. Some 137,000 people die each year of foodborne disease in Africa, making up about a third of global deaths due to foodborne disease. Outbreaks in South Africa and Kenya reveal that impoverished people continue to eat food they know to be contaminated because they have nothing else to eat.

To combat the troubling figures, the African Union in 2019 began steps to establish a continental food safety agency. The union convened a food safety expert panel and advisory group and later published a food safety strategy that plays into a broader plan to establish a free trade area across the continent. The agency and free trade area could lead to a major boon for the African economy, especially to enable agriculturally productive countries like South Africa and Kenya to sell more products more widely. The continent still lacks laboratory capacity, however, essential to support a robust food safety regulatory system.

She concluded, "If we don't get this right, we will be unable to achieve the development goals that are found in the African Union's Agenda 2063; namely, the Africa we want, which is an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens, representing a dynamic force in the international arena."





Power Cut Chaos: Food Safety Challenges in Africa



Cindy Jenks, Pick n Pay.

TOPLINE TAKEAWAYS

Food safety professionals face power blackouts, cold chain breaks, transport hiccups.

Bets on food safety capability building help small players access global markets, boost income and improve quality of life.

To reach rural people, food safety training programmes by mobile phone.

Retailers and multinationals operating in Africa face both unpredictable and unique food safety challenges. In South Africa, **Cindy Jenks, General Manager of Pick n Pay** and new member of the GFSI Steering Committee, observes a food industry that must adapt to “load shedding” – scheduled periodic blackouts that emerged since the country’s energy crisis began in 2007.

Despite the power shutdowns, South Africa finds ways to cope. Hometown company Pick n Pay places generators and other alternative power sources, which can last up to 11 1/2 hours per day, but food is wasted when there are extended blackouts. Jenks noted: “When you’re seeing people starve within the African continent, you don’t want to waste food.” A knock-on effect hits local suppliers, leading to empty shelves in stores.

Despite power cuts, new technology holds a grain of hope. Sensors, data analytics and real-time monitoring can improve the state of food safety in Africa. Mobile apps show promise too. They offer the best way to deliver food safety education to small producers, especially in rural areas, where most people who log into the internet do so through their phones. In future, mobile training tools may help rural producers access capability-building programmes and ultimately achieve GFSI-recognised certification, allowing them to supply Pick n Pay and others.

“We need to go out there and educate and help those suppliers in those various countries,” Jenks concluded. “Through the capability programme, we can open doors and open pathways for the suppliers to supply more countries and more regions.”

Capability Building in Africa: GFSI, USAID Join Forces

TOPLINE TAKEAWAYS

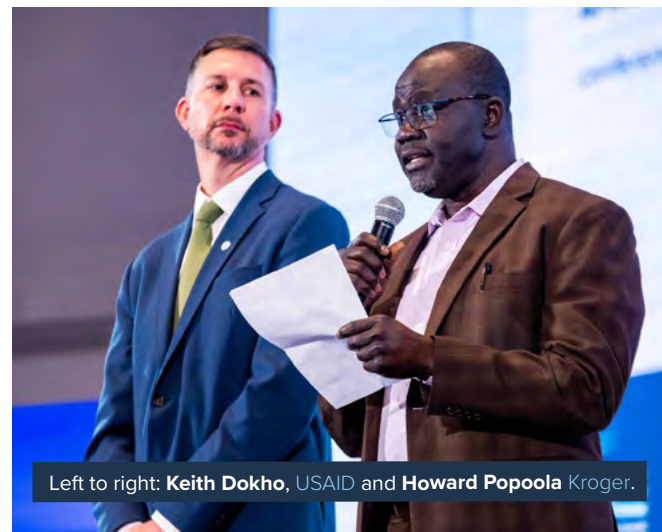
Working with USAID supports supply chain resilience, local engagement.

Public-private partnerships help deliver sustainable development goals.

GFSI future capability building framework to help SMEs in Africa, other developing markets.

Public-private partnerships can help meet sustainable development goals, especially in the face of current turbulence. That message from **Keith Dokho, Private Sector Engagement Secretariat Lead for the United States Agency for International Development**, means partnerships can combat hunger and poverty around the world. USAID projects in Africa and their partnerships with GFSI support this work.

“The African continent is currently experiencing the brunt of the global food security crisis,” Dokho began, adding COVID-19, high fuel and fertiliser prices, climate shocks and local conflicts to the challenges mentioned in the two previous sessions. “But by committing to partnerships and innovation, we can unlock the continent’s potential not only to safely feed themselves but to feed the world.”



Left to right: **Keith Dokho**, USAID and **Howard Popoola Kroger**.



Investments in global food systems work. Some USAID partnerships with companies present at the GFSI Conference show how. With The Coca-Cola Company, USAID leads the Water Development Alliance (WADA), which has delivered safe, sustainable water to 1 million people since 2010. The agency's work with the Alliance for Inclusive and Nutritious Food Processing (AINFP) empowers employee volunteers at General Mills, Cargill, DSM, Buhler, Hershey, ArdentMills and the J.M. Smucker Company to share food industry practices with African SMEs.

Delegates can and should get involved in USAID public-private partnerships for mutual benefit, he urged, "We at USAID can really leverage companies' innovation, industry expertise and agility, and businesses can leverage USAID's capabilities, relationships, operational know-how and convening power."

The session ended with a new **Memorandum of Understanding announced between USAID and GFSI**. USAID will support GFSI in ensuring its future capability building framework is designed with and for less-sophisticated food business operators around the world — and especially in Africa. "This partnership is an outstanding opportunity to scale up the impact of GFSI at a greater scale for safe food for everyone, everywhere," said Howard Popoola, SteerCo member and Vice President of The Kroger Company, while making the announcement.



Left to right: **Kelley Cormier**, USAID; **Howard Popoola**, Kroger; **Keith Dokho**, USAID and **Mark Fryling**, General Mills.

TECH TALKS

During networking breaks and delegate lunches, the Presentation Theatre at the heart of the Exhibition Area came alive with Tech Talks – 15-minute presentations on the cutting-edge of food safety technology. The casual setting allowed for easy flow of communication between delegates and presenters, who included some of the leading lights in tech and data science. Topics included food risk forecasting, energy-saving temperature monitoring systems, and applications of ChatGPT-like Large Language Models to enhance food safety.



Day 3

April 27th

DAY 3

GFSI Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: A Journey of Transformational Change

Former **GFSI Steering Committee Co-Chair Roy Kirby** sat down with his colleague and newly appointed Co-Chair **Howard Popoola of The Kroger Co.** to look back on the history of GFSI and how it has evolved during the past decade.

As the former chair of the governance subcommittee at GFSI, Kirby played a major part in implementing recent shifts in the organisation, which reflected broader changes taking place across all Coalitions of Action at the CGF. Those changes were led by the chief executives who drove the CGF, demanding greater transparency and a stronger code of ethics. "The ethics and integrity that comes from those people has been forced all the way through the whole organisation, and that then cascades down to GFSI," he said.



TOPLINE TAKEAWAYS

Recent changes in governance at GFSI reflect broader shifts taking place across the CGF ecosystem.

As GFSI expands its presence in the developing world through its capability-building framework, the importance of brand protection will become paramount.

Food safety professionals choose the field because they care about protecting consumers, and they must keep that priority at the centre of every decision.



Roy Kirby, Former GFSI
Steering Committee Co-Chair.

Some of the priorities that emerged from this push include strengthening GFSI's oversight of audit integrity, protecting its brand and promoting more transparent communication among stakeholders. Looking ahead, Kirby applauded the GFSI-USAID memorandum of understanding and hoped it would lead to greater impact across Africa and the developing world. He also cautioned GFSI to ensure it maintains trust in its brand as it becomes more visible in developing markets. "Allowing access to the global market is such a wonderful thing, but it's not just an open door you can walk through," he warned.

He ended with a call to action for GFSI and the delegates: "Forget all your agendas, forget your careers, forget all the rest of it. Make protecting the consumer your reason for being. We just have to make sure that we put that at the centre of our thought every day, in every decision."

Steering Committee Member and newly appointed Co-Chair Mark Fryling of General Mills joined the pair after their discussion to present Roy with a plaque recognising his contributions to GFSI, noting the importance of his leadership over the years of the pandemic.



Breakout Sessions

Capability Building Track

Supporting Business in Building Food Safety Capabilities: A 360° View

Kelley Cormier of USAID joined a session with GFSI leaders to discuss what GFSI's future capability building framework might look like and how it can drive sustainable development in Africa and developing markets elsewhere. The session convened after the memorandum of understanding was signed between GFSI and USAID regarding the new framework, a highlight of the 2023 conference. The news comes as the GFSI steering committee has been working in the past year to design a new capability building blueprint for GFSI, addressing six themes raised during the consultation process. The blueprint also enables a new GFSI vision on capability building to reach better outcomes and take a more inclusive approach.

People, Process, Tech: Innovations in Food Safety

Latest breakthroughs in food safety can boost capability building for people, processes and technology. During this breakout, stakeholders got a look at the future, where digital tools employed will help companies along the value chain improve food safety through a new pathway to certification. Drone technology will play a growing role in raising food safety levels and building capabilities in food safety across different industries. Developing ways to boost capabilities in food safety across different industries is not an easy task, but the latest trends and techniques look promising and will help keep food safe along the supply chain. Technology will form part of the just-announced GFSI-USAID partnership to support small and medium-sized food businesses in Africa to improve their food safety management systems by connecting them to technical resources.

Kelley Cormier, USAID.



Public-Private Partnerships Collaboration Track

Annelies Deuss, OECD.



Remote Audits for International Food Safety: Efficiency and Effectiveness

Attendees at this session delved into a recent report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development that explores whether remote audits are efficient and effective enough to address international food safety. It uncovered practices that countries find most useful, and offered views on continued or broader adoption in future. Using a case study approach and complemented by a survey, the report seeks to assess the costs and benefits of remote audit and inspection, as well as its overall efficiency and effectiveness, the practices that countries have found most useful, and viewpoints to continued or broader adoption in future.

Benchmarking and Harmonisation Track



Race to the Top Feature 2: GFSI Oversight of CPO's Ongoing Alignment with GFSI Requirements — An Independent Review

When things go wrong in the food safety arena, people suffer the consequences. With the aim of providing an independent assessment of the vital role that GFSI plays in overseeing the efficacy and integrity of the certification programmes it recognised, GFSI commissioned PwC Strategy consultants to review all aspects of the process including the benchmarking process itself as well as the ongoing alignment of certification programme owners with the Benchmarking Requirements. Their initial findings: there is further room for improvement and a host of opportunities to create a virtuous cycle of continuous improvement. The review outcomes matter as part of GFSI's own process of continuous improvement.

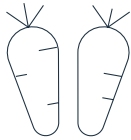
Technical Equivalence

Technical Equivalence is an area of the GFSI benchmarking process dedicated to publicly owned standards which acknowledges the equivalence of the standard's content to the relevant scopes of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements. Following the outcome of a strategic review of Technical Equivalence in 2021, GFSI is proposing a new approach to fully recognise public programmes. The session panel on currently acknowledged public standards discussed ideas and aspirations for the new approach. They also explored the challenges and opportunities arising from the review and why regulators value collaboration with GFSI.



Ken Petersen, Agricultural Marketing Service.

A Common Language for the Food System



A new mode of communicating food industry concepts may eventually transcend language, argued **Douglas Gayeton, Co-Founder and Chief Investigator of The Lexicon.**

Gayeton stressed the power of education for food safety, namely how producers share their food safety story. He noted: “If you can find a way to effectively communicate that to your audience, to the public, then you have created a consensus engine.”

His search for a consensus engine led him to create Foodicons, an initiative developed by The Lexicon’s Accelerator for Good Ideas with support from Food at Google. FAO has also become involved in the project, which will have a presence at the World Food Forum in Rome this October.



Douglas Gayeton, The Lexicon.

Certificate labels are useful, but they may not always tell what makes up a certification in a way that the public grasps.

A shared language sets and communicates goals within sectors and with consumers.

Consumers’ awareness of food-system terms, such as cage-free or rBST, can impact entire sectors.

TOPLINE TAKEAWAYS



Foodicons is a visual language designed by Adobe's icon team with input from international artists and experts across the food system. The icons, which are open source and machine readable, communicate detailed food system concepts without relying on words. Participating in Foodicons can "create alignments inside sectors that can be reflected externally, so that consumers understand what the aspirations are for the sector in terms of what they're doing," Douglas said.

The journey to Foodicons stemmed from Douglas' career in food education as a writer and filmmaker, creating award-winning documentaries such as the "Know Your Food" series for American public television broadcaster PBS. Through his interactions with farmers and food producers — and the experience of starting a goat milk ice cream company with his wife — he realised that the food industry lacks a shared language. Producers may be able to earn certifications and apply them to their labels, but they have no clear way to communicate how they put safety and sustainability in action.

He closed with a question for the delegates: "What's your lexicon, and how can you convey that in a machine-readable way so that it has the greatest resonance with your audience?" He added, "That's the goal or aspiration that you have; to remove that opaqueness that we all face and replace it with a greater transparency that allows people to make purchases that are aligned with their values, to see the world that they want to see."



Closing Remarks: Telling the Food Safety Story



Stories have the power to educate and bring people together behind a common purpose.

GFSI's capability-building work can help secure the global food supply by making it easier for companies to seek alternative suppliers in smaller, less-developed markets. The power of storytelling brings people together behind a common purpose, to educate and grow," **GFSI Director Erica Sheward** shared in her closing address.

Tying Douglas Gayeton's keynote to the wide-ranging topics of the conference, she asked delegates to take back the conference message to their teams. "It has never been more important that GFSI takes decisive action to fulfil its purpose and everyone's mission of safe food for people everywhere. We need you all to continue to support us to ensure that nothing is going to get in our way."

A final word given by **Pieter Boone, Chief Executive Officer of Pick n Pay**, further underscored the centrality of Africa to GFSI's agenda, especially capability building. He gave an overview of his company's response to supply chain shocks through a video address at a flagship store in Cape Town, South Africa.

"Retailers globally need to secure a cost-effective food supply safe for human consumption through alternative vendors and channels, often from smaller farmers in local markets," he said. "Work being done by the GFSI to boost food safety capabilities of small food businesses is critical in securing food in local markets that adhere to acceptable food safety standards."

The food safety story continues in 2024 when the next GFSI conference will be held in Singapore. We look forward to seeing you there!

PARTNER



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Bruno Sechet • 2nd
International Quality & Food Integrity / Safety Consultants...
2mo • Edited • 🌐

Do you want to see the many faces of Food Safety? You have to witness the brilliant keynote of **Julian Cox** today at the **#gfsi23** conference. Are Food Safety Incidents a crime? Who are the usual and novel suspects? What are the evolutions in the criminal investigation? What have Law & Order, CSI and Minority Report in common? And yes Food Safety is about People. Excellent!!!!!!
[#itsaboutpeople](#) [#foodsafetyculture](#) [#foodcrime](#) [#itsallintheegg](#) [#gfsi23](#)



Kari Hensien • 2nd
President/CEO at RisePoint
1mo • 🌐

Had an absolute time at **#gfsi23** in Atlanta. Thank you **The Coca-Cola Company** for a wonderful evening at your HQ. **Melody Ge**, **Victoria Alao** and **Tai Misra** - it is always a privilege to spend time with passionate, innovative women who are changing the game in Food Safety! **Paul Damaren** thank you for 2.5 days packed with great conversations with people in food safety from around the world.



Opeyemi S. • 2nd
Director, Food Safety at PepsiCo Europe
1mo • 🌐

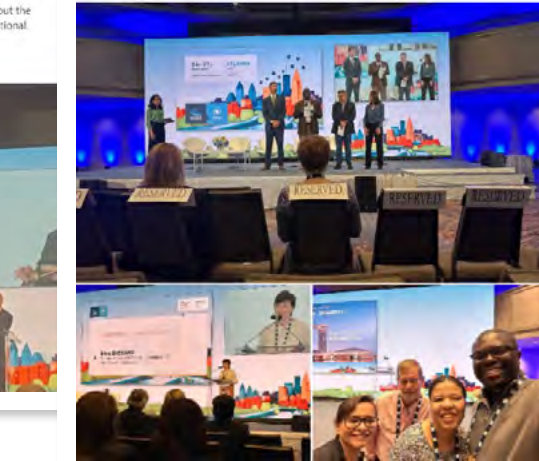
Just finished an incredible global food safety conference and I'm more excited than ever about the future of our industry.

One of my biggest takeaways was that food safety has to be everyone's business if we want safe food everywhere.

It was inspiring to see CEOs, industry giants and government agencies coming together to tackle this challenge.

Let's continue to work together to ensure that food safety remains a top priority for all!

[#gfsi23](#) [#foodsafety](#) [#globalconference](#) [#networking](#) [#collaboration](#) [#foodsecurity](#) [#toppriority](#)



Sandra S. • 2nd
Director QA Operations Food Brands
2mo • Edited • 🌐

The GFSI Codex Committee wrapping up a successful day of discussions in Atlanta. So happy to be a part of this group of tireless food safety professionals!
Annie Gerardi
Fran Freeman
Kimberly Turner
Trevor Phister

[#GFSI23](#) [#codex](#)



Todd Redwood • 2nd
Bioscience Managing Director (Deputy Mayor) | GAICD
2mo • 🌐

What a fantastic opening dialogue and welcome from **ERICA SHEWARD** at the **#gfsi23** conference in Atlanta today. She shared a personal story about it an infamous aviation near miss she was inadvertently involved in back in 1989. Dubbed the November Oscar Incident, triggered by a severe food poisoning event affecting two of the cockpit crew, she was inspired to write her book on Aviation Food Safety. Erica's story was a poignant reminder about the importance of what we all do in delivering food safety globally.

[BSI Food and Retail](#)



Samuel Barrett • 2nd
Global Food Safety & QA Manager at Yum! Brands
1mo • 🌐

Reflecting on an absolutely incredible two weeks in the US, starting with a fantastic Yum! Food Safety Leaders Summit where we brought the best of our global QA talent to meet at our Plano offices, before a great week at GFSI in Atlanta connecting with some good friends and building lots of new connections. There's some exciting things happening at Yum! and you can be sure we'll bring our amazing culture with us wherever we go [#yum](#) [#gfsi23](#) [#culture](#)



Lone Jespersen, Ph.D. • 2nd
Principal at Cultivate SA
2mo • 🌐

Better managing food safety risks. What is your company's risk culture and appetite? Super panel **Andrew Clarke** **Samuel Barrett** **Alison Johnson** discussing micro- and macro food safety, animal welfare, and sustainability risks (to name a few discussed) and how businesses manage these. Thank you! [#gfsi23](#) [#foodsafetyculture](#)



Michelle Minihan • 2nd
Director, Audit, Incidents and Investigations at Food Safety...
2mo • 🌐

Opening presentation of Day 2 of GFSI 2023 with Dr. Emilio Esteban, Under Secretary of Food Safety, Office of Food Safety, USDA, who outlined his vision for food safety, which is to be:

- science based
- transparent
- innovative

One of his priorities is to focus on salmonella in poultry. He also spoke about the need to focus on the one health approach. Thought provoking and inspirational.

[Food Safety Authority of Ireland](#)
[#gfsi23](#) [#foodsafety](#)



Photo Gallery





Watch the video highlights
of the 2023 GFSI
Conference in Atlanta



About Us

About GFSI

The Consumer Goods Forum is a global, parity-based industry network that is driven by its members to encourage the global adoption of practices and standards that serves the consumer goods industry worldwide. Uniquely positioned as the organisation bringing consumer goods retailers, manufacturers and their service providers together globally, the organisation is expertly placed to drive positive change across the industry to benefit both people and planet, and help members secure long-term, sustainable business growth.

www.theconsumergoodsforum.com

About The Consumer Goods Forum

The Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI; the Coalition) is a CEO-led Coalition of Action from The Consumer Goods Forum, bringing together 44 retailers and manufacturers and an extended food safety community to help oversee food safety standards for businesses and help provide access to safe food for people everywhere. As one of the world's largest networks to help achieve safe food, GFSI is committed to making food safety everyone's business and the Coalition members are addressing challenges facing food safety systems in their supply chains and the markets they operate in, and are helping to raise the food safety bar globally. Its ambition is to strengthen and harmonise food safety systems so they are able to feed the growing, global population and develop markets that can deliver food safely, no matter where in the world the consumer is.

www.mygfsi.com

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As we reflect on a successful GFSI Conference...



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Want to know more?

Click or scan the QR to download our white paper:

How Can Changing Our Approach to Risk Deliver Safe and Sustainable Food?

