

**GFSI**  
**Conference**  
Vancouver 2026

# **Executive Summary**

Food safety is everybody's business

# Contents

<b>The Vancouver springboard</b>	<b>03</b>
<b>The human force</b>	<b>05</b>
<b>The language of trade</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Preventive data and technology</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Beyond compliance</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Beyond 2026</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>About us</b>	<b>29</b>



# The Vancouver springboard

The 2026 Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) Conference in Vancouver represented a defining milestone for the global food safety community.

600 attendees | 320 companies | 35 countries

Celebrating a quarter-century of industry-led progress, the event highlighted the transformative impact of GFSI's benchmarking requirements that enable food businesses to protect millions of workers and billions of consumers. Industry leaders in Vancouver issued a call to deepen the dialogue across the entire ecosystem in the shared pursuit of safe food for people everywhere.

Over 600 delegates—including retailers, manufacturers, and regulators, alongside certification professionals, academics, and service providers—gathered to address the dual imperatives of protecting public health and securing brand value. A defining feature of the event was a series of interactive workshops that invited the community to participate in candid, often challenging conversations designed to break down historical silos and scrutinise the integrity of compliance systems.

While dedicated sessions explored how technology and data serve as a “co-pilot” for prevention, the overarching narrative remained focused on the human element. The Conference reinforced that leadership and culture are the true drivers of safety, reminding delegates that technology must amplify, not replace, human expertise. Ultimately, the discussions in Vancouver converged on the core theme of our 2026 gathering: **Food safety is everybody's business.** In the following pages, the key takeaways of the Vancouver Conference are presented as four critical conversations:

- The human force
- The language of trade
- Preventive data and technology
- Beyond compliance





Together  
we can build  
trust from  
fork to farm



Imagine the future  
we can all enable

Through our vast experience in science, technology, knowledge-based solutions and data insights, we are helping to shape the future of animal health for a world with a safe and sustainable food supply.

To join up the food chain, **join us today**



[Click here to find out more](#)

# Conversation 1

## The human force

Human agency is the engine that converts a shared vision into reality. The Conference underscored that food safety is not a static outcome of a system, but an active choice rooted in leadership and empathy. By framing technology as a strategic co-pilot to human expertise, speakers championed a culture of care that reaches beyond compliance to prioritise the protection of lives.

### Safety as a condition for business

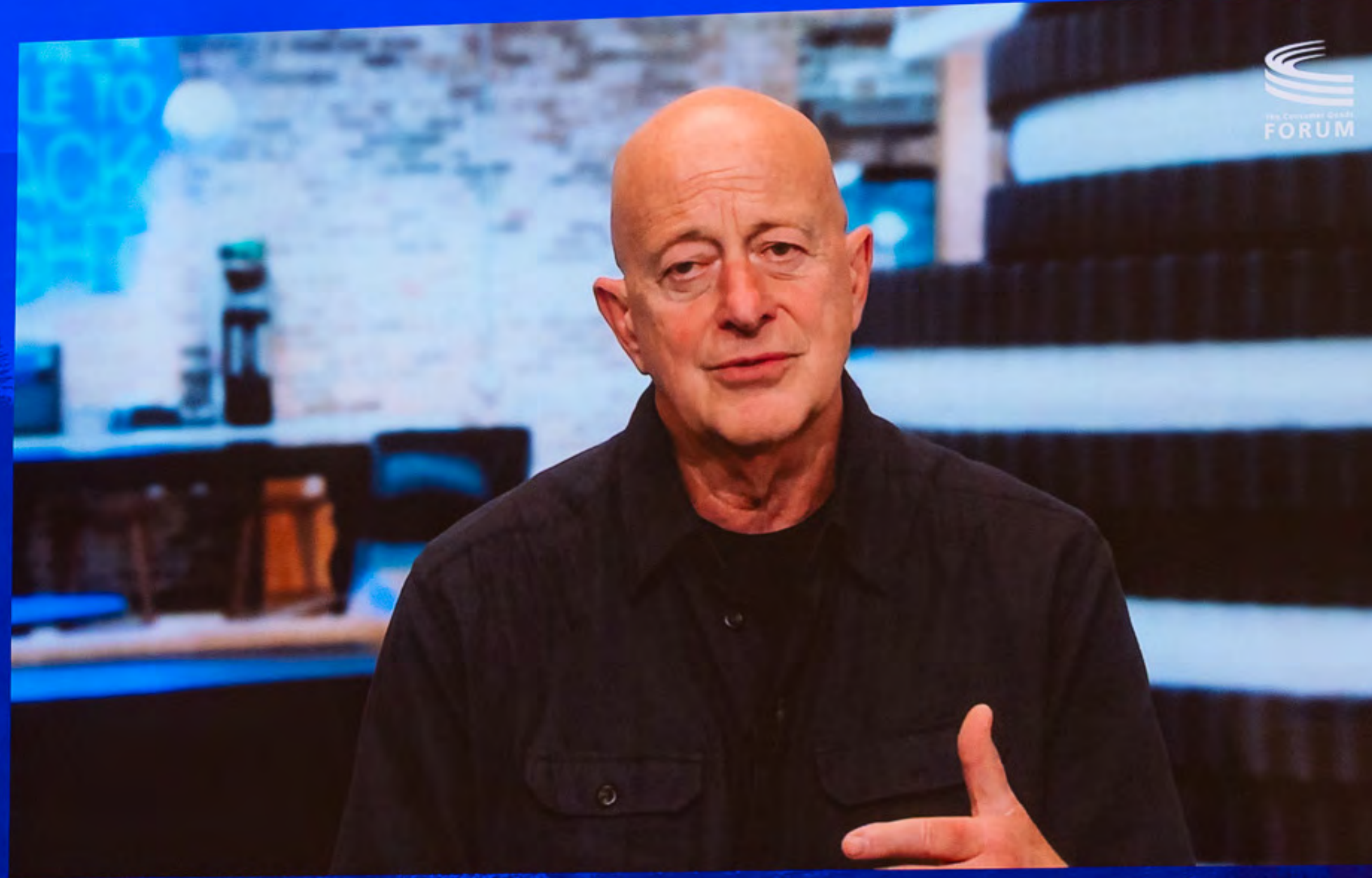
Food safety remains the bedrock of the global food system and the primary safeguard of consumer trust, the standard against which every strategic choice is measured.

Dirk Van de Put (Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Mondelez International, GFSI Co-Sponsor) framed food safety as an absolute prerequisite for commercial viability. He emphasised that for a global enterprise such as Mondelez International, the commitment to embed safety at the core of the business ensures it remains a shared value across the entire organisation, from the boardroom to the frontline.

Mary MacIsaac (Executive Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer) later explored how Loblaw integrates safety into its core commercial identity. By positioning safety as a strategic pillar rather than a compliance cost, Canada's largest retailer demonstrates that protecting the consumer is a fundamental business imperative. These perspectives remind us all that safety is a necessity; a failure at any point in the supply chain impacts the reputation of the entire sector. High-level engagement in these programmes allow food businesses to maintain their role as protectors of consumer confidence.

**“If you are a food company, there is no way that you can compromise on food safety. It’s non-negotiable for all employees, for our customers and for our shareholders.”**

Dirk Van de Put  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer  
Mondelez International and GFSI Co-Sponsor



## Embedding a culture of commitment

Translating boardroom strategy into frontline behaviour requires both a structural framework and a reliable means to deliver it. **Carol Wallace** (Emeritus Professor of Food Safety Management, **University of Central Lancashire**) and **Julian Cox** (Associate Dean, Faculty of Engineering, **University of New South Wales**) introduced the latest edition of the [GFSI Food Safety Culture Position Paper](#), which supports senior leaders in evaluating whether their organisational culture foundations (vision, mission, people) are successfully translating into manifested cultural essentials (hazard and risk awareness, consistency, adaptability and continuous improvement) across the business.

To achieve this at a global level, **Bianca Kolln** (Corporate Quality & Food Safety Governance Director) detailed how **Mars** employs a dedicated digital learning platform to build food safety and quality capabilities across its global segments. Within two years, this initiative reached over 15,000 learners and 800 suppliers, accumulating more than 100,000 learning completions. This infrastructure enables the organisation to provide associates with the practical insights needed to manage risks in real-time.

Yet, as several Conference sessions highlighted, digital tools are only effective when they support the people who use them. Employees need a “personal why” for their daily actions. **Vanessa Coffman** (Program Director, **Alliance to Stop Foodborne Illness**) provided a powerful reminder that behind every data point is a human story. When companies integrate the lived experiences of those affected by foodborne illness into their training, they foster a “culture of care”.

## A New Recommendation for Food Safety Culture

A central highlight of the Vancouver Conference was the launch of **A Culture of Food Safety (Version 2.0)**. Professor Carol Wallace (University of Central Lancashire) unpacked the refined framework, which draws on over 180 academic and industry sources to move culture from a “soft” concept to a measurable strategic asset.

The updated GFSI position paper introduces a dual-layered model designed to bridge the gap between intent and execution:

- **Organisational Foundations** The “DNA” of the business—leadership, values, and purpose.
- **Manifested Practices** The visible, daily behaviours that ensure safety from farm to fork.

By identifying five core dimensions — **Vision & Mission, People, Consistency, Adaptability, and Risk Awareness** the paper establishes a common language for food safety businesses. As Professor Wallace noted, the goal is not just to “do the right thing” when being watched, but to embed safety so deeply into the organisational foundations that “everything is done right” as a matter of course.

[Read the full position paper](#)



**“Culture is not just a project. It’s keeping that communication going, keeping the learning going, and making sure it’s embedded in everything.”**

Professor Carol Wallace  
Emeritus Professor of Food Safety Management  
University of Central Lancashire



**“Food safety is sensory. It requires the ability to smell, to notice nuance in cleaning, and to sense a food safety culture. Digitalisation and AI act as a co-pilot, but the human remains the captain.”**

Stephan Tromp  
Managing Director  
IFS Management GmbH

## The human in the loop

A resilient safety system is anchored by human judgment, which provides the critical nuance and professional discernment required to validate technical outputs. In the session Beyond compliance: food safety audits for real-world impact, Certification Programme Owners explored how to move from “checking boxes” to evaluating actual behaviour and performance at food facilities.

**Heather Gale** (Executive Director, **CanadaGAP Program**) insisted that “the focus should be on the people. Technology can only take us so far”. **Gigi Vita** (Chief Food Safety Assessment Officer, **SQFI** and Senior Vice President, **FMI**) expanded on this, noting that while software can verify data, only the human observer can evaluate the integrity behind it. She emphasised that “the true value of an audit lies in the auditor’s ability to look beyond the screen and assess the human commitment to a culture of safety”.

Similarly, the session Food safety innovation: the future of catering highlighted the need for human intuition in high-pressure environments such as airline catering and during major events (e.g. the Super Bowl) where organisations prioritise continuous monitoring and stress testing to ensure readiness for unexpected disruptions, from simple delays to global pandemics. Both **Dom Mitial** (Vice President of Food Safety & Quality, **Goldbergs Group**) and **Tom Ford** (Vice President, Food Safety and Quality Assurance, **Compass Group**) echoed the sentiment: in crises, decision-making, chain of command, and leadership matter more than the tech itself. It can help process huge volumes of data, automate drudge work and surface risks but humans still make the final safety and policy decisions.

## The human side of science

**Wendy Reinhardt Kapsak** (President & CEO, **International Food Information Council**) shared insights from IFIC’s annual survey, noting a decline in consumer confidence in the food supply—often driven by concerns over foodborne illness, chemicals, and heavy metals. She highlighted that the missing piece in science-based safety information is frequently the absence of simple, relevant facts delivered with a human touch. She encouraged the industry to lead with empathy, follow with succinct data, and conclude with clear, actionable guidance. By showing up authentically, food businesses can transform technical risk assessments into a narrative of care that resonates with a stressed and confused public.

High-value, science-based  
**food safety, quality** and  
**sustainability** solutions



Moving from **Test Results**  
to **Actionable Insights**

[www.merieuxnutrisciences.com](http://www.merieuxnutrisciences.com)

[www.biomerieux.com](http://www.biomerieux.com)

Better Food. Better Health. Better World.

Your Trusted Partner In Augmented Diagnostics

# Conversation 2

## The language of trade

## In a complex and fast-evolving market, transparency is the foundation of trust that allows global supply chains to flow.

Success requires more than efficient logistics; it demands a commitment to traceability, interoperability, and real-time insight that spans the journey from the smallholder farm to the retail shelf. Discussions at the Conference demonstrated how using certification as a common language facilitates more agile trade corridors, ensuring that even the most intricate networks remain grounded in accountability.

## Shared intelligence for risk anticipation

In a globalised economy, the ability to anticipate risks before they enter the production line is a significant advantage. The session Trusted industry collaboration explored how the businesses are voluntarily moving toward a model of “shared intelligence” through pro-competitive, anonymised data pooling. Supported by experts from **BioMérieux** and **Mérieux NutriSciences**, leading executives from **Mondelēz International**, **Chobani**, and **Nestlé** discussed how manufacturers can contribute to and benefit from an “early warning system.” By analysing broad data sets on emerging contaminants or pathogen spikes across different regions and commodities, businesses gain a high-level view of the risk landscape that no single company could achieve in isolation. This approach enables individual leaders to make better-informed decisions regarding raw material sourcing and testing protocols, strengthening supply chain reliability and reducing risk exposure.

## Ensuring transparency in circular supply chains

As manufacturers and retailers accelerate their sustainability commitments, the convergence of environmental goals and food safety has become critical. Addressing the technical challenges inherent in the move toward a circular economy, **Cedric Dever** (Director, Sustainability, **The Consumer Goods Forum**) provided context on the scale of the transition, while **Tola Alade-Lambo** (Vice-President, Food Safety and Quality, **McCain Foods**) and **Filip Milojevic** (Research and Development Manager, **Amtor**) discussed the safety implications of increased recycled content.

The primary challenge lies in ensuring that post-consumer recycled (PCR) materials do not introduce chemical migration risks that could compromise food safety. Leaders at the Conference noted that the transition to sustainable packaging requires rigorous validation and a “safety-first” design philosophy. By prioritising both the integrity of the material and its environmental footprint, manufacturers can ensure that circularity supports, rather than undermines, consumer trust. This alignment between the Consumer Goods Forum Plastic Waste Coalition and GFSI objectives underscores that sustainability and safety are inextricably linked.



**“The balance between sustainability, food safety, and quality is an aspiration. While we are often seen as hindering innovation when we prioritise safety, our goal is to navigate both—ensuring the scale stays balanced so we don’t compromise one for the other.”**

Tola Alade-Lambo  
Vice-President, Food Safety and Quality  
McCain Foods

## Strengthening end-to-end supply chain visibility

Ensuring product integrity requires seamless visibility across complex, multi-stakeholder supply chains. In the session Smart supply chains: safeguarding food safety behind the shelf, leaders from the **American Frozen Food Institute (AFFI)**, **BSI**, **Cargill**, and **Dole** explored the operational challenges of maintaining safety standards as products move through global networks. The discussion focused on how standards and real-time data visibility allow organisations to identify potential bottlenecks or temperature deviations before they impact food safety. By harmonising safety protocols between manufacturers and logistics partners, businesses can ensure a more robust and predictable flow of goods.

Complementing this focus on visibility, **Kersia** representatives, **Katrin Turvey** (Vice President, Global Food Safety for Key Accounts) and **Cath Chapman** (Global Head of Food Key Accounts) and guests from Lactalis, Mérieux NutriSciences and Refresh shared how collaborative verification models are essential for supply chain resilience. They argued that moving beyond traditional 'policing' toward a shared verification framework creates a more stable and responsive trade ecosystem.

## Biological proof as the basis for transparency

To provide the level of transparency now demanded by consumers and regulators, the industry is looking beyond traditional documentation toward biological verification. The plenary session From compliance to credibility: the next frontier in food traceability, hosted by **Merck Animal Health**, introduced the concept of "biological proof" using technologies such as DNA TraceBack®. This shift allows individual companies to verify the exact provenance of a product with absolute certainty, moving beyond reliance on paper-based or digital records that can be subject to error. For retailers and manufacturers, this high-level verification establishes a new standard of digital credibility, ensuring that safety claims are backed by scientific evidence rather than just procedural compliance.

## Targeted regulatory oversight for smarter supply chains

**Dr Joyce Boye** (Director General, Food and Nutrition Directorate, **Health Canada**) and **Dr Evelyn Soo** (Executive Director, Food Safety and Consumer Protection, **Canadian Food Inspection Agency - CFIA**), provided a case study on national modernisation. The Canadian model focuses on moving toward risk-based, automated oversight that uses industry data to enhance public protection.

This involves deep collaboration between government and the private sector to ensure that regulations keep pace with rapid innovation in food production and distribution. By adopting automated systems for import notifications and risk assessments, regulators can focus their resources where they are most needed, creating a more efficient and secure environment for both domestic businesses and international partners.



**“It’s not a data problem, actually it’s a visibility issue, because without visibility, how can you effectively manage risk?”**

**Alex Hoang**  
Traceability and Quality Systems Manager  
Chipotle Mexican Grill

# 5 THINGS

## every food safety leader should know about AI

Embracing AI early allows food safety leaders to influence how it's governed, applied, and trusted, so it strengthens food safety rather than introducing new risks.

### 1 Embrace AI early so you can influence how it's used

AI is entering food safety whether leaders engage with it or not. Early engagement allows food safety leaders to shape governance, guardrails, and use cases so AI strengthens prevention, culture, and trust.

### 3 The goal isn't more data. It's better decisions

Dashboards alone don't reduce risk. Impact comes when data moves teams from visibility to insight to guided action.

### 2 AI should amplify food safety expertise, not replace it

The strongest programs use AI to remove non-value-added work and sharpen prioritization, freeing experts to focus on judgment, accountability, and prevention.

### 4 Not all AI is the same, and it doesn't belong everywhere

Disciplined application matters. Leaders need to understand where different forms of AI add value and where they introduce unnecessary complexity or risk.

### 5 Food safety impact scales when the value chain aligns around shared signals

Data enables stronger alignment across suppliers, operators, partners, and corporate teams, reinforcing that everyone has a vital role in reducing risk.

**Ready to put these principles into practice?  
Connect with your Ecolab representative to learn more.**

[Ecolab.com/GFSI](https://Ecolab.com/GFSI)



# Conversation 3

## Preventive data and technology

Speakers and panellists showcased how industry leaders are already scaling tech and AI through practical, real-world case studies both in technical deep dives and in plenary. The applications demonstrate a shift from retrospective detection to predictive foresight: using tools like digital twins and machine learning to simulate risks before they manifest in the physical world. By converting vast datasets into simplified, frontline instructions, these innovative systems ensure that high-level technical insights are translated into consistent execution on the factory floor.

## AI as a strategic engine for prevention

Artificial intelligence has become a functional engine for facility-level safety. Sessions led by Ecolab and Kersia focused on the tactical application of machine learning to process disparate datasets—such as equipment performance, water chemistry, and hygiene protocols—at a velocity that exceeds human capability. This allows safety teams to identify hidden patterns and intervene before a failure occurs. The strategic value lies in the technology's ability to act as a force multiplier for food safety teams, surfacing the most critical risks in real-time.

**We're not lacking in data, standards or audits. What we're struggling with is having the right data available in a usable format at the right time and the right place for auditors to make intelligent decisions about food safety."**

Todd Redwood  
Global Managing Director - Consumer, Retail and Food  
BSI



## Regulatory architecture for predictive public health

While the private sector develops analytical tools, global regulators are focused on the infrastructure required to scale them. **Don Prater** (Principal Deputy Director for Human Foods, **U.S. Food and Drug Administration**) shared the agency's vision for a "New Era of Smarter Food Safety." The distinctive focus of this strategy is the move toward data interoperability. The FDA's approach relies on creating harmonised data standards that allow information to flow seamlessly between industry and regulators. The strategic takeaway is that AI is only as effective as the data it can access; by building a shared "digital language," the FDA aims to enable a system-wide view of the food supply, allowing for the anticipation of threats at an international level.

## Digital twins and simulation for systemic foresight

The next frontier of prevention lies in simulating risks before they manifest in the physical world. In the breakout session AI-Powered Food Safety, experts including **Dr Rozita Dara** (Associate Professor, Data Strategy Director, School of Computer Science, **University of Guelph**) and **Dr Ákos Józwiak** (Chair, **EFSA Advisory Group on Data**) detailed the use of "digital twins" to simulate global food systems. By integrating diverse datasets—from sensor readings to social media trends—these models allow leaders to run "what-if" scenarios for potential outbreaks. This level of foresight is being put into practice by **PepsiCo**, where **Mahir Bhagia** (Vice President - Chief Food Safety & Quality Assurance Officer) explained how the company uses predictive weather models to anticipate mycotoxin risks in crops months before harvest, allowing for instant, data-led adjustments to global sourcing strategies. Simultaneously, **Deann Akins-Lewenthal** (Senior Director of Global Food Safety and Quality Systems, **Mondelēz International**) highlighted how generative models can simulate risk assessments across

complex portfolios, enabling leaders to proactively recalibrate procurement and supply chains before a single ingredient is shipped.

Applying this proactive logic to the site level, **Marc Potzler** (Technical Services Manager, BCE, PCQI, **Rentokil Initial**) demonstrated how AI-integrated pest control transforms facility management from reactive treatment to real-time risk visibility.

## Bridging the frontline execution gap with AI

In high-volume retail and food service, the primary challenge remains the 'human variable'. **Robert Prevendar** (Chief Food Safety & QA Officer, **Yum! Brands**) emphasised that for a network of 60,000 restaurants, safety systems must be sufficiently intuitive that any team member can execute protocols perfectly from day one. **Eduardo Martinez Debeza** (Head of Quality Assurance International & Global QA CoE, **Restaurant Brands International**) framed the transition from paper to digital systems as a vital way to 'democratise' safety, bridging gaps in operational maturity and language to maintain a single 'operational truth' from Miami to Madrid.

As a practical solution to this complexity, **Testo Saveris** demonstrated the application of Large Language Models (LLMs) to remove the 'silent risk' of misunderstood instructions. By allowing a diverse workforce to interact with safety prompts in their native language, these tools ensure that high-level compliance is translated into precise, real-world execution at every location.



**“Data without action is liability. You need to share that data with your operational partners, to make an impact on food safety.”**

**Samantha Zepp**  
Director, Retail Food Safety Operations  
Starbucks



# *from Farm to Fork* Food Safety *is* our reality

**Kersia takes care at every stage of the food chain** to prevent risk and protect what matters most: people, animals and the planet.

From primary production to food processing and food service environments, Kersia **supports food businesses through preventive controls, operational expertise and science-based approaches.**

**By strengthening hygiene practices, biosecurity and risk management,** we contribute to the robustness and reliability of food safety systems, supports resilient value chains and **helps protect consumers worldwide.**

**Inventing  
a Food Safe World**



[kersia-group.com](https://kersia-group.com)

# Conversation 4

## Beyond compliance

Throughout the Conference, delegates were challenged to bridge the trust gap between certification and universal acceptance. This requires stewardship of a model of transparent reporting that eschews curated audits and surpasses compliance in favour of rigorous accountability.

## Bridging the trust gap

This narrative focused on the tangible distance between technical compliance and universal trust, requiring a total rejection of “compliance complacency”. A dedicated special session featured both technical experts from Neogen and prominent industry veterans Sabahnur Demirci (Vice President, Expert Partners - North America, Mérieux NutriSciences), Susanne Garcia-Schauer mann (Senior Vice President, Global Quality & Food Safety & Regulatory Affairs, Mondelez International), Roy Kirby (Partner, FoodsafERM), Dr. Alejandro Mazzotta (Senior Vice President of Global Quality, Food Safety and Regulatory Affairs, Chobani), Raquel Medeiros (Head of Food Safety - Chemical Contaminants and Packaging, Nestlé), and Hannes Pouseele (Global Solutions Architect for Data and Genomics, bioMérieux).

These leaders warned that historical success must not foster a false sense of security. Instead, speakers at the 25th-anniversary Conference championed transparent reporting and the rigorous assessment of existing processes. By fostering a culture that prioritises continuous improvement, the industry can ensure that safety remains an active, evolving individual company commitment for the next quarter-century.

This is not theoretical; Spir Marinakis (Vice President of Food Safety, Quality, Technical Services & Sanitation, Maple Leaf Foods) grounded the discussion in reality of food safety, centering the human tragedy of system failures. She reminded the assembly of the 2008 listeriosis outbreak in Canada that resulted in 22 lives lost, a number that serves as a solemn reminder of why Maple Leaf is committed to food safety.

She challenged the industry to confront the reality that the prevalence of redundant, “curated” audits signals a persistent lack of full confidence in the current third-party certification model. This was reinforced by Dr. Alejandro Mazzotta (Senior Vice President of Global Quality, Food Safety and Regulatory Affairs, Chobani), who framed the pursuit of excellence as a strategic imperative. For both leaders, these sessions were challenges to the status quo, reminding the room that moving beyond compliance is about elevating food safety to a core driver of brand integrity. The goal is to earn the trust of every stakeholder through transparent, high-impact execution.



“Our purpose is to make sure that people have confidence in the food that we make. It’s time for us to restore trust, reduce the redundancy, and raise the impact.”

Spir Marinakis  
Vice President of Food Safety, Quality, Technical Services & Sanitation  
Maple Leaf Foods

## Food safety is everybody's business

Addressing this trust gap is not the burden of a single entity, but is rooted in the core Conference theme.

GFSI Steering Committee Co-Chairs **Howard Popoola** (Vice President - Corporate Food Technology and Regulatory Compliance, **The Kroger Co.** and **Mark Fryling** (Vice President, Global Food Safety and Quality, **General Mills**) emphasised that in a globalised market, safety cannot be guaranteed in isolation. It requires a model of shared responsibility that moves beyond individual corporate silos.

This stewardship was central to a panel led by Alec Kyriakides, featuring four major Certification Programme Owners (CPOs): Agraya, CanadaGAP, IFS, and SQF. The discussion focused on how audit integrity and data-led reliability serve as the foundation of a resilient food safety system. By joining their efforts toward a singular goal, these stakeholders demonstrated that the rigor of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements is now supported by a renewed commitment to consistent, outcome-based execution.



**“If we stay with what we’re doing right now, we will just continue to audit the curated version of real life and not really what’s happening.”**

Elmé Coetzer-Boersma  
CEO  
Agraya GmbH

## Collaborative problem-solving: The Future of Auditing Workshops

The dedication to continuous improvement was put into practice through four interactive workshops. Focused on “The Future of auditing,” these sessions brought together 160 stakeholders (manufacturers, retailers, certification programme owners, certification bodies, auditors, academics, regulators, accreditation bodies) to address the barriers to once recognised, accepted everywhere. By engaging such stakeholders in problem-solving, the workshops sought ways to embed “continuous assurance” into the audit cycle. The outcomes of these discussions are being synthesised into a proposed roadmap to guide the next phase of the industry’s journey.

## The Future of auditing workshops

A defining element of the Vancouver Conference was a series of high-intensity, interactive workshops that brought together representatives from across the industry. Participants were challenged to address three foundational questions:

1. **Scope & recognition:** what are the main obstacles preventing “once certified, accepted everywhere” from becoming a global reality?
2. **Continuous improvement:** how well is this concept truly embedded in the audit ecosystem, and what mechanisms are needed to reinforce it?
3. **Risk management:** does the current GFSI audit effectively support supplier risk assessment, and how can we improve its impact?

### Common themes & provocations:

- The trust deficit: candid discussions highlighted a persistent “lack of trust” driven by regional variations, customer-specific addendums, and perceived inconsistencies in auditor competence.
- Checklists vs. substance: a recurring takeaway was the need to shift from “paperwork exercises” to evaluating actual factory-floor behaviour and high-impact safety outcomes.
- Predictive mindsets: participants advocated for a move away from retrospective “scores” toward “risk prevention” models that use data to anticipate failures before they occur.

These workshops mark the beginning of a journey. The insights gathered in Vancouver are currently being synthesised to help guide our future work on GFSI benchmarking and audit integrity.

Subscribe to our  
news & updates



“There’s a lot of things that we can improve and it starts with being transparent and trusting each other. When we have the hard conversations, we’re having them in the sense of continuous improvement.”

Amy Parks  
Director, Global FSQA Governance and Regulatory Compliance  
Dole





## A shared resolve

This cycle of challenge and improvement is ultimately driven by a vision that transcends technical benchmarks: safe food for people everywhere. In their remarks, **Sean Summers** (Group CEO, **Pick n Pay** and GFSI Co-sponsor) and **Wai-Chan Chan** (Managing Director, **The Consumer Goods Forum**) reflected on the resolve required to maintain this standard in a volatile global market. The 25-year legacy of the initiative is best viewed through the lens of this determination—the responsibility of the industry to ensure that safety is a universal right.

**“Everybody plays a critical role. Without our stakeholders and ecosystem we would not be where we are today. Networking, connecting, and understanding what others are doing is how we continue to improve.”**

Wai-Chan Chan  
Managing Director,  
Global FSQA Governance and Regulatory Compliance  
The Consumer Goods Forum



# SAFETY at your SIDE

Neogen® is dedicated to advancing modern food safety practices through data-enabled solutions for proactive risk management and holistic environmental monitoring.

We empower our customers with effective environmental monitoring solutions, expert guidance, and data-driven insights to help navigate the evolving food safety landscape. Together, we can help build a brighter future for global food safety. Let's take your environmental monitoring program to the next level.

**Download your copy of the 2nd Edition Neogen Environmental Monitoring Handbook**



[info.Neogen.com/ExploreTheNextChapter](https://info.Neogen.com/ExploreTheNextChapter)

The handbook was created in collaboration with Cornell University and food safety experts from around the world. This comprehensive guide offers a framework that can be tailored to help a wide range of food and beverage manufacturers implement an effective environmental monitoring program suited to their needs.



# Beyond 2026

**The 2026 GFSI Conference confirmed that the tools, partnerships, and thought leadership exist to secure the future of the global food safety ecosystem. Progress now rests on execution—the integration of food safety into commercial and operational decisions. By fostering a culture of care, embracing digital transformation, and modernising audit systems, industry leaders are navigating complexity to uphold the trust of the global consumer.**

As the food industry looks toward the next 25 years, the mission remains unchanged: safe food for people everywhere. The Conference provided a vital opportunity for the food safety community to share perspectives and learn from one another, turning insights into a springboard for improvement. This collaborative energy ensures we are not just reacting to systemic challenges; we are instead designing the proactive solutions that will define the next decade of global food safety.

**“Food safety is absolutely a non-competitive area. It is a given. Every single thing that we do is connected, and that is why we are truly in this together.”**

Sean Summers  
Group CEO  
Pick n Pay and GFSI Co-sponsor



# Rentokil Initial



## ADVANCED PEST MANAGEMENT **TO PROTECT FOOD SAFETY**

Powered by data-driven insights, innovative solutions and over 100 years of expertise, we're trusted by food businesses worldwide to mitigate pest risks and advance food safety standards.

We can be your collaborative partners in pest management, working with you to understand your business' unique challenges and goals to strive for a safer, pest-free tomorrow.



Find out how we can help with your pest control needs at: [rentokil.com](https://rentokil.com)



# Our speakers

## Deann Akins-Lewenthal, Ph.D

Senior Director of Global Food Safety and Quality Systems  
Mondelēz International

## Tola Alade-Lambo

Vp, Food Safety and Quality  
Mccain Foods

## Elizabeth Andoh-Kesson

GFSI Interim Director  
The Consumer Goods Forum

## Debby Atallah

Senior Vice President, Global Standards  
GS1 Canada

## Abena Lily Nyarko Awura

GFSI Technical Manager  
The Consumer Goods Forum

## Dr. Joseph Baumert

Professor in the Department of Food Science  
& Technology and Director of the FARRP  
University Of Nebraska

## Mahir Bhagia

Vice President - Chief Food Safety  
& Quality Assurance Officer  
Pepsico

## Dr. Joyce Irene Boye

Director General, Food and Nutrition Directorate,  
Health Products and Food Branch  
Health Canada

## Gary Van Breda

Director, Global Food Safety (Food & Packaging Suppliers)  
and Consumer Product Safety  
Mcdonald's

## Georgia Briseniou

Marketing Manager  
SGS Nexus

## Philip Bronstein, PhD

SVP, Global Food Safety and Quality Assurance  
OSI Group, LLC

## Stephanie Burchardt

Head of Subject Matter Experts for Food  
Testo Saveris GmbH

## Marci Burton

Senior Client Manager  
NSF

## Wai-Chan Chan

Managing Director  
The Consumer Goods Forum

## Cath Chapman

Global Head of Food Key Accounts  
Kersia

## Nidhi Chaturvedi

Business Development Manager  
SGS Nexus

## Kelvin Chen

Head Of QA  
Wu-Mart & GFSI Steering Committee Member

## Elmé Coetzer-Boersma

CEO  
Agraya GmbH

## Vanessa Coffman

Program Director of the Alliance to Stop Foodborne Illness  
Stop Foodborne Illness

## Catherine Cosby

Senior Director, Food Safety and Regulatory Compliance  
The Kroger Co.

## Michelle Covey

Vice President of Customer Success  
GS1 US

## Julian M. Cox

Associate Dean (International - Emerging Markets),  
Faculty of Engineering  
University Of New South Wales (UNSW Sydney)

## Stefano Crea

Senior Vice President, Global Director Market & Industries  
DNV

## Erin Crowley

Head of Global Thought Leadership  
Neogen

## Rozita Dara

Associate Professor, Data Strategy Director,  
School of Computer Science  
University Of Guelph

## Eduardo Martinez Debeza

Head of Quality Assurance International & Global QA CoE  
Restaurant Brands International

## Sabahnur Demirci

Vice President, Expert Partners - North America  
Mérieux NutriSciences

## Cédric Dever

Director, Sustainability  
The Consumer Goods Forum

## Catherine Dorfman

Strategic Solutions and Partnerships Lead,  
Global Technology Solutions  
Merck Animal Health

## Kevin Doyle

SVP And Chief Digital Officer  
Ecolab Digital

## Bertrand Emond

Ambassador - Culture Excellence Lead  
Campden BRI

## Dr. Jeffrey Farber

JM Farber Global Food Safety Consulting;  
Adjunct Professor Dept. of Food Science,  
University of Guelph

## John Field

Chief of the Chemical Health Hazards Assessment Division,  
Packaging and Contaminants,  
Bureau Of Chemical Safety, Food and Nutrition Directorate  
Health Canada / Government Of Canada

## Simon Flanagan

Research Fellow - Global Food Safety  
Mondelēz International

## Tom Ford

Vice President, Food Safety and Quality Assurance  
Compass Group

## Robin Forgey

Food Safety and Quality Assurance  
Costco Wholesale

## Pavlos Fragkopoulos

Global Quality Management Director  
Mars Petcare

## Mark A. Fryling

Vice President, Global Food Safety and Quality  
& GFSI Steering Committee Co-Chair  
General Mills

## Heather Gale

Executive Director  
CanadaGAP Program

## Nada Galesne-Armand

Group Quality & Food Safety Director  
Refresco

## Susanne Garcia-Schauer mann

Senior Vice President, Global Quality  
& Food Safety & Regulatory Affairs  
Mondelēz International

## Sanjay Gummalla, Ph.D.

Senior Vice President of Food Safety  
and Scientific Affairs  
American Frozen Food Institute

## Alex Hoang

Traceability and Quality Systems Manager  
Chipotle Mexican Grill

## Patrick Husmann

Quality & CSR Director  
Lactalis

## Cindy Jenks

General Manager  
Pick N Pay

## Ákos Józwiak

Head of Food & Nutrition Science  
and AI at Syreon Research Institute  
Chair of The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)  
Advisory Group on Data

## Wendy Reinhardt Kapsak, Ms, Rdn

President & CEO  
International Food Information Council (IFIC)

## Intisar Khan

Head of Food Safety  
Nestlé

## Roy Kirby

Partner  
FoodsafERM

## Bianca Kolln

Corporate Quality & Food Safety Governance Director  
Mars

## Isabelle Kumar

Presenter And Journalist - Moderator

## Alec Kyriakides

Independent Food Safety Consultant  
& Chair Of The Stakeholder Forum

## Jasmine Lacis-Lee

Director Food Science Centre  
Mérieux Nutrisciences AQ - Director Food Science Centre  
& Allergen Bureau - President and Board Chair

## Susanne Maassen

Managing Director  
Better Life Quality Mark Foundation  
(Stichting Beter Leven Keurmerk)

## Mary Macisaac

Executive Vice President & Chief Marketing Officer (CMO)  
Loblaw Companies Limited

## Aurélie Mansord Billiez

DNA Traceback® EURAM Head  
Merck Animal Health

## Spir Marinakis

Vice President of Food Safety, Quality,  
Technical Services & Sanitation  
Maple Leaf Foods

## Tobias Matt

Director Product Management Food  
Testo Saveris GmbH

## Vaneska Mattos

Vice President - Food Safety,  
Quality Assurance and Regulatory Affairs  
Loblaw Companies Limited

## Dr. Alejandro Mazzotta

Senior Vice President of Global Quality,  
Food Safety and Regulatory Affairs  
Chobani

## Raquel Medeiros

Head Of Food Safety -  
Chemical Contaminants and Packaging  
Nestlé

## Karla Mijatovic

GFSI Senior Technical Manager  
The Consumer Goods Forum

## Filip Milojevic

Research and Development Manager  
Amcor

## Dom Mitial

Vice President of Food Safety & Quality  
Goldbergs Group

## Kazuaki Miyagishima

Director, Research Institute for Food Safety  
Aeon Co. LTD

## John Newtown

Food Safety & Quality Market Director,  
Digital Quality Systems  
LabWare

## Tsutomu Okubo

Senior Manager, GFSI Japan  
The Consumer Goods Forum

## Felipe Oliveira

Chief of Technology, Data And Genomics  
Neoprospecta - BioMérieux

## Franck Pandiani

Head Of GFSI Operations  
The Consumer Goods Forum

## Amy Parks

Director, Global FSQA Governance  
and Regulatory Compliance  
Dole Plc

## Howard Popoola

Vice President - Corporate Food Technology  
and Regulatory Compliance & GFSI Steering  
Committee Co-Chair  
The Kroger Co.

## Marc Potzler

Technical Services Manager, BCE, PCQI  
Rentokil Initial

## Dr. Bizhan Pourkomailian

Director - Global Food Safety, Restaurant  
& Distribution  
Mcdonald's

## Hannes Pouseele

Global Solutions Architect For Data and Genomics  
BioMérieux

## Dr. Donald A. Prater

Principal Deputy Director for Human Foods  
U.S Food and Drug Administration

## Robert Prevendar

Chief Food Safety & QA Officer  
Yum! Brands

## Dirk Van De Put

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer  
Mondelēz International

## Todd Redwood

Global Managing Director -  
Consumer, Retail and Food  
BSI

## Lisa Robinson

VP Global Food Safety & Public Health  
Ecolab Inc.

## Marcos Sanchez

Associate Professor, Global Food Security  
Texas Tech University

## Christine Schindler

Ceo & Co-Founder  
PathSpot Technologies

## Jane Siebum

Chief Executive Officer  
Freshcare Ltd

## Fabian Smith

Global Vice President of Product Safety, Quality,  
and Regulatory Compliance  
Cargill

## Dr. Evelyn C. Soo, PhD

Executive Director, Food Safety  
and Consumer Protection,  
Policy and Programs Branch  
Canadian Food Inspection Agency

## Giannis Stoitsis

CTO  
SGS Nexus

## Sean Summers

Group CEO  
Pick N Pay

## Chayanika Talukdar

GFSI Community Manager  
The Consumer Goods Forum

## Stephan Tromp

Managing Director  
IFS Management GmbH

## Katrin Turvey

Vice President, Global Food Safety for Key Accounts  
Kersia

## Aaron Uesugi Ph.D

Principal Scientist Global Food Safety  
and Quality Systems  
Mondelēz International

## Gigi Vita

Chief Food Safety Assessment Officer at SQFI  
and Senior Vice President At FMI  
SQFI & FMI – The Food Industry Association

## Shawna Wagner

Vice President and General Manager  
for Certification Services  
AIB International

## Professor Carol Wallace

Emeritus Professor of Food Safety Management  
University of Central Lancashire (UK)

## Dr. Veronika Weber

Chief Sustainability Officer  
Vion Food Group

## Yang Ying Xu

General Manager, China  
The Consumer Goods Forum

## Dr. Jeremy Yarwood

Chief Scientific Officer  
Neogen

## Adam Zamorski

Global Director for Quality Auditing  
Mondelēz International

## Samantha Zepp

Director, Retail Food Safety Operations  
Starbucks

## Our sponsors

### Exclusive partner

---



### Diamond sponsor

---



### Conference Sponsors

---



### Exhibitors

---



## About us

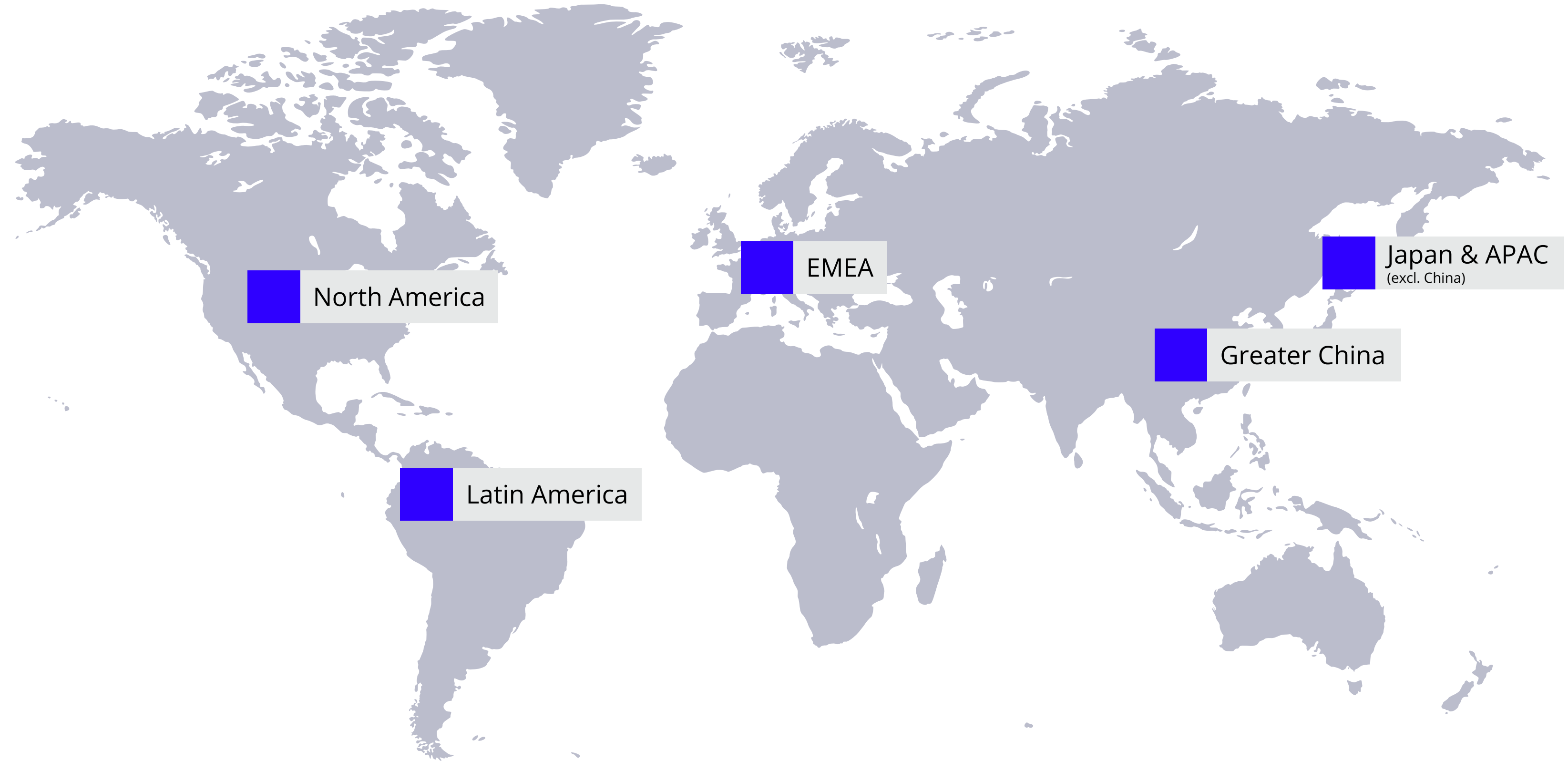
For over 70 years, the Consumer Goods Forum (the CGF) has united the world's leading retailers and manufacturers to solve industry-wide challenges.

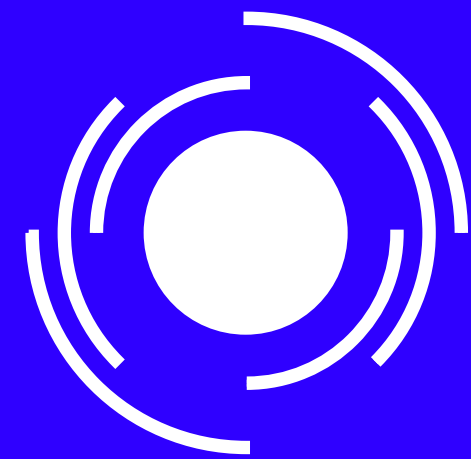
Guided by the vision Better Lives Through Better Business, our work is defined by a singular mission: bringing together consumer goods manufacturers and retailers in pursuit of business practices for efficiency and positive change across our industry benefiting shoppers, consumers and the world without impeding competition. In an era of increasing complexity, the CGF provides the platform for leaders to come together around shared aspirations and impactful collaboration.

## The Global Food Safety Initiative

The Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) brings together key actors of the food industry to collaboratively drive continuous improvement in food safety management systems around the world. With a vision of safe food for consumers everywhere, food industry leaders created GFSI in 2000 to find solutions to collective concerns, notably to reduce food safety risks, audit duplication and costs while building trust throughout the supply chain. GFSI is an industry solution of The Consumer Goods Forum (CGF).

[www.mygfsi.com](http://www.mygfsi.com)  
[gfsinfo@theconsumergoodsforum.com](mailto:gfsinfo@theconsumergoodsforum.com)





**GFSI**  
**Conference**  
Vancouver 2026

# Join us for GFSI 2027

We invite you to join the global food safety community in Amsterdam for our next GFSI Conference (8 - 11 March) where we will continue to drive these vital conversations forward.

[Subscribe to Updates](#)

Visit our [Website](#)

Follow on [LinkedIn](#)

Connect via [Email](#)