

Food Fight - 2021 Trends Complete

Matt Eastland [00:00:06] Welcome to The Food Fight podcast and our final full-fat episode of 2020, a year that has been like no other. I'm Matt Eastland.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:00:15] And I'm Lukxmi Balathasan.

Matt Eastland [00:00:17] And we're both from EIT Food, Europe's leading food innovation community, working hard to make the food system more sustainable, healthy and trusted.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:00:26] So last time we looked at the various ways that covid-19 pandemic has shaken up the agrifood industry for better and for worse. But as the vaccines begin to roll out, we want to spend time optimistically looking into 2021 to discuss the emerging food trends, innovations and thinking that is likely to shape the year to come.

Matt Eastland [00:00:46] Yeah, so to chat through the opportunities, we're joined by two very special guests. First is food and drink analyst Edward Bergen, who joins us from the renowned global research company Mintel. Edward is a well-known speaker in this area and we're really excited to have you on. So thank you very much for joining us Edward.

Edward Bergen [00:01:03] Thanks so much for having me. Looking forward to it.

Matt Eastland [00:01:07] Great stuff.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:01:08] And our second guess is one of our secret weapons at EIT Food and one of my favourite colleagues, it's Annick Verween, I hope I said that right Annick. Annick is well known for having her finger on the pulse as manager of the Rising Food Stress Association, which helps accelerate and support high potential scale-ups in this space. In other words, Annick knows about some of the coolest new projects before anyone else. So thanks very much for having us Annick.

Annick Verween [00:01:34] Nice to be here. Looking forward to it.

Matt Eastland [00:01:37] Yeah. And thanks for returning Annick. I think you're on the podcast with me last year in Lisbon where you stepped into Lukxmi's shoes.

Annick Verween [00:01:44] Yep.

Matt Eastland [00:01:44] So this is a new, from host to guest.

Annick Verween [00:01:48] On the other side. Now, at least I can say what I think.

Matt Eastland [00:01:53] Ahaha ok, now I'm scared.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:01:53] We're looking forward to that.

Matt Eastland [00:01:55] Ok, great. So just to just to kind of set the scene. So, Edwards, can you tell us a little bit about the type of work you do and why, especially in a time like this, the study of trends is so important?

Edward Bergen [00:02:09] Yeah, absolutely. So I work in a food and drink platform team from Intel, so I spend half my time writing and analysing consumer data, innovation, data,

menu data and sales and so on to try and, you know, spot opportunities for our client's and we have many Mintel and then the rest of the time is actually talking to those clients about their own specific requests or briefs or whatever's coming up. So I spend some of my time writing specifically about sources, seasonings, flavours and spreads and some of my time writing sort of more general big picture trend sort of pieces that cover different categories. So we're always trying to spot what's next is going to be our latest aim at Mintel, just really trying to shift towards that future rather than maybe sticking on what's happening now. So hopefully I'll be able to help on this one.

Matt Eastland [00:03:05] And given that there is so much data out there, you know, at Mintel in your role, so how do you identify the areas which are actually worth studying? Because you must be drowning in data all the time?

Edward Bergen [00:03:16] Yeah, we have a lot. So I think the crux of our products and what we do, we speak to consumers in thirty-five countries asking them sort of big picture questions like this year was a big year because we asked them about impact of covid. But in some of those thirty-five countries, we get into every single category across different industries asking about their attitudes to chocolate, concerns about sugar. And if you're talking about that category, what do you want from innovation? Do you want to spend more to buy, you know, a sustainable claim? All sorts of different questions we ask, which is why we work in sort of category groups as well, so that we can really get in depth on a particular space. But the other half of our business is this huge innovation database we have called the global new product database. And we're able to and we're buying from a hundred plus countries now, physical products. And we do some Internet scraping to where they come into our system and we track every single ounce of information from a pack. But then when you've got thirty thousand bars of chocolate over five years, you can actually start to see how the claims change because we'll track claims on packaging size and so on, so we can see Low/no sugar is growing.

Matt Eastland [00:04:31] Right.

Edward Bergen [00:04:31] Just as an example as a percentage of launches per year. So that helps us understand, you know, new trends appearing on the market. And when are you getting into the kind of the future stuff, you can start to maybe see things like an ingredient change that's just up and coming this year and then make a prediction based on using where are we now versus what's going to happen next. So lots of different ways. I could go all day talking about it ahahah.

Matt Eastland [00:04:56] I'm sure you can and we'll get into the more detailed stuff later. But thanks for that, really useful.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:05:01] And I guess, Annick, you know trends are definitely important in terms of your Rising Food Stars. Before we get into that, can you explain a little bit about you, your role, managing Rising Food Stars and really the relevance to keeping up with trends?

Annick Verween [00:05:12] Yes, definitely and thanks for that. I think what is important to know is what we do within the Rising Food Stars is we try to be the gateway to young scale-ups, as you mentioned, to powerful business connections and really opening doors to them, all kinds of opportunities. So we think or at least we select our rising food stars because we believe that they are impactful young scale-ups, very often with a tech focus. So not so much the brand, but much more the technology behind it. And we think, we

firmly believe, that these are the companies that will make a positive impact on the food system. We support them and specifically them, because we are fully convinced that these are companies who have an amazing tech background and they really know how that works. But they, because of that long timeline that they have into creating that impact, they need support, extra business support, extra easy opening of doors, and that's what we provide with them. So if I'm just lucky to be in the midst of this very dynamic group of young companies and on a daily basis, try to make connections with corporates, with investors, with funding opportunities, just always in the middle of a dynamic interaction.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:06:22] And I guess with respect, you know what I was saying and the importance of trends, like how relevant is it for your scale-ups to keep up to date with these trends in the food sector?

Annick Verween [00:06:31] Well, I think it's crucial. It's crucial for every young business if you don't follow the trends. And even more important, if you can't be well informed about the trends before they are there, it's so difficult to catch up. So it's important for them to know, to know well in advance and to tailor their technology towards a specific trend that is very important for the consumer. Because I do think in the food system, however you turn it, whether you're B2B, B2C, in the end you always need somebody who wants to buy what you are part of.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:07:04] Exactly, and I guess especially for startups, you always have to be that fortune teller, right? Always have to be reading what's coming up in the future and trends are absolutely important. I agree.

Matt Eastland [00:07:14] And so just talking about, like trends that we've seen in the past, I guess one big trend that stood out for me a couple of years ago is that, you know, everybody started taking photos on Instagram and overnight everybody became over, became like a food blogger. Right? And as a result, we saw the food industry kind of shift as a result of that. So reformulating products to make them more Instagram worthy and more visual, more oozy, changing the size and shape. So just as one example, that came from an unexpected place. So Edward, do you have any thoughts on other key trends over the past few years that have made lasting shifts in the agrifood sector?

Edward Bergen [00:07:55] Yeah, firstly, that trend we call it 'Eat With Your Eyes'.

Matt Eastland [00:07:58] Eat with your eyes.

Edward Bergen [00:07:58] That's one of our trends that's not going anywhere at all. I think one that we've been tracking for a while, I guess you could call it as you know, a big theme of sort of the sustainability side. But we've been tracking something, I guess we gave it a name last year, we called it 'High Tech Harvests'. And if we're talking about the agrifood sector and how and I think actually covid-19 has really helped it, maybe this one tick along. But how consumers are going to need to be convinced a little bit more that it's ok for science to get involved in our food production. Kind of the simple one. We were a bit scared of too much science in our food, that we had this big trend of naturalness for ages. But actually, whether that was down to, is it bad to have something that's maybe been made in an artificial way? We didn't really know or consumers didn't really know. So putting a natural unpack was like, ok, this is therefore clean and is how I should be eating because it's not been tampered with in any way. But we have this trend, 'High Tech Harvest', which we're going to be tracking. We call that 2030 trends for us. And it was looking at new ways to source and produce. A great example will be an underground farm

under a London tube station. That's kind of the perfect way. And, you know, there are examples out there where you can just use the lighting. You don't need to tamper with the actual seeds or ingredients. You can just change the lighting to actually shift how a product grows. You know, we had examples of kale being made, grown not bitter just using the lighting in an underground farm.

Matt Eastland [00:09:27] Is that right? Wow.

Edward Bergen [00:09:28] So not only that, but, you know, having an underground farm means that you're growing in a place that you weren't before and if we're all becoming more urban and consumers moving into cities and climate change impacting our environment outside of cities, and it's the future. And that was just one example. But there are so many others. So just give me one other great one. I saw the impact of having a 3D printer in the middle of a desert somewhere like Africa where access to new technology isn't as quick and easy and maybe you could 3D print a new part for a machine. In the past, you'd have had to order it from the other side of the world and it'd be delivered and so on. And now you're able to 3D print it, you know, next door.

Matt Eastland [00:10:08] Amazing.

Edward Bergen [00:10:08] So small changes to the industry that will help us grow in new locations. And that's not to mention vertical farms and so on are also connecting us. But those are two quite funky examples.

Matt Eastland [00:10:19] Thanks. Yeah, thanks for setting that up. I mean, I'd really like to talk more about the kind of food and tech side and those trends later, because it does seem to me that you're right. You know, people are concerned about food and tech. And yet I suppose if you look back across the evolution of the agrifood sector, everything we've done has basically been food tank you could even argue that pasteurisation is food tank at one point. So I think this is something which has always been with us. But, yeah, let's talk about that.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:10:47] Edward you mentioned the year that was 2020. And if we really focus on this year of disruption, there's obviously been a lot of changes forced upon us. So Annick, you know, speaking specifically about the scale-up, so how has the last year changed the focus of the scale-up's you're working with?

Annick Verween [00:11:03] Yeah, I think it's a combination of two things. It's been a hard year for young companies, that's in general right? It's everything, covid, the consequences on that, markets being closed, opportunities they could not chase, investors who freeze investments. So they had a lot of struggles. For some of them, it was an opportunity to redirect what they did. And I guess in one of the previous podcasts, you also had SwizzDeCode. They work on food, sanitation and delivering safe products. They're really tuned one of their products specifically to detecting covid in manufacturing principle and how they could change that. For other ones, it's almost been an opportunity, because I do think that due to covid, suddenly everybody was confronted by the fact that taking food every day and buying what you want to buy every day is not so straightforward anymore. We all remember going to the supermarkets, here in Belgium it was the toilet paper eh? There's always something.

Matt Eastland [00:12:04] Yeah same in the UK.

Annick Verween [00:12:04] But certainly you could not buy what you used to buy for fifty years, all the time everywhere. So and I think it's for a lot of them, it also offers an opportunity to say ok, how can we make this food system more robust? Suddenly, the food sector was like the main sector where, that needed to be protected. It was one of the few things that kept on going and going. So I think for a lot of them, it also opened the opportunities in having the clear visibility of doing things more transparent, more healthy and more sustainable. And I do think here is always the information of the consumer has become more crucial. It's more about them telling the story. We had a couple of years ago where you had the brand and it was a nice story and people bought it. Now, I think people are even more aware and more crucial about what they eat and why they eat it. However, you always still have this convenience angle. We don't want to give that up. And I think that offers opportunities for a lot of them.

Edward Bergen [00:13:06] The convenience angle is very interesting because you have said two years ago convenience was food to go, going into a supermarket and being able to get your, you know, your meal to go and you're just quick top-up shop, small packs, really easy to sort of carry around. And we've shifted from convenience out of home to convenient cooking, convenience in the home. And that sort of brought new opportunities for small brands that could align to that. We know that meal kits have done quite well this year and we had a great veg delivery service called Oddbox that used odd wonky fruit and veg that's done really well this year. My favourite one of this year has been the impact that consumers have been buying small appliances. And we know that Black Friday has just happened and small appliances, did quite well. And we've seen sales of like bread makers and instant pots really grow. And there was a really cool example from Williams-Sonoma in the United States. I think they're a retailer, they have a really big private label range and they did an instant pot range because they realised consumers are actually they're not thinking about I need to cook tonight. They're thinking I need to cook in my instant pot. I'm still going to cook. I don't want a ready meal. But so they're actually just saying buy all the ingredients in this pack. It says instant pot on it and just pop it in and we'll give you the recipe on pack. So it's just a slight shift in how we communicate it to consumers and that small changes this year, had brought really good opportunities like that.

Matt Eastland [00:14:29] And is that one of the, that kind of convenience factor, is that one of the things that you picked up on the, your Mintel 2030 global food and drinks trends and has anything else in there, I guess changed as a result of covid or accelerated?

Edward Bergen [00:14:45] That one probably wasn't picked, because we did our 2030's last year and that one because convenience was just ticking a long, food to go we thought it was always going to have its place. We were getting into things like meal kits. They were starting to grow and that was sort of picked up more, automation, consumers being able to get more personalised with the products that they want and helping people to semi scratch cook without having to, you know, do totally buying raw ingredients. So we did pick that up. But the impact of covid has helped that tick along. I think that this year, especially, that we're now going to be trusting in science more and vaccines, I think, is going to help consumers, you know, trust in new methods of production, more. So we talked about science already, but consumers will be, will hear the, you know, cultivated meats been grown in a lab and they're now so safe to eat. And they might actually believe that and go, okay, that's not weird because it's okay because the scientist said it's okay. When maybe last year it was more thinking an influencer said it's a bit weird to eat it and actually they're not qualified to tell you anything. So I think there's going to be renewed trust in science again, especially if science is what saves us, which is clearly going to happen. So that's

definitely helped drive some of these, the 2030 trends, the science, those sort of a high tech harvest trends.

Matt Eastland [00:16:02] So that's really interesting. I mean, I've obviously thought about covid accelerating certain trends, but I never thought about the kind of parallel there that because there's been so much talk about science, because of all the vaccines coming through covid, that actually that would then support people's acceptance of sort of science and tech in the agrifood industry. That's really interesting. As you say, going into next year with all the vaccines going, maybe this will start to sort of tick upwards. So you've pulled that one on convenience there, but just and before we kind of dig into the real sort of categories of trends just from both of you, what have been your like quick headline trends that you've seen this year? Whether it's across the industry or from start ups. So convenience we said was one. But I mean, and what have you seen from a start-up and scale-up perspective?

Annick Verween [00:16:50] I think there are two things very clear. It's everything that is personalised diet, smart diets. Call it whatever you want, the fact that again, science and tech together can mean something for you and I as an individual consumer. It is different for me than it is for you, then it is for Edward for example. So there's a lot of opportunities and things going on there. And then a personal soft spot for me, is everything that's related to, again, the high tech and also the regenerative agriculture. Really, instead of just using the soil then leave it there, to know it and nourish it and it's the basis of everything. And there's so many good things happening there that can have an impact. So many cool start-ups doing stuff there.

Matt Eastland [00:17:34] Cool. Thanks.

Edward Bergen [00:17:35] So I've got a funky one, which is then you could talk about Maslow's hierarchy of needs. I guess the sheer for many people, the bottom layer, the idea of safety and survival has been essential. So while, you know, sustainability is going to come back in a vengeance, I reckon it's been on pause a little bit. But one of the things that's come out of it is you might call it sanitary theatre or safety theatre, how brands show that they're clean. And I don't mean clean in terms of their label, that their environment is clean. And there's been this new trend about that our products have been well washed, our staff have got gloves on, we're wearing face masks, we wear the right PPE. And I love how they're using that to advertise and market themselves now. So you'll see things, which will help maybe certain new products come to market when they're making sort of lab-grown products, they can - or cultivated meat as we said - they can actually this is a cleaner method of producing and they'll play on the theatre of the cleanliness. We know that, you know, go to Deliveroo and that's what they're all about. They're about, you know, you're going to have touch-free. You know, they're going to leave the door knocking and stand away from your front door. Little simple trends but actually just to give consumers that confidence that everything's safe. That's been a nice one for 2020, which may not survive forever.

Matt Eastland [00:18:54] Yeah.

Lukxmi Balathanan [00:18:54] Yeah.

Matt Eastland [00:18:55] So maybe people will move away from Instagramming their food to Instagramming like the cleanliness of the kitchen.

Edward Bergen [00:19:03] Ahahahaha.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:19:03] Ahahha Exactly.

Matt Eastland [00:19:04] Who knows.

Annick Verween [00:19:03] Yeah, but there are great examples on that. Specifically, there's a company within my networks Can Trust and that's what they do. You as a consumer can take an end product. You take a picture of the code and you have that transparency through all the whole line. So we've been talking about connecting all these part of the value chain already for a long time. I think that's not a new trend, but now really in a transparent way, communicating it towards the consumer. And you know what really meaning it, I don't mean the green washing principle really showing what you do in an honest and transparent way. There's so many opportunities there. I think a lot of the power of this is still with the consumer. And they are they are wanting to be informed. They want to know what they eat for what reasons.

Matt Eastland [00:19:47] Yeah. So, yeah, trust and transparency seems to be a big trend which is emerging. I think we're now already moving into the deep dive areas. So why don't we have a look at this? So looking into next year and beyond then, I mean, there is so much that we could talk about here. So we've tried to kind of categorise some key areas. So if I give you the area, could you both just give me your thoughts on the trends for 2021 and maybe any companies to watch out for as this will be interesting. So if I just said like health. So obviously given everything that's going on with covid, people are thinking a lot more about their health and wellbeing. But how has this sort of manifested itself as a trend in the sector? Edward, what do you think?

Edward Bergen [00:20:30] A few different things are going on. I think looking at what's happened this year, consumers have realised that they're vulnerable and they've realised that they're not going to live forever. We know that the virus, for example, has attacked consumers with diabetes and that there's been concerns about that. So it's helped bring, you know, make consumers think a bit more about their overall health. And we think there's going to be, I guess, a renewed push on long term health. There's been things like immunity claims. Vitamin D has been brought to the market. We already had digestion, digestive claims growing, but then links made, whether they're proved or not to that. Also helping your immune system today. I'm currently drinking Kombucha here, not for any other that tastes amazing. And so that's from one side. There is going to be some consumers. They're going to be thinking, actually, I do need to think about my long term health. But, but this is where it's fun to talk about trends, because that doesn't mean that indulgence is going anywhere.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:21:30] Hmm.

Edward Bergen [00:21:30] And we've got a trend this year, which is for 2021. We've called it, I guess, 'Feed The Mind'. And this link to emotional health is going to grow even more as and this has been a bad year for mental health. But actually next year, I think it's going to be a great year to sort of fight back against mental health. Hopefully consumers coming back together, having fun and enjoying company of others, but also that it's okay to have a treat moment because it's going to keep you going and keep you smiling. And so there's going to be this, I think balance will come back into focus that you do need to think about your long term health, but at the same time, you know, indulgent brands have a role to play and also hopefully new claims related to the brain health and your, you know,

relaxation and so on. Tea plays in that space already. Other categories are definitely going to be getting into it. So health is massive and there's different ways to do it. Actually, indulgence can have a role in it, too.

Matt Eastland [00:22:30] That's interesting. So it's like food enhancing our mood because it's good for us and it makes us feel better. But it's also about food enhancing our well-being, that if you're having something which you really enjoy, whether that's an indulgence or not, that actually has a positive mental wellbeing perspective, that's really interesting. So what about you Annick? From a sort of start-up or scale-up perspective, particularly amongst your community, what are you seeing from a health perspective?

Annick Verween [00:22:57] I can just agree on what Edward said. I think there's a lot of asking now about everything that enhances immunity. So we have all these different food sources, but also already existing products who are now in homes to have a better influence, do things there. There's always a better question about the added value of a real claim, health claim. For consumers they're quite confusing and how to solve that. So we have some companies who really work on that, how to nicely address a claim towards the consumer and make this transparency so everybody understands if you buy something that makes sense. Another thing I do think and there I can give the example of LOEWI, one of the Rising Food Stars, it's really, again, that we need certain things. And so we want to buy products who are tailored according to our needs. In this case, it's a grouping of vitamin supplements. But again, so much further. Smart With Food, another company linked to one of the bigger retailers. It's as easy as an app that you have on your phone whereby you say, ok, this is what I want to eat. I have a deficiency and this and this or I want more of this and this, and whoop you get your package fully online with what you need to buy the amount and what are the good products to enhance you with that two very interesting things.

Lukxmi Balathanan [00:24:15] It really sounds like they're enabling making the healthy choice, the easy choice. That's really interesting.

Annick Verween [00:24:20] Convenience always Lukxmi.

Lukxmi Balathanan [00:24:22] Oh yeah, absolutely. I guess, you know, moving on from health, you know, the big thing we just recently just heard about lab-grown chicken meat being available in Singapore, like really exciting for the sector. So, yeah, let's talk about meat alternatives and alternative proteins. What are you seeing? What are your thoughts on 2021 and beyond?

Edward Bergen [00:24:44] So this isn't even the trend of, you know, this is mainstream, the idea that we should be reducing our meat consumption. We just got some stats for the UK and we says that it's still about one point six percent of people that say they're vegan and it doesn't sound very much. And the market still talks about the vegans. And while they're really helping sort of provide noise and help innovation take along, actually it's not about them. They're just loving the rollercoaster in the ride. And we've got forty one percent of consumers, this is in the UK, who say they're reducing the amount of meat they eat. It's about this, this trend is about them. And we're going to get to a point where, coupled with everything going on, you know, with our population is growing and so on, are we going to have enough meat to actually feed everybody? We know the plant-based and potentially lab-grown is going to have to help to feed us. So the big issue now is can you convince the consumer that it's okay to eat? Does it taste as good? That's got to be the main thing. You know, you look at plant based now compared to five years ago, five years

ago, it was bland and dreadful. No one really wants to meet it unless they were forced to. And now it tastes really good. And we've got Tesco, Wicked Kitchen naming themselves Wicked Kitchen and putting things like seasonings in the range. Yes, they're plant-based but it's just about providing flavour and fun. And that's what we want to start to see happen more that we shift away from these things. A new insight seeing a particular diet, and actually it's about the standard average mainstream consumer who's still going to eat meat, you know, through the week but they are happily, you know, moving to new meals. And this is going to help cultivated meat really drive. If they can make it taste good, we know that all the fast food joints are doing it. The first fast food joint that gets a cultivated meat product in their burger and if it tastes nice, they're going to win and it's going to be amazing story and consumers will try it and they'll probably enjoy it. So a really good future for this space.

Matt Eastland [00:26:45] Yeah, exciting trend. And also, it's spawned a new word that I came across as part of the research for this podcast, Labra Culture, which is a new one to me, which I actually really quite like. It's quite nice.

Lukxmi Balathanan [00:26:56] And I completely agree with your point about the fun element, because I'm still a bit baffled. Like, you know, veggie burgers and veggie dogs have been around for years and now it's trendy and sexy, you know.

Edward Bergen [00:27:09] Well, they taste nice now.

Matt Eastland [00:27:10] Yeah.

Lukxmi Balathanan [00:27:10] And it's that fun element, right? Like what you said, like it's making going veggie a bit more mainstream. So I guess on the same topic to you Annick, what are you seeing? Like you have a number of companies in this space. So what are the ones that you've been keeping an eye on?

Annick Verween [00:27:24] Yeah indeed, and that we've had a lot of them. I think this is specifically the sector who has a positive impact of covid right? The fact that everything started in slaughterhouses suddenly alternative proteins are even more important than they already are. As Edward said they're mainstream. I think what's happened now in Singapore is going to change things at a huge pace. And I also have, for example, Mosa Meat. One of the Rising Food Stars, just closed their seventy-five million series B.

Matt Eastland [00:27:51] Wow.

Annick Verween [00:27:51] To really produce a factory in the Netherlands to do it and to step away from the whole discussions and the landing that we had the last couple of years. I fully agree on the tasting, I think again, taste is king always. That's what we buy. We buy something we like and all the rest is good, but still it has to taste good. So I even have a Piece Of Meat, a company, and they cultivate fat, not animal, just animal fat. So you can add it to certain products to have that specifically juicy taste and all of that stuff.

Matt Eastland [00:28:24] Wow.

Annick Verween [00:28:24] But I do think, yes, it's still meat, right? It's cultivated in a more sustainable way on the long term. Hopefully it also becomes economically feasible. But on the other hand, we also have all these plant-based proteins, but also some so many different things are happening. Mycoprotein now being scaled up to really have your

myco burgers. Alternative proteins from waste streams, which is maybe an even more exciting theme because it's more than just making a plant based protein. It's also using something that otherwise is thrown away. And I think that for me is extra exciting if you can really close the circle fully. That's great. So Napiferyn is the perfect company. These are all companies who are raising a lot of money on the short term, really building factories and stepping away of the whole story that things should do different. They really do them differently.

Matt Eastland [00:29:20] And you bring up a kind of another theme that we'd like to talk about Annick. Which is, so you mentioned food waste and I guess we're sort of moving into that sustainability sphere. So, you know, we've had the year off to kind of Greta and she's had a huge impact on the kind of people's perception about the environment. We've had covid people staying at home, which is, you know, maybe focussing people's minds more on things like food waste. But from a start up perspective, what's the trend here in sustainability and is this accelerating?

Annick Verween [00:29:52] Well, I think you see three different things, right? And it's like the muscle of paramite. Yes, you have companies who take a waste principle and turn it into something that creates value, no waste streams anymore. We don't even use the word anymore right? We use Side streams and we make something of it. But if you can just reduce the waste. So in there we see two different things, companies who really focus a lot on packaging because we can see a lot of things about packaging, but still us as convenient consumers want to buy something that we can keep for a while before we use it. So we need packaging anyway. So a lot of great examples dare Mimica is a company working on that TIPA made a compostable packaging, both of them really on the go now and doing pilots with big corporates. And then you have the third thing like really can't you just produce without creating waste? And then there's no need for that anymore, just the avoidance of waste. And there we have companies like Wasteless, the name says it by themselves, who have a technology which makes it easier in the supermarket, again, to have the convenient choice that you just pick the package that you're going to eat that day and not the one that really annoys me when I'm in the supermarket where you have people just dragging their salad all the way to the back of the shelf just to take the one, even if they're going to eat it that day.

Matt Eastland [00:31:14] I know it so strange.

Annick Verween [00:31:14] So if you can just take that out.

Annick Verween [00:31:17] Yeah, actually, we've had I think of all the three examples you gave there. I think we've had them all on the show. So good to know that we're on trend as well.

Annick Verween [00:31:25] Perfect.

Matt Eastland [00:31:25] And what about you, Edward? What from a sustainability perspective, you've spoken about this a bit, but what are your big trends?

Edward Bergen [00:31:31] So there's a few, I like the using waste products but I just wanted to share a really great example. I don't know if you guys are a fan of the great British Crumpet?

Matt Eastland [00:31:41] Yeah all over that.

Edward Bergen [00:31:42] There's you thinking where's he going with this. There was a really lovely example from a beer brand called Toast. You may have seen it.

Matt Eastland [00:31:50] Yeah we had them on the show actually.

Edward Bergen [00:31:52] Did they talk about their Warburton's collaboration?

Matt Eastland [00:31:55] I think we were, it was just a little bit ahead of that, but I then was following them and they were saying that they're now doing something with Warburtons yeah.

Edward Bergen [00:32:03] They're picking up the waste wheat products to make a Warburton like a crumpet flavoured beer or crumpet created beer.

Matt Eastland [00:32:11] Amazing.

Edward Bergen [00:32:11] You know, think about all the tastes, you know, examples you're going to have on pack to entice the consumer. But just an example like that of what it represents. And then someone gets like a craft beer at the end of it that's inspired by favourite brands. You know, I love that. Plus, it's got that amazing sustainability angle. There's lots of things, we've discussed from Mintel ocean plastics and how, you know, plastics. We're going to have to get to a point where we see more brands reusing plastic that has been recycled. You know, we constantly hear in the media how we need to recycle more and brands need to make their material recycled. But the amount of stuff that actually gets recycled once that you've gone to a dump, recycle dump, is virtually nothing. And then, as I said, we can analyse that in our database. The number of products, which is tiny, minuscule percent or less than, that say they reuse recycled plastic to make that packaging, is so tiny. And that's where an opportunity comes. I know Coca-Cola, they've launched, I think they've talked about they want to do this over the next sort of thirty years to get to a point where all their bottles are made out of at least reused or plant based packaging. That's one. We're going to see a lot more of that. I think the other side of this is where I get to talk about my beloved chickpea, is consumers understanding that some ingredients are better for the planet and for us, but better for the planet than others. So you're getting something like the chickpea that feeds the soil while it was growing and it doesn't use a huge amount of water compared to the almond, which has questionable levels. And I think that we're going to see more brands just celebrating ingredients. In the past, it was about saying this ingredient tastes nice lets mention it on pack. Actually now it's saying, you know, eat chickpeas, they taste amazing and also they.

Matt Eastland [00:34:04] Good for the planet.

Edward Bergen [00:34:04] And they're great for the planet and they're great for you. And that's, you know, try to go forward. The other one, we've got a trend this year called 'Quality Redefine', which talks about what does quality mean to the consumer? Yeah, it's got to be a good price, but it's telling them the story that we pay our farmers fairly, that we grow in an environment that's good for the soil there, we're not ruining environments. And so it's just going to expand more and more and more. Most of it's about traceability and transparency from the brands, but also there will be brands that will just drop out because they can't keep up with consumers wanting this stuff, really soon.

Lukxmi Balathanan [00:34:39] I was going to say it's interesting hearing you hear about the chickpeas because it's been such a staple diet for so many people, you know, from the east. And it's kind of interesting how that's kind of being incorporated now into the Western diet.

Matt Eastland [00:34:51] Yeah, well, I've certainly seen something on like research-wise that saying that 2021 is meant to be the year of the chickpea, which, you know, I don't know whether that's right or not, but it certainly seems to be a trend.

Edward Bergen [00:35:02] I hope so.

Lukxmi Balathanan [00:35:03] Yeah. More hummus.

Annick Verween [00:35:06] We have Innovopro in our network. Taly will be really loved hearing that.

Matt Eastland [00:35:10] That's right. Tell us about Innovopro.

Annick Verween [00:35:12] Yeah so there a company who are making alternative proteins from chickpea and they've been struggling now for quite some years and really explaining that, that there is a sustainable added value to work with chickpeas, but they always have the economic and economics against them. So now, indeed, with this new trend, they have an opportunity. They also very recently released and now they're *whistles*. 2021 will definitely be a different year.

Matt Eastland [00:35:38] Ok.

Lukxmi Balathanan [00:35:38] That's amazing. Yeah, I feel like there's just so much disruption to like look forward, in a positive way, to look forward to as a result of the current situation. I'm going to pick up a little bit, I think you've both already touched a bit on like food packaging in terms of sustainability. But I think food packaging, you know, it's been the year of delivery based food concepts. I think my son's first word is going to be Deliveroo this year.

Matt Eastland [00:36:00] Ahahaha that would not be a good thing Lukxmi.

Lukxmi Balathanan [00:36:03] It's either going to be Alexa or it's going to be Deliveroo. But Edward, so where do you see the whole delivery based food concept going?

Edward Bergen [00:36:11] Where is it going to go, to drones? That's kind of related. This is going to go anywhere people love the convenience of it. There will be hopefully a fight back to get people back sitting with their friends in restaurants again next year. Please. Really want to sit at a restaurant with my friends. The delivery...I'm going to go to the Far East. When SARS happened fifteen, twenty years ago.

Lukxmi Balathanan [00:36:31] Yeah.

Edward Bergen [00:36:32] There was this huge boost in capability of online comfort and shopping online. And they effectively gained a whole generation. You know, young people were starting to but older consumers, not old consumers. Older consumers began to use online services because they had to and they never went back. And we've seen this year people like my parents who cannot use anything, ordered online delivery for the first time,

and they're in the sixties. They are the worst when it comes to tech. But yet their capability has hugely increased because they realise this is ok to do. So what we've got is that we're not going to see a decline now in online delivery. It's not going anywhere. And that gives a whole host of opportunities to brands out there. And you might talk about start-ups in a minute, because stuff like swiping up on Instagram and purchasing a product immediately or going to, I think of an example, BBC Good Food, finding a recipe, clicking add to basket, it goes to your supermarket basket and you can go and you've got the recipe there. Loads of these new bits of technology that are helping consumers to shop. And then you've got your Deliveroo's and delivery services, which, you know, you can have a really lovely food experience at home and not have to go out. And, you know, there's so many opportunities for space to grow. And I think now if a brand is coming to market and they don't have an online plan, they won't succeed.

Matt Eastland [00:37:55] Do you think that it's just, I'm just trying to think of the offset here. So lots of people obviously, you know, going for things like Deliveroo and having their food in, but there's also through covid a trend for people to want to be doing more home cooking and baking, sitting together down as a family. You know, we had Klaus from Aarhus University on a couple of weeks ago. He was talking about one of his reports that he's produced, looking at these sorts of trends. And one of the big ones is people are, across Europe certainly, sitting down more as a family. So how does that kind of balance out? People are ordering more from the likes of Deliveroo and ordering online, yet at the same time cooking more at home. Do you think there's space for both?

Edward Bergen [00:38:31] Yeah, I think so. I wonder how the ready meal market will do over the next few years and well, there's these other sorts of convenience semi scratch cooking, you know, products out there. I think there's space for both. Consumers have told us they've spent more time cooking this year when we asked them about the impact of covid and they say that they're going to do more next year. Especially very young consumers like sixteen to nineteen year olds have cooked for the first time ever. And we had some data about kids and cooking a couple of years ago and it was pretty dreadful. You know, they do not know how to cook and actually they've really learned a lot this year.

Matt Eastland [00:39:05] Amazing.

Edward Bergen [00:39:05] And new machines are helping them, so bread makers and the banana bread trend and so on. Consumers are, it's still cooking and they're enjoying the process of it.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:39:14] So what do you sort of see in terms of the convenience being integrated into home cooking? I think you touched upon this a little bit like the tech and the appliances that we'll start to see in the homes. Do you have any sort of insights into that? What were the future trends in kitchens look like?

Edward Bergen [00:39:30] Oh smart kitchens. There are now products that can cook things that you would not have felt comfortable doing. So you're getting air fryers and you're getting new types of pressure cookers that aren't as sort of scary and complicated. And we are getting to a future where you will be able to do a bit of cooking, but your machine will do the rest. And I don't know. Have you seen, Annick have you seen any brands that have done some, you know, have entered this space because they realise that consumers are using machines more?

Annick Verween [00:40:01] Yes, some of the young companies really see opportunity there. There's a Belgian company here, and they have delivered something specifically for the young market where you have like a package like Deliveroo or like a food bag but then everything is frozen. You put it in your fridge, you have a machine and it works like obamari did we say in Belgium, like with hot water. And then you put it in the moment you want to, and then you have your really nice, amazing meal. And it's healthy and it's easy and you don't need to plan because they deliver it on a weekly basis. I do think when it comes to these smart kitchens, it's even two fold. You have all these smart machines, but you still have the feeling, at least even I have as a housewife, that you want to do stuff yourself and have your herbs nicely. So there are some companies who now have these indoor gardens, right? You have your basil just growing nicely green on the back of your kitchen. Looks even great when you have people coming over, look how healthy I am. So yeah, there are a lot of opportunities there. I think it's always going to be a combination of both. Yes, we want to cook ourself. We still think it is necessary in this time to sometimes get away from all the digital fuzz and whatever. So I prefer to get my food bag once a week. Nicely the ingredients and the amount that I need for my meal instead of having to buy everything in bulk and then to throw away half of it. So again, sustainability thing. But however, on Friday you're at home, everybody wants Deliveroo. We're used to that. On Friday, you sit down, you watch Star Wars and you eat something easy.

Edward Bergen [00:41:35] Yes, I agree to well Mandalorian. There's a really cool brand called Tovala who have made a smart oven. This is quite funky and it's also a meal kit subscription company. So you get your meal kit, your oven scans your recipe card, so it knows what setting it needs to be, how hot, how long and so on. You prep some of your ingredients in trays that they, recyclable trays that they give you. You pop them in your oven and you press go and it does all the work for you. But it's that connection between your actual, your piece of tech and, you know, scanning a card telling you using a QR code. And you can think about all the opportunities for different brands to partner up with a company like that and appliances like that. So that's quite a fun one, that's Tovala.

Matt Eastland [00:42:21] Tovala, I'm going to check that out.

Edward Bergen [00:42:24] Yeah.

Matt Eastland [00:42:24] What about 3D printing food? So I think Annick we've had like Natural Machines on in one of your Rising Food Stars on the show as well. I mean, do you think that people in the future are going to be comfortable just kind of pressing a button and having all their food printed?

Annick Verween [00:42:39] Yes, but it will take a while and it will be a certain population. I even have Redefine Meat they do the same, but then 3D printing of meat, which is even more questionable, although I really love what they do and how they do it. So we have some companies working on that, I do think on Natural Machines, there's definitely an opportunity there. Not necessarily in each of our households, I'm not a fan of having a kitchen full of machines doing all individual stuff. But if you can have a technology that can make, I'm just seeing something older people or people in a hospital having the possibility to eat something that looks the way they are used to see it, but has a much easier taste or an easier way of swallowing it, added to better nutrition that they need. I think there's definitely an opportunity for that market. It will take a while. It will first go there and then probably it will be mainstream. I know that a lot of consumers love to have their own devices to do every small step, but that I, I believe that there's an opportunity there. It might take a little bit longer, again, because very often all of us still think about 3D printing

as something more mechanical instead of food that we then eat. But then Natural Machines, again, as an extra example, they've now made it even possible to print things that are immediately precooked because originally it was something cold and then you need to put it in your oven or wherever they even managed to solve that problem.

Matt Eastland [00:44:06] Wow.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:44:07] Oh, wow. And how long does that take, you know?

Annick Verween [00:44:10] Well, it depends. I think some of the things they can do in quite a short time. I don't know how your husband is cooking at home Lukxmi, but at this pace that my husband is doing it, for me, something like 3D printing might be quicker, but it's very often at the moment is still used for the bigger things right? Everything that has to do with food service and restaurants and so on.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:44:34] So I think something to pick out about, you know, 3D printing might be not so much of an opportunity inside people's homes, but there's really opportunity when you're eating out and in restaurants. This has been, I think the one main industry has been hit really hard by covid has been you know, the hospitality industry has been crippled. But who do you think is going to rise from the ashes here Edward? What do you, what are you seeing as the outcome of what's happened this year for the hospitality industry?

Edward Bergen [00:45:04] Oh, it's hard one. I guess it all depends on how quickly we can get back to it. There's I guess there's going to be some opportunity where menus can, I think, stay simple. That restaurants should be an experience that should be a talking point, that should be a social. It's going to be tough for I think for some of the mainstream, you know, restaurant chains, I think going forward, because it's harder to sort of for them to tell a fun story about it. One of the other sectors that I think will continue to do well, we've seen as a result of this year, food tourism become a big thing. Whether people will be travelling in the next couple of years is a question. There will be some hit back. We're going to be travelling again, but we're in a, probably an economic struggle at the same time and the opportunity for new cuisines and a bit more nuanced flavours to grow, I think consumers will be looking for a new experience, a new flavour, because they can't go abroad and have it abroad. Just wanted to connect as well, a last one to your 3D printing one, I think patisseries and bakeries, the opportunity to use things like 3D printers to use waste ingredients and stuff to make something really elaborate and crazy and different. There's a really funny example from Tokyo, and I don't know if they actually launched in the end because of this year called Sushi Singularity, don't know if any of you read about these guys. You send in a urine sample, you probably won't want to say this.

Matt Eastland [00:46:39] I don't like where this is going Edward.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:46:39] Ahahaha

Edward Bergen [00:46:39] And a sample of your saliva to the restaurant in advance. They then are able to personalise based on your DNA and your, they said they can read your diet and then personalise a product that perfectly suits you. Doing that in a restaurant experience, as in it's bonkers and crazy. It's very Tokyo. But being able to really get this new totally new experience from the restaurant industry, that's probably quite premium option. But I think experience is going to be key. And that was just to experience coupled

with science coupled with nutrition and everything. So look at the Sushi Singularity is funky.

Matt Eastland [00:47:20] Check that out.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:47:20] Sounds amazing.

Matt Eastland [00:47:20] You talk about these things which are bonkers. I mean, is there any other kind of I was going to say weird, but are there any other trends out there which maybe feel too far out there? But actually it's going to be one of these things but in five years, we look back and it's like, well, obviously we're going to be doing urine tailored restaurant food.

Edward Bergen [00:47:40] Ahahaha.

Matt Eastland [00:47:40] Are there any other things that we haven't covered here that you think, you know what, this is something which is emerging, which we should be aware of?

Edward Bergen [00:47:47] On that subject, there is new tech that we potentially going into a future where we'll be able to breathe on our phones and our phones to tell us about, you know, not only are diets and what we should be eating, what our deficiencies are, but also potentially talk to us about flavours that we like, you might go to lick your phone and get those sort of experiences and the idea that you can really personalise your diet and experience and that tech and potentially couple with this growth of stuff like online gaming, VR sets and so on, where consumers will be able to taste and eat products that they're seeing in the sort of digital world in the gaming world.

Matt Eastland [00:48:34] Right.

Edward Bergen [00:48:34] We know there are games out there now where you go sort of hunting for food and drink ingredients in a game and then, you know, you end up making a meal and it boosts your character's power in some way. But actually be able to taste that as an opportunity using the tech that's there. That's a bonkers one if you wanted to think about that one?

Matt Eastland [00:48:52] Yeah, that's a bonkers one.

Edward Bergen [00:48:54] There's I think the film Ready Player One.

Matt Eastland [00:48:57] Yeah.

Edward Bergen [00:48:57] That launched a few years ago, which sort of showed us what the future might be like. It might actually be like that. Yeah.

Matt Eastland [00:49:01] Yeah ok, I like that. What about you Annick? I mean are there any I mean we're talking about sort of almost moving into like taste and food pairing as one of your start-ups territory. But is there anything sort of weird and wonderful that you're keeping an eye on?

Annick Verween [00:49:16] Well, I think what strikes me and everything that has to do with personalised nutrition is always for or it's mainly focussed for the consumer who already has everything and just wants to make it even more easier or more exclusive,

more whatever. So when you, I think Food Pairing is the perfect example, they host an event two weeks ago and what they do is they pair specific flavours. So it makes, put weird things together, but they have some data analytics on it. So it really sounds like amazing in your mouth. And what they did is they reached out to hospitals where you have patients who have problems with swallowing and they made very specific prolines whereby they had this flavouring. And because these people, they also have problems in tasting specific flavours. And so they were able to develop a proline which has extra saliva. It's like artificial saliva, but has this amazing taste within the throat. And for these patients, it was like they hadn't eaten something like that for ten or fifteen years.

Matt Eastland [00:50:18] Wow

Annick Verween [00:50:18] I hope for me that personalised nutrition will also go there. Because we have it all right? We're healthy, we can eat whatever we want, we can afford it. But there is still such a big part of our population who doesn't have it. I think if there, would be amazing opportunities in personalising that with an easy and affordable approach. I would be a fan of that. So looking forward to support also that also.

Matt Eastland [00:50:45] Awesome, love that.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:50:46] That's really fascinating. We've just had this amazing trip through all these different areas. So I think I just want to sort of round up and, you know, Annick and I both work with start-ups, so I'm going to focus on that. So Annick, in terms of sentiment, in terms of investments in the agrifood sector going to 2021. So for the entrepreneurial types out there, where would you place your money, like the big things coming out?

Annick Verween [00:51:12] I think you asked me such a difficult question Lukxmi. And it was said in the beginning, I think if all my Rising Food Stars could really bet on me as a fortune teller, I'd be so rich.

Matt Eastland [00:51:20] Ahahaah

Annick Verween [00:51:23] So and I do think, ok, there will be sectors who will get more attention and more money than other ones but I can't choose I have to be honest here. I have this, for me it's more about these amazing teams behind these promising technologies, and it's much more than that. So I think a lot will happen now in the alternative meat space, alternative proteins as well as meat. We've seen that that's going to be explored, but I'm sure there will be other fields. It's about betting your money on the ones you believe in and let go of all the hype and the trends coming up. I think that's an important one.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:51:59] And do you think its going to be easier? I mean harder? I mean it sounds, we just went through so many opportunities but what do you think, easier or harder year for securing funding?

Annick Verween [00:52:09] Well, I think it's double. We have more and more investors now looking into the space. But of course, with all these opportunities, we will also have more and more start-ups who will start up and have these opportunities. I think for the more mature companies, it hopefully will be easier. You have more investors looking into series A, series B and there the amount of companies available, amount of qualitative

companies available is still quite limited. So I hope for the best and hope it will be better next coming years.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:52:37] Yeah. For all the investors out there listening, you know, this is a great space to be in at the moment. So lots of innovation happening.

Matt Eastland [00:52:43] So come on down.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:52:45] Yeah.

Annick Verween [00:52:45] Always welcome.

Matt Eastland [00:52:47] And Edward, you know, so maybe less on the start-Up space. But if you could, let's say, champion one single biggest or most exciting innovation category or trend. You know what, what are you really looking forward to next year? What do you hope will happen?

Edward Bergen [00:53:05] I want to find a way for flavour, for stuff that tastes amazing, to align itself with stuff that has values. We've had a really tough year from political reasons and also health. And I think that, you know, consumers want to find they love aligning themselves with brands and they also like talking about the brands that can get a consumer's ethical side that are really out there to try and help people. And at the same time, they taste amazing. There are brands that are trying to do it and are doing it but that's what, that's the type of brand that I want to see.

Matt Eastland [00:53:41] Ok, brands that can do it all.

Matt Eastland [00:53:44] Ahaha no I think it's... Yeah, well, yeah, but it's got to taste good, but they've got to have a story to tell and they've got to have a reason to purchase more than just the taste of it and the fact that it's cheap. I think that they've got to have both.

Annick Verween [00:53:56] It's better for the planet, better for us. But since still something we really would like to eat, right?

Edward Bergen [00:54:01] Yes.

Matt Eastland [00:54:01] Yes absolutely.

Edward Bergen [00:54:02] Something that makes me smile yeah.

Annick Verween [00:54:04] Yeah.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:54:05] Sounds like the Holy Grail, but I completely align with you there a hundred percent. And, you know, finally, the really important question here, banana bread - fad or trend? What do you think, Edward?

Edward Bergen [00:54:17] Well, it was a bit of a probably a bit of a fad. There'll be another thing. When I went to sour doughs people growing there own sour doughs. I invested in a very posh coffee machine and I'm making my own latte at the moment. That's probably a fad, too, so I know a bit of a fad. There'll be another bakery item next year that we'll be into.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:54:36] That will all be 3D printing.

Matt Eastland [00:54:38] With chickpea bread obviously.

Edward Bergen [00:54:40] Hope so.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:54:42] Our future to sound so delicious.

Matt Eastland [00:54:45] It does, now I'm hungry. So, yeah, amazing. Annick and Edward, this has been such a pleasure talking to you both and a real standout episode. And it's just really nice to finish the year, given the year that we've had on something which is a lot more positive and upbeat as well, particularly for the agrifood sector, which is, you know, we've been through some bumpy ride this year. So it's good to look forward. So thank you very much to both of you for that. Where can people find out more about your work, Edward?

Edward Bergen [00:55:14] So you can go to intel.com and, you know, straightaway see what we do. You can get our podcasts with a little conversation that I sometimes host and, you know, often will be thrown in the press and different things, consumer stats or so on. Or you can just, you know, find us and get in touch with us on the LinkedIn's and so on. But we're always here to help.

Matt Eastland [00:55:34] Thanks. And what about you Annick, where can people find out more about your work with the Rising Food Stars?

Annick Verween [00:55:39] Why they can definitely find out much more on the EIT Food channels. But there's also risingfoodstars.eu and [#risingfoodstars](https://twitter.com/risingfoodstars) on Twitter also. Gives a good overview of all the amazing scale ups that we support.

Matt Eastland [00:55:52] Great stuff. So, yeah, just thank you both very much for your time today and future amazing insights. So I just wanted to say thanks to you Ed.

Edward Bergen [00:56:00] Thank you very much for having me. It's been great.

Matt Eastland [00:56:03] And thanks very much Annick.

Annick Verween [00:56:04] Same here. It was really fun.

Matt Eastland [00:56:06] Great stuff. And if you want to check EIT Food out, please go to eitfood.eu/podcast or also check us out on Twitter [@EITFood](https://twitter.com/EITFood). So you've been listening to The Food Fight podcast, and it's just down to me to say keep fighting for a better food future. Thanks for listening, everyone.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:56:25] Thanks, everyone.