



Co-funded by the
European Union

The Future of Food

Conference 2021

30 November - 1 December

Virtual Event

Conference Report

www.eitfutureoffood.eu

#FutureFood21

The Future of Food

Conference 2021

30 November - 1 December

Virtual Event



Co-funded by the
European Union

The Future of Food Conference 2021

Programme Outline

Day 1: Morning "Change-makers Summit"

Welcome remarks

Andy Zynga, CEO, EIT Food

UN Food Systems Summit: What's next for the EU?

Janusz Wojciechowski, EU Commissioner for Agriculture
Jože Podgoršek, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food
of Slovenia

Dr. Agnes Kalibata, UN Secretary General's Special Envoy
for the 2021 Food Systems Summit

Gerda Verburg, UN Assistant Secretary-General and SUN
Movement Coordinator

Plenary session | Panel debate

From commitment to action: Innovation as a driver for societal impact

Moderator: Sara Roversi, Founder, Future Food Institute
Gianluca Brunori, Full Professor of Food Policy, University of
Pisa, Chair of the 5th SCAR Foresight Exercise Expert Group
Kristin Schreiber, Director Chemicals, Food, Retail,
European Commission's DG GROW
Victoria Bondesson, Head of Unit of Business and
Development, Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF)
Herman Betten, Senior Director, Strategic Partnerships and
Engagement, DSM

Plenary session | A conversation with Generation Z representatives

Where do we need to be a generation from now?

Moderator: Sara Roversi, Founder, Future Food Institute
Sasha Cohen Ioannides, FutureFoodMaker
Chloé Dorin, FutureFoodMaker
Ricard Celorio, FutureFoodMaker
Kari Noelken, FutureFoodMaker
Emilija Oreščanin, FutureFoodMaker

Interview | Policymaker and industry perspective

Reactions and responses to the Generation Z Menu for Change

Moderator: Jennifer Baker, Freelance Journalist and Presenter
Claire Bury, Deputy Director-General in DG Health and
Food Safety, European Commission
Dirk Jacobs, Deputy Director-General, Director Consumer
Information, Nutrition and Health, FoodDrink Europe

Day 1: Afternoon

Parallel breakout sessions: Innovation challenges in food systems transformation

Breakout session 1 | Sustainable Food Labelling

From many to one: How can we build a harmonised and robust environmental labelling system for food in the EU?

Moderator: Andrew Carlin, Director of Strategic
Programmes, EIT Food
Laura Degallaix, Director of Environmental Sustainability,
FoodDrinkEurope
Cliona Howie, Chief Executive Director, Foundation Earth

The Future of Food

Conference 2021

30 November - 1 December

Virtual Event



Co-funded by the
European Union

Johannes Weber, European Affairs Manager, Nestlé
Europe, Middle East & North Africa

Declan Ferguson, Research, Development and Technical
Director, Finnebrogue

Tom Holden, Chief Product Officer, Mondra

Saioa Ramos, Senior Researcher, Efficient and Sustainable
Food Chain Department, AZTI

Isabelle Maurizi, Head, Environment and Sustainability,
EuroCommerce

Breakout session 2 | Sustainable Agriculture

Soil Purpose: Tackling regenerative transition

Moderator: Martin Scholten, Principal Advisor,
Wageningen University and Research (WUR)

Martine van Weelden, Senior Manager, Capitals Coalition

Sirkku Puumala, Farmer, Baltic Sea Action Group

Andrew Voysey, Head of Sales and Carbon, Soil Capital

Emmanuel Petel, Policy Coordinator, Greening, Cross-
Compliance and POSEI, DG AGRI, European Commission

Roberto Conti, R&D Specialist, Caviro Sca

Breakout session 3 | HoReCa

The future of the HoReCa sector:

Economic, social and environmental sustainability

Moderator: Afton Halloran, Independent Consultant in
Sustainable Food Systems Transitions

Johan Kristensen Dal, Project Manager, Copenhagen
Hospitality College

Ewa Rzeszowska, Project Manager, EIT Food

Katarzyna Młynarczyk, Founder of Handelek & Co-founder
of Rebread

Jakub Emanuel Malec, Executive Chef, Novotel Warszawa
Centrum Hotel

Olaf van der Veen, Co-founder and CEO, Orbisk

Breakout session 4 | Targeted Nutrition

The future of personalised nutrition:

An impactful solution for many?

Moderator: Lorena Savani, Innovation Programme
Manager, EIT Food

Emilia Nordlund, Research Manager, Industrial
Biotechnology and Food, VTT

Ignace De Nollin, CEO, SmartWithFood

Paul Finglas, Head of Food Databanks National Capability,
Quadram Bioscience Institute

Breakout session 5

Circular Food Systems

Innovative solutions to build a circular food system

Moderator: Illario Ingravallo, Innovation Programme
Manager, EIT Food

Miha Pipan, Founder and CSO, Better Origin

Cliona Howie, Project Lead, ETH Zurich, Laboratory of Food
Biochemistry

Volker Lammers, Head of Research Platform Process
Engineering, DIL

Day 2: Morning

Building an inclusive food system

Welcome remarks

Andy Zynga, CEO, EIT Food

Fighting food dis- and misinformation to increase trust and increase citizen engagement in food systems

[Food Unfolded®](#) video highlighting the impact science-
based food information has on consumers

The Future of Food

Conference 2021

30 November - 1 December

Virtual Event



Co-funded by the
European Union

Plenary session | Panel debate

Consumer information: The fine line between accuracy and engagement

Moderator: Jennifer Baker, Freelance Journalist and Presenter
Durk Bosma, Founder, Future of Food Institute
Saskia Nuijten, Communication Director, EIT Food
Domagoj Urbos, Team Leader, Strategic Communications, Communication, Engagement and Cooperation Department, EFSA

Plenary session | Presentations + debate

Implementing a skills agenda to achieve food system transformation: The future of vocational and professional training in agrifood

Moderator: Maarten van der Kamp, Education Director, EIT Food
João Santos, Senior Expert, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission
Ondina Afonso, Chair of Continente Producers Club, Director of Quality and Research, SONAE
John Edwards, Secretary General, European Association of Institutions in Higher Education, EURASHE

Breakout session

Bridging the gender gap: Innovating innovation in the agrifood sector

Moderator: Lara Rodriguez, RIS Project Manager, EIT Food
Simonetta Manfredi, Professor in Equality and Diversity Management and Director of the Centre for Diversity Policy Research and Practice, Oxford Brookes University
Anna Ogar, CEO, Insignes Lab
Dara Nikolova, Finance Advisor, European Investment Bank (EIB)
Giovanni Colombo, Senior Public Affairs Manager, EIT Food

Breakout session

How skills drive the transformation of the food system

Moderator: Jennifer Baker, Freelance Journalist and Presenter

Ingrid Rigler, Deputy Head of Unit, Innovation and EIT, DG EAC, European Commission

Paola Pittia, Professor, University of Teramo, Leader of the Askfood Erasmus+ project

Barbara Mason, Partnership Manager, AgriFood Training Partnership, University of Reading

Maarten van der Kamp, Education Director, EIT Food

Day 2: Afternoon

Investing in impactful solutions

Opening keynote address

Investing in the future of food to generate impact

Moderator: Paul Adamson, Chairman, Forum Europe
Kyle Welborn, Managing Director, The Yield Lab
Caroline Chandler, Senior Consultant, IPSOS

EIT Food's Entrepreneurship and Investment Programme

Moderator: Paul Adamson, Chairman, Forum Europe
Benoit Buntinx, Entrepreneurship Director, EIT Food
Erich Sieber, Founding General Partner, Peakbridge Ventures
Adelaide Cracco, Head of Climate and Environmental Impact, European Investment Fund (EIF)

Protein diversification: Challenges and opportunities to scale-up impactful solutions in Europe

Moderator: Paola Giavedoni, Innovation Director, EIT Food
Francisco Guerreiro, MEP, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, European Parliament
Didier Toubia, Co-founder and CEO, Aleph Farms
Christian Bärtsch, Co-founder, Essento
Jim Laird, CEO, Enough

The Future of Food

Conference 2021

30 November - 1 December

Virtual Event



Co-funded by the
European Union

EIT Food's annual Future of Food Conference was the ideal high-level platform to consider what's on the menu for food innovation in Europe: what role can the EU play in implementing the promises following the UN Food Systems Summit and the commitments adopted at EU level through the EU Farm to Fork Strategy? And how can innovation contribute to meeting these ambitions?

The virtual event brought together policymakers, EIT Food partners and stakeholders from every part of the food value chain with an interest in agri-food innovation, education, entrepreneurship and consumer engagement, as well as industry, farmer and consumer associations.

Over two days of plenary sessions and interactive breakout sessions, they discussed themes from the role of women in driving change, to sustainability in the HoReCa sector, to the construction of circular food systems. Links below give access to the video recordings of breakout sessions in full, with a brief description of the issues, for those who want to delve deeper. Across social media, content from speakers, experts and attendees was drawn together under the [#FutureFood21](#) hashtag.

As **Janusz Wojciechowski**, EU Commissioner for Agriculture said in his keynote, when it comes to transforming food systems, stakeholders need to “work together to realise our shared goals and achieve the transition to sustainable food systems in Europe and across the world.” The challenge now is completing that transformation: The Future of Food Conference 2021 set out concrete steps for achieving this.



Janusz Wojciechowski, *EU Commissioner for Agriculture*

The Future of Food

Conference 2021

30 November - 1 December

Virtual Event



Co-funded by the European Union

Day One Plenary Sessions

Big Changes, Hard Choices



The recent UNFSS “has asked countries to confront the reality of balancing food production with climate action, affordable food with healthy diets, and stable food supplies with fair and open trade,” said **Andy Zynga**, CEO of EIT Food, in his welcome remarks to delegates. With a global sense of uncertainty as we emerge from the pandemic, ambitious targets, such as the EU’s aim to be [climate-neutral by 2050](#), and a number of open questions on how to manage the green and digital transitions when it comes to the way we eat, it is time for major change. “Are we ready to break away from business as usual, to embrace innovation with societal impact?” he asked.



Andy Zynga, CEO of EIT Food

Making this transition fair and inclusive is just as important as delivering the necessary changes to global food systems, he said, and EIT Food remains at the forefront of thinking on how to make these hard choices. It recently launched an [Innovation Call for 2022](#), seeking out proposals that maximise the societal, economic and environmental impact of innovative ideas and consortia within the scope of EIT Food’s Impact Framework. “The task ahead of us is complex, but I am happy to see that we are not alone in this,” Zynga concluded.

Europe, a Global Leader in Food Transitions



Dr. Agnes Kalibata

The first morning session, “UN Food Systems Summit: What’s next for the EU?” took stock of the outcomes of [September’s UNFSS](#). **Agnes Kalibata**, the UN Secretary General’s Special Envoy for the 2021 Food Systems Summit started by praising the EU’s role in making the Summit

happen, both in terms of funding and thought leadership. “There are things we have to do, and we have to anchor them in the momentum the Summit helped us build,” she said.

There’s a real need for collaboration at every level: delivering on the food systems agenda is going to have to be anchored in strong national and regional ownership. That means embracing scientifically informed policies to encourage innovation, as well as making sure actions are inclusive and enable women, young people, indigenous communities to be part of this agenda, she added.

#FutureFood21

www.eitfutureoffood.eu

The Future of Food Conference 2021

30 November - 1 December

Virtual Event



Co-funded by the
European Union

Janusz Wojciechowski, EU Commissioner for Agriculture, shared insights on where Europe is heading next. He noted that “for the first time in the history of the Common Agricultural Policy” payments were being made under the [new National Strategic Plans](#), which enable EU Member States to support farmers in the transition towards increased sustainability in our food systems, and urged them to take “full advantage” of these changes.

With the Commission working on a new initiative to make the EU’s food system sustainable and integrate sustainability into all food-related policies, a broad public consultation on food sustainability is planned for spring 2022. The initiative will lay out requirements and responsibilities for all actors in the EU food system - again showing the bloc’s determination to lead global changes.

Transitions With a Strong Local Flavour

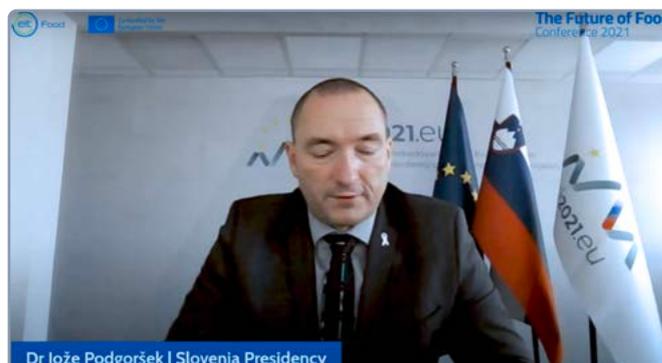
Of course, the EU consists of 27 member states and each one has its own gastronomy traditions and food culture. Speakers noted the importance of embracing this. “My strong



Gerda Verburg | SUN Movement

Gerda Verburg, *CUN Assistant Secretary-General*

plea is to please encourage national food system dialogues in which both the consumer, the whole food value chain, also the producers” are involved, said **Gerda Verburg**, UN



Dr Jože Podgoršek | Slovenia Presidency

Jože Podgoršek, *Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of Slovenia*

Assistant Secretary-General and Coordinator of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement.

What works in Spain won’t necessarily work in Sweden when it comes to changing food systems. Europe needs to “embrace the diversity because countries want to do it in their own way,” she added, and countries could also consider a system of checks and balances with higher taxes for unhealthy, unsustainable food.

Jože Podgoršek, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of Slovenia, whose country holds the rotating presidency of the EU Council, echoed this. While the EU is carrying out reforms to ensure a healthy, balanced and sustainable diet for all EU citizens, each country should take their own measures, he added. In Slovenia, that means for instance ensuring food security and the sustainable use of natural resources, as well as education - such as encouraging children to learn about where food comes from with beekeeping lessons in schools.

People, Planet, Prosperity

“Right now more than 90% of all our diseases are related to food,” said the UN’s Verburg. “If you go through the root causes of all diseases today they are all related with the food we eat,” which affects not only physical but mental health, too, she explained.

The Future of Food Conference 2021

30 November - 1 December

Virtual Event



Co-funded by the
European Union

The current food system “has bankrupted our health and is destroying our climate,” with Europe spending some [8.3% of GDP on healthcare according to the OECD](#). She welcomed the EU’s plans for a sustainable food strategy, and also praised the existing Farm to Fork Strategy, which is good, “but a little more focused on saving the planet than saving people.”



Saving the planet was just one of the topics covered in the next plenary session, “From commitment to action: Innovation as a driver for societal impact.” This discussed the role of innovation in delivering on UNFSS commitments. “We all know that our food system is kind of failing... we fail the planet, because we are overshooting planetary boundaries,” said **Herman Betten**, Senior Director Strategic Partnerships and Engagement at Dutch health, nutrition and bioscience company DSM. “Food has the potential to be part of the solution and not be part of the problem.”



Panellists discussed the opportunities to take up innovative solutions in Europe, and the role of governments, industries, farmers and consumers in doing so. DSM’s Betten highlighted the need to work across the value chain. While there’s a role for pure innovation - such as Evonik’s innovation to get [Omega-3 supplements from algae](#), instead of fish oil - there’s also a need to end practices such as sending excess harvests in good years from Europe to Africa, disrupting local farms, supply systems and economies.

Be Fair to Farmers - and Bring in Business

This innovation ends up affecting those who grow the food we eat, so farmers should be at the core of research and innovation, said **Victoria Bondesson**, Vice-Chair of the Research Working Party at Copa-Cogeca, which represents Europe’s farmers. “Farmers that are managing our land are often the first ones that experience the negative effects of climate change... while we are being asked to do more with less,” she said.

She stressed the need to involve all stakeholders early in the innovation process to maximise societal impact, and cautioned against regulating farming in the same way as carbon-emitting energy production, especially as it is very hard to calculate emissions, especially on complex foods.

“Innovation occurs in ecosystems,” said Gianluca Brunori, Full Professor of Food Policy, University of Pisa. “It is very difficult to carry out transformative research if we don’t connect with policy, with society, with business.” That means creating plenty of interfaces for discussion.

Nutrition, Circularity, Diversity

Professor Brunori is also Chair of the 5th Foresight Exercise Expert Group of the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR), which recently published “Resilience and

The Future of Food Conference 2021

30 November - 1 December

Virtual Event



Co-funded by the
European Union

transformation," a wide-ranging [report on how to achieve safe and just operating space for food systems](#). Setting out ambitious targets from now to 2050, he was pleased to see the European Green Deal set many of the same goals.

The report (available via the link above) deals with three main themes: Nutrition, Circularity and Diversity, and highlights social innovation as vital to achieving improvement in all of them. That requires great ambition from all players in the food value chain, including consumers. "If we can start to calculate the true cost of food, choice will be different," he said. "We really need to start a new wave of responsibility and innovation."

The panellists all agreed on the need to develop the concept of a sustainable diet, the importance of getting schools and universities involved early on, and not overloading the consumer with choices. So what is the next step towards genuine change?

SMEs, Smart Labels and Sustainability

Kristin Schreiber, Director of Chemicals, Food, Retail at the European Commission's DG GROW said the next step is to implement the UNFSS conclusions. "It's a no-brainer to see that innovation and research are the driver for the transition to such sustainable safe healthy and inclusive food systems," she said, highlighting several areas where the EU is working to do this.

SMEs represent around half of food and drink activity in Europe, so getting them to innovate is vital. Along with exchanging ideas through the [European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#), the [Enterprise Europe Network](#) can link them up with sustainability advisors who can use expertise to guide SMEs in their sustainability transition. In addition, the [European Research Infrastructure Consortium \(ERIC\)](#) facilitates the establishment and operation of Research Infrastructures with European interest.

Then there is the [Code of Conduct](#) on Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practices, one of the first deliverables

of the Farm to Fork Strategy (discussed at last year's Future of Food Conference) which sets out actions that food processors, food service operators and retailers can voluntarily commit to in order to improve their sustainability performance.

Another topic that ran throughout the morning was the importance of the next generation, with EIT Food's Zynga noting that young people are not only those who will inherit the food system of tomorrow, but also pivotal for in the future of food and deserve a seat at the table.

Fit for the Future? A conversation with Generation Z representatives

Where do we need to be a generation from now? What do you get when you energise young people to take charge of their future? EIT Food launched the 'Our Food, Our Food System' campaign in July 2021 to better understand the needs and demands of young people across Europe about the food system. Our aim with this campaign is to ensure that the voices of this generation are heard by the stakeholders in the food system now, so that they can have a key part to play in the future they will inherit. In the scope of this campaign, EIT Food has selected ten FutureFoodMakers, promising European food activists who want to drive positive change and help design a connected and understandable food system. They have been working on the "[Menu for Change](#)," a manifesto of clear actions the sector needs to address in this critical period, and launched it as the conclusion of the first morning of the Conference.



#FutureFood21

www.eitfutureoffood.eu

The Future of Food

Conference 2021

30 November - 1 December

Virtual Event



Co-funded by the European Union

Young people have a vital role to play in building a future-fit food system. FutureFoodMakers outlined the role of younger generations as change-makers and innovative thinkers in food system transformation. You can [read the full manifesto here](#); its key points include:



Target 25% of EU agricultural land to be managed under regenerative practices by 2030 and develop a training body to support existing and new farmers in the transition to regenerative farming, “so that our soil can become resilient to climate change,” said **Chloé Dorin**, FutureFoodMaker. That includes using emerging technologies to minimise use of water, fertilisers and intervention in the farming process.

Define uniform EU nutrition and labelling guidelines which are easy and accessible, meet individual needs and include the environmental impact of food products. As FutureFoodMaker **Kari Noelken** pointed out, guidelines aren't consistent across Europe - a German who eats the recommended upper limit of sugar in their daily diet has consumed double the recommended amount for someone in Malta. And FutureFoodMaker **Ricard Celorio** returned to the labelling question, noting that the proposed Nutri-Score labelling system doesn't show any environmental aspects.

Develop an inclusion policy that considers the effects of regulations on food costs among vulnerable populations and the provision of vouchers for nutrient-rich foods.

Adopt an EU-wide true cost of food policy that mandates the calculation of the true cost of foods produced by medium-large corporations and multinationals through the implementation of life cycle analysis and impact assessments.

Tackle food waste in supermarkets and through the Bioeconomy strategy by creating supermarket reduction monitoring plans that feed into the EU-wide food waste monitoring programme and accelerate the development of bio-based materials (alternative to those based on fossil fuels), recyclable or biodegradable. “Throwing away food can be compared to stealing from the table of vulnerable populations,” said FutureFoodMaker **Emilija Oreščanin**.

Include the nutritional, health, and environmental implications of food in education curriculums for children, as well as provide support and resources for parents and teachers on healthy and sustainable diets. “We really need to start these conversations at a very young age,” in school before young people reach adolescence, said **Sasha Cohen Ioannides**, FutureFoodMaker, in order to take a holistic approach to changing the whole system. “We need to develop an entire new food system, we can't just change one thing.”



The Future of Food

Conference 2021

30 November - 1 December

Virtual Event



Co-funded by the European Union

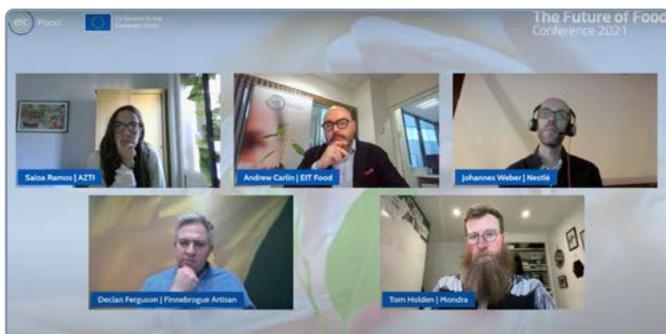
Breakout Session 1 Sustainable Food labelling

From many to one: How can we build a harmonised and robust environmental labelling system for food in the EU?



This session discussed proposals that would enable companies to substantiate their environmental claims using Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) methods that cover 16 impact categories.

This year, Foundation Earth, an independent, non-profit organisation joined forces with industry partners to launch two pilot programmes to test consumer response to front-of-pack labelling options, as it sets about developing an optimum scoring and labelling system for full roll-out in 2022. The session explored how the industry can move from the current plethora of ecolabels to a more harmonised system that makes sustainable options affordable and easy to identify, with speakers from industry, research and Foundation Earth.



Breakout Session 2 Sustainable Agriculture

Soil purpose: Tackling the regenerative transition



Regenerative agriculture will play an important role in the transformation to more sustainable food systems, but how can farmers be supported in embracing these new methods? Methods include developing innovative technologies, training farmers and providing adequate financial rewards to farmers for using regenerative practices, ensuring they can remain competitive. Beyond the “push” of farmers, commitment from the supply chain and consumer awareness will also help generate the market “pull” that will stimulate the uptake of regenerative practices. This session brought together experts from pilot farms, food industry, finance and the European Commission to discuss what comes next.

#FutureFood21

www.eitfutureoffood.eu

The Future of Food

Conference 2021

30 November - 1 December

Virtual Event



Co-funded by the European Union

Breakout Session 3

HoReCa

The Future of the HoReCa Sector: Economic, Social and Environmental Sustainability



According to an [EIT Food Foresight Study](#) on the impact of COVID-19 in the agrifood sector, the HoReCa segment proved to be one of the most negatively impacted by the pandemic. What does the future hold for the hospitality segment? How can it become more sustainable, not just environmentally but also socially and economically? In this breakout session we discussed international trends, key opportunities and challenges as well as good practices in the sector. The session kicked off with a presentation of the [EIT Food project "Direction: Restaurant of the Future,"](#) along with a panel discussion on how sustainable practices, educational initiatives and innovation play a role in transforming the future of hotels, restaurants and catering, with representatives from the gastronomy community.



Breakout Session 4

Targeted Nutrition

The future of personalised nutrition: An impactful solution for many?



Distorted nutritional habits are contributing to a health crisis, with 50% of European citizens being overweight (WHO). Personalised nutrition accounting for different needs depending on age, sex, body size, levels of physical activity and so on, is a powerful instrument in solving this crisis. But will it be an impactful solution for many? What is the future of personalised nutrition? The session offered an overview of the potential and challenges of this sector through insights from three EIT Food-supported projects: [Healthricious](#), providing a science-based app to inform user choices in shopping, cooking and nutrition; [HealthSnAP](#), developing a new food manufacturing technology and B2C business concept for on-site customised production of healthy snacks; and [PERSFO](#), developing an AI system to deliver personalised food advice linked to food service providers at work.



#FutureFood21

www.eitfutureoffood.eu

The Future of Food

Conference 2021

30 November - 1 December

Virtual Event



Co-funded by the European Union

Breakout Session 5 Circular Food Systems

Innovative solutions to build a circular food system

The creation of circular food systems minimising waste will be an essential element in moving towards a more sustainable future. With one of its six focus areas being dedicated to Circular Food Systems, EIT Food is actively engaging in this field. The session provided an overview of some of the innovations created by three EIT Food-funded projects contributing to such objective: [Better Origin](#), producing carbon-negative insect feed; [Phenoliva](#), active in the upcycling of the side streams of olive oil production; and [TRIBOTEC](#), developing innovative solutions for protein concentration by triboelectric separation.



Day Two Plenary Sessions



Fishing, Facts and Fake News

Day two kicked off with a session entitled “**Consumer information: The fine line between accuracy and engagement.**” In an era of mass information - and disinformation - getting to the facts can be tough. People often don't trust new, unfamiliar food technologies and innovations, or have concerns over food safety and reported benefits. [FoodUnfolded®](#) is the public-facing platform of EIT Food, and aims to help solve this problem by raising awareness of food-related issues and providing accurate, science-based, and non-partisan information.

The popular **Netflix** documentary *Seaspiracy*, which came out in March 2021, presented [FoodUnfolded®](#) with a familiar challenge for science communication: defining the fine line between accuracy and engagement. Documentaries such as *Seaspiracy* can craft powerful narratives, representing a wake-up call for many consumers – but at the risk of accusations of sensationalism, and distorting the industry's image.

In contrast, attempts to give consumers more accurate, science-based information (without telling them what to think) can make the content appear less impactful. In an increasingly polarised world, how can we build strong, engaging narratives whilst still being as factual as possible? How can narratives be powerful without creating antagonism?

The Future of Food Conference 2021

30 November - 1 December

Virtual Event



Co-funded by the
European Union



Silvia Lazzaris, editor of FoodUnfolded®, started the morning by presenting a study they conducted in the wake of Netflix documentary *Seaspiracy* (2021). In the study, 128 consumers from 13 countries were shown *Seaspiracy* and FoodUnfolded's coverage of the fishing issue. "We wanted our audience to learn that what is missing is the political will to make difficult decisions, and that we're not just consumers but also citizens." The reactions from those who took part in the study revealed a range of issues for communicators who want the public to understand the science, not the hype.

A Hunger for Information

"What I found quite surprising is that we expected a much more polarised debate among the participants of the research," said **Durk Bosma**, Research Director of the Future of Food Institute, which supported FoodUnfolded in the research. "Instead, the debate was rather nuanced." Consumers understand that media is used to persuade them of certain views, he said, which is why it makes sense to give both sides of a story for balance.

A continuous dialogue is required when it comes to communicating around food, said **Domagoj Vrbos**, Team Leader of Strategic Communications at the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). "Food is an interplay of passion and duty," so while everyone wants to read about gastronomic delights, food safety risks are "not your first choice when it comes to something that is cool and interesting."

With so much content being produced about what we eat, people are suffering from information overload and confirmation bias when it comes to understanding food-related issues, panellists agreed. Although they generally trust the food they buy in the shops, knowing it will be safe and healthy, uncertainty prevails when it comes to making sustainable choices, healthy eating, and reducing their carbon footprint.

Reach People on Their Own Terms...

Communications experts need to try to understand how people form different beliefs. "Once you understand how people form opinions, you can also be more effective in trying to change their opinions," said Bosma from the Future of Food Institute. Think about what your audience will listen to - and where to find them.

The panellists noted the rise of social media as a source of information, at the expense of going to find information on a website. EFSA is investing in research, into how to reach different audiences; recent Instagram carousels on issues ranging from 'use-by' dates to whether eggs are safe for pregnant women to eat had a high engagement rate.

... And Be Honest

"Our work shows that people are calling for more openness in what the different agents in the food sector do", said Saskia Nuijten, Communication Director at EIT Food. "Retailers, farmers, manufacturers and food authorities need to be more transparent in their production methods."

With consumers considering a plethora of issues from packaging to food miles and nutrition every time they buy something, clear information from everyone in the value chain is vital, but it also has to be easy to understand.

The Future of Food

Conference 2021

30 November - 1 December

Virtual Event



"I personally don't believe in sacrificing accuracy," said EFSA's Vrboš. "We can all be creative institutional communicators and we can try to deliver that accurate science in an appealing way." We want the public to understand the science, not the hype.

Skills to Pay the Bills: Training, Agrifood and the Future



Better communication is vital at a time when food systems worldwide are undergoing a fundamental change. The session, "implementing a skills agenda to achieve food system transformation: the future of vocational and professional training in agrifood" discussed how to ensure that those working in the food industry of tomorrow have the right blend of skills.

The EU's skills agenda is focused on upskilling and reskilling people to ensure Europe is ready for the green and digital transitions, said **João Santos**, Senior Expert at the European Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion (DG EMPL). "Much more than having a model that will solve all these problems, what we need is an education system that is agile," he said.



That means education and training systems that keep pace with the rapidly changing labour market and are engaged with the economy and society - something the EU is fostering with [Centres of Vocational Excellence \(CoVEs\)](#). These bring together a range of local partners such as vocational education and training providers, employers, research centres, development agencies, and employment services to develop "skills ecosystems."

Regional Flavours, Across Europe

One example of such partnerships came from Portugal, where retailer **Sonae MC** set up the Continente Producers Club (CPC), a support structure for Portuguese agricultural and livestock production since 1998. With 240 members, including producer organizations, individual farmers and family businesses, it hosts an academy which introduces them to the latest developments in agrifood and beyond.

"We need different models of partnership," said **Ondina Afonso**, Chair of CPC and Director of Quality & Research at SONAE. "Nobody would think that a retailer would develop a project directly with a fresh producer," but it works well as a way to introduce new technologies, update suppliers on consumer tastes, and exchange best practices.

There's also an evolving role for more traditional providers of professional education, which has been neglected in many countries, said **John Edwards**, Secretary General of

The Future of Food Conference 2021

30 November - 1 December

Virtual Event



Co-funded by the
European Union

the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education, EURASHE. "Everyone knows society and the labour market is changing rapidly," he said, pointing to the fourth industrial revolution. With an urgent need to strengthen high-quality professional education, providers should develop new methods of delivery, and make the most of their strong regional presence.

Investing in the Future of Food



The afternoon plenary turned to investing in impactful solutions, with an opening keynote from **Kyle Welborn**, Managing Director of The Yield Lab on **"Investing in the future of food to generate impact."** Their mission is to enable entrepreneurs to sustainably revolutionize agrifood systems by investing in and accelerating high-impact early-stage companies worldwide.

"Developing a framework for AgTech impact investing is hard," with so many variables to consider, but inspired by



Breakthrough Energy's approach, "smart people are providing a path forward" for effective ways to invest in start-ups making real change. Agriculture is an attractive sector for investors who want to see real results when it comes to tackling the climate crisis, he explained, because farmers can use a combination of mitigation and sequestration technologies to literally get carbon back in the soil.

Caroline Chandler, Senior Consultant at IPSOS presented their study which maps public and private research and innovation (R&I) expenditure on food systems in Europe. She led a study designed to map public and private R&I expenditure on food systems in Europe and extent to which this matches EU Food 2030 priorities and pathways, covering the period 2007-2020. **Food 2030** is the EU's R&I policy to ensure everyone has enough affordable, nutritious food to lead a healthy life, and to accelerate this transition within safe planetary boundaries.

The results highlighted a positive trend over the period in the amount of funding at EU and national level, though large discrepancies were noticed between countries. Most funding was tied to primary production, she noted, with 60-80% of funding in each country going to farming because the



"ministry of agriculture is seen as the main stakeholder in terms of food policy and has the most funding to distribute." In addition, the majority of public funding was channelled to universities and research institutions.

The Future of Food

Conference 2021

30 November - 1 December

Virtual Event



Co-funded by the European Union

Innovation Through Collaboration

EIT Food's Entrepreneurship and Investment programme focuses in areas including waste streams, the circular economy package and alternative proteins. The next session was a **presentation of EIT Food's entrepreneurship activities** and showcase of some of the RisingFoodStars, mature scale-ups supported by the EIT that will help transform European and global food systems.



Finding early-stage start-ups to support is like looking for diamonds in the rough, with a series of entrepreneurship days, talks with PhD students, a seedbed incubator and partners across Europe who can identify those developing new IP or knowledge that could be converted into a new product or service, said **Benoit Buntinx**, Entrepreneurship Director at EIT Food.

The accelerator is where they polish those diamonds. Through our RisingFoodStars association we help them to scale internationally and match-make their projects with corporates and investors to facilitate access to finance. EIT Food is already looking for the next gems: "All the programs at EIT food are totally open to everybody," Buntinx said. "Everybody with a business idea that would expect to receive support from us is invited to apply to our programmes."

Public, Private, Passionate

"What's really important to me is to connect the public funds with the private," said **Erich Sieber**, Founding General Partner at PeakBridge Ventures and a former executive at Nestlé. PeakBridge, which was founded in 2000 and manages multiple foodtech funds, aims to invest in ten companies every year.

Investments have included [Imagindairy](#), which offers "real milk, no cows;" [Orbisk](#), a Dutch company working on food waste in hospitality; and [Mediterranean Food Lab](#), which uses fermentation to create umami-rich flavour compounds. All panellists agreed that investment was timely, with consumers more aware than ever of the impact their diet has on society and the planet.

Financial crises, food and climate crises, and the pandemic "have all raised fundamental questions on how we live and how financial markets can impact society," said **Adelaide Cracco**, Head of Climate and Environmental Impact, European Investment Fund (EIF). "The agrifood industry is strategic at all levels and, as such, it gets the interest of investors across the globe," with the EIF expanding its activities in the agrifood sector.

Panellists also discussed the forthcoming [EU taxonomy](#), which could play an important role helping the EU scale up sustainable investment by giving companies, investors and policymakers definitions for which economic activities can be considered environmentally sustainable. "While I'm not a big fan of regulation in general, this regulation against greenwashing does make sense," said PeakBridge's Sieber.

Still, it's a work in progress, noted the EIF's Cracco. "The taxonomy is really intended to be a living document that will be evolved and expanded over time," who noted that the EIF had set its own criteria for measuring impact a decade ago. Ultimately, it's all about actions, not just words. "Impact investing is so popular that now every start-up is an impact start-up," said The Yield Lab's Welborn, but investors need to look carefully at whether they are actually making a difference. "Those claims need to be scrutinised," he noted.

The Future of Food

Conference 2021

30 November - 1 December

Virtual Event



Co-funded by the European Union

Insects, Cells, and Fungi: The Quest for Protein Diversification



The final plenary session took on the meaty subject of **Protein diversification: Challenges and opportunities to scale-up impactful solutions in Europe**. Innovative entrepreneurs have created a range of plant-based, insect-based, cultivated and fermentation-made alternatives to meat, eggs, dairy and seafood, but the potential positive impact on people and planet promised by these foods continues to face significant challenges.



"We are in a political and economic shift," said **Francisco Guerreiro** MEP, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development in the European Parliament. "We need to go further and all shift to a more diverse way of eating." Alternative proteins can deliver societal impact in line with the goals of the EU Green Deal and Farm to Fork - at scale. Consumers are increasingly aware of meat production's

impact on the planet and reducing the amount of animal products they eat. But we still need protein to survive.

Since 2013, [Essento](#) has been making food from insects for retail and food service providers, with the vision to create an added value for people and the environment. It's a win on multiple levels, explains Co-Founder **Christian Bärtsch**. The insects are fed from side streams of food, basically waste, before they can "upcycle them directly into the human food chain again." Peer-reviewed scientific studies show that both micro and macro nutrients are easily bio-available, so nutrition is covered. And, they're tasty.

"Can we make products that consumers love? If we can do so and they taste as good or better and cost the same or less than the animal equivalent... we're confident" of success, said **Jim Laird**, CEO of [Enough](#), which hopes to produce 1,000,000 tonnes of Abunda, an edible mycoprotein by 2032. He stressed the potential for alternative proteins to help the world reach goals on climate change, especially because so much methane is produced by conventional farming.

"We do see cultivated meat as a supplement to sustainable animal farming practices," said Didier Toubia, CEO of [Aleph Farms](#), which cultivates meat directly from cells and is committed to achieving net zero carbon within its operations by 2025. "There's been some confusion around the sustainability of cultivated meat," he said, and the company is working with an interactive life cycle analysis platform to optimize its resource use.

Risks to the uptake of alternative proteins include over-promising on health, environmental or other benefits, or, for some types of alternative protein, how processed it is. Still, the opportunities are vast and these technologies can be more efficient than traditional meat productions. In addition, rising energy and resource prices, disrupted supply chains and the global recovery from the pandemic all pose threats to growth - and not just when it comes to alternative proteins.

#FutureFood21

www.eitfutureoffood.eu

The Future of Food

Conference 2021

30 November - 1 December

Virtual Event



Co-funded by the European Union

Breakout Session 1

Bridging the gender gap

Innovating innovation in the agrifood sector



Diversity, including gender diversity, and inclusion are key to the success of food systems innovation - but in the agrifood sector, women face barriers at every step. How can stakeholders tackle issues including scarce opportunities to enter the sector, limited access to finance for enterprising



women, and the lack of gender mainstreaming in the design of new products, services and business models? How can we build greater awareness and convert it into concrete initiatives? In this session, an expert in supporting female-led spinoffs, a woman entrepreneur from EIT Food's network and a Finance Advisor at EIB explained how the inclusion of women will help address the challenges of food innovation.

Breakout Session 2

How skills drive the transformation of the food system



As discussed in the morning plenary, the updated [European Skills Agenda](#) prominently positions reskilling and upskilling of labour as a key objective to create a sustainable, digital and competitive economy. What has been the impact of the increased use of innovative teaching methods to encourage more entrepreneurial students and professionals? How can we create a more robust framework which connects gaining skills with changing practices, in turn leading to societal impact? Hear from academics, policymakers and EIT Food on how we can use skills to drive the transformation.

