



# GFSI CONFERENCE



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**25<sup>th</sup>–28<sup>th</sup>**  
**FEBRUARY 2020**

**SEATTLE**  
**USA**

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

[#gfsi20](https://twitter.com/gfsi20)

2001 | 2002 GENEVA SWITZERLAND    2004 | 2009 | 2013 BARCELONA, SPAIN    2005 ROME, ITALY    2006 PARIS, FRANCE    2007 MUNICH, GERMANY    2008 AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS    2010 WASHINGTON D.C., USA    2011 LONDON, UK

# #gfsi20 IN NUMBERS

**19th** edition



DIVERSITY



TOP 5 COUNTRIES

- ① USA
- ② UK
- ③ Canada
- ④ Japan
- ⑤ France

## 5 DAYS OF SESSIONS, MEETINGS AND EVENTS

- 73** Speakers
- 33** Exhibitors
- 9** Special Sessions
- 8** Tech Talks
- 3** Discovery Tours
- 4** Award Winners
- 5th** G2B Meeting  
(government-to-business meeting)

## THE TALK ABOUT #GFSI20



TWITTER & FACEBOOK

**1K**

#gfsi20 Posts  
During Conference Week

**2.5K**

Engagement

**18M**

Potential Reach



LINKEDIN

**31K+**

Group Members



YOUTUBE

**24K+**

Views on 2 new GFSI  
Web Series Episodes

2012

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

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## INTRODUCTION

The 19th edition of the GFSI Conference was a celebration at a turning point. Over 1,000 food safety stakeholders from around the world gathered in Seattle for the Global Food Safety Initiative’s annual meeting, representing the food industry, academia, the public sector and beyond. The vibrant tech hub proved to be an ideal venue for the innovation-focused conference, which centred around the theme **One Connected World. One Safe Food Supply.**

Held on the year of **GFSI’s 20th birthday**, the GFSI Conference 2020 was punctuated with festivity. However, the celebratory atmosphere never impinged upon a focus on practical action, as GFSI Director Erica Sheward reminded delegates in her stirring opening address.

Erica was one of several new leaders to whom delegates were introduced during a conference that emphasised shifts in governance and strategy. These

leaders are spearheading the organisation’s new initiatives, such as the **‘Race to the Top’**: a movement to ensure that GFSI achieves explicit oversight throughout its ecosystem and around the world. **Version 2020** of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements, launched during the conference, is one step towards this goal.

Every facet of the food safety ecosystem had its turn in the spotlight during the diverse programme. Speakers included CEOs, startup founders, regulatory decision-makers and prominent academics, as well as leaders from aid organisations like the UN World Food Programme and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. From the beneficiaries of these organisations to the consumers of the world’s largest multinational brands, we all deserve safe food. At GFSI, we stand united for **safe food for consumers everywhere.**

# CONFERENCE AT A GLANCE

	TUESDAY 25th	WEDNESDAY 26th	THURSDAY 27th	FRIDAY 28th
MORNING	Discovery Tour  GFSI Board Meetings	Opening Plenary Session	Special Sessions <i>NSF / Rentokil Initial / SGS / Testo</i>	Special Sessions <i>AIB International / Diversey / GS1</i>
		Plenary 2	Plenary 4	Plenary 6
		Networking Break	Networking Break	Networking Break
		Special Sessions <i>Ecolab / greenfence</i>	Tech Talk <i>DNV GL</i>	Tech Talk <i>SES imagotag</i>
LUNCH			Breakout Sessions	Breakout Sessions
		Networking Lunch	Networking Lunch	Closing Plenary
AFTERNOON		Tech Talks <i>IFS / Eagle Certification Group</i>	Tech Talk <i>SAI Global / Lloyd's Register</i>	
		Plenary 3	Plenary 5	
		Networking Break	Networking Break	
		Tech Talks <i>Agroknow</i>	Tech Talks <i>TÜV Rheinland</i>	
EVENING		Breakout Sessions	Breakout Sessions	
		Official Opening Cocktail / sponsored by Danone	Official Reception & Dinner / sponsored by greenfence	





# PLENARY 1

## GFSI & YOU: A WARM WELCOME TO THE GFSI CONFERENCE

Always an opportunity to look back on past achievements, the opening plenary of the GFSI Conference took on a special significance on the year of GFSI's 20th anniversary. The session served as a retrospective on GFSI's two decades of history, as well as a refresher on recent and forthcoming shifts in strategy and governance.

**Peter Freedman**, Managing Director of The Consumer Goods Forum, opened with a presentation that placed GFSI in context, both within CGF and within our changing world. 'Action on positive change, The Consumer Goods Forum's agenda, is getting more and more urgent', he said, citing the climate advocate Greta Thunberg as an example. 'Think of the urgency that she brings when she talks to audiences of the imperative of not just responding, but responding really urgently and really aggressively.'

To meet their agenda with the appropriate urgency, CGF is forming **coalitions of action** defined by CEO leadership and commitment, rapid movement, a focus on reporting and regional engagement. 'Coalitions of action bring companies together that want to go further, achieve more, with a much faster timescale', Peter said.

GFSI Director **Erica Sheward** echoed this urgency in her address. She introduced a recent strategy the GFSI team and board of directors have developed in step with the CGF's drive for rapid change: the **Race to the Top**, a conceptual

framework of complete modernisation for GFSI.

The framework includes developing harmonisation and benchmarking requirements for auditor competence and ongoing professional development; continuous oversight and assessment of CPO activity; and a collaborative approach to the management of certification bodies. 'In broad terms, we are moving to ensure that we all achieve explicit oversight of what good looks like', Erica said.

To close, Erica borrowed a page from Cancer United, the charity founded by her mother Jan Sheward, and invited the entire delegation to stand together. 'I invite you, each and every one of you, to join me...in committing to working together to make sure we achieve our mission of safe food for consumers everywhere', she said. 'United we stand.'

GFSI Board of Directors Chair **Mike Robach** and Vice-Chairs **Gillian Kelleher** and **Anita Scholte Op Reimer**

then took the lectern for the last time in their capacity as leaders of the board. Mike, Gillian and Anita, who each have a long history with GFSI, reflected on their earliest memories of the organisation and the ways it has evolved under their tenure.

Mike was especially proud of the work GFSI has done to welcome all food safety stakeholders, a major shift from the handful of retailers that comprised GFSI in 2000. 'We have consumers, we have academia, we have service providers, we have the certification bodies and the CPOs, accreditation bodies, governments, intergovernmental organisations and the industry, from origination

all the way through to consumption, here in this room today', he said. 'You should all be congratulated for the work that you've done.'

Finally, Mike, Gillian, Anita, Erica and Marie-Claude Quentin, Senior Technical Manager of GFSI, gathered around a portentous red button to mark the publication of **Version 2020 of the Benchmarking Requirements**, the first full revision since 2017. They counted down from 10, and in a blitz of lights and music the document was officially published on the GFSI website. The new version is 'an exemplification of a big, major step forward', said Erica.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. In the face of a rapidly-changing world, action is more urgent than ever before.
2. Coalitions of action bring together companies that can commit to enacting change on a rapid timescale.
3. GFSI's Race to the Top aims to modernise the organisation through greater oversight and a strengthened collaborative approach.

### ACTION POINTS

1. Benefit from GFSI's diverse governance; talk to a board member representing your region or market.
2. See how your company can get involved in CGF's coalitions of action.
3. Read Version 2020 of the Benchmarking Requirements and see how they apply to you.

Peter Freedman Managing Director of The Consumer Goods Forum

Erica Sheward GFSI Director

# PLENARY 2

## LEADERSHIP: FOOD SAFETY FROM THE TOP DOWN

Leadership commitment is a defining element of GFSI and The Consumer Goods Forum. In the second plenary, three leaders demonstrated their commitment by sharing ways that they use their platforms to inspire food safety culture throughout their organisations.

Danny Wegman Chairman of Wegmans Food Markets

Danny Wegman, Chairman of Wegmans Food Markets, spoke candidly of his company's two-decade food safety journey, beginning with their hiring of GFSI Board Vice-Chair Gillian Kelleher in 1997. Gillian visited every location in the supermarket chain to demonstrate that food safety is critical. 'The key seems to be having our food safety experts acting as coaches, never acting as the police', said Danny. 'That way, we're all working together.'

Wegmans has since adopted a zero-tolerance attitude to food safety. The rest of the supply chain must follow suit, Danny said. Such an attitude would bring an end to the repeated outbreaks of E. coli in romaine lettuce that have plagued US retailers since 2017.

'The current system is not set up right to sell leafy greens safely', he said, pointing to a map that illustrated the proximity between farms producing lettuce and cattle in California. 'We must question the status quo. Our customers are counting on us.'

Edmond Scanlon, Executive Director and Group CEO of Kerry Group has even more customers counting on him — an approximate one billion products in 140 coun-

tries contain a Kerry ingredient. To maintain safety and quality across that far-reaching supply chain, Edmond uses his role as CEO to 'set the tone from the top'.

Edmond delineated his role as food safety leader into three parts: reinforcing the message of 'safety first, quality always' in all settings, allocating capital and operational resources towards food safety and putting food safety at the top of the agenda.

'At Kerry, we're doing this by embedding food safety into our culture, into our business, into our purpose, and by leading by example — walking the talk — ensuring that food safety comes through in our actions', he said. 'I recognise that that very much starts with me.'

Hugo Gutierrez, Global Chief QSHE Officer of Kerry Group supported Edmond with a presentation that delved into some of the specific measures Kerry has taken to promote food safety and food safety culture.

All Kerry products are designed with food safety in mind, Hugo said, and safety remains a primary concern from ideation to final consumption. 'We need to build food safety from the inside', he said. 'The only way to be preventative is if (when) we design something for the first time, that we make sure food safety is there.'

In order to uphold this philosophy, all 26,000 Kerry employees must share Hugo's concern. To that end, Kerry has designed cultural behavioural tools, supported by mobile applications, that help plant managers and their teams understand and communicate about food safety.

'If you put all the emphasis on the issues, people might be a little bit scared and not transparent to offer.. the problems that (they) have', said Hugo. Instead, leaders should set up a simple, non-threatening system through which operators can share their concerns. 'That is a game-changer. That is a change of philosophy', he said.

In the closing panel discussion, Danny, Edmond and Hugo compared the issues they face in retail and manufacturing, reaching a consensus on the importance of investing in food safety professionals. 'Food safety jobs are the most important jobs in your organisation, period', said Danny. 'What you need is tenacity, and never stop.'

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Food safety culture starts with business leaders who must communicate their commitment to food safety in all settings.
2. Safe food begins with safe design.
3. Question the status quo. Do not hesitate to change your practices if you see an issue.

### ACTION POINTS

1. Set up a simple, non-threatening system through which operators can communicate their food safety concerns.
2. Connect your food safety experts with the rest of the team in a supportive, coach-like capacity.

Edmond Scanlon Executive Director and Group CEO of Kerry Group

Hugo Gutierrez Global Chief QSHE Officer of Kerry Group

Craig Wilson Vice President of Food Safety and Quality at Costco

# PLENARY 3

## INSPECT WHAT WE EXPECT: BEST PRACTICES FOR FOOD SAFETY MANAGEMENT

The GFSI Conference 2020 placed a special emphasis on science and technology, and Plenary 3 was no exception. The panel of experts discussed data-based best practices for food safety within the ‘inspect what you expect’ framework, a cross-sector philosophy that has special significance in our field.

Craig Wilson, Vice President of Food Safety and Quality at Costco began with some background on the concept of ‘inspect what you expect’, which he traced back to Socrates. In food safety, the concept involves inspecting various elements of the food value chain and developing expectations for what should be in place.

These expectations must be supported by rigorous science and data. ‘If you have science and data, and you use it as your friend, it’s going to give you a great start in defining what we should be working on’, Craig said.

In order to acquire useful data, retailers and manufacturers must collaborate with regulators, academics and industry partners. ‘And when you get advice’, he said, ‘you can’t be afraid to use it...You just can’t be afraid to do something different.’

Next, Peter Taormina, President of Etna Consulting Group, offered his own advice to bridge the gap between science and business. Science can help companies ‘with identifying risks, mitigating those risks, working to establish validation and compliance with regulatory policies and then also being a liaison between supplier and customer’, he said.

To help industry leaders begin to incorporate science into their systems, Peter suggested some useful sources, including spreadsheets developed by the North American Meat Institute; databases developed by ComBase (a consortium of the University of Tasmania, the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture and the USDA); science-based recommendations through VITAL, an initiative of the Allergen Bureau; and Excel workbooks developed by the International Commission on Microbiological Specifications for Foods.

‘As much as I wish I could stand up here and say I’m as smart as a rocket scientist, I am a food scientist’, said Peter. Everyone can understand food science, he claimed, because everyone eats food. ‘Don’t underestimate the ability of a supervisory level of your organisation to assimilate this information to make them more effective in their day-to-day jobs’, he said.

Peter Taormina President of Etna Consulting Group

Finally, delegates heard from Paul Kiecker, Deputy Administrator of the FSIS, just weeks before he dropped the ‘deputy’ from his title and assumed the role of administrator. With over 30 years of experience at the Food Safety and Inspection Service, he was uniquely placed to explain the history and function of the agency.

Rather than lingering in FSIS’s past, Paul focused on its recent modernisation efforts and plans for the future. ‘Our approach to modernisation of inspection systems has been to ensure that the FSIS inspectors’ time is spent in the best way possible, meaning that we want our inspection personnel to spend time devoted to the inspection tasks that have the biggest impact on food safety’, he said. The agency therefore collects and analyses enormous amounts of data from inspection and sampling.

‘We’re also committed to sharing data with stakeholders, including regulated establishments, industry groups, consumers and the general public’, he said. ‘The more transparent the industry is with data, the more data itself serves as a tool to drive compliance with food safety regulations and pathogen reduction goals.’

The subsequent panel discussion allowed the three speakers to discuss ways to facilitate data-sharing between the public and private sectors, as well as ways to use what is already available. ‘Focus on what the data’s telling you’, said Peter. ‘Identify the risk, direct the resources there; don’t get caught up in the perceived risk.’

Paul Kiecker Deputy Administrator of the FSIS

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Data allows you to identify real risk and direct resources to it, rather than getting caught up in perceived risk.
2. All members of the food industry can and should understand some useful fundamentals of food science.
3. Expectations should be carefully defined and regularly examined.

### ACTION STEPS

1. Access the resources suggested by Peter Taormina and see how they can impact your business.
2. Find ways to make your data available to those who can make use of it, such as members of regulatory agencies and academia.

## PLENARY 4

# FOOD SAFETY IN OUR CONNECTED WORLD: FEATURING THE GLOBAL MARKETS AWARDS

**The theme for 2020, One Connected World. One Safe Food Supply, took centre stage at Plenary 4, which offered regional perspectives far afield of the Seattle venue. Delegates heard from those working to provide safe food to regions including Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe, including the winners of the fourth annual Global Markets Awards.**

**Steve Wearne**, Director of Global Affairs at the UK Food Standards Agency and Vice-Chair of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, began by relaying messages from other leaders in political, industrial and civil society spheres about the challenges involved in feeding 10 billion people by 2020. The leaders agreed that clear, predictable rules will allow world trade and

innovation to grow in step with the population's needs.

'Those rules must not treat everyone equally, but in an equitable way', said Steve, quoting the Ethiopian Minister of Agriculture Oumer Hussien Oba. 'The starting point for every country is not the same.' To that end, the Codex Trust Fund invests in developing markets in order to help them advance to the point that they can upgrade national regulations and engage in the Codex process.

Voluntary third-party assurance data also plays a role in the Codex process by informing risk profiling and reducing frequency of official controls, which lightens the burden on authorities. 'We facilitate and celebrate the use of Codex standards as a benchmark by voluntary third-party assurance programmes', Steve said. 'Together, we optimise resource utilisation towards the goal of consumer production and promotion of fair practices in the food trade.'

**Kristen MacNaughtan**, Programme Officer of the Agricultural Development Programme at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, had her own stories to share about working to improve food safety in developing markets. 'Food safety, nutrition and food security are tightly linked', said Kristen, who co-leads the foundation's Nutritious Food Systems Initiative portfolio.

Low- and middle-income countries lose about \$95 million in productivity from foodborne disease, due to factors including poor infrastructure, inadequate water sanitation and hygiene systems and rudimentary processing technology. The Gates Foundation invests in these sectors and others in order to drive down the burden of foodborne disease.

In order for the foundation's efforts to be successful, Kristen said, innovators must develop advanced systems, technologies and governance solutions that fit low- and

**Isabelle Mballa** Senior Regional Supply Chain Advisor of the World Food Programme

middle-income countries. Above all, her foundation needs open, accessible data on foodborne disease. 'Money follows data, and without the evidence, food safety will continue to fall between the cracks', she said.

**Isabelle Mballa**, Senior Regional Supply Chain Advisor of the World Food Programme, agreed with the need for right-fit solutions and data. Her organisation provides food to some of the world's most vulnerable people, including refugees and victims of famine.

After a series of food safety incidents — including a recall that required pulling contaminated products from a remote mountain village — the organisation established a food safety team to address issues like recalls and traceability. Private sector partnerships have proved key to their mission, and GFSI helps the organisation audit their suppliers and train their staff.

'We are using our platform to transform, to influence, to expand knowledge', said Isabelle. 'That cannot happen without joining hands, and we have to work together.'

The final portion of the session was devoted to **Global Markets Awards ceremony**, which recognised the exemplary efforts of four small but ambitious companies leveraging the Global Markets Programme to improve their food safety management systems.

This year's awards went to **Luna Export from Ethiopia, Shanghai Mcvolf Food Co. Ltd. from China, Alacor from Argentina and Linya Smaku from Ukraine**. Representatives from three of the winning companies joined the stage to receive their awards from Mitch Chait, CEO of awards sponsor greenfence, and GFSI Board Chair Mike Robach.

'The awards give small companies an opportunity to really showcase the hard work that they're putting into their food safety systems', said Mike. 'Our mantra is...safe food for consumers everywhere. The Global Markets Programme just absolutely epitomises that and makes it available to everybody.'

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Clear, predictable food safety standards will allow world trade and innovation to grow in step with the population's needs.
2. Food safety innovations must be supported by rigorous data.
3. The private sector has the resources to support the aid initiatives of intergovernmental and non-governmental agencies.

### ACTION STEPS

1. Get in contact with your country's Codex focal point and let them know how they can represent your needs at the Codex Alimentarius Commission.
2. The Global Markets Awards 2021 will open for applications in May. See if you or a company in your supply chain has what it takes to be the next Global Markets Awards winner!



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. In order to scale, food businesses must find technological solutions to scale their food safety strategy.
2. Like the people in your organisation, machine learning tools must be trained well to perform well.
3. While machine learning and AI are powerful tools, food safety technology need not be complex to be useful.

## ACTION STEPS

1. Consider hiring subject matter experts in technologies such as machine learning to your food safety team.
2. Find ways to digitise the pencil-and-paper steps in your food safety processes. You may be able to leverage the digital format into a tool that can help automate the process.

pose safety risks and remove them from the marketplace before they cause problems, a model that is constantly improving as they gather more data. 'There's one takeaway that I want you guys to walk out of the room with today, and that's that machine learning can only predict the tasks that you train it to do,' said Chance. 'Like the people in your organisation, you have to train them to perform well.'

**Mingwei Shen, Manager of Machine Learning,**

talked about optical character recognition, another data-based solution that supports Amazon's food safety programme. With OCR, Amazon can identify allergen labelling issues exponentially faster than if they relied on the human eye.

'It's hard to teach a machine to do everything at once', Mingwei emphasised. To that end, his team has to break the process of 'reading' into simple steps: determine if there are words, locate the words, and then identify the words. Then the team can decide whether to build a machine learning model.

'As you walk through this simple to complex stage, you can derive value and figure out what to do next', Mingwei said, pointing out that the process can be useful at any stage in its development.

**Allison Jennings, Director of Food Safety & Compliance of Amazon North America,**

offered relatively simple, but equally useful ways to leverage technology for food safety. Her case study involved an Excel macro that automated the process of finding deviations within a temperature control system. 'You're probably asking yourself: Is she really talking about Excel?' Allison said. 'We just heard all these presentations about machine learning and OCR, and she's going to talk about Excel?'

But the solution went beyond the spreadsheet. Her team transformed the macro into a template for a tool that can automatically stop a process in real time if a temperature is out of spec. 'It's not rocket science', Allison said, 'but these are examples of opportunities that we can all leverage to explore technology solutions to enable food safety processes.'

Anthony came back to the lectern to present another relatively simple technological solution: barcodes and QR codes that alert fulfilment and delivery associates to a package's contents and its history in the supply chain. He closed with some useful advice for leaders hoping to leverage the solutions he and his colleagues described: 'Technology is not a hobby', he said. 'It requires full-time professionals to be part of the team.'

Mingwei Shen Manager of Machine Learning

Allison Jennings Director of Food Safety & Compliance of Amazon North America

## PLENARY 5 TECHNOLOGY AT THE SERVICE OF FOOD SAFETY: THE NEW PILLARS OF FOOD SAFETY TECH

Amazon, whose headquarters are located in Seattle, contributed generously to the 2020 programme. Delegates had a rare chance to observe the company's inner workings during the Discovery Tours, with stops at the headquarters' futuristic Amazon Spheres, an Amazon Go store and a robot-powered fulfilment centre. The company's presence continued into Plenary 5, in which a tag team of five subject matter experts introduced delegates to the tools that keep Amazon's food products safe.

**Anthony Auffray, Director of Global Product Safety and Food Safety Compliance,** opened with the history of Amazon's food safety programme. When Anthony began at Amazon in 2013, the programme was relatively traditional, focusing on audits, inspection and lab testing — and was unprepared to scale in step with the company's growth, he said.

The following speakers, including **Fedor Zhdanov, Principal Applied Scientist of Amazon Web Services AI,** were among the team of experts that Anthony assembled to support Amazon's expansion. Fedor offered a crash course on machine learning and ways to apply it. The process starts with a simple question, he said. 'What is a problem that I can

solve in my business case which can leverage machine learning, and what is the data that can help that process?'

**Chance Kelch, Director of Product Management,**

then addressed a specific problem Amazon has worked to solve with machine learning: protecting customers from unsafe products. He walked through the three phases of development for machine learning: the input data, the binary model and the likelihood calculations. 'You're very likely to be able to use data that you already have, with machine learning, to do exactly what we have done, and predict risk before it happens', he said.

With machine learning, Amazon can identify which products are likely to

Charlie Arnot CEO of The Center of Food Integrity

Silvia Dumitrescu Vice President of Communications at the International Food Information Council

Ujwal Arkalgud Co-founder and CEO of MotivBase

## PLENARY 6

# TRUST IN A CHANGING WORLD: CONSUMER PERCEPTION IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

After two days of presentations devoted to cutting-edge food safety technology, the penultimate plenary drew delegates' attention to an unavoidable reality: even the most advanced food safety systems in the world may not guarantee consumers' trust. Three speakers approached the concept of consumer perception from different angles in this session, each looking for ways to communicate with honesty and transparency.

**Charlie Arnot, CEO of The Center of Food Integrity**

began by sharing ways that his organisation helps companies to earn consumer trust. 'Trust, as we believe, is the most important intangible asset in any organisation', he said. 'And so working on that, investing in that...has significant business value.'

Charlie separated customer needs into three categories: rational, emotional and social. 'We are competing for shares of heart, mind and voice, not just rational information and not just share of wallet, as we continue to go forward', he said.

In order to serve consumers' emotional and social needs, companies must communicate that food is not only safe, but also 'good for them, good for their families and good for the planet'. Charlie suggested three steps to begin this conversation: begin engagement using shared values; commit to transparency; and engage early, often and consistently. 'You need to embrace this and put trust building into your

budget on an annual basis if you're going to be successful', he said.

**Silvia Dumitrescu, Vice President of Communications at the International Food Information Council,**

offered a quantitative look into the global status of consumer trust. She compared recent results of the IFIC Food and Health Survey in the US, the Eurobarometer 2019 and the Edelman Trust Barometer to consider who consumers' trust, where they get their information and what their main concerns are.

The US and EU studies had interesting differences. In the US, for example, consumers are most concerned with foodborne disease, while in the EU they think more about antibiotics, additives and GMOs. In both places, however, consumers are bombarded with conflicting information and are more likely to trust their friends and family with nutrition advice than other sources.

'We can't throw facts at people anymore', said Silvia, whose organisation has phased out fact sheets in favour of Youtube videos, blog posts and gifs. 'People trust their tribes, so we need to be able to be part of those tribes in order to be credible.'

**Ujwal Arkalgud, Co-founder and CEO of MotivBase,**

approached the topic from the frame of cultural anthropology. 'Food safety is not just a regulatory and scientific issue; it is as much, if not more so, a cultural issue', he said. 'Culture, these shared set of meanings around things like food safety, are created inadvertently, and they're created naturally, unknowingly.'

Due to the rise of microcultures, Ujwal said, the meanings that consumers ascribe to food safety have become more complex and fragmented than they were in the past. In order to communicate about food safety, companies must therefore learn how to communicate in the unique language of each relevant microculture.

'The solutions you and I design, they need to fit into the lens of these microcultures', he said. 'It doesn't matter whether it's scientifically right or wrong; if we do not fit into the narrative, people will reject them.'

The final discussion among the panelists revealed some interesting overlaps among their perspectives. All agreed that genuine, thoughtful engagement is key to earning trust. 'When you have conversations, I think it's very important to listen, and it's very important to take into account what the other party says', said Silvia.

Ujwal cautioned against defining microcultures generationally, a form of categorisation he called fundamentally flawed. 'Don't ever use the word millennial', he said. (His employees put \$10 in a jar every time they slip on this rule.) 'Never use that word, and you will learn things about people that surprise you, and that will actually give you an opportunity to engage positively.'

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Consumers have rational, emotional and social needs, and companies must meet all three to gain their trust.
2. People trust their tribes, so companies need to be part of those tribes to be credible.
3. Due to the rise of microcultures, consumers' understanding of food safety has become fragmented and complex.

### ACTION STEPS

1. Discover which microcultures are relevant to your company and learn how to communicate with them.
2. Invest in consumer trust. Hire full-time professionals to manage communication and arm them with the information they need to reach your consumers.

# CLOSING PLENARY

## LEARNING FROM THE PAST, LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: THE FOOD SAFETY OF TOMORROW

The closing plenary traditionally takes a forward-facing perspective, focusing on next steps and predictions for food safety. The 2020 edition narrowed in on a specific issue regarding the future of the field: who will become the next generation of food safety professionals, and how can we reach them? The session also welcomed in the next generation of leaders for the GFSI Board.

The first speaker of the session was **Jason Dorsey**, President and Co-Founder of the Center for Generational Kinetics,

who would owe Ujwal a few hundred dollars by the end of his presentation if he were following his 'millennial' taboo. Like Ujwal, though, Jason is interested in using data to better understand groups of people and to pressure the stereotypes against them.

Jason separated the 'millennial' category into two parts: 'mega-Ilenials' and 'me-Ilenials.' The latter meet millennial stereotypes regarding low professional stability and high debt, but the former do not. The generation after millennials, Gen Z, have more in common with previous generations in terms of their frugality and work ethic, he said.

The key to integrating younger generations into the workforce, including the food safety profession, is to learn to communicate on their

level, whether that means creating video-based training modules or simple, well-designed tools for doing their jobs. 'Every generation brings value, and I would argue when we look at food safety, supply chain, everything else, we need every generation to work together well', Jason said.

**Frank Yiannas**, Deputy Commissioner for Food Policy & Response at the US FDA

— a familiar face at GFSI — took a literal spin on the session title and began with a retrospective on food safety in the United States, starting with the publication of *The Jungle* in 1906. Compared to the revolutionary changes of that era, recent food safety advancements have been relatively small, he said.

But Frank was optimistic. 'I believe we're on a sea change in terms of how we're going to manage food safety in the future, and really resolve and conquer some of our greatest food safety challenges that have evaded us for the past decade', he said. To that end, the FDA will soon release a blueprint to an initiative called The New Era of Smarter Food Safety. He broke the blueprint into four key areas: technology-enabled traceability and outbreak response; smarter tools and approaches to prevention; new business models; and food safety culture.

'Like FDA, GFSI has to adapt to the changing world around us', he said. 'What's really clear to me more than ever before...is that there's so much more we can do together.'

Next, **Mindy M. Brashears**, Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety at the USDA,

offered a perspective from the other US government agency concerned with food safety (of meat, poultry and egg products). Like Frank, Mindy gave an overview of her agency's plans for the near future. Those plans include three 'interrelated and overlapping goals: leading with science, building relationships and influencing behaviour changes', Mindy said.

More specifically, the USDA will be taking a targeted approach towards salmonella, modernising inspection processes and information technology systems, setting pathogen performance standards and building relationships with national and international entities and with universities. 'We need to start recruiting the next generation into the agency, so we have been very aggressive in developing a programme to do that', she said.

The last presenter, **Barbara Chamberlin**, Extension Instructional Design and Educational Media Specialist at New Mexico State University,

is among the people working to introduce the next generation to food safety. Barbara and her team develop games, animated videos and other educational tools that help people from preschool on up to learn about everything from hand-washing to water sampling.

'But really, what I do, and what I think we have in common, is I ask this question: How do we design to change?' she said. 'If you are not

trying to figure out how to change, you're in the wrong industry. We have never had a theme for this conference which was like, Food Safety: Everything's Fine as It Is.'

Barbara closed with a personal experience that brought the importance of GFSI to life: Less than three months before, her mother passed away while undergoing treatment for listeria meningitis. 'The preventable deaths are harder to take', she said. 'Everything that drives our work is to prevent. Our goal is to get to the point where nobody understands why we're funded to do what we do, because there doesn't seem to be a problem anymore.'

After this moving story, **GFSI Director Erica Sheward**

— who had opened the conference with an equally personal narrative about her own mother — returned to the stage to close it. She introduced new leaders for the GFSI Board: Co-Chairs **Craig Wilson** of Costco and **Roy Kirby** of Mondelēz

International and Vice-Chairs **Carletta Oton** of Amazon and **Monique Pellegrino** of Danone.

The chairs and co-chairs are evenly split between the manufacturing and retail sectors, better aligning with CGF's rules for parity-based governance. 'The only reason why there are two co-chairs', quipped Roy, 'is that the only way you're going to fill (former chair) Mike Robach's shoes is with four feet.'

'What comes next?' Erica said. 'Well, we are not slowing down...We move forward aggressively, rigorously, actively to shape and craft our new vision for how GFSI will interact with food safety to deliver on our mission, with all of you, with all of our partners, for safe food for consumers everywhere.'

With such an imperative, who knows how far we will have come in a year's time? We look forward to finding out at the GFSI Conference 2021, and to seeing you in Singapore!

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. All generations add value to an organisation, and effective communication is key to unlocking this value.
2. Food safety professionals must embrace emerging technologies to meet current challenges.
3. Education is an important facet of prevention.

### ACTION STEPS

1. Reach out to a colleague from a different generation and ask them how you could better communicate.
2. Look into the games and other tools produced by Barbara Chamberlin and her team at the New Mexico State University Learning Games Lab. Are any of them applicable to your training processes?

**Jason Dorsey** President and Co-Founder of the Center for Generational Kinetics

**Frank Yiannas** Deputy Commissioner for Food Policy & Response at the US FDA

**Mindy M. Brashears** Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety at the USDA

**Barbara Chamberlin** Extension Instructional Design and Educational Media Specialist at New Mexico State University

## DISCOVERY TOURS

The Discovery Tours offered a backstage pass to some of the disruptors that started in Seattle and went on to change the world. Before the tour, experts from Kantar Consulting gave a short presentation on the local retail scene. Then, delegates visited a curated collection of Amazon worksites, including the robot-powered BFI4 Fulfilment Center, a cashierless Amazon Go store and the Amazon Spheres conservatories, as well as the original Costco warehouse and the Starbucks Kitchen, where the 30,000-strong chain develops its distinctive products. There was no better way to experience the innovative spirit of Seattle!

## GFSI GLOBAL MARKETS AWARDS

The fourth annual Global Markets Awards, sponsored by greenfence, recognised four companies for their exemplary efforts to improve their food safety management systems through the Global Markets Programme. The winners, [Luna Export from Ethiopia](#), [Shanghai Mcvolf Food Co. Ltd. from China](#), [Alacor from Argentina](#) and [Linya Smaku from Ukraine](#), join a growing corps of ambassadors for GFSI and the Global Markets Programme around the world.

## GFSI BOARD MEETINGS

Leaders from major retail, manufacturing, primary production and food service operations, who make up the GFSI Board of Directors, met before the conference to discuss new challenges in the evolving food industry landscape. During this productive Board meeting, they also agreed on the new strategic framework for GFSI, which was presented at the Opening Plenary, GFSI & You. For the first time in GFSI history, the 24 board members elected four new leaders, two co-chairs and two vice-chairs, representing a parity between the manufacturing and retail sectors. The GFSI Board's role is to identify priority issues, provide strategic direction, and encourage broader implementation across the industry.

## GFSI VILLAGE

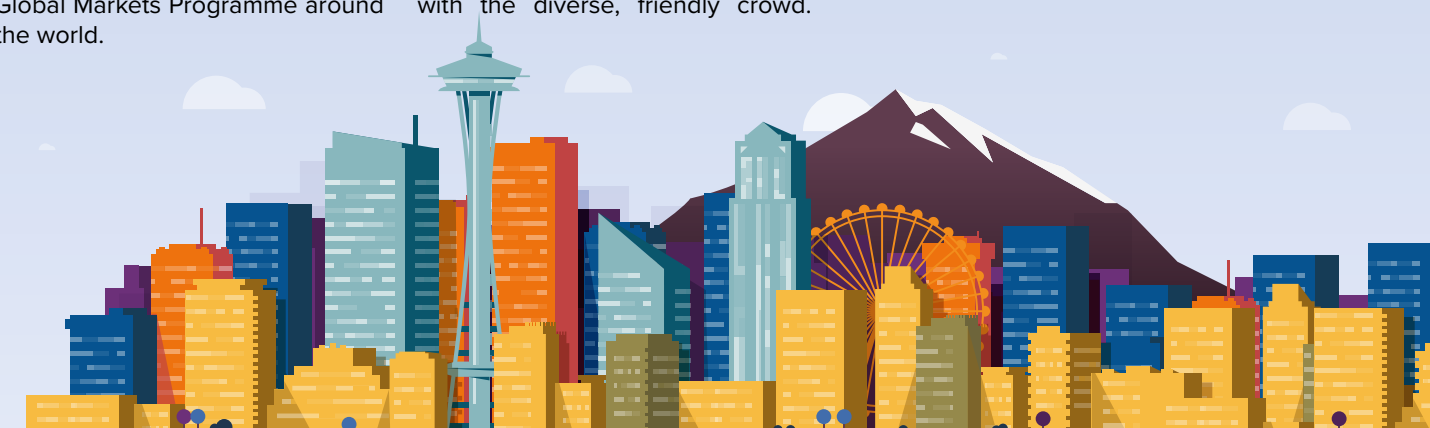
At the vibrant GFSI Village, the exhibition hall of the conference, delegates learned about new and innovative food safety solutions while mingling with the GFSI delegation. The centrepiece of the village is the Presentation Theatre, where subject experts presented concise, informal Tech Talks during networking breaks. While enjoying the attractions, delegates took the opportunity to make connections and do business with the diverse, friendly crowd.

## SPECIAL SESSIONS

At the GFSI Conference, mornings mean Special Sessions, where some of the leading lights in the industry discuss hot topics in food safety, technology and innovation. Our collaborators, including Ecolab, greenfence, NSF International, Rentokil Initial, SGS, Testo, AIB International, Diversey and GS1, brought together the most relevant topics and speakers to equip delegates to tackle food safety challenges. Some repeat presenters were even able to share how far they have come since last year's event. Delegates came away with concrete solutions and the connections they need to make them happen.

## TECH TALKS

Tech Talks took place during networking breaks in the Presentation Theatre, the heart of the bustling GFSI Village. These short sessions offered a relaxed, informal setting to discuss specific topics in food safety. As the name implies, each of these presentations had a focus on food safety technology, including Big Data, Internet of Things, food logistics, and mobile apps. Experts from across the food industry shared experiences and insights and introduced delegates to the new frontier of food safety.





# BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Breakout sessions are an opportunity to delve into topics affecting the food industry in more detail than the broader plenary sessions may allow. This year, each block of concurrent breakouts was thematically linked to its preceding plenary. In addition, the breakouts linked to Plenary 5, which focused on emerging technologies in food safety, took on an all-new, interactive format inspired by the programme Shark Tank.

**Breakout 3.1, Beyond the Audit: How to Expect More from Inspection**, explored innovative techniques, including machine learning and analytics, that can improve inspections, increase auditor competence and move beyond current limitations to provide a broader picture of site conditions. Speakers brought on-the-ground experience in a variety of settings, including agriculture, production and retail, and rich knowledge in subjects ranging from pest management to artificial intelligence.

**Breakout 3.2, Setting Expectations: How to Develop Food Safety Specifications**, was requisite for those who have wondered how organisations such as GFSI, the World Health Organisation and others develop the food safety standards that set expectations for the entire food chain. Speakers explained the rigorous science behind standards and outlined the process by which risk assessment data helps set specifications for process controls, testing thresholds and products.

**Breakout 3.3, Training the Supply Chain: Education from Auditor to Consumer**, showcased tools and best practices developed by companies including Microsoft, Lobster Ink, McDonald’s Corporation and the Harvard Business Review which organisations can apply to streamline compliance, reduce turnover and enhance engagement and collaboration in their undesked workforce. Ultimately, these strategies lead to optimised productivity, quality and business performance, as well as a better customer experience.

In **Breakout 4.1, Public-Private Partnerships: Working Together Towards One Safe Food Supply** representatives from partnerships in different geographical regions and industry sectors chronicled their accomplishments and predicted the future of public-private collaboration. The speakers, who hailed from governmental and non-governmental agencies as well as from multinational companies, also discussed the challenges and conflicts associated with working across the public-private divide.

**Breakout 4.2, Food Safety from the Fields: a Focus on Produce and Primary Production**, highlighted the work GFSI has done to address risk management in the first step of food production, especially of leafy greens. Delegates heard academic and regulatory perspectives on methods for identifying risk and making food safety decisions, such as conducting inspections and audits, and from food safety leaders in retail and industry who used their expertise to make swift decisions in the field.

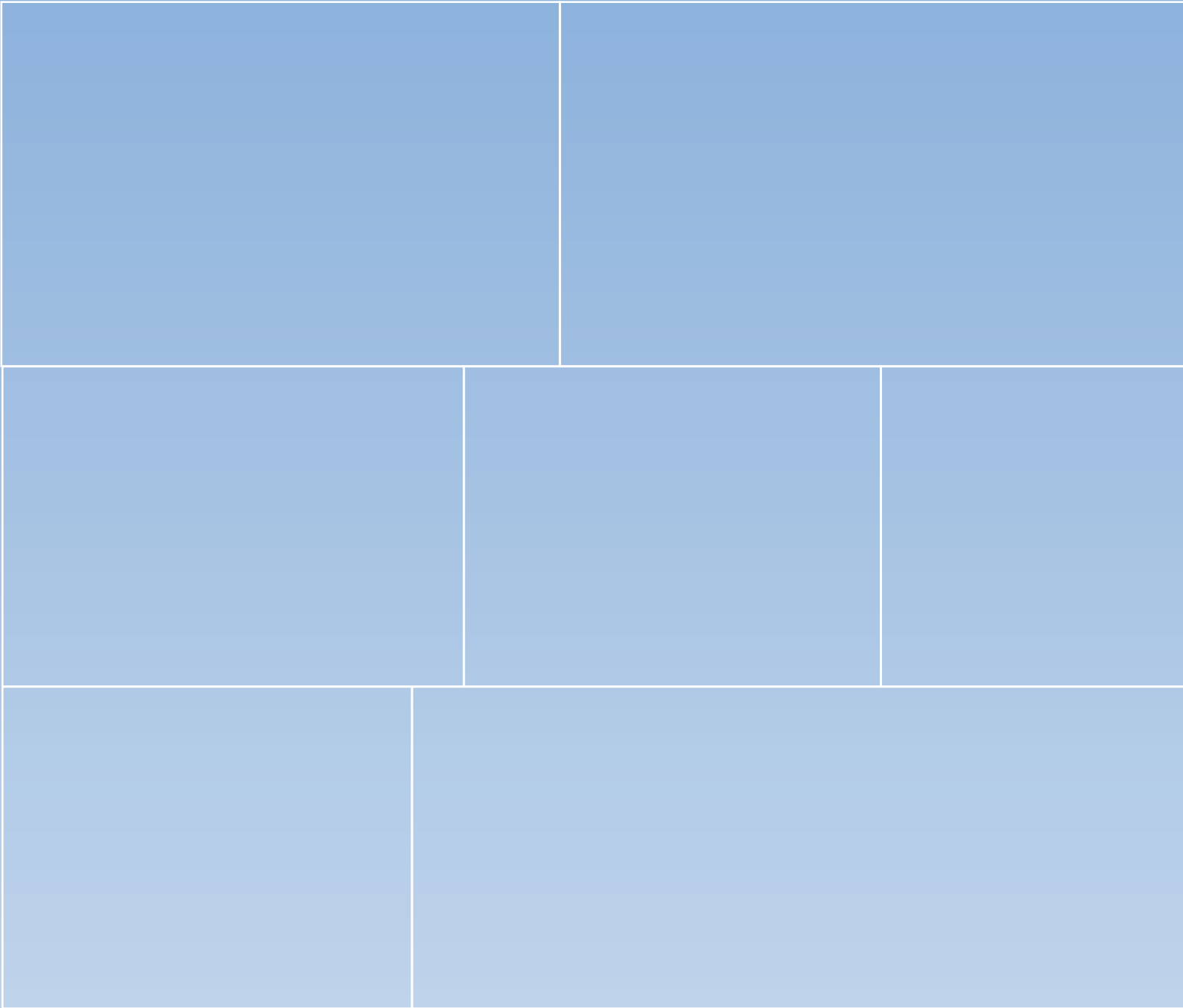
**Breakout 4.3, Data Sharing Between the Public and Private Sectors: Blockchain and Beyond**, shed light on the importance of data-sharing and explained how companies can access and apply the data that is already available to them. Real-world examples in settings such as Sainsbury’s Supermarkets in the UK served as clear illustrations for these often-abstract concepts, and delegates came away with practical ideas to use and share data in their own places of work.

**Breakouts 5.1-5.3** took an interactive format inspired by the programme Shark Tank. In the concurrent sessions, a total of nine innovators excited the audience about tech applications that are relevant to the food industry. The presenters each had about 12 minutes to explain the solution and to field the sharks’ clarifying questions. At the end of each session, the audience was asked to vote for their favourite innovation. Though there was no cash prize for the winner, CEO Christine Charlotte Akselsen of Kezzler, she will have bragging rights for life!

**Breakout 6.1, Bridging the Gap Between Truth and Perception: Science and Myths in Food Safety**, addressed the disconnect between the popular perception of safe food and the science behind industry practices. Representatives from consumer organisations and research firms discussed ways to ease the flow of information between scientists and the public, including clear labelling, consumer science-based messaging and new guidelines for recipe-writing that include instructions for food handling and other food safety steps.

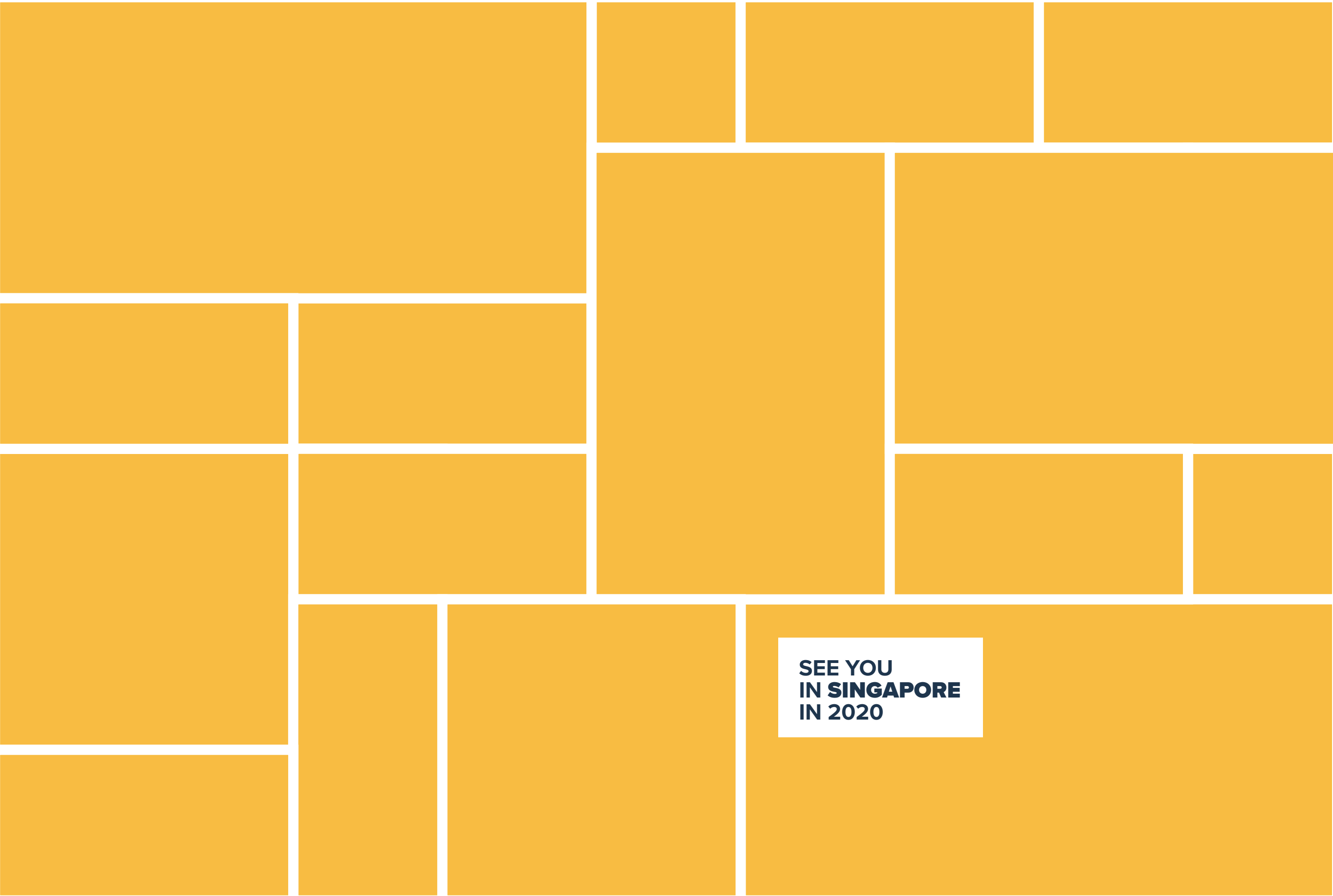
**Breakout 6.2, Food Safety vs Sustainability: the Challenges and Opportunities Associated with Using Recycled Materials for Food Contact** explored the challenges and opportunities that impact the drive to use recycled materials for food contact. Delegates heard from one of the innovators working to cut plastic waste by encouraging recycled packaging and from Ignacio Gavilan, Environmental Sustainability Director of The Consumer Goods Forum, who shared the surprisingly long history of recycled packaging and the possibilities for its future.

In **Breakout 6.3, The Future of Shopping and Selling: New Trends in E-commerce**, regulators and industry representatives came together to discuss recent and upcoming e-commerce developments and consider how food safety management can adapt in step with new trends. The session began with a summary of findings from the GFSI Technical Working Group on E-Commerce and included case studies from Walmart and Freshippo-Alibaba.



**GROUP  
PHOTOS**

**PHOTO  
GALLERY**



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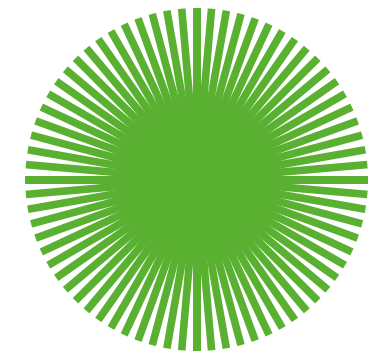
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