THE GREEN ISSUE

SUSTAINABLE INSIGHT, ADVICE AND INSPIRATION

March 2025

speciality food magazine.com

SPECIALITY FOOD

CONNECTING THE FINE FOOD AND DRINK INDUSTRY



SUSTAINABLE FOOD TRUST

PATRICK HOLDEN: POWER TO THE PEOPLE
P. 37



NFU

TOM BRADSHAW: INDIES ARE INVALUABLE
P. 44



RIVER COTTAGE

HUGH FEARNLEY-WHITTINGSTAL: EDUCATION IS THE KEY
P. 48



FIELDFARE

HOW TO OWN
WITH OUR DELICIOUS,

Be up and running in as little as 6 weeks!





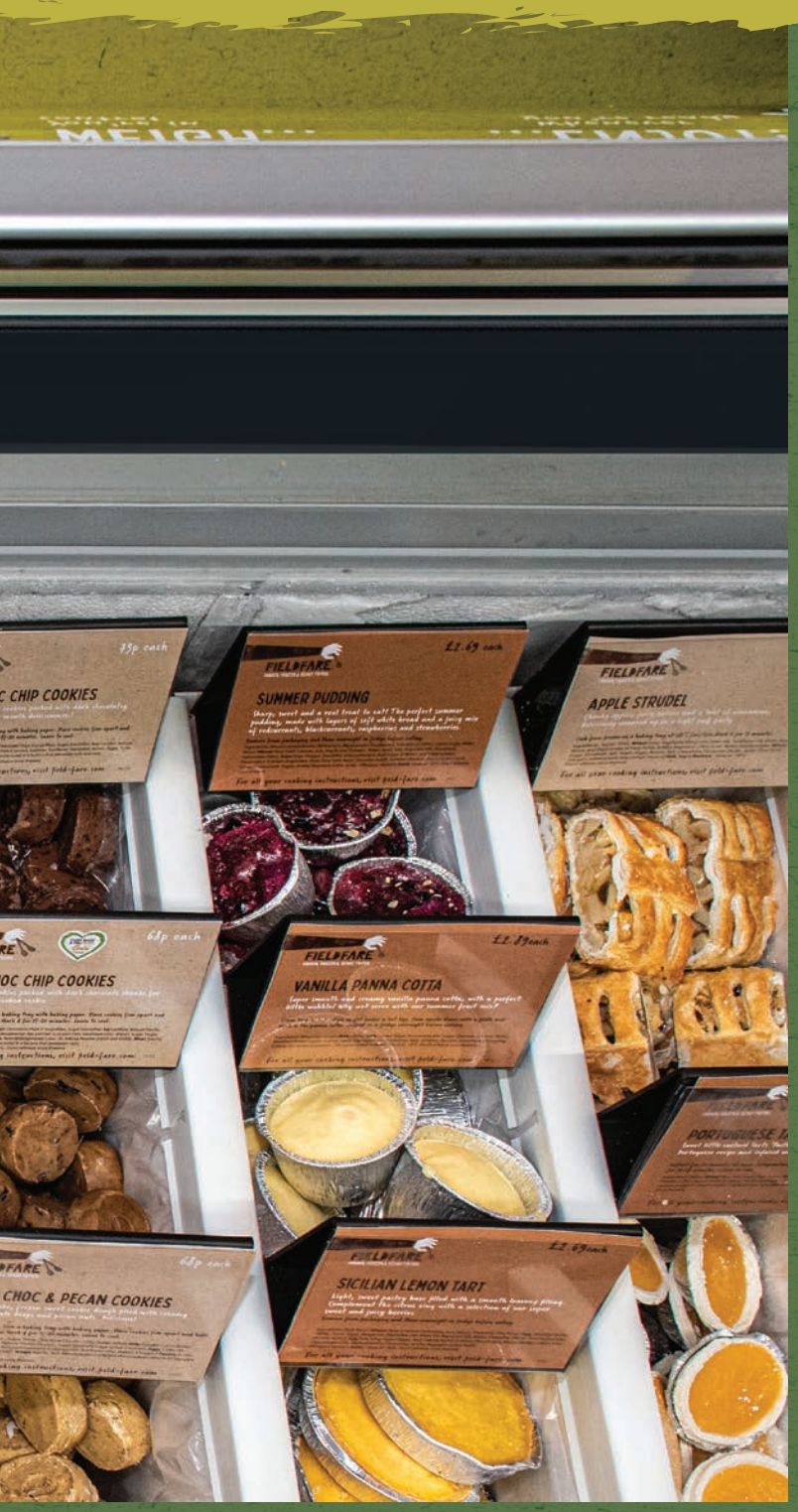






THE COOLEST BUFFET

LOOSE FROZEN FOOD









It's easy!

1. Contact Us – Let's discuss what you're looking for (we'd recommend a minimum two freezer set-up for best return).
2. Choose Range – Over 100 premium, delicious, loose frozen products from our award-winning range.
3. Free Installation – Your dedicated Sales Manager will set up your fully branded Fieldfare freezers.
4. Easy Order – By phone or email, then receive just one invoice – keeping admin as simple as possible.
5. Additional support – An entire package from technical help and marketing provision, to bringing the brand to life in your store.
6. Targeting Foodies – our advertising campaign has reached over 8 million consumers and directs them to find our stockists.
7. Happy Customers – You'll see again and again!

We'd be chilled to bits to chat to you about becoming a Fieldfare stockist. Give us a call, email us or visit us at the Farm Shop & Deli Show in April – Stand L209.

e: enquiries@field-fare.com t: 01732 864 344
www.field-fare.com

In this issue

8 **Edward Berry,** The Flying Fork

10 **Oliver Lloyd** Consultant

33 **James Grant** No.2 Pound Street

REGULARS

14 **Farm Shop Focus: River Cottage**

18 **Product News**

30 **Counterpoint: Selling Sustainably**

32 **Cheese Uncut**

38 **Trend Watch: Honey**

52 **Daring to Diversify: Flourish Foodhall**

54 **Last Words**

FEATURES

16 **lunch! NORTH show 2025 preview**

17 **Meet the Producer: Farrington's**

20 **IFE 2025 preview**

22 **Experience a Flavour of the EU at IFE 2025**

23 **Ready, Steady, Cook**

26 **Sustainable Solutions**

34 **Dairy for All**

37 **"We hold the key for change"**

39 **"We don't sell, we serve"**

40 **Is Regenerative Agriculture the Future of Farming?**

43 **Spotlight On: Dilmah**

44 **"Farm shops are invaluable"**







EDITOR'S LETTER



Welcome to the March issue of *Speciality Food*, also known as our *Green Issue*, where we shine the spotlight on the sustainable future of the food and drink industry.

All of our regular features have had the *Green Issue* treatment, meaning that every product launch highlighted and piece of retail advice shared is inspired by sustainability, and we highlight the expertise of a raft of experts to help you make the right decisions for the future of your business.

Sustainable heroes such as Patrick Holden and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall share their insights into the sector, and there is intel from green-minded producers and industry professionals that will not only help you make smart business moves going forward, but even shape your stocking decisions for the year to come.

We also cover need-to-know topics such as regenerative farming and take a look at the sustainable dairy industry, and highlight the Sustainable Champions making waves in the green sphere.

It's increasingly vital to be proactive around sustainability, and we're proud to help you do just that.

HOLLY SHACKLETON | EDITOR
holly.shackleton@artichokehq.com





How to be a sustainable retailer

Those working in the fine food world can no longer just pay lip service to sustainability, it's something consumers are increasingly expecting them to be on top of

The modern consumer in speciality retail demands so much more from the stores they choose to visit. As well as expecting a cornucopia of the very best ingredients and produce, and personable, knowledgeable service, they're taking businesses' claims around sustainability much more seriously.

A report released by FMCG Gurus revealed 32% of shoppers wanted to avoid ingredients that could be harmful to the environment while, according to Euromonitor, 60% of consumers are choosing to buy food in a more planet positive way. They said they wanted to see more ethical sourcing, lower carbon footprints, and thoughtfulness around social and environmental causes.

"Spending on sustainable products remains a conscious decision based on personal values," says Inga Klebanskaja, senior research consultant at Euromonitor. She adds that sustainability today is a "prerequisite for innovation that drives growth".

WHAT DOES SUSTAINABILITY MEAN IN RETAIL?

There are lots of things to consider, from choosing brands with a lower carbon footprint, to those that arrive in minimal packaging or that offer a packaging return system, or even helping the growth of the local economy by supporting the Living Wage and improving the lives of your employees.

Richard Werren, BSI's global director for food and retail, says he thinks the "penny has dropped" in the sector. "Independent retailers realise sustainability means something to consumers and is here to stay. Today's consumers are well-informed, and our research shows that 62% globally now look for sustainability claims when buying products."

If you're taking the issue seriously, he continues, there's a brilliant opportunity to engage with shoppers who are voting with their wallets towards 'greener' retail.

Speciality retail's superpower is speed, Richard adds. "Independents can implement changes much faster than major retailers, and in a competitive market that's a big advantage. Furthermore, research by Faire shows that 41% of consumers believe independent retailers provide better customer service as well as offering better quality and more interesting products (35%)."

The trick, Richard says, is to tell not only stories around products, but also about how your own business is run. If you're cutting back on waste, championing local sourcing and using green energy, shout out about it because sustainability has "moved from being a fringe concern, to the cornerstone of a winning business strategy".

Gen Z are becoming a key part of the independent retail picture, and will continue to be influential as their spending power increases, Richard continues.

WHAT CAN RETAILERS DO TO BE MORE SUSTAINABLE?

There are lots of opportunities for independents such as farm shops and delis to make a change and lead from the front on sustainability initiatives, says Richard. "For example, they can do this by reducing packaging waste, encouraging and incentivising customers to use scales and their own containers for loose produce, deli items and meats, or by replacing plastic bags with paper or compostable, recyclable alternatives."

Specialist retailers can also work with shorter supply chains. "This makes good sense, because it supports local farmers and producers, and creates an opportunity for independents to really engage with their local communities."

You could go a step further, he adds, by promoting these products with enhanced signage, discounts and sampling to put them front and centre of your offering. "Or host pop-up events to inform environmentally conscious consumers about the sustainable food choices in store and what they can personally do."

There are financial benefits, says the Carbon Charter, to becoming more eco-friendly. According to the organisation, for example, cutting 20% of your energy cost could improve your profits by as much as 5%.

Advice from them includes:

Looking at lighting – Installing LED lights is instantly energy saving, and as they give off less heat, there's a reduced need for cooling. The bulbs last longer too. Consider also installing occupancy sensors in areas such as corridors and storage rooms to ensure lights are only on when they're occupied.

Heating and cooling – Balance your office, storeroom and shop floor temperatures to outside conditions and set controls to match requirements throughout the day. Consider a dead band setting of 3C between heating and air conditioning to ensure they're not running at the same time. And heat reflective glass and awnings over large display windows can also reduce unwanted heat gain in summer.

Refrigeration – Save money by scheduling regular maintenance of in store fridges. Avoid overcrowding fridge shelves to help them run better, and consider insulating covers or sliding doors to retain a consistent temperature. Overnight, you might think about using night blinds or aerofoil technology to reduce the loss of chilled air.

WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF SUSTAINABLE RETAIL?

Richard thinks tomorrow's retail world will be shaped and defined by a shift to more sustainable ways of working in order to meet rising consumer expectations.

It must become, for independents "a defining pillar of their retail strategy, with eco-friendly practices built into all aspects of their business operations".

In the UK new regulatory and compliance frameworks supporting this shift are likely to be another driver, he adds. There's a lot of talk around AI too, being used as an enabling tool and Richard thinks it will have a part to play in improving sustainability through accurate forecasting, improved stock management, supply chain transparency and energy efficiency.

"All of these will play a part in the future of the sector."



Summerdown celebrates two decades of Chocolate Peppermint Creams

Pioneers of Black Mitcham Peppermint, Summerdown, are celebrating 20 years of their Chocolate Peppermint Creams – a product which began as a mission to revive the taste of pure English peppermint and has become an award-winning confection enjoyed all over the world.

In March 2004 the taste of English peppermint was long-lost and, inspired by a bag of traditional peppermint candies brought back by farm manager Ian Margetts, Summerdown founder Sir Michael Colman decided to explore the idea of creating a unique sweet made using English peppermint. Anthony Terry suggested making luxurious peppermint creams, so the team partnered with confectionery experts and manufacturers to produce the ultimate peppermint cream.

Naming the new brand Summerdown Pure Mint bestowed a sense of English provenance and heritage, as well as a taste of what the new product brought to the market, and its now instantly-recognisable green packaging was a hit at its launch at 2005's Speciality & Fine Food Fair.

The launch was an immediate success, with the Chocolate Peppermint Creams winning a Bronze award from the Academy of Chocolate and orders coming in from the likes of Harvey Nichols and around the world – the first international purchase coming from David Porat of Chelsea Market Baskets in New York.

20 years after their creation, Summerdown's Chocolate Peppermint Creams are best-sellers loved around the world for their rich chocolate and signature authentic peppermint – testament to the craftsmanship, dedication and teamwork that led to their invention.

Katie Westwood, marketing manager at Cobbs Farmshops, one of our longest standing stockists, said, "We love Summerdown Peppermint Creams because they perfectly align with the values we hold dear—local, sustainable, and crafted with care. We're proud to support a brand that's dedicated to farming practices that respect the land, while creating a truly delicious product."

Not only are Summerdown's Chocolate Peppermint Creams beloved by fine food shoppers, but they are B Corp certified. The Summerdown team is dedicated to cutting its carbon footprint, cultivating nature stewardship and connecting people with nature. The business is now carbon net neutral and continues to explore new ways to decarbonise – including by removing carbon-based plastic from its packaging, moving towards 100% sustainably sourced ingredients by 2030, and gaining a deeper understanding of their Scope 3 emissions which incorporate how waste is handled, how customers use their products, and how sustainably their suppliers work.

Summerdown's peppermint fields are havens for birds, insects and flowers, with each hosting a beehive and wildflowers as well as seeds sown for the benefit of wild birds.

Consumer education is also a key part of Summerdown's sustainability mission, and it hosts stays and experiences to educate visitors about regenerative farming. Summerdown works with wildlife conservation charity Plantlife, supports the Farming Community Network (FCN) and is involved in research initiatives, plus all of its teas are RSPB Fair to Nature Certified, helping consumers to make sustainable shopping choices.



'Room for growth' for EU charcuterie, says recent research

According to recent research by FICT (Les Entreprises Françaises de Charcuterie Traiteur) the UK market is demonstrating space for growth for charcuterie made in the EU.

A group of 2000 nationally representative consumers were surveyed for the research, which found that despite the popularity of charcuterie boards and use of charcuterie on grazing platters, UK consumers had little understanding of charcuterie products and the sector as a whole.

The survey showed that 51% of British consumers state that they know what the term 'charcuterie' means, yet just 32% of Millenials knew that it referred to cured meat. Indeed, some of the consumers questioned believed that a charcuterie board would feature cheese, bread, olives and fresh fruit in addition to fresh and cured meat. 79% of those surveyed aged 55+ reported that they believe they have poor knowledge of the category.

According to the research, 48% of consumers stated that they would purchase these items at a supermarket, and only 13% would buy them from a specialist shop.

Trade research was carried out with 100 retailers, 93% of whom stated that EU quality marks such as AOP and Label Rouge played an important role when deciding whether or not to stock charcuterie products, but that the range of items with these marks were limited.

70% of retailers felt that their stocking decisions were largely shaped by the products' availability at wholesalers rather than consumer requests.



Wessex Mill is an artisan flour brand milled in the heart of the beautiful North Wessex Downs. Family-owned, its milling history in Wessex goes back more than 125 years.

All wheat grain for our British flours come from trusted local Wessex farmers, some we have worked with for generations for their commitment to great quality.

Milled slowly and in small batches, altogether this makes flour with real heritage and provides excellent baking results for home and professional bakers alike.

Wessex Mill
PROUDLY MILLING IN WESSEX SINCE 1895

www.wessexmill.co.uk

cotswold Meringues

Luxury handcrafted pavlova base, created using only the finest ingredients. Made with love and care, staying true to the original family recipe.

Simply top with whipped cream and fruit for an easy yet elegant dessert.

Try the rest of our range

www.meringues.co.uk





"Sustainable profit"



EDWARD BERRY
THE FLYING FORK

Is it possible to run a food shop that both follows a strong green agenda and is profitable?

Let's first ask the key question. Why bother? Why go green in the first place? We operate in a tough world dominated by large retail where we, the small independents, have to work extra hard, and where a less green outlet might be more profitable. With even the highest respect for the planet, it can make the model questionable when you are looking to make money.

Well, we can probably sing the reasons in unison. Running a food shop with a green agenda as we know can reduce its environmental impact, supports sustainable practices, ideally attracts responsible customers, hopefully promotes healthier choices and ultimately helps conserve resources.

That's all good.

But let's face facts. Green businesses often face higher operational costs; sourcing locally grown produce or artisan products can be more expensive, as can implementing energy-efficient systems or using eco-friendly packaging. These higher costs may need to be passed onto customers, which can reduce price competitiveness. As we know, many consumers prioritise affordability over sustainability and, with an eye on budget may be less willing to pay a premium for green or environmentally friendly options, even if their hearts tell them to. Some consumers might not fully understand or appreciate the long-term benefits of green practices which could lead them to choose a less green and potentially cheaper option instead.

So if the shop relies heavily on green practices, it might not attract enough customers who are willing to pay more. This is a tough realisation when we aim to attract as many customers as possible.

However, running a food retail outlet that is both environmentally sustainable and profitable should be possible. It does however require careful planning, constant review, and a thoughtful approach to every aspect of the business and strategic decisions.

Reducing food waste is crucial. If it works, you might set up systems for composting organic waste and recycling materials. Choosing reusable or biodegradable packaging, or even offering customers the option to bring their own, containers can be a cost saver.

It's not just for the greener outlets, but stock control affects everything so use technology for inventory management, waste tracking, and supply chain optimisation. This can help reduce waste, improve efficiency, and increase profitability.

It's an obvious one today, but invest in energy focussed equipment, like LED lighting, energy-efficient refrigerators, and ovens. If possible, and probably for the farm shop sector particularly, you might consider ways to transition to renewable energy sources such as solar or wind to power your business. Maximising natural light can reduce the need for artificial lighting during the day. It will take work, but these initiatives and investments can reduce your energy bills over time.

How about attracting those consumers who are in the loop and want to support a greener shop. There are consumers today who are willing to pay a premium for ethically sourced products understanding that locally grown and seasonal products can reduce our carbon footprint. Shout loudly! Make sure you are evidently doing your bit. Be transparent and share your sustainability efforts with customers, your sourcing practices, waste reduction programmes, and energy-saving initiatives. Sponsor or participate in local environmental initiatives. This not only enhances your green credentials but can also strengthen your local customer base. Offer customers the option to purchase or bring their own reusable containers. This reduces the reliance on disposable packaging. Share your sustainability efforts with your customers through signage, social media, and in-store communication. These can help to build brand loyalty.

While a range of factors might make a less green outlet more profitable in the short term, the long-term sustainability of these models will depend on evolving consumer preferences. By incorporating these principles, you can create a food retail outlet that not only meets the needs of today's eco-conscious consumers but also makes a positive impact on the environment and community. Sustainability doesn't have to be a huge challenge – it's about making small, thoughtful choices that add up over time.

> "Sustainability doesn't have to be a huge challenge – it's about making small, thoughtful choices that add up over time"

Farm Shop & Deli Retailer Awards finalists announced

The Farm Shop & Deli Retailer Awards, championed by Fieldfare and in partnership with The Grocer, are renowned in the sector for recognising and rewarding some of the UK's best-loved specialist retailers - pillars of their respective communities and champions of great produce and sustainable practice.

Supported by Fabulous Farm Shops, the Farm Retail Association and Go Jute, the shortlist for the 2025 Awards has been announced, with businesses across the UK in line to win best in category, best in region and the overall accolade 'Retailer of the Year'.

Last November Fortnum & Mason in London played host to the judging day, where an esteemed panel of judges came together in person for a day of deliberations and decisions. From this they have created their shortlist of category finalists, whittled down from hundreds of entries, by taking into consideration the achievements retailers have made in the independent sector, and testimonials from suppliers and customers.

The 52 successful businesses span seven categories: Butcher, Delicatessen, Farm Shop Large, Farm Shop Small, Independent local shop/ Village store, Online Business and Other Specialist Retailer. They cover seven UK regions: Anglia, Midlands, North of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, South of England and Wales.

In addition, judges went on to select the 'Newcomer of the Year' finalists. The five successful new businesses finalists represent the Midlands, Scotland and South of England.

Judge Matt Whelan, managing director of Fieldfare, which champions the Retailer Awards, said, "It is wonderful to meet the inspiring and enthusiastic people behind the businesses. I love finding out more about them, their businesses and their aspirations for the future. The awards finalist announcement has a real buzz to it. It's great to be there and celebrate the achievements within our industry, network and learn from our colleagues."

Regional winners will be selected from the category finalists, with the 'Retailer of the Year', 'Newcomer of the Year', 'Best in Category' and 'Best in Region' awards up for grabs. The winners' announcement on Monday, 7th April, at Farm Shop & Deli Show, is set to be a fantastic celebration of speciality retailers.





OUR PUREOATY DRINKS HAVE A SUPER LOW CARBON FOOTPRINT!

CLIMATE FOOTPRINT 0.26 KG CO^2 E/KG*

HERE'S HOW WE DO IT...

FROM FIELD

Our British oats are grown across 100,000 acres in our own fields and by farmers within 70 miles of our farm.

QUALITY CONTROL

TO FARM

Our unique and strict procedures ensure that in the UK, only we can guarantee 100% gluten free pure British oats.

QUALITY CONTROL

TO FOOD

We take our oats from grain to retail pack in less than 150 metres, keeping our quality high and food miles low.

100% BRITISH OATS 100% BRITISH MADE

Love British Food



PSST... THIS IS HALF OF OATLY'S REPORTED CARBON FOOTPRINT**

*SOURCE: MY EMISSIONS JULY 2024. **OATLY.COM

TRY SOME TODAY

WWW.GLEBEFARMFOODS.CO.UK | ORDERS@GLEBEFARMFOODS.CO.UK | T: 01487 773 282

GLEBE FARM

IT'S HOW WE DO THINGS.

"The food trifecta"



OLLIE LLOYD
CONSULTANT

It is easy to despair when thinking about the green agenda. A climate change denier is in the White House, global temperatures are reaching levels that exceed previously agreed targets, and there is an ever-growing list of record-breaking natural disasters filling our news feeds. In addition to this, corporations across the board seem to be stepping back from "unnecessary initiatives" that their critics call woke and people like me call vital. So why do I not despair?

It comes down to a simple thought: generally, humans are selfish. They look for products that deliver on their immediate needs. If you review any food preferences research that explores why consumers buy particular food products, you will find 'taste' tops 'sustainability' every time. On top of that, personal health also tops sustainability. However, the reality is that embracing the green agenda can lead to products that deliver well on these consumer needs. To create a truly successful product it needs to taste great, be better for you and often, this comes with cleaner labels and more naturally produced ingredients. You don't need to sell it as being sustainable; it is just sustainable as it is designed well.

This has been called the 'Food Trifecta,' admittedly a betting phrase, but if you can create a product that is green, delicious and good for you, you have, in my view, landed a true trifecta. Is it not best to strive to design products that deliver on all fronts?

The meats that come from the Knepp Estate are a case in point. They have been some of the pioneers of the rewilding movement and are obsessed with creating biodiversity and adopting regenerative farming practices that are in harmony with nature. Their slow-grown wild-range meat is produced on an organic 3500-acre farm, a biodiversity hotspot. They have free-roaming herds of Old English Longhorn cattle, Tamworth pigs, and Red and Fallow deer that have a herb-rich natural diet and can be spotted on their safaris. They also claim that "because their diet is entirely natural, the meat is positively good for human health." They claim high inclusions of omega-3 and CLA which are said to help combat cancer and diabetes. They also note that the meats are high in beta carotene and vitamins E & B, high in calcium, magnesium and potassium, and low in saturated fats.

Yeo Valley is another example of a business thinking far beyond organic dairy products, which they pioneered and focused on a much broader set of considerations. They are constantly innovating their product range and have recently created an exceptional set of kefir products. It's fair to say that some of the early kefirs were a tad funky, but the stuff being produced by Yeo Valley are utterly delicious and great for your gut. I have even got my kids to drink them, which they certainly didn't do with some of the goatkKefirs I brought home many years ago!

So as we all think about how to do our bit for the green agenda, do not give up hope. Often, it just requires buying products produced by smaller brands that naturally focus on the trifecta without being told about it. And hopefully they keep inspiring bigger brands to embark on this journey.

FRA relaunches 'Real Farmers Market' certification

The Farm Retail Association has relaunched its 'Real Farmers Market' certification scheme in order to provide clarity and consistency to the sector.



The certification has been refreshed in order to provide consumers with a greater understanding of what a true farmers market is.

A true farmers market provides a valuable route to market for thousands of farmers across the UK, and in order to be certified as a Farmers Market there are eight key principles that must be met:

1 Champion the farmers – customers should be able to buy directly from the farmers, growers and producers who grow and produce the products on sale.

2 Prioritise local produce – It's important to recruit stall holders from as close to the market as possible and the majority of stallholders come from within the county in which the market is located.

3 Be proud of your provenance – Each stallholder should have either been grown or produced, baked or made by the stallholders at your market.

4 Understand your product(s) – Stallholders should be able to talk to customers about how the product has been produced from field to fork and give customers accurate advice and clear information on how the product has been created.

5 Be correctly insured – All traders must have suitable Public, Product and Employment Insurance in place to protect their customers.

6 Follow the correct legal procedures – All traders and markets must follow all relevant national and local laws, and as a minimum ensure that each trader is registered with Trading Standards and Environmental Health.



7 Promote yourself as 'Real Farmers Market' – Be proud to fulfil these principles and shout about it in your communications, clearly talking to customers about the farmers, suppliers and products that make it a 'Real Farmers Market'.

8 Enforce the above principles – The market organiser should have systems in place to ensure that the above principles are enforced at all times.

Emma Mosey, chair of the FRA, said, "It is vital that there is an industry standard for Farmers Markets in the UK so customers can be sure of the provenance and locality of the produce. Once a Farmers Market has demonstrated their credentials and been awarded certification, the FRA will commit to promoting the Farmers Market in many ways including a logo on each markets web page, an opportunity to be entered in the annual FRA awards, inclusion in press releases and on social media."





KALTBACH

CAVE-AGED

Kaltbach Cave Master Michu

The Kaltbach Cave Aged Family of Cheeses

EXPERTISE: Aged in a 22-million year old sandstone cave in Switzerland where cavemasters have been refining cheese for more than 60 years.
NATURAL CLIMATE: The cave climate is stable throughout the year, therefore artificial climate control is not necessary.
TRUSTED BRAND: The Kaltbach brand gives consumers a trusted and recognisable family of cheeses to explore.

For more information on our Kaltbach range of cheese go to **www.emmi-kaltbach.com/international** or email **info.uk@emmi.com**

Open Farm Sunday's role in bridging the farm-to-fork gap



Annabel Shackleton, national manager of LEAF's annual Open Farm Sunday initiative

It can be frustrating working in a world where food convenience often overshadows people's connection to how it was produced. The UK's speciality food producers and farm diversification businesses are frequently trailblazers for reversing this worrying trend. To support these fabulous endeavours, Open Farm Sunday provides an amazing platform to showcase UK food production and farming practices that are deeply rooted in the local environment and communities.

As we look ahead to Open Farm Sunday on 8 June, the 19th year of inviting the public onto farms, it's crucial to recognise the importance of the agricultural industry's annual open day. The day is so much more than a fun family outing, it has significant importance for any business looking to engage, educate and connect by demonstrating your commitment to quality and sustainability directly to consumers.

GETTING INVOLVED

National plans are well under way, and I would encourage all farm shops to get involved! Since 2006, over 6,000 Open Farm Sunday events across Britain have welcomed 3.25 million visitors. I'm inviting you to take up the mantle this year and grow these valuable connections far and wide.

It could be as simple as hosting a timed workshop or farm walk with a local farm supplier, followed by a tasting session. Whatever the scope of the activity you choose to undertake on farm, there is a wealth of information available to help make that journey as straightforward as possible.

SUPPORT PACKAGE

This year LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) is offering our best-ever preparation support package for potential hosts. We have two free in-person workshops being held in Yorkshire and Berkshire during March. There's also a series of nine Zoom webinars running until May which address a broad range of topics for running successful events, including logistics, publicity, visitor engagement, and safety protocols.

We also publish a free handbook with everything you need to know, offering guidance and ideas to both novice and seasoned host farm shops.

THE BROADER IMPACT

Participating in Open Farm Sunday has a profoundly positive effect. Our 2024 impact report demonstrates just how powerful this on-farm connection can be with 96% of visitors leaving with a greater appreciation of the work farmers do, while 91% of visitors are motivated to buy more British produce. This research highlights the benefit of engaging with the public, not only does it stimulate greater understanding it also increases consumer trust and confidence.

For me, Open Farm Sunday is not just about educating communities about farming with nature - it's an opportunity to inform potential customers on why their choices are so important. Your field to fork stories matter - and people are hungry to learn.

SUPPORT FOR NEW AND RETURNING HOSTS

Connecting the public with farming has never been more important and this year we hope to bring even more stories to life to reinforce the value of every link in the farm-to-fork chain.

For additional information about Open Farm Sunday and details on how to become a host or to book your place at the upcoming workshops and webinars, please farmsunday.org



freshlock by BARFOOTS

A VEGGIE REVOLUTION!

All the flavour, crunch and vibrancy of fresh...with all the time-saving-waste-reducing convenience of long life!



GOODNESS LOCKED IN
100% natural ingredients, no artificial preservatives or additives.

LONGER LIFE
Gently pasteurised extending the life to 40 days and helping reduce food waste.

NO FUSS, NO FAFF
Just golden deliciousness delivered to plates in minutes.

GROWN WITH LOVE BY BARFOOTS
Award winning sustainable farmers, looking after the land like we'll farm forever.

PLEASE GET IN TOUCH!
freshlock@barfoots.co.uk
freshlockbybarfoots.com
@freshlockbybarfoots





natural food EXPO

FEATURING

ARTISAN FOOD & DRINK EXPO

12-13 May 2025 | ExCeL London

The Definitive Trade Event for **Natural, Organic, Plant Based** and **Free-From** F&B

If you're a delicatessen, farm shop, retail, hospitality or foodservice buyer, there is no better place to visit.

You'll find a huge a range of exciting new food & drink product launches to get your tastebuds tingling.

"Attending NOPEX is how we understand what's out there. There are loads of products and brands here so there's something for everyone. It is the place for innovation!"

WAITROSE

REGISTER FOR YOUR **FREE TRADE TICKET**

PART OF natural & organic PRODUCTS EXPO







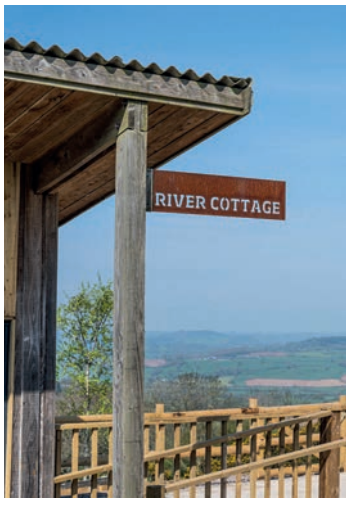




naturalfoodexpo.co.uk
#NOPEX

Organised by diversified





RIVER COTTAGE

With a sustainability star at its helm and a world-famous reputation to live up to, River Cottage Farm Shop has more than risen to the challenge

River Cottage has been a much-loved destination and brand across Britain for decades. With sustainability champion Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall at its helm, and a focus on living better and improving the connection between people and planet, the business's philosophy speaks to an increasingly broad audience in 2025 – and its farm shop is at the heart of its mission.

The farm shop was borne of a request from River Cottage's clientele, who wanted to bring the produce they had enjoyed at their Dining Experiences and Kitchen & Store Cafe at HQ.at their restaurant to their homes says Stewart Dodd, chief executive of River Cottage. "The idea for a farm shop came from our customers, who often asked if they could buy the products featured on our menus. So, we listened and gave the people what they wanted!"

A moveable feast

As with any business run from the heart, evolution was the name of the game for River Cottage's farm shop. "For those who've followed River Cottage over the years, you might remember that we used to have cafés across the UK, including one in the main Axminster town centre. While we had to close the other cafés, we relocated the Axminster café to our farm, bringing it closer to the heart of River Cottage."

This relocation brought with it an opportunity that proved to be fruitful for the business and local food scene alike. "When we moved the café to the farm, we saw it as the perfect opportunity to offer a small retail selection of our branded products. Since then, the shop has grown to showcase not only our products but also incredible local produce from talented makers and suppliers in the area. It's now a place where visitors can take a piece of River Cottage home with them."

A natural ecosystem

The fact that this farm shop is one element of a world-famous brand isn't the only thing that makes it stand out; it's a vital part of an ecosystem that supports local producers, connects customers with food and the land, and ensures circularity to maintain optimum eco credentials. "Our farm shop isn't your typical one," admits Stewart. "While most of our produce is used in our courses, dining events and café, the shop focuses on showcasing River Cottage products alongside a selection of items from local suppliers, such as bread and eggs. When we have surplus produce, we make it available to purchase in the café to ensure nothing goes to waste. This might include freshly baked bread or extra seasonal harvests from our River Cottage chefs and garden team."



The relationship between retail and foodservice is a truly symbiotic one: "The shop is designed to complement our café, which celebrates seasonal, organic, and wild ingredients, offering a true taste of River Cottage and its vibrant local community," explains Stewart.

Goodness at its heart

Those who watched the BBC's River Cottage series in years gone by were attracted to the carefully crafted and at-one-with-nature ethos passionately advocated by Hugh and his team, and this philosophy lives on in the farm shop. "We focus on organic, fresh, and live products that align with the River Cottage ethos. This includes our organic ferments, yoghurt, kefir, and a selection of craft beers, ciders, stocks, and sauces." says Stewart. "We also proudly support local producers, such as Trill Farm, where we host a veg box collection point, as well as suppliers of artisan bread, sea salt, and fresh eggs." The River Cottage methodology is smart and perfectly tailored to today's foodie audience, blending "customer favourites with sustainable, locally sourced products, reflecting both traditional essentials and modern trends".

Products which proudly showcase the River Cottage stamp are top of the best-seller list. "Our best-selling products include apple juice made from our apple orchards on our organic farm and pressed locally, Beetchup Ketchup, Stinger Ale, ciders, and everything from our bees, like wax and honey," says Stewart. In fact, the interest in River Cottage's on-site bees is so great that the team has introduced Beekeeping courses which are proving hugely popular. Homewares, fresh food and store cupboardstorecupboard staples are equally successful. "Our vegetable stock products and River Cottage-branded blankets are also very popular."

Shared challenges

While River Cottage may be an internationally-renowned business, that's not to say that its path has been free of the trials and challenges faced by food businesses and retailers across the board. "While it may not be recent, we're incredibly proud of opening the Kitchen & Store at HQ in 2022, especially considering the challenges that followed the pandemic. As many in the hospitality industry can relate, it was a tough time, and launching a new café came with its hurdles," says Stewart.

> "What makes our shop special is the mix of seasonal items and products. You never know what you'll find, but it's always full of delicious and organic products"

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FARM RETAIL ASSOCIATION REAL LOCAL FOOD

BEST SELLERS



RIVER COTTAGE ORGANIC STINGER

Traditional pale ale infused with the zing of field-grown organic nettles. A crisp, herbal and zesty brew.

rivercottage.net



RIVER COTTAGE ORGANIC BEETROOT KETCHUP

A clean label ketchup showcasing the natural earthiness of beetroot, made using organic and ethically-sourced ingredients.

rivercottage.net



RIVER COTTAGE APPLE JUICE

Made using apples grown organically at River Cottage, this apple juice is the perfect balance of tart and sweet.

rivercottage.net



FARM SHOP & DELI SHOW

PART OF THE UK FOOD & DRINK SHOWS

AEO EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2024
BEST UK TRADESHOW MORE THAN 8,000SQM
WINNER

7-9 APRIL 2025
NEC BIRMINGHAM

DOORS OPEN NEXT MONTH



Where the specialist retail sector meets

Informing, inspiring and connecting the industry

Farm Shop & Deli Show will return to the NEC, Birmingham from the 7 - 9 April 2025, as part of the award-winning UK Food & Drink Shows.

Make sure you come along to the largest gathering of the specialist retail sector where you can:

- **Connect** with 100s of innovative suppliers, meet with peers and make valuable contacts
- **Sample and source** the latest innovations under one roof
- **Gain** valuable market insights from industry experts and have your say on hot-topic debates

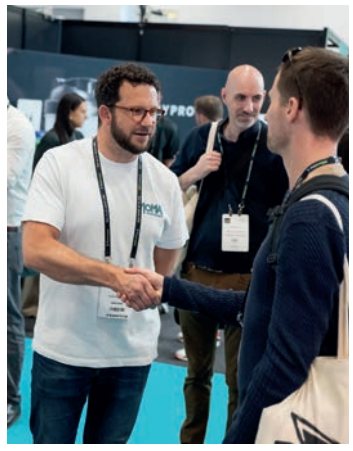
Register free now:

farmshopanddelishow.co.uk

This is a trade event. No under 18s will be admitted.

lunch! NORTH 2025





The must-visit trade show for cafés and coffee shops debuts at Manchester Central on 11th–12th March 2025, co-located with NRB25

This March, the North's café, coffee shop, and food-to-go sectors will take center stage with the debut of lunch! NORTH, an exciting new trade show dedicated to showcasing the best in innovation, talent, and expertise. Held at Manchester Central on 11th–12th March 2025, the event is set to become the premier gathering for professionals in this fast-growing industry.

Co-located with the well-established Northern Restaurant & Bar (NRB25), lunch! NORTH offers hospitality professionals a unique opportunity to discover the latest speciality food trends, connect with leading suppliers, and gain insights from some of the most respected voices in the industry. Together, the two events will create an unrivaled platform for the entire northern hospitality community.

Speciality exhibitors

lunch! NORTH will showcase exhibitors specialising in the café, coffee shop, and food-to-go sectors. Attendees can explore the latest in artisan foods, baked goods, and innovative snacks, with confirmed exhibitors including:

Epicurium, offering a curated selection of artisan cheeses and charcuterie, perfect for adding a touch of sophistication to any menu.

Tony's Chocolonely, blending fair trade ethics with exceptional chocolate, making each bar a statement of quality and sustainability.

Blendsmiths Drinkmakers, offering expertly crafted artisan beverage blends for a premium café or coffee shop experience.



The Exploding Bakery, renowned for their handcrafted cakes and pastries made with premium ingredients and a focus on bold flavours.

Ginger Bakers, specialising in artisan gingerbread and traditional bakes crafted with locally sourced, high-quality ingredients.

Lexi's Treats, showcasing their plant-based protein snacks, delivering delicious, wholesome snacks ideal for health conscious, on-the-go customers.

Keynote theatre, panels and live sessions

A dynamic program of keynote interviews, panel discussions, food-to-go research insights, and live sessions is set to inspire and inform attendees at lunch! NORTH.

The line-up includes Marta Pogroszewska, managing director of GAIL's, who will discuss her journey in growing one of the UK's most beloved bakery brands, which has expanded from a single site in London to over 100 locations nationwide in 2024.

William Gordon-Harris, executive chairman and CEO of Knoops, will join the Food-to-Go Leaders Panel on day two of the event. As the driving force behind Knoops' premium hot chocolate brand, Gordon-Harris will share insights into how Knoops is leveraging its niche offering to compete in a booming northern market, where premium and experiential food-to-go options are increasingly in demand.

The Coffee Shop Leaders Panel will feature Claudio Ribeiro of Federal Cafe & Bar, a Manchester favourite. Federal has become a northern institution, garnering local and national acclaim, including 'Best Coffee Shop' at the Manchester Food and Drink Awards. The panel will feature expert commentary and lively debate on the current state of the coffee market and its future direction.

The event will feature a range of dynamic panels covering key topics, including the Operations Leaders Panel, Coffee Shop Leaders Panel, New Openings, Food-to-Go Leaders Panel, Marketing Leaders Panel, and Menu Innovation. Each session will provide actionable insights and practical takeaways for professionals across the café, coffee shop, and food-to-go industries.

Networking and inspiration

lunch! NORTH is the ultimate platform for café owners, coffee shop operators, and food-to-go professionals to connect, share ideas, and discover the latest products and trends. Whether you're an independent operator or part of a larger chain, lunch! NORTH has something to offer everyone in this vibrant sector.

Taking place alongside NRB25, lunch! NORTH is set to become the cornerstone event for the café, coffee shop, and food-to-go markets in the North. Register now for your free trade tickets and join the celebration of the North's hospitality excellence.

Visit https://www.lunchnorth.co.uk/ for more information and tickets.

NEED TO KNOW

WHAT: lunch! NORTH show
WHERE: Manchester Central
WHEN: 11th-12th March 2025
WEB: lunchnorth.co.uk



MEET THE PRODUCER

Mellow Yellow was the UK's first cold-pressed rapeseed oil grown, crushed and bottled on-farm. Founder Duncan Farrington MBE tells *Speciality Food* about his pioneering journey





Fourth generation family farmer, Duncan Farrington MBE, says he is both humbled by, and proud of the success of Farrington Oils, which celebrates its 20-year anniversary in 2025.

Grown and bottled on the farm where he was born, his Mellow Yellow cold-pressed rapeseed oil is not just a business, it's almost an extra member of the family. One he and his team continue to nurture and invest in, alongside protecting and enhancing the natural landscape around them, in the heart of the rural Northamptonshire countryside.

The seed of the idea for Mellow Yellow was planted in the early 90s, when Duncan returned from university, bursting with ideas from his research around the culinary potential of rapeseed oil. It was a pioneering suggestion - up until that time, rapeseed was simply grown in the UK as a commodity crop - but Duncan's tenacious spirit, and desire to build a more profitable future for his family, and the farm, drove him forward, where no one else had been before. He knew he could tap into the unbridled potential of this wonder crop.

Farrington Oils was the first business in the UK, two decades ago, to not only grow, but to press and bottle rapeseed oil at source. "What started as a small diversity project for my wife Eli and myself has far exceeded my expectations," he reveals. "Within four years of starting, it had the same turnover as the farm! In year one, my mother and I filled 6,500 bottles. We can do that every day now."

Pressed is best

They say the simple things in life are best, and nothing is simpler or purer than cold-pressed oil. Belonging to the brassica family, each golden head of oilseed rape contains a tiny seed, hiding a kernel rich with healthy fats, vitamins and essential acids. "What we do is we take that seed and literally squeeze it through a press," says Duncan. "It doesn't get above 32 to 33C. It's a very inefficient process. The seed has about 45% oil in it, and by the time we've pressed it the byproduct, which we sell for animal feed, has still got 10 to 15% left in." But they wouldn't have it any other way.

This gentle, careful method retains all the goodness unleashed from within the kernel – particularly Vitamin E and plant sterols, with cold-pressed rapeseed oil boasting around twice as much plant sterol activity as olive oil.

Duncan likens the benefits of consuming rapeseed oil to having oily fish and olive oil rolled into one. "It's high in Omega 3 – up to 10 times more than olive oil – and in Omega 6. You're getting a full package here of monounsaturated, polyunsaturated and saturated fats in the right balance."

Subtle, versatile and delicious

One of the many selling points of Mellow Yellow oil is its versatility in the kitchen. It has a gentle flavour, says Duncan, without that lingering hint of bitterness some others have. "It has a subtle nutty taste," he explains. "It reminds me of raw, unroasted peanuts or maybe sunflower seeds. Some people taste butter. But the important thing is that it's mellow. It's a very clean-tasting oil. You can use it drizzled on salads, for baking cakes, stir fries, or roasting potatoes, and it lets the other ingredients sing and come through. It doesn't overpower."

The most thrilling (and nerve-wracking) thing about leading the way in a new category is being at the forefront of education. After launching, Duncan would spend huge amounts of time away from the farm at shows and stores, demonstrating the beauty of rapeseed oil, and helping explain to retailers (and their customers) all the wonderful ways it could be used. One of the most common questions he was asked was whether it could be used in salad dressings.

Duly, Eli shook up some oil with honey, mustard and vinegar, and sent Duncan on his way to the tasting tables. The dressing was such a hit, those who tried it implored him to add it to the range. And so Mellow Yellow expanded to include a chilli oil and four dressings.

The Honey & Mustard Dressing remains a bestseller, but a team favourite is The Ultimate Chilli Dressing, renamed from Chilli & Cumin Dressing in December to enormous success – sales immediately soared. "When people try it, they love it!"

Every bottle is entirely natural, concocted using only the kind of ingredients you'd find in your kitchen cupboards. Keep an eye on Mellow Yellow's social media this spring for exciting new additions to the range.

At one with nature

Duncan says he was "bowled over" to receive his MBE recently, especially as it's for services to both agriculture and the food and drink industry. "I think it's wonderful, because they're combined industries. One leads the other. I've spent my whole farming career dedicated to growing crops and producing food. I want to grow healthy, nutritious food, in good, healthy soils," he says, adding that none of it would be possible without the unwavering support of Eli, his family, and the entire team.

Duncan is constantly thinking of ways the business can be more sustainable. He's held the LEAF Marque since he started, and the business is certified carbon neutral by the UN and has a Queen's Award for enterprise for sustainable development.

The farm follows Integrated Farm Management practices. "In this day and age we call it regenerative agriculture," he explains. "We work in a holistic way. It's a whole farm approach, but I spend a lot of my time looking after our soil. If the soil is healthy, there's more chance for the crops to grow, and the crops will be full of more nutrition."

Around four to five crops are in rotation with oilseed rape at the farm, with tests showing organic matter has increased from 3.8% to over 7% in a 20-year period.

What goes on around the edges of the crops is just as important, Duncan adds, saying they've planted hedgerows to support birdlife and small mammals, have put in 8,000 trees, and continue to monitor and ensure the vitality of watercourses and ponds.

Duncan's particularly excited about the results of wildflower plantings around the farm. Scientific studies have shown twice as many moths and moth species in these areas compared to the average conventional farm.

"A lot's changed in 20 years," he beams. "It's a farm full of life in the soil, and full of biodiversity. It's a much better place than it was a generation ago, and long may that continue."



PRODUCT NEWS

Take stock with our new food and drink round-up

Clearspring launches grab-and-go oat biscuits

Clearspring, the Japanese and organic fine foods specialist, has released sweet Organic Oat Biscuits to satisfy time-poor snackers.

The new trio is available in Miso Maple, Matcha and Sweet Date flavours, and are made by fourth generation artisanal craft bakers in the Scottish Highlands using organic wholegrain oats and premium organic ingredients.

The biscuits also contain organic coconut oil and olive oil instead of palm oil, which provides a unique depth of flavour, and are refined sugar-free, high in fibre and plant-based.

The 40g packs contain six biscuits and the packaging is entirely recyclable.

Maria Dawson, managing director of Clearspring said, "These sweet biscuits are a first for Clearspring and we wanted to launch something special. We have been working with our producer for nearly two years to perfect these flavours, which are unique, sweet and internationally inspired. The range has something for everyone, with each offering its own delicious flavour profile. We are also proud that we are offering a sweet-treat range that is made using wholegrain oats, is organic, is minimally processed whilst being refined sugar free, high in fibre and plant-based. Our new Organic Oat Biscuits are also a delicious and convenient way for us to take consumers on a journey of discovery, especially those who are new to authentic Japanese Miso and Matcha."

clearspring.co.uk





Fudge Kitchen taps into appetite for nostalgia

Award-winning confectioner Fudge Kitchen has unveiled a new range which celebrates classic British flavours.

The new collection brings together Rock Salted Peanut Brittle, Raspberry Coconut Ice, Vanilla Crumbly Fudge and Salted Caramel Crumbly Fudge.

The four-strong range is designed to remind customers of the simple, nostalgic pleasures of the past without compromise. Each product is handmade hsing organic dairy and British sugar, contains no preservatives, and is packaged in FSC-certified boxes, printed with plant-based inks and sealed using water-based adhesives.

Richard Parson, managing director of Fudge Kitchen, said, "We're excited to share this range responding to a growing customer demand for confectionery that celebrates quality, nostalgia and tradition, aligning with the core values that have been honed during our forty-year legacy. Whilst the range has tradition at its centre, it's been reimagined for the conscious consumer, where every bite also supports ethical and sustainable practices."

fudgekitchen.co.uk

'World's healthiest cola' enters UK market



ROBOT Kombucha is now available for fine food retailers to stock as a delicious, sustainable and healthy alternative to conventional cola drinks.

With sustainability and public health as its focus, it is made using 100% organic ingredients including organic honey in order to support dwindling bee populations and give drinkers a boost of natural nutrients, vitamins, omega-3s and antioxidants.

ROBOT Kombucha has a naturally sweet and complex flavour which closely emulates conventional cola drinks, meaning that fans of mainstream alternatives can be satisfied without compromising on health or quality.

With a carefully crafted kombucha at its base, the product also boasts a high level of probiotics in every can, making it an attractive choice for the growing number of consumers who are investing in improving their gut health.

Pascal Du Bois, brand director, said, "Cola is the most consumed drink on Earth, but also the most destructive to health and the environment. The organic honey in ROBOT provides a rich taste but with 90% less sugar than conventional cola. ROBOT delivers the familiar cola taste while improving public health and supporting bee populations."

robotkombucha.co.uk



New egg joins Chococo's Easter range

Multi award-winning artisan chocolatier, Chococo, has added a new chocolate egg to its Easter range.

Sitting alongside handcrafted chocolate eggs and characters in Chococo's Easter range, and made using direct trade chocolate, the new Nest Egg is made using the business's 47% Colombia milk chocolate and studded with new Colombia origin 'blonde' caramel white chocolate mini eggs before being hand decorated with bronze shimmer speckles. All items in the range, including the new Nest Egg, are presented in entirely plastic-free packaging



Claire Burnet, co-founder of Chococo, said, "As our new white chocolate from Colombia looks like the shell of a real egg, we thought it would be fun to stud mini eggs made from this white chocolate inside a bigger egg. The combination of our award-winning signature Colombia origin milk chocolate with this sweet caramel white chocolate is a winner! "All our chocolate is sustainably sourced and we are very proud that our award-winning signature milk, dark, oat m!lk and blonde chocolate are all directly traded with our chocolate partners based in Ecuador and Colombia, who are producing fine chocolate in country of origin for us. These companies use local ingredients, create more highly skilled jobs, keep a greater share of the value chain in the local community and raise the value of their exports, giving more power to cocoa growing communities."

chococo.co.uk

Biona creates new paste for health-conscious home cooks

Organic food supplier Biona has announced a new Ginger & Turmeric paste which will be available for retailers to stock from March.

The new ready-to-use paste caters for shoppers who are seeking convenience and foods with health credentials, and is made using organic ginger and turmeric. The ingredients have been prepared so that shoppers do not need to spend time peeling and chopping; this simplifies the preparation of dishes such as Indian and Malaysian curries.

Carmen Ferguson, brand manager at Biona's parent company Windmill Organics, said, "With recent data from Nielsen once again confirming the positive growth trajectory for organic food sales, which are now outperforming non-organic, we're excited to bring another sought-after and healthy organic option to market. Scratch cooking continues to grow in popularity, and particularly South-East Asian-inspired scratch cooking, so we expect this new launch to be well-received by consumers.



biona.co.uk

Gnaw trials new 100% recyclable paper wrappers

The Norwich-based chocolatier's popular range of chocolate buttons have had a packaging refresh in line with the business's sustainable approach.



The new eco-friendly pouches are made usign EvoPak RCM, a 100% recyclable paper wrapper which unlike many other recyclable paper wrappers contains no polyethylene.

The move sits alongside Gnaw's other sustainability efforts, including investing in solar energy which provides 70% of its manufacturing needs, not using irresponsibly farmed palm oil, and using compostable or recyclable wrappers and vegetable inks in its range of chocolate products.

Mike Navarro, MD of Gnaw, said, "EvoPak offers a significant step-change in planet-responsible snacking and confectionery wrappers as a result of significant advances in lightweight multi-layer structures that preserve shelf-life whilst producing none of the harmful microplastics historically associated with snacking wrappers that unwittingly release harmful microplastics as they break down. Our sublime buttons remain a leading light within our ever-expanding premium chocolate portfolio, providing the perfect vehicle for our next sustainable initiative, championing awareness for cutting-edge wrapper technology that helps to address the catastrophic clogging up of seas and rivers with unwelcome micro-plastics."

gnawchocolate.co.uk



Honey-sweetened soft drinks unveiled by Hive Mind

Hive Mind Mead & Brew Co has launched Honeyade – a blend of 100% British honey, sparkling water and natural flavours.

There are two flavours currently available – Lime & Mint and Just Honey – and two more variants, Strawberry & Basil and Rhubarb & Ginger, are set to join the range this spring.

The drinks contain no refined sugar or artificial sweeteners, and are being launched in sleek 330ml cans packaged using a carbon neutral canning line.

Kit Newell, co-founder of Hive Mind Mead & Brew Co, said, "Honeyade is a proudly 'ultra un-processed' drink showcasing the flavours of real honey. We've been looking to expand our customer offer beyond our mead and honey beer. This is our first non-alcoholic drink launch and we've focused on making something that can appeal to all ages in terms of great flavour, and is also a very natural product. These products were developed around the push back against artificial sweeteners, but also the desire to avoid processed ingredients and refined sugar. As with all our products, we're putting the honey front and centre – and we know that our customers appreciate the positive impact of our mission to boost bee numbers, and that we buy directly from other British bee-keepers as well as using honey from our own bees in the Wye Valley."

hivemindmead.com





IFE 2025

Discover the future of food and drink at this year's edition of the must-visit event

For over four decades, IFE has been the definitive gathering for food and drink professionals, bringing together innovators, producers, and buyers to explore the latest trends and opportunities in the industry.

Taking place on 17th-19th March 2025 at Excel London, this year's event promises to be bigger and more impactful than ever, with an expanded offering that caters to the dynamic needs of today's market.

IFE 2025 will showcase an incredible array of food and drink products, from innovative plant-based alternatives to the finest artisan ingredients to leaders in the frozen and grocery categories. Visitors can connect with over 1,500 exhibitors from across the globe, providing unrivalled opportunities to discover unique products, forge meaningful connections, and gain insights that drive growth.

IFE comprises 15 distinct show sections, which include Bakery, Snack & Confectionery, Chilled & Frozen, Grocery & Wholesale, and the Fresh Produce Section, returning for a second year in partnership with the Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC).

Nigel Jenney, CEO of the FPC, comments, "Partnering with IFE has been a game-changing move for FPC, opening doors for our exhibitors to an extensive network of fresh produce buyers across the nation and beyond. This partnership empowers us to unlock exclusive opportunities, spotlight cutting-edge industry innovations, and foster lasting, meaningful relationships."

This year's show features a robust programme of panel discussions, presentations, and live demonstrations on the Future Food Stage, where industry experts will explore key topics such as sustainability, innovation, and the future of the global food industry. With actionable advice and trend insights, attendees will leave equipped to stay ahead in a competitive landscape.

Co-located with IFE Manufacturing, HRC, The Pub Show, and International Salon Culinaire, IFE 2025 is part of Food, Drink & Hospitality Week, creating a powerful hub for cross-sector collaboration. Whether you're a retailer, wholesaler, or foodservice professional, the show provides a unique platform to connect with industry peers, gain inspiration, and shape the future of food and drink.

International innovation

More than 60 countries will be represented on the show floor at IFE 2025. From Vietnam and South Korea, from Kenya and Zimbabwe and from Portugal to Poland, this year's edition of IFE will reflect the amazing diversity and innovation on show in the food and drink industry around the world.

Among these are 18 international pavilions managed by organisations including the Taiwan External Trade Development Council, Spices Board India, Korea Agro-Fisheries & Food Trade Corporation and ICE Italian Trade Agency.

Visitors to this year's event can meet with brands including Netherlands-based Jan Zanbergen, an international partner for meat and meat alternatives, Turkish company Seres Gourmet, which will bring a world of flavour to the show through its premium range of sauces and condiments, and Thailand's Flying Goose Brand, the producer of the iconic siracha chilli sauce and offering a range including limited edition Siracha with Ballantine's blended scotch whisky, superhot Siracha Blackout, and Smoky Siracha.



Future Food Stage

The Future Food stage at IFE 2025 is set to be a focal point of the show, with a packed programme of engaging discussions and insightful panels featuring some of the most influential voices in the food and drink industry. Taking place across the three days of the show, the stage will tackle everything from the role of ultra-processed foods (UPFs) in modern diets to the growing influence of AI and retail innovation, offering visitors a unique opportunity to stay ahead of the curve in an ever-evolving sector.

One of the standout sessions at this year's event is 'Ultra-Processed Foods: Do We Need a Tighter Definition?' Moderated by Siân Yates of FoodBev Media, this discussion will explore whether a clearer definition of UPFs is needed and how this could impact consumer understanding and product development. Panellists include Jessica Stansfield (Huel), Kerri Fidler (Greencore), Peter Noy (Food Systems Institute, University of Nottingham), and Sarah Bull (Bakkavor), each bringing a wealth of expertise to a topic that continues to spark debate across the industry.

In the vegan and plant-based space, 'State of the Vegan-nation' will see Freya O'Mara from Ocado moderating a panel featuring Indy Kaur (Plant Futures), Karen Spinner (Vegan Society), and Toni Vernelli (Veganuary). Together, they will discuss how brands and retailers can navigate this growing market while addressing evolving consumer demands.





Innovation takes the spotlight in 'Revolutionising Retail: How Accelerators and Incubators are Shaping the Future', moderated by Theadora Alexander of YF, with panellists Andrew Allen (Bidfood) and Melanie Harris (Iceland). The session will explore how these programmes are driving growth for emerging brands and reshaping the retail landscape.

Meanwhile, 'Online Shopping as a Trend Predictor in the Food & Drink Industry' will examine how e-commerce data is influencing product development and identifying new consumer trends. Moderator Debbie Davies (Contigo Management Limited) will be joined by Louise Armour (Rosetta Brands) and Stephen Minall (FDReviews) for what promises to be a lively and thought-provoking discussion.

In a highlight for independent retailers, 'Empowering Change: A Fireside Chat with Planet Organic Founder Renée Elliott' will offer a rare opportunity to hear from one of the pioneers of organic and sustainable retail. Hosted by Holly Shackleton, editor of Speciality Food Magazine, this intimate conversation will explore Elliott's journey with Planet Organic, her insights into the evolving retail landscape, and the importance of championing positive change in the food industry.

These sessions are just a snapshot of the dynamic programme planned for the Future Food stage, which promises to challenge perceptions, ignite new ideas, and provide actionable insights for food and drink professionals. Whether it's debating the future of UPFs, diving into the future of the vegan market, or exploring how digital innovation is reshaping retail, the stage will be the place to discover the ideas shaping the industry in 2025 and beyond.

Trends & Innovation Platform

The Trends & Innovation Platform at IFE Manufacturing 2025 promises to be a hub of insight and inspiration, bringing together experts, innovators, and thought leaders to tackle some of the most pressing topics in the food and drink manufacturing sector.

With an agenda spanning artificial intelligence, sustainability, supply chain resilience, allergen management, and branding, the stage will offer actionable insights

STARTUP MARKET

IFE's Startup Market is the home of new food and drink businesses at the show, and the perfect place to discover emerging startups, inspiring foodie entrepreneurs, and innovative young brands.

CHIMMY'S

CHIMMY'S is an award-winning venture founded by husband-and-wife duo Diego and Sofia Cardoso. Drawing inspiration from the beloved chimichurri of their Argentinian heritage, CHIMMY'S brings the authentic flavours of this versatile sauce to life for a modern audience. Whether used as a marinade, a sauce, or the base for a dip or condiment, CHIMMY'S adds a vibrant, flavourful touch to any dish.

CRISPR BITES

Crispr Bites, founded by Isaac and Josh, delivers a unique combination of crispy wafer and velvety chocolate in bite-sized treats. Their products are designed to provide consistent quality and indulgence, satisfying customer cravings nationwide.

UMRI

UMRI is a ready-to-drink, non-alcoholic beverage designed to support women through the unique challenges of perimenopause and menopause. Unlike traditional medicinal or supplement-based solutions, UMRI offers a natural, convenient, and socially engaging approach to managing menopausal symptoms. Crafted with over 20 natural extracts and vitamins, it effectively alleviates common menopause and perimenopause symptoms.

ALL THE AUNTIES

All The Aunties is a family business revolutionising paneer as a versatile, vegetarian protein. Handmade inBritain with double the protein of tofu, their soft paneer comes in Original, Cumin Chilli & Turmeric, and Sundried Tomato & Basil flavours—perfect for grilling, snacking, frying, or crumbling.

ROSE & LILY CLUB

Rose & Lily Club is a family-run business creating spice blends and rubs that celebrate global flavours, making cooking accessible and enjoyable for all. Crafted with a balance of tradition and innovation, their products simplify seasoning, enabling home cooks to create flavour-packed meals with ease.

for businesses seeking to navigate an ever-changing landscape.

Kicking off the discussions, AI in Manufacturing: Driving Innovation, Efficiency, and Resilience will explore the transformative role of artificial intelligence in food production. Moderated by Bertrand Emond of Campden BRI, the session features Paul Wilson (Scorpion Vision) and Simon Brentnall (British Frozen Food Federation), who will share how AI is unlocking new efficiencies and enhancing resilience in the face of industry challenges.

Sustainability takes centre stage in 'Driving Sustainability: Transitioning to Net Zero in Food Systems. Hosted by Isabel DiVanna of the Carbon Trust', the session features Jason Danciger (Hana Group), Kate Cawley (Future Food Movement), and Sarah Wakefield (Eating Better). Together, they will discuss how manufacturers can meet net-zero goals by transforming supply chains and operations.

"How the food and drink industry responds to the climate and nature crises will determine much about the future of their businesses and the planet," says Wakefield. "I'm excited to share ideas and hear from other experts on tackling these challenges."

The importance of allergen management is addressed in 'Allergens: Avoiding Contamination and Recall – A Case Study'. Moderated by Rachel Ward (Exponent International Limited), the session includes Gill Dando (RQA Group), Tina Potter (Food Standards Agency), and Jatin Patel (FGS Ingredients). Their discussion will offer critical advice for manufacturers on preventing costly recalls and protecting consumers.

Meanwhile, 'Supply Chain Resiliency' will tackle a topic that remains a top priority for the industry. Peter Wortsman of European Food and Farming Partnerships will lead the conversation, joined by Duncan Rawson (EFFP), Francisco Martin-Rayo (Helios), and Tom Maidment (Hilton Foods). Their insights will provide strategies for mitigating disruption and building robust supply networks.

Branding and its role in innovation will take the spotlight in 'Using Branding to Supercharge Your Innovation'. Bob Bayman and Danielle Horsley of Elephants Can't Jump will deliver a rapid-fire session packed with practical advice.

In addition to its robust seminar programme, the Trends & Innovation Platform will host two awards ceremonies: the World Food Innovation Awards, in partnership with FoodBev Media, and the IFE Manufacturing Ingredients Awards, in association with the Institute of Food Science & Technology. These events will recognise the companies and innovations driving the future of food and drink manufacturing.

With its cutting-edge content and high-calibre speakers, the Trends & Innovation Platform will be a must-visit for any manufacturer looking to stay ahead of the curve in 2025.

IFE is also home to the New Products Tasting Theatre, where visitors can enjoy live product pitches from innovative startups, attend demos by quality producers, and hear from organisations including FICT - Les Entreprises Françaises de Charcuterie Traiteur, Hopscotch, and Isle of Man. This interactive space is perfect for buyers looking to sample the next big thing in food & drink and connect with the creative minds behind the products.

NEED TO KNOW

WHAT: IFE
WHERE: Excel London
WHEN: 17th-19th March 2025
WEB: ife.co.uk



THE COTSWOLD CARDILLO

STAND 2137

Join The Cotswold Cardillo at IFE 2025 (17th–19th March, ExCeL London) for an exclusive first look at their new artisan range. Indulge in biscotti, limoncello, view new ready meals like Beef Lasagne and Cannelloni, plus Colomba di Pasqua (Easter cake), premium Olive Oil, and Apple Cider Vinegar. Enjoy a complimentary mini-Panettone while exploring their award-winning Italian delicacies. Meet Clara and Matteo, passionate about blending authentic Italian tradition with Cotswold ingredients. Visit Stand 2137 and taste artisan creations from their Italian family kitchen.



SEAGULL SPIRITS

STAND 955

Seagull Spirits, based on the South Coast of England, create unique Gin and Rum smooth finish flavours by using the finest spices and botanicals. Our award-winning city and town editions feature signature local labels with famous images and historical text. Our Seagull Gin has five essential botanicals which creates this smooth gin. Our Seagull Rum is blended with up to 5 year barrelled Jamaican and Barbados base and then our spices are added which creates a full flavoured smooth rum on the palate.
seagullspirits.co.uk







EXPERIENCE A FLAVOUR OF THE EU AT IFE 2025

Over 50 products demonstrating the excellence of EU members' food and drink scene are to be showcased by the More Than Only Food & Drink campaign this year

A cornucopia of the very best food and drink from the European Union will take pride of place at IFE 2025 (held from 17th to 19th March at Excel London) as its More Than Only Food & Drink campaign attends the event for the first time, since launching in 2024.

More than 50 speciality products from 27 member nations will be available to discover and sample across the three-day event, with More Than Only Food & Drink team members and ambassadors joining together at stand number 2732 within the International Pavilion, to demonstrate their quality, authenticity and sustainability.

It's a chance for buyers and retailers to learn more about the key characteristics, heritage and unrivalled taste of products renowned as being the very best of the best, across categories including charcuterie, fresh meat, cheese and dairy, fresh and frozen fruit and vegetables, bakery and confectionery, and wines, spirits and beers.



Many are sourced from artisanal, family-run businesses, made to time-honoured methods that respect the land, the environment, animal welfare. They're a testament to the notion that the best, most delicious, things in life cannot be rushed.

Meet the experts

At IFE, meet three of the More Than Only Food & Drink campaign's UK advisors – Patrick McGuigan, Veryan Bliss and Rupert Claxton. The trio, alongside others, have been selected for their unrivalled sector knowledge, working to support promotion of the exceptional taste and exacting standards of artisan-made food and drink from the EU.

Veryan says she is delighted to be attending this year. "At IFE we have the opportunity to connect directly with buyers, retailers, and food industry professionals, sharing not just the products themselves, but the rich stories behind them," she explains. "The craftsmanship, the dedication of producers, and the deep-rooted traditions that make European food and drink so special.

"There will be the chance for guests to sample everything on display – from more well-known



VERYAN BLISS

produce such as sauerkraut from Poland, and Speck Alto Adige PGI from Italy, to undiscovered confectionery from Estonia and Slovakia, PGI meat from Croatia and Romania, and lesser-known fruit and vegetable products such as squash caviar from Latvia, and rose jam from Bulgaria."

In today's market, Veryan adds, "Consumers are increasingly looking for transparency, provenance, and sustainability in the products they choose. The More Than Only Food & Drink campaign is about bringing those values to life, demonstrating why European products are more than just ingredients—they are part of a legacy of taste and quality."

At the event you'll also be able to watch some key ingredients in action, as Michelin-starred chef Danilo Cortellini hosts a demonstration each day, bringing cheese, meat, fresh produce and more to life, with plenty of sampling opportunities.

A taste of Europe

The expanse and variety of what's available to try at the EU's debut More Than Only Food & Drink stand this March is vast, from exquisite jams and juices, to outstanding cured meats, and highly revered cheeses and wines. A flavour of what you'll find includes...

Cioccolato di Modica PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) from Italy: There is, quite simply, no other chocolate like this (though it has been imitated by craft makers across the world). Protected by a consortium, and made solely around the medieval city of Modica in Sicily, this is a pure expression of chocolate, produced with just two ingredients – cacao and sugar. These are ground slowly at low temperatures to retain all the beautiful natural flavours of the cacao. It's a technique brought to Sicily by the Spanish who, in turn, learnt their craft from the Aztecs. Cioccolato di Modica PGI has an addictively different texture, being grainy, crumbly and almost cookie-like. It's often flavoured with other ingredients, from vanilla or cinnamon to ginger.

Saucisson sec d'Auvergne PGI from France: This dry-cured sausage embodies the ancient tradition of preserving in France. Every step of the process is important, from sourcing only the finest pork from the Haute-Loire region and grinding it coarsely to achieve the perfect texture, to seasoning simply, only using natural casings, fermenting, and then curing slowly until each sausage reaches perfection. It's best tasted in thin slices at room temperature.

Espárrago de Navarra PGI from Spain: These slender white asparagus spears have a delicate flavour and smooth texture, and represent the long agricultural traditions of Spain's Navarre region. To achieve PGI status they must only be grown in Navarre, where the soil and climate combine to create ideal conditions. The asparagus is carefully tended to, and picked at its very best, by hand, before landing in the kitchens of top restaurants, and keen home cooks.

Vipavska Dolina PDO, a red wine from Slovenia: The Vipava Valley in Slovenia, is one of the country's most successful wine growing regions. Lush green valleys, excellent soil, and a mild climate with just the right amount of rain produce grapes of excellence – especially red varieties such as Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Pinot Noir.

Kulmbacher Bier PGI from Germany: Dating back to the 19th century, this beer is brewed naturally, using only malt, hops, water and yeast, within the borders of Kulmbach, Bavaria. Its flavour and appearance changes according to the variety, which can be pale, golden or dark, tasting from mild to bitter, and even sharp.

Paški sir PDO from Croatia: This hard, flaky cheese, with a herbal, gently salty taste, is made only on the Croatian island of Pag, using milk from Paska Ovca sheep. It's aged usually for at least four months, with curations ranging up to 18 months, giving varying expressions, from light and crisp, to deep and savoury. It becomes tangier as it ages.

enjoy-its-from-europe.campaign.europa.eu/united-kingdom/en

COMMENTATORS



MILLY BAGOT
BYRUBY



HANNAH SPRINGHAM
FARMYARD FROZEN



KIRSTY HENSHAW
KIRSTY'S



BINI LUDLOW
BINI'S FINE FOODS



NATALY KOMOVA
IT'S ME & YOU CLINIC



MATT WHELAN
FIELDFARE



READY, STEADY, COOK

Pioneering producers are evolving the frozen and ready meal market to suit the demands of 2025's consumer

Frozen food and ready meals are shaking off their reputation of offering poor quality meal solutions to time-poor shoppers. These days, not only are consumers able to buy restaurant-level three-course menus to relish at home but there's a raft of options for those wanting to feed themselves – and their families – without the guilt that high-fat, low-nutrient conventional ready meals too often entail.

Indeed, many producers in the fine food sphere are ticking all the boxes for the modern day consumer who is low on time but high on expectations. Yes, a meal solution created using sustainably-reared meat, expertly partnered with mouthwatering sauces and accompaniments, and prepared by an experienced chef doesn't come as cheaply as conventional ready meals found on supermarket shelves – arguably, questions are being asked from all corners as to how, and why, these foods can be sold so cheaply – but this isn't as large a risk factor for fine food retailers as for the multiples.

At long last, *Speciality Food* readers have a raft of fine quality, delicious frozen foods and ready meals to delight customers of all persuasions – including those who are seeking sustainable solutions.

Quality comfort

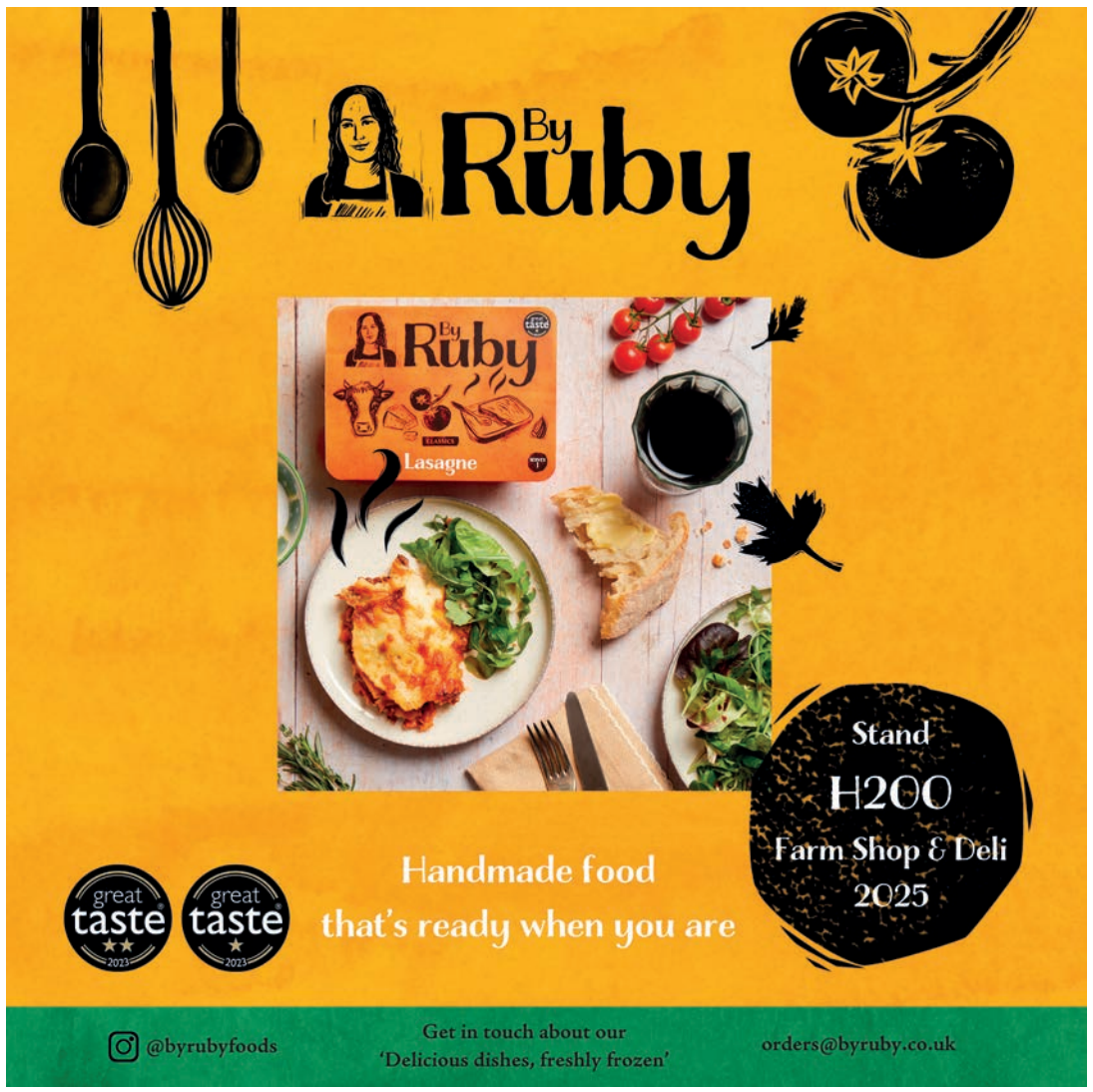
ByRuby is one such example of a producer borne from the desire to offer time-poor but discerning customers better than what they have traditionally been served. Milly Bagot, co-founder alongside Ruby Bell, came from a fine food background – at the time of launching the brand in 2018 she was running a fine food shop in Chelsea – and the fact that the idea came to the pair when as a new mother, she was gifted delicious meals for the freezer from a friend. She wanted to share the relief that comes from knowing an enjoyable and nutritious meal for the whole family is safely tucked away in the freezer.

"It's so important to us that the food tastes absolutely delicious every time, and we are very conscious of what kind of ingredients we use and that all of our packaging is recyclable," begins Milly. "We're trying to do something really good predominantly from a flavour perspective" – co-founder Ruby's chef experience is put to great use in the range – "and also by sourcing British, making sure we're using the great artisanal producers that are in this country." ByRuby uses Barber's Vintage Cheddar, MSC-certified fish and high welfare chicken in its meals, so customers can be confident that while they're cutting time from their to do list by purchasing ByRuby meals, they're not compromising on quality or ethics.

"Everything we use in our products you could find in your kitchen cupboards at home," says Milly. "Absolutely nothing is ultra-processed and we don't use any additives or preservatives."

> "People who care about where their food comes from and require something convenient and wholesome are drawn to what we do and how we embrace true culture"





Top-sellers in the range include fish pie, lasagne, beef bourguignon and chicken tikka – all familiar favourites. "People really want comforting and delicious dishes in their freezer that taste like they're homemade."

Restaurant-quality dishes at home

For Norfolk-based Farmyard Frozen, the Covid-19 pandemic made Hannah Springham and her chef husband Andrew Jones re-evaluate their business model – and move into the growing market for restaurant-quality food in the comfort of customers' homes. With Farmyard, their restaurant located in central Norwich, closed, they decided to feed the growing appetite for fine food at home.

"We talk a lot about 'foodies', particularly time poor foodies," begins Hannah. "People who really care about provenance and who made their food for them but also people who want to avoid e numbers and ultra processed food. There are lots of meal kits around which are brilliant, but our range is zero prep so it's great to just be able to pull it out of the freezer and have an excellent meal without having to think. Because we're frozen you essentially have a chef at home, on tap. In a nutshell we're frozen food for foodies."

Why should discerning fine food retailers act now? "We call it the frozen food revolution," says Hannah. "The signs are all pointing the right way with people turning to it for various reasons –younger people don't have the old stigma in their minds and it's convenient. More people than ever own large freezers thanks to lockdown and we're here to show people just how good it can be. We're seeing the artisan farm shops and delis we stock investing in freezers because their customers are asking for an offering alongside the lovely fresh produce. If that's not an indicator of where we're going I don't know what is. The sky's the limit for this category."

It's not only in the freezer that products can be found that satisfy the 2025 shopper's appetite for quality foods that deliver on convenience, taste and sustainability. "We know consumers are increasingly looking for organic foods that offer shorter cook times without compromising quality or healthfulness," begins Carmen Ferguson, brand manager at Biona's parent company Windmill Organics – which recently launched Pumpkin and Mushroom risotto mixes. "With 90% of shoppers incorporating ready-to-cook meals into their diets and organic food sales flying at the moment, we'd encourage retailers to get onboard and stock these two delicious risottos which should both prove popular with health-conscious consumers."

Kirsty Henshaw, founder of Kirsty's and Prep'd Protein, agrees – and suggests that annual events can provide opportunities for retailers. "The cost-of-living crisis has seen consumers move away from dining out to creating dining in experiences instead – quality ready meals are a big part of this, with them offering quick and convenient ways to create tasty meals at home. Retailers can play on customer dine-in moments, such as Chinese New Year, Valentine's and Easter, offering popular 'deals' for customers."

Authentic and convenient

As anyone who has prepared an authentic meal from far flung destinations can attest, it often takes far longer to prepare – and even shop for – the dishes in question than it does to eat them. And with time being an ever-diminishing currency in UK households, many are on the hunt for delicious, nutritious and high quality meals that offer up authentic flavours without the hassle of preparing them at home.

Enter Bini's authentic Indian ready meals. By using family recipes and traditional techniques, founder Bini Ludlow has ticked all the boxes with this range – which is a far cry from the Indian dishes available in every supermarket chiller cabinet and freezer up and down the country. "The biggest difference is that everything we make is produced by hand, in small batches, just as you would cook at home," Bini begins. "Unlike mass-

> "Retailers can play on customer dine-in moments, such as Chinese New Year, Valentine's and Easter, offering popular 'deals' for customers"



"SUSTAINABILITY IS NO LONGER A NICE-TO-HAVE"

Matt Whelan, MD of Fieldfare shares his take on the frozen food market

Sustainability is no longer a nice-to-have for shoppers. They expect their favourite retailers to offer a wide range of sustainable products and to implement effective sustainability practices. Last year, Fieldfare collaborated with the independent researcher, YouGov, to learn more about evolving shopper habits. The research* found that sustainability is increasingly important in influencing purchasing decisions. A quarter of respondents stated that a product's overall sustainability credentials are important to them, and 36% of shoppers expressed a preference for products with plastic-free packaging. Additionally, 38% of shoppers prefer to be able to choose the amount of a product they buy, rather than being restricted to pre-packed quantities.

Food waste is a key area of concern. It is both an environmental and economic issue for shoppers and retailers. Consumers recognise the role that frozen products can play in reducing waste at home as they can have delicious foods to hand, without having to worry about short use-by dates. Fieldfare's loose and single-portioned products can also help reduce waste by allowing shoppers to take only what they need. The scoop-your-own concept is particularly beneficial for smaller households needing perhaps just one or two portions.

For retailers, frozen presents a low-risk option due to the extended shelf life compared to fresh or chilled items. This reduces the risk of discarding products past their shelf life, benefiting both sustainability and profitability. According to WRAP, retail accounts for approximately 3% of overall food waste in the UK. While this percentage may seem small, it translates to an estimated cost of around £1bn per year for retailers, which is substantial.

Plastic-free packaging or low packaging is a growing area of interest for shoppers. Minimising packaging can be challenging for frozen brands; however, with over 40 years of experience providing high-quality, loose frozen foods to UK farm shops, Fieldfare has demonstrated that it can be done. Nearly 90% of Fieldfare products are packaging-free and packaging is used only when absolutely necessary to protect a product. Since 2021, all Fieldfare's new products have been launched without packaging and the company is now working closely with suppliers to convert legacy products to packaging-free as well.

Fieldfare is also constantly working with suppliers to find solutions that reduce plastic and packaging during transportation. Matt Whelan, MD of Fieldfare, states: "While it is essential to protect our products so that they reach shoppers in perfect condition, there are excellent eco-friendly solutions available now, that allow us to avoid unnecessary use of harmful materials such as plastic."

** Total sample size: 2,150 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 14th - 15th February 2024. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).*



Authentic Frozen Ready Meals
clever spicing and confident flavours

Proud to hold 13 prestigious Great Taste Awards

Bini®
Authentic Indian Ready Meals

Made in Somerset – Inspired by India
info@binifinefoods.co.uk www.binifinefoods.co.uk 07879777167

produced frozen ready meals, we use fresh, local and knowingly clean ingredients."

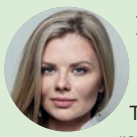
With the utilisation of authentic family recipes, no wonder customers have relished levelling-up their Indian cuisine game. "Our meals are rooted in Gujarati traditions and made to taste just like I grew up eating in Bradford, West Yorkshire (curry capital of the world and 2025 City Of Culture) – being full of warmth, comfort, and authentic flavours."

Truly worlds apart from the alternatives available at supermarkets, it's perhaps no surprise that the range is made using the upmost attention to detail and quality. "Using high-quality, locally sourced ingredients makes all the difference," says Bini. "I have a unique relationship with my suppliers, having forged a trustworthy bond amongst them all. I visit the suppliers and knowing where the ingredients are sourced, how they are produced and having the same ethos creates trust and reassurances for me. When you start with amazing fresh ingredients the curry has already had a fantastic start. These high standards, paired with traditional recipes, make Bini ready meals that truly taste homemade. People who care about where their food comes from and require something convenient and wholesome are drawn to what we do and how we embrace true culture."



No longer do fine food shoppers – and the retailers who serve them – need to sacrifice their time or ethical standards to enjoy convenient food at home. With a raft of high quality and consciously produced meals ready for us all to enjoy, 2025 is just the start of the convenience revolution.

SHAPING THE SECTOR



Insights from Nataly Komova, nutritionist at It's Me and You Clinic

The soup and ready meal market is experiencing a profound transformation, with personalized nutrition emerging as a key driver. Consumers are moving away from generic, mass-produced options and increasingly seeking meals tailored to their specific dietary needs, whether it be high-protein, keto, or gut-health-focused. This shift reflects a deeper understanding of how nutrition influences long-term well-being and is pushing brands to innovate with ingredients like collagen, probiotics, and nutrient-dense superfoods.

The rise of premiumization is also a significant factor shaping this market. Consumers are now willing to invest in high-quality, chef-inspired meals that offer the same culinary experience as dining out. The pandemic amplified this trend, as people sought to replicate restaurant-quality meals in the comfort of their homes, and this elevated expectation has persisted. Quality and authenticity have become central to consumer choices, with a preference for gourmet, artisanal options over traditional ready meals.

Transparency and sustainability have further redefined consumer expectations. Shoppers are increasingly focused on where their food comes from, leading to a growing demand for locally sourced, sustainable ingredients. Brands that prioritize ethical sourcing and provide full transparency about their production processes are gaining trust and loyalty, particularly as consumers become more eco-conscious.

In essence, the evolution of the soup and ready meal market is being shaped by demands for personalized nutrition, premium offerings, and ethical practices, positioning it as a forward-thinking, health-conscious sector poised for continued growth.

> "Brands that prioritize ethical sourcing and provide full transparency about their production processes are gaining trust and loyalty"

STOCK CHECK



BINI FINE FOODS CHICKEN MOGHUL CURRY

A creamy curry with generous pieces of chicken and perfectly balanced and aromatic spicing.

binifinefoods.com



LADA MAKES CHICKEN PAD KRAPAO

Made using premium ingredients including fresh Asian herbs and vegetables.

ladamakes.com



WOODMILL GAME GREEN THAI PHEASANT CURRY

Made using pheasant breasts that are marinating in a creamy coconut milk sauce, spruced up with apricots, green chillies and fresh coriander.

woodmillgame.co.uk



FIELDFARE CRISPY CALAMARI

A modern-day family favourite. Tender cuts of calamari are coated and crumbed for a crispy, moreish finish. Serve with spicy chilli sauce or Thai dips.

field-fare.com



FIELDGOODS AUBERGINE PARMIGIANA

Plum tomato and basil ragu layered up with roasted aubergine and cooling crème fraiche, topped with crunchy lemon zest breadcrumbs.

fieldgoods.co.uk



BYRUBY FISH PIE

Generously filled with sustainably sourced smoked haddock, cod and salmon, combined with sweet leeks in a rich and creamy sauce. Topped with buttery mashed potato and a sprinkling of Cheddar cheese.

byruby.co.uk





COMMENTATORS



SIMON MORRIS
ICERTECH



ALEX JACKSON
ICERTECH



MARTIN HOLDEN-WHITE
GRUBBY



MATHEW MARCH-SMITH
PONG CHEESE

SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

The temperature-controlled packaging sector is making strides when it comes to sustainability – and retailers, producers and consumers alike are set to benefit

Transporting chilled products to their final destination safely, maintaining quality throughout the chain, is a foundational aspect of the food industry. Suppliers, retailers and consumers alike must put their trust in temperature-controlled packaging to deliver food and drink exactly as it should be, which is why operators in this sphere take their roles seriously – particularly when it comes to sustainability.

With more consumers and fine food professionals than ever conscious about their impact on their environment, and keen to minimise their footprint, 2025 brings with it new technologies and solutions which mean that not only can *Speciality Food* readers be confident that the chilled items they purchase to sell to their discerning customers will arrive in top condition, but they won't need to sacrifice sustainability to make that happen.



Conscious clarity

Icertech is one such provider, offering products which are both ecologically sound and of solid quality. They are passionate about offering clarity to their customers, including around the Green Claims Code – a practical guide developed by the UK's Competitions and Markets Authority (CMA) to help businesses communicate their green initiatives transparently and avoid 'greenwashing'.

"As a business (and as an industry), we have a responsibility to ensure that the information we present to our customers is factual, transparent, and clear to interpret," begin Simon Morris, sustainability and innovation manager, and Alex Jackson, sales and marketing director. "The Green Claims Code lays out six key principles that businesses must follow when making environmental claims: 1. Be truthful and accurate 2. Be clear and unambiguous 3. Avoid omitting key information 4. Ensure comparability 5. Back up claims with evidence 6. Consider the full lifecycle

Using the Green Claims Code, we aim to provide substantiated claims using robust, science based and verifiable methods. If you see a business making environmental claims, the Green Claims Code is a great resource to reference those claims against."

In a world of countless unsubstantiated claims, and retailers and consumers having to tread carefully and with their eyes wide open when looking to source planet-friendly items, smart businesses are looking outwards to utilise tools that prove their statements can be trustworthy. "Sustainability is of growing importance to consumers, businesses and governments," they continue. "We are now feeling the effects of climate change globally and it is important to consider how, through our own direct action, we can preserve the Earth for our future generations."

Proven validity

"It can be hard to wade through the countless, unsubstantiated environmental claims, and understand how products compare," say Simon and Alex. "That is where Life Cycle Assessment comes in, it is a method to calculate the entire environmental impact of a product and provides a provide fair comparison between products. In partnership with Bangor University, we have calculated the environmental impact of all Icertech products through LCA."

LCA evaluates the environmental footprint of a product across its entire lifecycle, from raw material extraction, production, and transportation, through to use and disposal. "For our products much of the mass and energy data was collected on-site, to provide the most accurate representation of our products footprint as possible," they continue.

This information is vital to help Icertech and other businesses move forward sustainably. "This data is crucial to allows companies to make informed, sustainable decisions about their packaging while comparing real-world data. It allows them to meet their sustainability goals, increase transparency with their customers, and gets them ahead of the ever-changing legislative curve."

The best way for consumers to recognise sustainability efforts is through third-party accreditation, such as EcoVadis, Simon and Alex suggest. "We have recently been awarded a Platinum EcoVadis rating, placing us in the top 1% of companies within our sector.

"Our customers can be assured that significant consideration has been given to the sustainability of our products and practices, with our company motto 'Packaging

> "We are exploring other materials including seaweed and other renewable technologies"



with Purpose' guiding our decision-making process, which embodies our dedication to creating packaging solutions that not only meet our customers' needs but also contribute positively to the environment and society."

Safe and sustainable

Sustainable temperature-controlled packaging is an invaluable tool in GRUBBY's recipe kits, ensuring that ingredients arrive with the end consumer in optimum condition as well as satisfying the growing demand for sustainable. "At GRUBBY, keeping ingredients fresh isn't just about temperature control – it's about delivering everything as safely and sustainably as possible," begins Martin Holden-White, founder. "We use eco-friendly insulated packaging and ice packs, but only where absolutely necessary, which is around 25% of boxes."

While temperature-controlled packaging isn't required for all ingredients in GRUBBY's kits, it plays an important role – and sustainable options are utilised. "Most fresh veg don't need chilling, but for items that do – like tofu, plant-based cheeses, and dairy alternatives – we use sustainable insulation made from recycled materials and non-toxic, reusable ice packs."

Food waste has been hitting headlines for a few years now, and with consumers increasingly aware of the impact wasting food can have on the environment GRUBBY has built anti waste tools – both food and non-food – into its model. "We're also mindful of waste," says Martin. "Our ice packs are designed to be refrozen and reused by customers, or they can be emptied and the outer packaging recycled. By constantly reviewing and testing our packaging, we ensure that we're using just the right amount of insulation to maintain freshness without excess."

Of course, the journey of temperature-controlled packaging doesn't end with items being put into boxes – it's important for suppliers and retailers to partner with sustainably-minded transport partners too. "Beyond packaging, we focus on smarter logistics to reduce transit times," says Simon. "Partnering with carbon-conscious couriers like Hived and Zedify has helped us deliver fresh, high-quality ingredients while keeping our footprint as light as possible, with little to no carbon emissions."

Delivering quality

We all know that fine food customers have high standards, and the role of suppliers and retailers is to ensure that food and drink is in perfect condition to be relished by the end consumer, whatever care items require while it's in their hands. As well as ensuring that products arrive in optimum condition, it's important that packaging looks great too says Mathew March-Smith, co-founder of Pong Cheese.

"We've always said that 'cheese delivery' is our main service and once the product is taken care of the rest of the customer experience is about the 'delivery'. The courier's reliability is key but the only other part of a successful delivery is the packaging and it has to do many jobs: look great, promote the company and other products, protect the products inside it and maintain the temperature of them, and finally be a good price and be easy to assemble and produce in bulk and at speed," he says.

When it comes to the products used to guarantee safe delivery, the Pong team go full belt and braces. "We use a double layer strengthened cardboard carton and inside the cheeses are nestled in food grade, biodegradable shredded paper and bespoke frozen gel ice packs made by Thergis. This combination ensures that our products remain at an optimal temperature throughout the delivery process, preserving their quality and freshness until they reach our customers," explains Matt. "Our ice gel packs are leak-resistant, mess-free and long-lasting. These three factors are all critical to keep our cheeses perfectly chilled."

While there are certainly conscientious producers of packaging out there doing sterling work, there is still more to be done – and the appetite for it is keen. "We require all of our packaging to be as renewable as possible and it is all recyclable: the cardboard and paper shred can be recycled with household paper, and the ice gel packs can simply be cut open, the non-toxic 'food safe' solution poured down the drain, while the plastic outer can then be recycled as with other household plastics," says Matt, but "this isn't as biodegradable as it could be and we are therefore exploring other materials including seaweed and other renewable technologies."

With the demand for sustainable temperature-controlled packaging growing, and suppliers rising to the challenge, the future looks bright for the chilled fine food sector.

> "We are dedicated to creating packaging solutions that not only meet our customers' needs but also contributing positively to the environment and society"

icertech
Quality Chilled Packaging

Introducing Flexi-Chill

Contents are 100% purified tap water

100% Recyclable outer bag

Flexible pocketed design

48
Keeps products 0-8°C for up to 48 hours

ecovadis
PLATINUM SUSTAINABILITY RATING
TOP 1%

01978 661 247
www.icertech.co.uk
sales@icertech.co.uk



COME AND SEE US ON STAND N210 AT FARM SHOP & DELI SHOW 2025

100s OF NEW

REQUEST YOUR COPY HERE!



FIND EVERYTHING NEW ONLINE



www.holleysfinefoods.com

AND EXCITING PRODUCTS!







0117 938 0084 | sales@holleysfinefoods.com



SELLING SUSTAINABLY

Sustainability is not just about minimising plastic use, it's a holistic approach worth investing in

While on the surface, selling cheese sustainably can seem manageable with a simple checklist – minimise plastic use, reduce energy consumption and source locally – and all of these things are well worth pursuing, but true sustainability goes beyond this into a more wide-reaching realm where people and planet are equally valued.

A holistic approach

For Chris Hallam of Chorlton Cheesemongers, selling sustainability is much more than a box-ticking exercise – it's a holistic way of doing business. "When we set up the shop five years ago it was all a very practical exercise," he says, "and we focused on things like making local deliveries by bicycle, wrapping the cheeses in paper not plastic, having a machine which dispenses untampered with but pasteurised milk which customers can refill using any of their own containers or purchase one of our glass bottles, and minimising our energy usage – for example by keeping the shop cool rather than storing and presenting cheeses in a refrigerated counter."

Chorlton Cheesemongers now charges for its paper bags after noting the annual cost of giving them away for free – and the fact that most people will likely bin them as soon as they get home – and usage has fallen as a result. They are also on the hunt for a planet-friendly alternative to plastic pots for Feta and olives. "Everything's a trade-off," says Chris. "We can either buy non-sustainable pots locally or sustainable options but need to have them shipped."

James Grant, owner of No2 Pound Street, advises, "In a shop sense there are many improvements you can make including reduce your power and lighting usage and consolidate storage. If possible, order more to reduce the number of deliveries you receive to help lower your carbon footprint."

Mindful stocking

Over and above the sustainable measures listed above, Chris and his team are keen to support the work of like-minded cheesemakers from the local area and beyond. "We buy from dairies and farms which are feeding into their local economies and local communities, so although they're not necessarily local to us we are supporting businesses which are very much feeding into their region sustainably," he says.

At No2 Pound Street, improving the business's sustainably credentials is firmly on the agenda – and the mission begins with smart sourcing. "I am changing my cheese shop choices to focus on the planet by stocking good cheeses with organic and regenerative credentials," says James. Healthier for the planet means healthier for people, James believes, and "as people we deserve to live healthily.

"Sustainability is about the earth and how we look after it," he says. He is passionate about supporting the work of eco-conscious cheesemakers – and ensuring that their message is shared far and wide. "We need to encourage people to spread the word about the goodness we get from organic and proper regenerative cheesemakers."

James and his team have been on a path of discovery around sustainable cheese – and the time has arrived to make tangible change. "I have learnt that mega agricultural industries are killing the planet. If we don't make the change to focus on real farming then the planet will die," he says. "Don't buy from mega dairies. Do buy from small producers that are happy with subsistence, and buy produce that works with nature – find facts. There is a lot of greenwashing." Ultimately, he says, "Enjoy knowing the truth about what you sell and that it is genuinely brilliant."

Chris is also passionate about doing thorough research about the cheesemakers he is considering working with before hitting 'buy' – this not only supports local infrastructures but directly benefits the makers, too. Supermarkets are undoubtedly getting better at stocking good cheese, but Chris explains that due to the scale of the operations in question, more money goes directly to the cheesemaker when small retailers stock the products of small cheesemakers – "it's a healthy and sustainable way to support their local economies."

Spreading the word

Thorough, well-considered labelling help customers to make better purchasing decisions. "Food needs to be have labels stating 'chemical-free' when no fertilisers and pesticides are used," James says. When a product has been produced to a high standard, customers should be made aware – and communicated with about why that's the case. For example, "cows were born to eat grass not grains."

While you may be at the start of your sustainably journey, you can still teach others. "On a number of occasions I've been surprised when a customer isn't aware of something I take for granted around sustainable food production," says Chris. "Similarly, people are horrified when they learn what's behind non-sustainable food production."

By taking a holistic approach to sustainable cheese-selling *Speciality Food* readers can offer their customers a taste of the future for years to come.

> "On a number of occasions I've been surprised when a customer isn't aware of something I take for granted around sustainable food production"



FRUITS OF **DAILY COMMITMENT**

The secret ingredient for outstanding **Parmigiano Reggiano** is **commitment**, especially with **animal welfare**. This is why our Parmigiano Reggiano is made at our **mountain dairies**, with a transparent **supply chain certified** according to the **Classyfarm protocol**.

PARMIGIANO REGGIANO

Benessere Animale Certificato Certified Animal Welfare



DalterFood Group

Best Italian Cheese Solutions

Find out more at dalterfood.com

DalterFood Group reinforces its commitment to sustainability

The Italy-based business dedicated to the production, cutting and packaging of portioned and grated cheeses has released its third Sustainability Report, reinforcing its commitment to becoming a benchmark for sustainability in its sector.

In the report, the Group's comprehensive approach towards sustainability – including economic, environmental, ethical and social aspects – are highlighted.

A focus on sustainability is a key part of DalterFood Group's operations, which was reaffirmed in the business's Code of Ethics which reinforces the company's characteristics of honesty, transparency and fairness and by having received the EcoVadis Bronze Medal for sustainability in 2023.

Andrea Guidi, GM of the Group, said, "The continuation of the war in Ukraine, with its repercussions on raw materials costs, the outbreak of turmoil in the Middle East, and climate change, which, with episodes of drought alternating with heavy flooding, is increasingly impacting our peninsula, have been a difficult context in which to operate for all production realities in Italy and beyond. It is precisely these difficulties that have driven us – yesterday as today – to be increasingly proactive in making our business economically, environmentally and socially sustainable, with projects that enable us to make products that are good for our customers, but also for the society and the region of which we are a part. Thanks to the Group's determination, we have achieved positive results in economic terms (+8% turnover), social terms (+87% training hours provided) and environmental terms."

For full details of the report, visit dalterfood.com/en/sustainability/sustainability-report-highlights/







Cornish Cheese Co makes sustainable investment

The Cornwall-based cheesemaker has invested in anaerobic digestion (AD) in a move towards greater sustainability and lessened dependency on the national grid.

Anaerobic digestion captures the gases released by organic materials, such as cow manure, and converts it into energy. "While small UK herds are not the main contributors, every effort to capture methane and convert it to green energy is a win for the environment," explained Ben Stansfield, head of sales and marketing at Cornish Cheese Co. "Capturing methane from manure not only prevents it from entering the atmosphere but also produces



nutrient-rich manure that is easier and more economical for farmers to spread."

Conventionally used by larger scale operations, anaerobic digestion was made possible for Cornish Cheese Co by partnering with BioFactory. BioFactory's system filters the gases from cow manure and whey, and uses a motor to generate electricity while the naturally-generated heat warms water within the system.

"When we reached out to BioFactory and explored their system, we quickly saw its potential: a small AD plant on our farm could produce over 250,000 kWh annually. This energy, derived from hot water and electricity, would cover about 75% of our dairy's current consumption. Our long-term goal is to supplement this with solar energy, pushing us closer to net-zero emissions.

"As the first cheesemaker in the UK to deploy a Micro AD Plant, we're committed to sharing our journey openly. Our goal is to demonstrate to other small businesses that affordable, scalable, and sustainable solutions are within reach. By investing in green technology, we're not only curbing operational costs but also contributing to a healthier planet – one step closer to a sustainable future for all," Ben concluded.

> "We are committed to sharing our journey openly"

French 'knighthood' awarded to Academy of Cheese director



Tracey Colley, founding director of the Academy of Cheese – a non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting the art, science and appreciation of cheese – has been awarded the prestigious title of Chevalier in the Ordre du Mérite Agricole by the minister of agriculture and food sovereignty of France.

The title recognises Tracey's efforts in championing cheese, supporting cheesemakers and nurturing future generations of cheese professionals during her 20-year career in the cheese industry and within her role at The Academy of Cheese. Throughout her career, Tracey has been a key figure in promoting and elevating the profile of cheese on an international stage.

Tracey is one of the first professionals in the cheese industry to receive the honour, which was established in 1883 to acknowledge individuals who have made an invaluable contribution to the agricultural sector.

Of the award, Tracey said, "The award is a fantastic accolade for the cheese industry, recognising the farms and animals producing great milk, the cheesemakers creating wonderful cheeses and to those promoting and selling them. I am determined to inspire and encourage new generations to understand and appreciate cheese. It is so important, not just as an ingredient, as it defines cultures, landscapes, health and happiness."

Mary Quicke of Quicke's Cheese, fellow director at The Academy of Cheese, said, "Tracey is a lifelong advocate of artisan cheese, having begun her career running Deli on the Square, a wonderful deli in Ludlow, championing all that is best in local and British cheese. She then took a senior role at distributor Harvey & Brockless before taking the leap to create the Academy of Cheese. Its extraordinary success is hugely reliant on her untiring contribution; she is powerful, inspired, committed, dedicated and hardworking – a stand for great cheese and all the people who make that happen. Not only that, Tracey is a warm, loving and incredibly supportive person."



"We are all nature"



JAMES GRANT
NO2 POUND STREET

It is February and given the global farming crisis we may only have 60 years before the world's soil dies. Pretty bleak reading this, right? You may be wondering what my topic is this month. Well, my *Speciality Food* friends, this month's column is about our land, cheese choices and how your purchasing can affect the world we live in.

Last month was my second time attending the Oxford Real Farming Conference, held every January. A gathering of real farmers from all over the world, including media, professors, doctors, scientists, land lovers and cheesemakers. It is the annual time to check in and see how humanity is working to protect the planet.

Agriculture is the most destructive human activity on earth – can we feed the world without destroying it? Just a handful of healthy soil contains more microorganisms than people on the planet. 70% of the world's soil is now lifeless. With only 30% of healthy soil left, if we continue to farm aggressively within 60 years there will be nothing left to feed us. Ten thousand years ago we started to till the soil. This was the beginning of our destructive relationship with soil life. By tilling and ploughing it turns soil carbon into carbon monoxide.

After World War II there was an excess of bomb-making material that was turned into fertiliser and an excess of nerve gas which was turned into pesticides. So, the military industrial complex moved into the agricultural industrial complex. This forced our current agricultural model into chemical dependency. As Vandana Shiva, renowned environmental activist says, industrial agriculture is a war against the earth with chemicals actively killing the soil. This has given us the epidemics of cancer and allergies because of a toxic imbalanced diet. We reflect the environment we live in. So, I would like you to consider your purchases carefully. Large industrial production needs to be a thing of the past. Monocrop farming must change. We need to embrace organic, regenerative farming. The soil should be full of life. We need to localise our food choices.

Buy your cheese from truly sustainable and ethical cheesemakers. Ask as many questions as you can, about the cows, what they eat, where they live, are there any health issues. As a specialist you have every right to understand how your cheese is produced.

This year I will be working more closely with farmers and cheesemakers that have adopted a regenerative approach to making cheese. They value their land, and they help to put back the energy they use to feed us.

Currently there are only a few organic cheesemakers in the UK in my opinion, and I am sure, with your help, this will change soon. Look for the cheese Hafod from Holden Farm. Also, Feltham's Farm in Somerset produce delicious organic cheese – try their Lucky Marcel, also a super gold winner at the World Cheese Awards. Near me in Oxfordshire is Nettlebed Creamery. The selection of organic cheese here is sublime and do try the delicious Witheridge that is aged in hay. We also must mention High Weald Dairy – their organic Seven Sisters is delicious. Another famous organic producer is Daylesford Organic – the selection there is extensive and very yummy.

Look up regenerative cheesemakers that are working hard with nature with extensive research programmes. Recently I joined Pasture for Life. This is a thriving organisation championing the virtue of pasture-fed ruminants and their meat and dairy products. Do look up these brilliant people and find out what they are doing to help bring us back to nature.

So, there you have it, we need to gain the will of the people. For too long we have been bullied into buying cheese that is made through mega industry that only harms the fabric of our world, invertebrates, animals, fungal networks. oceans and air. As shopkeepers and business owners think seriously about making the change – work with nature – we are all nature.

> "As shopkeepers and business owners think seriously about making the change – work with nature"



DAIRY FOR ALL

The dairy sector is evolving, with more farmers than ever going green – and shoppers are lapping it up

COMMENTATORS



ANNABEL MCLELLAND
CLAWSON



ROB YATES
TOM PARKER CREAMERY



FRANCIS CLARKE
TREWITHEN DAIRY



SAM PARSONS
BALCASKIE ESTATE

Sustainability, farming and the cost-of-living crisis are sharing news updates like never before, creating the perfect opportunity for fine food retailers to investigate the potential of sustainable dairy products in their store. The future is looking promising for sustainable dairy, but there are plenty of challenges ahead – from consumer education to the issues faced by farmers up and down the UK.

Fine food shoppers are often well informed, or at least keen to know more, so *Speciality Food* readers' audiences are ideal candidates for relishing great products created sustainably and sharing the good word.

Thankfully, there are plenty of producers creating great quality – and delicious-tasting – dairy products for sustainably-minded customers to enjoy.

A shared vision

Speciality cheesemakers Clawson are passionate about doing things properly, taking care of their ecosystem to ensure for our animals, land, employees and members, consumers and local community whilst taking steps to reduce our impact on the planet," begins Annabel Mclelland, technical and sustainability director.

"We are passionate about everything we do and ensuring we are doing the right thing. We have a dedicated farm care team who support and guide our farmers by sharing best practice, running workshops and working collaboratively."

Clawson recognises that a one-size-fits-all approach is not suitable when it comes to sustainable dairy production – but collaboration is. "At Clawson we can't make changes to the whole world, but we can change and work together to create a better future for our farmers, animals, employees and community," she says. "All our farms have their own bespoke action plans as no two farms are the same. Each farm receives one on one time to support in the plan development to ensure goals/targets are both realistic and achievable. At site are employees are of upmost minimal environmental impact and a sustainable community. "Sustainability is at the heart of everything we do at Clawson to ensure we have the best environment





importance and engaging with them across all functions to share our vision and progress is key."

Approaching the task at hand with eyes wide open is key to making meaningful change. "We know that our farms are the largest contributor to our carbon footprint and focus has been on these since before 2020," says Annabel. "Our average carbon dioxide emission per kilo of fat and protein corrected milk (CO2/kG FPCM) is lower than the UK average and almost half of the global average which means our farms are already working to high standards. This in turn has made our goal of reducing our emission per tonne of product produced by 30% by 2032 a more difficult challenge as those quick wins and low hanging fruits have already been completed. We are keeping abreast of technologies to see how we can further support our farmers in hitting this target."

Conscious production

"At Tom Parker Creamery, our commitment to sustainability starts in the field and runs all the way through the supply chain to the consumer's fridge," begins Rob Yates, CEO. "We are committed to using only free-range, whole milk and natural ingredients to ensure that both our flavoured and functional milk products and our creams are clean label, nutritious and wholesome."

Supporting British farmers has been in the headlines for years, seeing a big boost during the Covid-19 pandemic, so customers keen to support the domestic dairy industry while enjoying a quality treat will be satisfied. "We source our whole milk from local family farms, and it is minimally processed on site, meaning it's simply pasteurised and homogenised, never standardised so nothing is skimmed off," says Rob. "And, any ingredients added, such as fruit purees, cacao or coffee, are completely natural and of the highest quality."

The lives of the animals whose milk and meat we consume is becoming increasingly recognised – with many consumers opting to step away from that resulting from intensive farming – and producers are working towards satisying that demand. "We work closely with our farmers to ensure our cows are kept in the best possible conditions. This means prioritizing pasture-fed cows, grazing freely in natural pastures," says Rob. "We play music to them when they come in for milk, install brushes and salt licks, and make sure there are communal areas so that they can hang out together indoors. Each cow also has an individual, well bedded cubicle to lie down in, as they spend around 14 hours a day lying down resting and ruminating. We believe all of this means they make better-tasting, better-quality milk."



Of course, it's not just farming practices that come into question when discussing sustainability – packaging is of vital importance, too. "The finished products are packaged in fully recyclable, resealable glass bottles with paper labels to ensure our supply chain is completely plastic-free.

"This clean label, minimal processing approach is part of our heritage, evoking the tradition of our founder Tom Parker's original milk deliveries – delivering free-range milk from grass-fed herds in glass bottles. And it speaks to today's consumer who is looking for healthy alternatives to ultra-processed food and drink that is good for them and good for the planet."

Going above and beyond

Cornwall-based Trewithen Dairy has sustainability at its heart. "Sustainability is at the very heart of Trewithen Dairy," says Francis Clarke, chief procurement officer at Trewithen Dairy. "As a family-run business in Cornwall, we take our responsibility to the land, our farmers, and our community seriously. Over 75% of our carbon footprint comes from farming, so we work closely with our 45 local dairy farmers to implement and support regenerative and sustainable practices."

"Consumers are driving change," says Francis, "demanding more transparency, sustainability labels, and verified carbon reductions. At Trewithen we believe regenerative dairy farming is the future and key to creating a thriving, nature-friendly food system."

The business has taken steps to ensure that its standards go above and beyond the established levels to ensure optimum sustainability.

> "Farming with nature rather than against it helps create biodiverse, productive farms that are better for cows, farmers, and the environment"







"Our trewFarming Standard goes beyond industry standards, ensuring high-welfare, ethical dairy farming, while our trewRegen Standard focuses on soil health, biodiversity, and carbon sequestration," says Francis.

Changes have also been made to production processes – and this evolution has been recognised and rewarded. "At our factory, we've invested in energy efficiency, water recycling, and solar power to cut our impact further. These efforts were recognised when we were named runner-up in the Cornwall Sustainability Awards. For us, sustainability is about securing the future of dairy farming in Cornwall; reducing emissions, improving soil, and supporting farmers every step of the way."

Of course, it's vital that businesses don't simply pay lip service to sustainability – they must walk the walk for a better future. "We're making meaningful change by embedding sustainability into every part of our business," says Francis. "On farms, we're leading the way in regenerative agriculture, working with six pilot farmers to boost soil health, increase biodiversity, and cut carbon emissions. We've been measuring farm-level carbon footprints for five years, and the trend is heading in the right direction. Our farms already have a lower carbon footprint than the UK average. At our factory, we've cut carbon intensity by 35% since 2020, thanks to renewable energy, efficiency upgrades, and innovative heat recovery systems. This results in lower emissions, more resilient farms, and a healthier environment demonstrating our commitment to long-term environmental and economic sustainability."

While terms such as carbon sequestration and the concept of soil health are of paramount importance to sustainable farms, only a small percentage of consumers speak the language of sustainability, which means that retailers who stock considerately and the brands they sell must take on the role of educator.



Francis is conscious that dairy farming is impactful on the environment, but the business is taking great strides to minimise this impact – and not only that, to improve the health of the land for future generations. "Dairy has a big environmental footprint, but it also has the potential to be part of the solution," he says. "By improving soil health, cutting artificial inputs, and optimising feed, farmers can sequester carbon and reduce emissions. Healthy soil doesn't just store carbon, it retains water and improves resilience against drought and extreme weather. Farming with nature rather than against it helps create biodiverse, productive farms that are better for cows, farmers and the environment."

A sustainable future

"The future of dairy farming lies in carbon reduction, soil regeneration, and ethical food production," says Francis. "We're keeping a close eye on carbon sequestration, with early data suggesting that well-managed dairy farms could offset most, if not all, of their emissions. Regenerative farming gives everyone the opportunity to improve soil, boost biodiversity, and reduce artificial inputs, no matter their farming system. Circular farming - where waste is minimised nutrients are recycled, and energy is generated on-farm – will also play a big role."

At Clawson, collaboration and innovation are key to farming sustainably for years to come. "Working sustainably with our members is key to the survival of our heritage and future of our business. We have a motto – 'healthy cows are happy, sustainable and efficient cows'," says Annabel. "Dairy in the past has received negative coverage as being the main contributor to global warming due to enteric fermentation (burping to those who are not familiar with the term). We firmly believe that cow (dairy) numbers have reduced over the last 30 years and cows are creating fewer burps, and therefore reducing the overall methane produced. We need to embrace change, challenge the norm and drive efficient farming, this is done by balancing tradition and innovation," says Annabel.

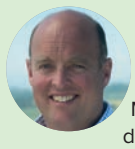
"Dairy farmers have been doing the right thing for years and love what they do. At Clawson we are a farmer's cooperative who firmly believe a sustainable farm is an efficient farm with happy healthy animals, caring for nature, healthy soils and most importantly a profitable business."

> "Dairy has a big environmental footprint, but it also has the potential to be part of the solution"





FARMER PERSPECTIVE



Sam Parsons, farm manager at Balcaskie Estate, shares his insights

Milk has for decades been a 'staple' in supermarket price checks – so driving the value down to a level where specialisation and scale are the only goals for producers to remain financially sustainable. With consumers concerns over environmental impact of meat and dairy, a growing market for sustainable dairy is beginning to gain momentum. The recently published *United Kingdom Food Security Report* is an important piece of research, and how we use the information to impact our farming and buying practices in the food industry is crucial for 2025.

Sustainable dairy, much like other sustainable and organic food production, faces two barriers: consumer awareness and price point. A consumer picking up a pint of milk has no idea how much the farmer has been paid, nor often the cost of the pint, let alone the cost required with producing the raw ingredient from field to bottle. Seen as a necessity to have in the fridge rather than a source of nutrition and flavour, there is little thought given to the quality of milk – just how much cream has been removed.

The dairy industry has become demonised by the media and alternative milk products. Contrary to public perception that reducing meat and dairy intake improves health, the data says otherwise. We drink 45% less milk than we did in the 1970s when it was all full fat – but somehow we are less healthy? Could it be that we are consuming more harmful ingredients in our diets? A positive change would be for consumers to prioritise sustainably produced fresh meat, dairy, vegetables and fruit reared and grown with care by farmers in the UK, rather than imported, synthetic processed products. Consumers drive retailers more than they think – so purchasing choices from the shelves become demand from retailers to producers. Demand from customers and supportive voices in the media from the farmers and producers themselves will shift the dial from commodity bland milk to quality dairy produce. As an island benefitting from plenty of grass here in the UK we produce some of the finest milk, cheeses, ice-cream and butter. Taste and nutritional quality in milk come from grass grown naturally – we should be celebrating this and making sure consumers taste the difference.

Value is a perception – we are happy to spend £4 on a coffee, but a pint of milk? We have seen a value perception shift for meat, with people starting to look for locally sourced, organic and Pasture for Life-certified meat as there has been education on the health and biodiversity benefits. This has taken years of chefs, farmers, butchers and journalists covering the topic. I'd love to see that for dairy too. I look to countries like Italy and France where their dairy products are revered and hope we can get appreciation for our own produce to that level too. After all, if there isn't consumer demand, systems cannot change. Consumers have to create demand and support our farmers and producers.

I would love to see more people supporting sustainable dairy with their spending power. And for a network of dairies and sustainable dairy producers to be available across the UK.

We're so lucky in our region to have St Andrews Farmhouse Cheese just down the road who regularly come along to take a stand at our Market Weekends and we're actively looking to have a dairy join us at Balcaskie Estate in the East Neuk.

A food hub for food and drink production, we see a dairy being able to provide not only local people but also local businesses with fresh milk as a fantastic addition.

> "If there isn't consumer demand, systems cannot change. Consumers have to create demand and support our farmers and producers"



“We hold the key for change”

Patrick Holden, founder and CEO of the Sustainable Food Trust, believes good food should – and could – be accessible for all

Why is it that speciality foods are confined to people who have privileges, who maybe have more income, who have more knowledge, and out of those privileges, want to source food with a better story behind it? This kind of food should be accessible to all and be more normalised. Why hasn't that happened?

I think value is associated with paying the true cost of something, paying for something which is delivering benefits. And I think that speciality foods would deliver benefits to you and to society as a whole. And at the moment, we're having to pay a lot more for them. Which begs the question, why do we pay so little for so-called normal food which doesn't deliver those benefits?

I think the answer is that we have a distorted economic system where apparently cheap food isn't really cheap at all, because the costs behind that so-called cheap food include contributing to climate change, destroying nature, having negative effects on river pollution, reducing biodiversity, and also causing social harm including damage to public health. Also reduced cultural cohesion – for example fewer jobs on the land – and none of those costs are attributed to the normal food that most people buy. So this idea of cheap food, which is what most people buy and it's mostly available in supermarkets, is a delusion.

Most of us buy food according to its price and shop at speciality retailers as a treat rather than normal practice, and we need to change that. The first step is to make sure these hidden costs of food are attributed to their creator. In other words, we make the polluter pay. If your farming system or your food system is causing damage, then you should be financially accountable for that damage. Unfortunately, we live in a world where the polluter doesn't pay, so that's the first thing we need to put right.

The second thing we need to put right is the price gap between quality and cheap food. Our Hafod Cheddar is quite highly priced, which makes it out of reach of a lot of people. If we were to be paid for the social benefits we're delivering such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving biodiversity, employing local people and making a nutritionally dense food, then the price of it would come down and the price of normal food, which is dishonestly priced, would go up, and that would close the gap.

Our current food systems are causing damage for future generations. And, interestingly enough, a few years ago a law was passed in the Welsh Government, the Senedd, around the health and well-being of future generations – the idea that every law that's passed in the Welsh Government should take that into account. That is not what we're doing with our current food system.

Educate without preaching

The key to unlocking the barrier of dishonest pricing and the wrong kind of food – which is what most of us are eating – is a better-informed public, and the best way to achieve that is to get people onto farms. We've recently launched the Beacon Farms network, positioning farms as educational platforms with an aim to get every child at an impressionable age – and adults at perhaps a less impressionable age – to have seeing-is-believing experiences.

Our aim is to get millions of people to visit the farms where their food comes from so they recognise the story of its origin. I believe that if we could scale that, it would deliver the change that's needed because too few of us know the story behind our food – in fact, very few of us do.

Farms and very often the farmers themselves are powerless because they don't know the customers – there's very little direct relationship – so retailers are absolutely in a pivotal position, and I would say that supermarkets have not really honoured this fact. Indeed, they have done worse than that. This means that idependent fine food retailers are more vital than ever, because they are the interface between the producer and the public. They could shout about the connection between the locally-produced food they're selling and the farm it was grown on – they even could ask if the farmer would be open to having customers visit his farm. It's a question of show, don't tell. We can educate, but we mustn't preach.

My farm was part of the 'great cheese heist' a few months ago, and I did 20 interviews over 36 hours with media from all over the world – the *New York Times* as well as publications in Australia and Dubai. It caught the public's imagination. If you ask yourself why, you'll find it's because more and more people are interested in the story behind their food and this rather was cheese with a story. We can be encouraged by that in a way; we can recognise that there's an underlying interest in where our food comes from.

Power to the people

The public has the power to change and improve the food system we're currently working and living within. We hold the key for change. It's no longer a case of 'them' fixing this, it's 'us'. This is an empowering message and suggests that we don't need to preach at people about what to buy and how to eat, but make eating well easier and engaging.

The large-scale food industry has pulled a veil over the reality of what they do, because in the words of Eric Schlosser, who wrote *Fast Food Nation*, "If their customers knew the story, they probably wouldn't want to eat the food". Don't forget that a individual person is more powerful than the big companies because once you scale those individuals up, that's the market. If enough of us buy food with a better story, then those that don't supply these products will not survive – even the biggest supermarkets. Both consumers and speciality food retailers should feel empowered by this.

> “Why is is that speciality food is confined to people with privileges? Connect with the farmers producing your food, educate without preaching, and hopefully one day speciality food will be the emergent future for all”

Sponsored by

Tracklements



RAW HONEY

What's the buzz around the store cupboard essential? Speciality Food finds out more...

There are some ingredients shoppers naturally pop into their baskets on a regular basis. Milk, bread, flour, sugar, eggs... honey. The basics. They're products most consumers will buy almost without a second thought.

But the way we shop is changing. The British public are becoming ever more concerned about not only the quality, but the provenance of their food and drink. This has been demonstrated most recently by the outrage over Arla's plans to introduce the supplement Bovaer into a selected number of farms.

And by what's been billed by some as 'the great honey scandal'.

WHAT IS 'THE GREAT HONEY SCANDAL'?

In 2021, the European Commission's From the Hives initiative tested honey imported into Europe. It found 46% of consignments weren't compliant with the European Honey Directive.

Testing showed more than half (57%) of operators had exported honey suspected to contain added sugars, and more than 60% of operators had imported at least one suspicious consignment. Shockingly, 100% of honey sampled in the UK failed the purity test.

Last autumn national press picked up on more recent discussions around added-sugar honey, which thrust it back into the headlines again.

Lynne Ingram, chair of the Honey Authenticity Network UK, and honey ambassador for the British Beekeepers Association, says, "You'll find very little, if any British honey in most shops. Everything is imported and blended. You probably won't be able to tell where it's from. And the prices are so cheap. No real beekeeper producing real honey anywhere could make it for the prices we're seeing. Consumers are constantly being deceived into buying something that says 'pure' and 'natural' when it's anything but!"

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RAW AND STANDARD HONEY?

"There's a magic to raw honey," says Oussama Azzam, co-founder of Malik's Honey. "If you taste it there will be more nuance there, not just an overly sweet, sugar-syrup taste. Real raw honey will have lots of lovely floral notes."

Speaking from a more technical perspective, Lynne admits there's no legal definition, but that it's generally interpreted as honey that is taken directly from the hives and spun. Honey that isn't raw (almost all of what's in large retailers) might be pasteurised or have its temperature raised to ensure a long shelf life. "But that takes out all the wonderful natural enzymes and properties from the honey. Raw honey will set quicker, but for me that's a sign of a good honey."

WHAT DOES 'ETHICAL HONEY' MEAN?

"There's been a lot of talk in the vegan community about taking honey away from the bees," Lynne explains. "But we say, if you let the bees 'get on with it', they'll make honey anyway. The average hive needs about 40lbs in store for winter but easily produces 100lbs or more. If you leave it with them they won't eat it. Beekeepers doing things the proper way will only take away this excess, not what the bees need to survive."

DOES RAW HONEY HAVE MORE HEALTH BENEFITS?

Honey has been used for Millennia in ancient medicine and as a natural healer and wellbeing tonic.

An obvious use practically everyone will have heard of is the old adage of helping a cough or cold with a warm mug of honey and lemon. This was backed up in 2018 by guidelines from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and Public Health England (PHE), which said there was some limited evidence honey can help ease cough symptoms.

"Honey is antimicrobial and antiviral, and it draws fluid out," adds Lynne. "The NHS uses honey dressing for things like ulcers and also burns, to allow the wounds to heal better."

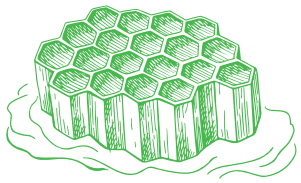
There's also a lot of talk around honey as a preventative approach to hayfever, but the message has become muddied along the way, Oussama explains. "There's this debate around hay fever season where people think raw honey from their local area will help them. But all raw honey can be helpful for hay fever."

WHICH HONEY IS THE HEALTHIEST?

For a long time Manuka honey, derived from hives where bees have fed from the Manuka bushes, has been heralded as one of nature's great superfoods – with a price to match.

Typically the beneficial properties of Manuka honey are measured by the term Total Activity or TA. The higher the TA score, the greater the antimicrobial and antifungal clout of the honey. The majority of mainstream Manuka honey brands come in with a TA of somewhere between 10 and 20.

But... there's a British alternative. If you want to offer raw honey with even more oomph, look out for varieties labelled as Ling Heather. Though it's often costly for makers to have batches lab tested (and they don't have the marketing magic of the Manuka industry behind them), results are showing many Ling Heather honeys contain a TA level of around 10.



46% OF HONEY SAMPLES TESTED WEREN'T COMPLIANT WITH THE EUROPEAN HONEY DIRECTIVE

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

DOES RAW HONEY TASTE DIFFERENT?

In a nutshell, yes. One of the most delightful properties of raw honey is every batch's unique flavour profile, informed by what the busy honeybees have been foraging on that season.

Raw honey can be floral, savoury, herbal, even a touch salty.

HOW CAN RETAILERS BE SURE THEY'RE BUYING REALLY GOOD HONEY?

Lynne advises looking for independent, natural honey producers in the UK and forming a relationship with them rather than choosing the most convenient jars from a wholesaler. "Avoid labels that say 'blend of' or 'non EU' honey on. By law, any honey producer here has to state 'produced in the UK' on the label. If it says 'packed in the UK' it that doesn't mean anything. It could be any other honey that's just put into jars here."

Although honey doesn't have its own accreditation scheme there are, say producers, some other things you could look out for. Black Bee Honey, for example, is a B Corp, which co-founder Paul Webb says gives a really good level of accountability for the business from field to jar.

> "There's a magic to raw honey. If you try it there will be more nuance there, not just an overly sweet, sugar-syrup taste"
>
> **OUSSAMA AZZAM, CO-FOUNDER OF MALIK'S HONEY**



THE LIFE & SOUL OF THE PANTRY · Tracklements

The Life & Soul of the Pantry

Certified B Corporation

ORDER AT TRADE.TRACKLEMENTS.CO.UK OR CALL:01666 827044



“We don’t sell, we serve”

As a pioneer of conscious consumerism and founder of Planet Organic, Renée Elliott understands first-hand the tension between values and commerciality

When Planet Organic opened in 1995, the term ‘conscious consumerism’ hadn’t been coined, and sustainability wasn’t really on the agenda. My goal was to create good business that does good for the individual, the community and the planet. What we realised at the beginning is if we were talking about people’s health and well-being, the well-being of their babies, children, families, that was interesting to them. But the talking about the environment was not a hook at all. Whereas according to a recent Mintel study, the number one consumer concern is plastic which is a question of environment and awareness.

Awareness is the golden thread running through everything I do. Conscious consumerism is magic because it’s about having an awareness about what you’re buying, why, and the impact that it has on a myriad of different strands. In consumerism, awareness enables choice.

As well as looking for products which fit in with our definition of conscious consumerism the Planet Organic team look for organic, but I think producers are making a choice between the two to avoid putting the price up for consumers, which is a pity. Organic food is more expensive because it’s better for you and the planet, and better quality overall. That costs, as do all environmentally-led decisions. Sometimes we find there’s a product that we really want that has incredible environmental credentials, but it’s not organic.

Today, you can think about the impact of what you’re buying choices you’re making in terms of farming, agriculture, chemicals, plastics. At Planet Organic, I believe we have the highest product standard in the country – suppliers have to jump through hoops to get stocked.

Price versus value

When Planet Organic first opened, the press really attacked us on price. My answer was always that quality costs more money. When it’s clothing, cars or technology people recognise that, but not when it comes to food. We spend less of our income on food than ever before, and more on technology and leisure, so it all comes down to choices.

When we talk about price, I think about value. Organic food has a value to your health. The body is incredible at healing itself so you can eat badly for decades and still feel pretty good, but once you hit your later years you have opened yourself up to diseases. People don’t realise that your body is your greatest gift on Earth and you need to honour it. We’re not taught that, but people who buy fine foods, people who buy organic foods, people who are on the journey of health, understand the implication of that. What they’re investing in their health today is going to save them cost in pain, money and time as they get ill when they’re older.

When it comes to the fine food consumer, I think there is generally a greater understanding of the bigger picture of value – a holistic view that incorporates their personal health as well as the health of the planet and the livelihoods of the people and land who produce the food they eat.

Comparatively, when it comes to the general public who shop in supermarkets, they haven’t been educated at school or potentially at home, so they don’t know that a large percentage of what they’re eating is bad for them – even in the ranges that are branded as being better quality aren’t necessarily rich in nutritional benefit.

Communication is vita

As a values-driven retailer, which is what Planet Organic has always been, we are still leading with values despite the added costs they bring to the business. Labour’s Budget and increased National Insurance payments are going to cost retailers thousands of pounds, but we’re not laying people off to cover that cost. We’re committed to our teams, and the service that we provide in our stores thanks to the number of team members we have. We’re being smart about trying to find that money somewhere else, and we’re not whacking prices up for our customers to make up for the costs resulting from the Budget like many retailers are.

We never compromise on our values, and we define these in the business in three ways. One is product standard, which is sacred – that’s a non-negotiable. The second is aspirational values. We’d love to do everything perfectly but we can’t afford to do that, so there’s a constant tension between values and commerciality. Thirdly, we have an upward spiral of excellence in the direction of travel to be as environmentally-friendly as possible – for example, with all-green fridges and no plastic.

Customers have to understand your mission and what it means for the business and for them, and then if those values are threatened by cost or you have to put prices up because of things going on in the marketplace, you need to have that dialogue with the customer. That communication creates trust, and you’re having that communication because you respect the customer and the farmer.

Planet Organic is known for its level of service, and every member of our team is knowledgeable about what we do and can support customers on their journey. They understand our definition of value and can pass that on. It’s a huge part of who we are and what we do and always has been. We want Planet Organic to be a haven from the crazy, busy world outside. You can walk in, take a breath and find the answers that you seek. We say that if you have a question, nature has the answer. We curate those answers and we deliver them to you on the shelf floor. And to do that, you need a team who care and have time to talk to the customer. And actually, we say that we don’t sell, we serve.

“Conscious consumerism is magic because it’s about having an awareness about what you’re buying, why, and the impact that it has on a myriad of different strands”

COMMENTATORS

PIC: LEANNE COATES



MARTIN LINES
NFFN



BARNES EDWARDS
THE GARLIC FARM



LEONA MCDONALD
GOLDEN HOOVES



NIELS CORFIELD
REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE CONSULTANT

IS REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE THE FUTURE OF FARMING IN BRITAIN?

Proponents of regenerative farming say it's the only way forward for the industry, while others claim the word 'regenerative' is being used indiscriminately and should be regulated. *Speciality Food* reports...

Regenerative agriculture was thrust into the public psyche last year as 5.1 million viewers watched Jeremy Clarkson take on the regen mantle in season three of *Clarkson's Farm*. Working in partnership with Wildfarmed's Andy Cato, the beleaguered presenter, who'd in the series lost piglets and entered the minefield that is mushroom harvesting, discovered an exciting new way to grow food.

Along the way, the word 'regenerative' pricked the ears of the food community and consumers. But what does it really mean?

What is regenerative agriculture?

Independent farming advisor and trainer, Niels Corfield, says the word 'regenerative' evokes a number of different contexts, but that it's primarily about focusing on outcomes.

"Regenerative agriculture is literally set of practices that deliver improvements in soil health, pasture health, landscape, ecosystems and biodiversity. You can look at whichever metric you like, but the key point is we're regenerating a resource. Or you could call it 'natural capital'.

For Martin Lines, CEO of the Nature Friendly Farming Network, in addition to the above, people matter. "It's about community. Bringing people together and putting more people into the landscape." While also, "Giving farmers the opportunity to adjust, change, and go on a journey of transition of continued improvements." There isn't one set way of doing this, Martin continues. "Our earth isn't rigid, our crops aren't rigid. We have to adapt our practices and systems to what the soil and



fields and weather allow us to do. Every field is different, and every challenge is different."

Barnes Edwards, director of The Garlic Farm, which has been organic for some time but has in more recent years adopted a regenerative approach, says the term, for him, means "to leave the land in better health than you found it".

The word 'sustainable', Barnes continues, is "not good enough". "It's out of date. Sustainability just sustains the status quo. We are aiming for restoration, and active rejuvenation, and regenerative farming has a number of practices which, when applied in harmony, can really help with that, and deliver it."

Though there is some pushback from organic farmers over regenerative agriculture and its definition, Barnes believes there should be more collaboration between the two movements. "They are very closely entwined. What we do is we farm organically as a baseline, and we employ, and encourage, and are

'HEALTHY FARMING LEADS TO HEALTHIER DIETS'



David Wolfe and his family are custodians of organic farm, Wakelyns, in Suffolk, practicing agroforestry, while also growing diverse wheat varieties and lentils, all with an eye on caring for nature

WHAT DOES REGENERATIVE MEAN TO YOU, AND WHAT DOES 'GOOD' LOOK LIKE IN FARMING?

I think the difficulty with the term regenerative is it sounds great, but it's been captured by a style of farming which can rely on a huge amount of weedkillers like glyphosates. Here, we tend to say we have an agroecological approach. We want to be doing a whole range of things to produce food, but that has to be high-quality, nutritious food. And we have to support biodiversity and nature.

Our point of view is food has to move away from fields producing low-quality, high-impact food, to a much more sustainable use of the land. It's about wildlife and sequestering carbon, and people, and wellbeing, and a whole range of other components. Agriculture should be about replenishing our environment.

Conventional farmers would control weeds by spraying. We don't do that. Historically here we would have a problem with thistles and docks, and in order to deal with that we would mow them using a tractor. I thought it was ridiculous, costing time and diesel, and compressing the soil. We introduced sheep, putting them into the alleys. They eat the thistles, saving me from using nasty chemicals and diesel, and turning the grass into fertiliser. Then, at the end of the year, we get some meat. I've done the numbers and we're absolutely saving in terms of climate change impact and getting things right. It's an easy win!

DO YOU THINK MORE REGULATION IS NEEDED AROUND THE WORD 'REGENERATIVE'?

Regenerative is absolutely being overclaimed and I think the use of the word is unhelpful. Some farmers using words like regenerative don't realise it's been 'stolen', that's the problem.

I would like all farming to be organic because the framework's there already, but if there's going to be other frameworks that are not organic, they need to be properly organised and not industry-run schemes. They would have to demonstrate the kind of oversight we get for organic.

If you're in a supermarket, you're faced with a whole bunch of things making claims at you about standards, and supermarkets have their own labelling schemes. I think people are being hoodwinked. There's not necessarily a way of knowing what each scheme means.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR ADVICE FOR OTHER FARMERS?

Be more connected to the destination of your food, rather than putting into the commodity machine. Involve people, be more aware of your local environmental impact and what you're doing in terms of pollution, and climate change and diversifying.



guided by and learning from the regenerative movement."

He sees a combination of organic and regenerative as the 'gold standard' for farming. "I'm upset by the polarising of techniques. It's all about harmony and being nature-led. The fantastic thing is organic is a mature process with some great minds and really fantastic practitioners that's been in place for many many decades. But there's been some quite good research that shows regenerative practices could take this one step further."

An example is that organic standards don't insist you move your livestock frequently. "We move ours daily, even though the organic system doesn't demand it. Also agroforestry, bringing trees into the farm, is not a requirement for organic."

Something that would have to be addressed for the two forms of farming to bond in future though, Barnes admits, is the issues of chemicals, which are not off-limits in the regenerative system. "We fundamentally oppose the use of glyphosate," he says. "Our position is that it's deeply, deeply harmful. It's not something we do on farm or advocate for."

On the topic of chemicals, Martin adds many farmers within the regenerative system are looking to reduce their reliance. "Some will say they need glyphosate to terminate cover crops and can't do without it. I point to organic farmers and say, 'they're managing without them'. Using pesticides is a sticking plaster and there needs to be a focus that glyphosate isn't the solution."

If this can be resolved, and organic farming adopted alongside regenerative measures, Barnes says there are wholesale benefits throughout food growing and supply chains. "We have to stop quibbling over which is best and bring customers with us on this urgent journey to galvanise around what is a helpful way to produce food. We need to unite. I feel strongly we need to do that, rather than pick holes in definitions."

What are the benefits of farming regeneratively?

There is no food security without a workable, sustainable system, says Martin. "If we continue to degrade soils, where is the food security for future generations?"

In an ideal world, he expresses, we'd eat less meat, growing less high-input cattle feed (such as maize and beet) and adopting a grazing approach, moving animals regularly, and relying on their manure as natural fertiliser. "Where animals are outside we find more birds and insects, more flora and fauna under their hooves. When we put sheep in the fields the swallows are flying around eating the bugs, the birds eat pests, and we find we need to use less wormers. It's that nature-friendly approach."

For Barnes, adding regenerative agriculture methods into the existing systems at The Garlic Farm has delivered, despite them only having been applied for six years. "We've already found that our garlic can be given what it needs from animal integration rather than something out of a bag," he says. "And in the pastures in the surrounding areas where we can't grow garlic, there are a lot more plants, grasses and legumes. More diversity.



Interestingly, moving livestock daily means the farm can hold three times the amount of cattle on the same land. "If you get fully nerdy and go to forums and events, this is what works. This is how farming was. It's how farming is."

Niels says farmers are often surprised at the outcomes from adopting regenerative measures. "Those could be significant uptakes in organic matter in the grazing sector, for example, or reductions in the cost of production while being able to carry more animals on the same area of land because it's healthier and more productive. I think the system has significant opportunities to deliver on farm income, without being at the expense of the natural environment."

For Leona McDonald, director of Golden Hooves, regenerative farming is imperative to helping tackle the climate crisis and challenge of food

THE 7 PRINCIPLES OF REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

- Improving and nurturing soil health
- Promoting the sequestration of carbon
- Supporting and enhancing biodiversity
- Integrating livestock
- Conserving water
- Supporting the livelihoods of farmers
- Having a long-term mindset

> "The conversation we'll be having in 10 years' time will be why are we calling it 'regenerative agriculture'? It will just 'be' farmin"
>
> **BERTIE MATTHEWS, MATTHEWS COTSWOLD FLOUR**



'FARMING THIS WAY WILL BRING GREATER FOOD SECURITY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS'



Bertie Matthews is the eighth generation of his family to run the 100-year-old Matthews Cotswold Flour business, with a bold vision for the future

WHAT DOES REGENERATIVE MEAN TO YOU?

It's my turn to run the business and, at 33, I'm probably still going to be doing this job in 40 years' time. Like my father, I have the luxury of being able to take a long-term view of the future, with time to deliver on our plans.

For us that means supporting tangible change, because we want to be supplied by farms in the local area for the next 10, 20 and 30 years. In order to secure that supply chain, we need to start investing in the thing that makes all of our food, which is the soil.

For us, regenerative agriculture is a farming model that is moving the ball forward.

We've been organic for a long time (since the 80s) and are supplied by conventional farmers as well. In 2019 we started (regenerative agriculture) in earnest, and built a set of deliverable standards, working with some of our farmers who are quite far down the regenerative road.

As well as the benefits of the system on-farm, with a reduction in inputs making them more sustainable, we give them a premium plus for their delivery.

Slowly this flour is going into more and more of our products. We'd like 10,000 acres of our farms to be regenerative by 2030 and I'm convinced we can do that and improve it by 20,000 to 30,000 acres by 2040.

WHAT IMPROVEMENTS HAVE YOU NOTICED?

All the farms we work with have increased soil fertility, which means it's more drought resistant. A lot of people worry about the yield, but it's within 10 to 15% of what you'd get in conventional farming within five years. That's longer-term security for our children and their children.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR ADVICE TO OTHER PRODUCERS?

If we all understand why regenerative agriculture is vital to our future, tying that to our personal and business motivations and strategy, while learning from and listening to the experts, that would be the key. Whether you're a farm, a flour mill, a baker or a retailer – everybody has a part to play, and we've all got to do this together. The conversation we'll be having in 10 years' time will be why are we calling it 'regenerative agriculture'? It will just 'be' farming.

‘WE WERE ONE OF THE FIRST REGENERATIVE FARMS IN THE UK’



Thomas Gent is the fourth generation of his family to be involved in regenerative agriculture at Gentle Farming in South Lincolnshire, farming in fields bought by his great grandad post-WWII

WHAT DOES REGENERATIVE MEAN TO YOU?

We’ve been no-till and regenerative focused since 2008, making that transition at a time where nobody was really talking about it or doing it at scale.

It’s my grandad, Tony, who pushed it forward. For us, it was an economical move at the start. Our machinery was very very old, and we needed to invest, which was going to cost a lot of money.

Grandad had been to Argentina and seen no-till, regenetative farming in practice and thought it looked interesting. He trialled a field for one year and it was one of the best on the farm! The next year we went completely into it, 100%.

HOW HAS GOING REGENERATIVE IMPACTED THE FARM?

The best way to test soil health is by organic matter. When we first started we tested a neighbouring farm and the soil organic matter was 3-4%, ours is 8-10%. It’s a huge difference. I can’t describe how much change we’ve been able to drive on the farm. We don’t have as much waterlogging, the plants are much healthier, and everything functions better. We see more butterflies and birds too. But it all starts with the soil. If you don’t have that foundation, nothing works properly.

DO YOU THINK THERE NEEDS TO BE A FRAMEWORK OR STANDARD FOR REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE?

I think it’s really really good people are talking about regenerative farming more. It’s becoming a bit of a topic, but we need to make sure we’re not misleading anyone. We can’t be greenwashing. If we say we’re doing something, we need to do it properly and that means looking at the outcomes.

I would not like a standard put in place though. People could be incentivised to do the bare minimum of the standard. That’s not how it should be. We should be trying to exceed what we do now.

security. For us and our members it provides value to our farmers, their animals and their land, not to mention the pride that they’re truly having a positive impact.”

Working towards regenerative principles means any farmer can start and be supported, she says. “Let’s all just try and be a little bit better every day – the impact of that could be huge.”

Is regeneratively-farmed food healthier?

More widespread studies will need to be done, but indications are that yes, food grown in a system that prioritises soil nutrition and grazing is healthier. A study in the USA, for example, led by professor David Montgomery of the University of Washington, found that micronutrient and phytochemical density was improved in no-till systems with cover crops and diverse crop rotations.

“The biology of the soil was really the part that got overlooked in moving to chemistry-intensive farming,” he said. “It may be that one of our biggest levers for trying to combat the modern public health epidemic of chronic diseases is to rethink our diet, and not just what we eat, but how we grow it.”

Neils cites the work of Dan Kittredge, founder of the Bionutrient Food Association. “His early day findings show a close correlation between improved nutrient density and improved soil biology.”

Should there be any regulation or standard around regenerative farming?

The overwhelming answer from most in the sector is ‘no’. Barnes explains, taking organic certification as an example, that while it’s fantastic to have a trusted, legal definition, any standardisation within regen could stifle much-needed innovation.

Producers should, he says, be looking at driving forward, not towards certification necessarily, but to a collection of practices everyone can understand.

Martin is on a similar page to Barnes, saying that organic farmers deserve “loads of respect” but that the system’s rigidity, set rules and set inspections don’t leave much wiggle room for those who want to lead by example. Having something similar within regenerative agriculture could see farmers stop progressing after they’ve met criteria.

“The whole point of regen is to continue the principles.” Any standard, he adds, should be at a farm level, recording what’s been done every year, what’s been achieved and how those measurements can actively be improved upon. “There’s that continual adaptation and focus on getting to a better place. If we have a rigid system, nature doesn’t work that way. For farmers to come on the regenerative journey they need flexibility.”

Martin goes on to say he’s troubled by businesses using regenerative terminology for commercial gain, and that he believes the culprits should be challenged. “What are they doing to rejuvenate and regenerate systems other than ticking a box? They have to be accountable. Maybe it will come to an audit system whereby somebody else is saying you are continually improving.”

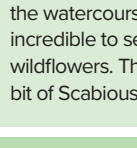
The topic of a ‘standard’ or regulation is a “tricky one” admits Leona. “The great thing about regen is that it encourages all and welcomes everyone in. If you are committed to making a change, then we celebrate and support you.”

Leona feels protective of the community and doesn’t want there to be barriers to progression. “If we consider the B Corp model for example, businesses need to have a base standard and long-term commitment to get started, and so long as they keep improving year on year, their accreditation stands. I quite like that as a theory.”

Greenwashing is, she adds, a big challenge. “All we can do is hold ourselves to account and make sure that we are doing all we can to offer confidence to the rest of the industry and consumers at large.”



‘GOING REGENERATIVE HAS CHANGED OUR LIVES’



Sam Beaumont and wife Claire moved to her family business, Gowbarrow Hall Farm (part of the NFFN) seven years ago, discovering regenerative agriculture as a way to improve the health of their land, animals and finances.

WHAT DOES REGENERATIVE MEAN TO YOU?

In the beginning we emulated what Claire’s grandad did with a similar system to him, including sheep, and it was quite intensive in using a lot of fertiliser and feed. We did that for a few years, but it was clear it was going to be very difficult economically because fertiliser and feed are very expensive. We felt we needed to be grazing and pasture-fed, so that’s what we do now. In summer we have 80 head of cattle we finish for beef. It’s 100% pasture-fed and Pasture for Life certified. The animals live outside all year with very little supplementary feed. And we’re going to be organic soon as well.

In terms of herbicides, fungicides and insecticides, we went cold turkey, which is not what most would recommend doing. The land looked a bit hungry in the early years, but we decided we had to be quite brutal. We couldn’t afford to buy the fertiliser, and we wanted the land to recover as quickly as possible.

WHAT DIFFERENCES HAVE YOU NOTICED SINCE YOU ADOPTED REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE?

We have an area where we keep the cattle in winter, and in summertime they don’t graze there at all. It gets a chance to grow, and everything can set to seed. As a result, we’ve got thousands of saplings springing out of the ground, particularly in the watercourses, which has been incredible to see. But also lots of wildflowers. Things like Trefoils, a bit of Scabious, and a lovely one is the Grass-of-Parnassus, the county flower of Cumbria. It’s beautiful, and we’d never seen it anywhere before.

Also, we mob graze in summertime and that’s seen a massive change. At the beginning of 2019 we had three to four species per square metre in the meadows, and two to three years later in some places that’s up to 14 species, things like red clover and plantain – all just through a change in land management.

Before farming as we are today, my wife Claire was working full time, and I was the only person doing the day to day on the farm. We were running ourselves into the ground without making any money. We didn’t foresee a future. Now Claire is working just five days a month and doing a lot more direct sales of the beef and pork. She’s also developing a leather business using the hides from the cattle, and it looks like this year could be quite good.

This is so exciting. Once you start changing your business it can unlock other things you might be able to do. We feel like we have time to think about and look at the business rather than chasing our tails firefighting.

DO YOU THINK THERE SHOULD BE REGULATION AROUND REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE?

The movement is so positive and wonderful I wouldn’t want to see it become policed and monitored too much. I think it’s down to each individual farm to work out what it might mean for them. We have to carry on and do what’s right.

SPOTLIGHT ON: DILMAH

Kindness, sustainability, people and the planet matter to the family behind Dilmah – one of the world's finest tea producers





Tea has a magical quality. Exceptional tea stops you in your tracks, encouraging you to take pause, enjoy the moment, inhale its soothing aromas and just 'be'.

Leading excellence in this sector is Dilmah – a genuinely ethical enterprise, driven by kindness. Legendary teamaker Merrill J. Fernando founded the business in 1985, pioneering single-estate varieties, and establishing the world's first producer-owned tea brand.

Today, Merrill's family continue his legacy, cultivating beautiful tea leaves in their own fine tea gardens, picking and packing in the place where they're grown to ensure complete traceability throughout the chain, while empowering local workers and caring for the environment.

Merrill was, say his family, "Driven by faith, and relentless determination as he pursued his desire to 'make the world a better tea'." They're proud to follow in his footsteps.

The true taste of tea

Dilmah's superpower is its absolute control over the tea growing process from start to finish, led by the family's passion and dedication to crafting some of the most exquisite products in the world, while sticking to their core values and upholding integrity. "Maintaining the perspective of a tea grower in a category corroded by discounts and compromise is difficult," they say. "But we believe that where quality – taste and goodness – are concerned, we must always focus on doing what is right, and not what is profitable."

Dilmah is rightly renowned for the sheer variety and unrivalled flavour of its loose and bagged teas, with the ranges encompassing single estate Premium Ceylon, Exceptional, Inspiration, Gourmet and Decaffeinated selections, covetable Watte caddies, herbal teas, and elegant Ceylon Golden Pekoe – a complex, golden infusion produced using leaves plucked from Sri Lanka's lush Sabaragamuwa region.

Caring for people and the planet

"Sustainability matters to our business because we have an enduring connection with nature and biodiversity," explains Dilmah CEO, Dilhan C. Fernando, proudly. "It is nature's sunshine, rainfall, wind and soil that produce the taste and goodness in our fine teas. We honour the inspiring legacy of kindness my father, the founder of Dilmah, taught us. That heart of kindness is our greatest strength today. Our MJF Charitable Foundation and Dilmah Conservation are funded by earnings from your cup of Dilmah. The Foundation builds schools and hospitals, and funds scholarships and vocational training for the less fortunate, as well as nutrition, welfare, healthcare and housing for plantation workers. Through Dilmah Conservation, we support initiatives related to biodiversity conservation and restoration, environmental education and awareness, and climate action. We touch the lives of over 100,000 people and transform countless ecosystems every year."

Dilmah's focus on sustainability has amassed an extraordinary number of achievements. The business is zero to landfill, its tea bags are between 98% and 100% biodegradable, and at least 15% of pre-tax profits go to humanitarian projects. Just a few examples include the planting of more than 1 million cashew trees, the creation of wildlife corridors in degraded tea plantations, safeguarding more than 50kms of Sri Lankan coastline through the Beach Caretaker Programme, planting an urban arboretum, and launching a beekeeping project.

That's in addition to many, many people-centred initiatives – from education programmes, to helping to make women in Sri Lanka more financially independent.

By choosing Dilmah tea, you're contributing to shaping a better world.

ELIXIR LEADS THE WAY

Though it celebrates its heritage and traditional roots, Dilmah has been innovating and pushing boundaries within the tea industry from the very beginning – and that innovation never stops.

The family's latest launch, once again, brings something completely new to the market. Dilmah Elixir is a pure, low sugar, natural extract of beautiful single-estate Ceylon Tea, made from 100% tea leaves, which imparts antioxidant goodness and unmistakeable flavour to every single drop.

Crafting the artisanal Elixir begins at Dilmah's Rilhena Estate, where tea leaves are hand picked and processed within 12 hours to preserve their heady aroma. The tea is then freshly extracted, evaporated under a vacuum, and enriched with honey, Vitamin C and natural sweeteners.

"Our master teamakers have spent years perfecting each flavour, creating an exceptional taste experience," says Dilhan. "Elixir is available in Black Tea and Green Tea variants, offering 13 gourmet flavours to suit every occasion, such as our very popular Black Tea with Peach, and Green Tea with Jasmine."

Easy to use, Elixir can simply be dropped into any dish or drink to elevate and enhance its taste – the ultimate convenience, with endless possibilities.

"Whether you are a professional mixologist or just love experimenting with flavours, Dilmah Elixir transforms any drink or dish into a masterpiece. Make a refreshing iced tea, a delicious smoothie, a creamy milkshake, a cocktail or mocktail, or even a tea-infused soda or slushie – all in a matter of minutes," Dilhan adds.



"Farm shops are invaluable"

Tom Bradshaw, president of the NFU, on the power of *Speciality Food* retailers to inspire change

Speciality Food's readership is doing a lot of good in terms of supporting local farming and the rural community which is at its heart. There are a lot of farms that are offering direct sales to the public, and there is no better way for the public to directly support farmers than to be shopping locally.

We've all seen the headlines about how one in two farm shops is worried about what their future looks like as a result of the NI increases, which are going to prove very challenging. I don't think there's any ability for a lot to absorb that, which means that they're going to have to pass it on to the consumer – then it's a question of whether their customers are willing to cover the increased costs.

Today's shoppers buy into convenience, and the only way that direct supply would ever disrupt the retail sector is to compete with them in terms of convenience and online retail. But we're never going to be cost competitive because we will never drive the volumes that sector demands, so I believe that direct supply will always be a niche – even if consumers buy into the story of where their food comes from.

We have strayed so far from the average consumer understanding this. Our society is generally time-poor and financially stretched, and not everybody can afford to buy into localism either because of time or money constraints, and that is the ultimate challenge.

If we end up in a period where consumers have a better understanding of what healthy food looks like and the impacts of diet on their long-term health, then we may get to a period where more people want to be cooking from scratch using locally grown ingredients.

During the Covid-19 pandemic we saw a bit of a reconnection – people didn't want to go to the big retailers because of the risk of infection, and they felt much safer going to their local farm shop. It's amazing how much it changed behaviour, but we need more.

Jack Bobo, a food system scientist at Nottingham University who spoke at our conference, said that if people won't change their consumption habits of food for their own health, why do we expect them to change their consumption habits to save the planet?

It's such a rational comment, but it spells out how big the challenges that we face are.

Support British farming

I worry that the Government completely takes our food resilience for granted – I don't think they have recognised the vulnerability of our just-in-time supply chain. Longer term, that's a real concern. Unless we fundamentally change our consumption habits we're either going to displace the environment here in this country or we're going to have our externalities based overseas. It'll be out of sight, out of mind, but unless we actually reduce that intensity we will never, ever get to a point where we solve the world's problems.

I've got no issues reducing farming's impact – if we then have the same expectations of our imports. But at the moment, we don't want our import policy to match our domestic standards of production, so I don't see how you can have a conversation about a food system which is incredibly complex. If it needs to change, it needs to change in a fair and balanced way, but you can't bring about that change while you're being undermined at every opportunity by imports. That is the conundrum that we face today.

There is a very real risk here – we're producing high end niche products here because we've legislated for higher standards, but we haven't protected ourselves against lower standard imports. And so at the moment we are drawing in Thai, Brazilian and Polish poultry. That doesn't solve any of the world's problems, it just means that we're not producing it here. British farmers don't even necessarily need to be protected, we just need a level playing field.

Consumers hold the power

Of course, for a time this all shut down during the pandemic but, in my view, domestic farmers filled the gaps too quickly. If there had been a pause, and people were faced with empty shelves, they would have recognised the importance of what British farmers do and the struggles we face.

But it's difficult to get to that nuanced approach around how we actually solve climate change. Everybody pays their role in that, and when I talk about the intensity of consumption it's a matter of the impact of consumers on climate change through the food systems we have in place. It's empowering – we all need to own that and ask how can we reduce our impact and what is our role in working with farmers to reduce that impact. Is it about eating more seasonally and not consuming food that's shipped in and has a carbon footprint attached to it? Is it about eating less and better meat?

Unfortunately, we live in a society where people are unlikely to stop taking flights in order to reduce their environmental impact, but they can choose to support British farmers. Each decision we make around what and how we consume has an impact.

These choices should be active rather than subliminal, but what I'm focusing on here is probably 10% of society who are in the luxury position where they can make those choices – meanwhile, 90% are focused on how they can buy food as cheaply as possible. They don't feel able to make those decisions, and then it becomes a story of affordability. This is really problematic if it's a question of your lifestyle choices dictating your impact on the planet.

It is an incredibly complex system, but the best support fine food retailers can do is to promote shopping locally and seasonally. Connecting consumers with the stories behind the food they stock is invaluable to the farming industry.

> "Each decision we make around what and how we consume has an impact"



SUSTAINABLE CHAMPIONS 2025

We meet the businesses moving the food industry towards a brighter future



The scale of work to be done to make the food industry – let alone the world – a more sustainable space for years to come is daunting, but having spoken to a number of key players in this sector for this issue, the *Speciality Food* team has confidence that consumers are in safe hands.

There's a raft of businesses in the fine food sphere which are passionate about making change, but at present this comes at a cost which not all are able or willing to pay – as is the case with consumers.

Ultimately, when it comes to the consumer's understanding of sustainability, a lot of the understanding (or misunderstanding) is down to the true meaning of value. A sustainably-produced bag of crisps may cost considerably more than a pay of a conventional bag you'd find on a supermarket shelf, but what is the true cost behind this 'saving' shoppers make by opting against the sustainable choice? That is the question that is all too difficult for many to answer, but which must be understood if we are to look to protect our people and planet for future generations.

The answer is complex, but from a fine food perspective – where conversations are frequently had around connecting shoppers with farmers and small-scale producers, and the stories behind their food, it is not hard to understand if we take the time to listen as it's a language we are all familiar with.

Within the next few pages you can learn about how valuable players in our industry are forging ahead to make a difference. From investing in new technologies and adapting their farming and production practices to educating consumers about how they too can become sustainable champions, there is plenty of hope to be found.

We also hear from industry experts who share vital intel, from challenges to opportunities, to help you make future-forward decisions as the year progresses.

You'll find reams of vital information about how the fine food industry is evolving and shaping up for the better – and, I hope, feel inspired to take action in your own realm.

Here's to a brighter shared future.

HOLLY SHACKLETON | EDITOR



BARFOOTS

"Look after the land like you're going to farm forever"

Sustainability runs through the very core of Barfoots – which is renowned for preparing and delivering excellent quality sweetcorn and speciality vegetables, grown with care.

The business is always thinking one step ahead when it comes to its impact on the environment and natural world, and this sensitive approach has been recognised at the highest level, with founder Peter Barfoot awarded a CBE for his services to sustainable farming.

His mantra, right from the start, has always been 'look after the land like you are going to farm forever'. This is something that rings true through every part of Barfoots, which is proud to be a LEAF 'Beacon of Excellence', and part of WRAP's Courtauld Commitment to reduce waste, cut carbon emissions and protect water.

There are myriad ways in which the business mitigates its environmental impact. Firstly, across the business farming is delivered in a nature-positive way that encourages biodiversity and better soil health.

There's a strong commitment to using water sustainably and effectively. Water treatment facilities convert all waste factory water into irrigation water for crops, and in 2024, reverse osmosis was added to this process, converting waste water into potable water.

On the energy front, an AD plant converts waste (such as sweetcorn husks) into electricity to power the entire factory and operations site, with surplus sold to the National Grid. Digestate from the process (rich in micronutrients), is turned back into the soil as a natural, homegrown fertiliser.

Additionally, last year Barfoots installed more than 5,000 solar panels at two sites, saving 399 tonnes of CO2 annually – the equivalent to planting 20,563 trees.

Another crucial part of the business is its model to reduce food waste, which remains a huge contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. In the UK alone £3.5 billion worth of food is thrown away by households, and a further £3 billion by hospitality and foodservice.

The unique Freshlock system helps tackle this problem, without compromising on taste. In fact, consumers surveyed agreed they preferred Barfoots sweetcorn to standard vac packed varieties, saying the flavour, texture and appearance were all superior.





VICKY PAINTER
CONTENT ANALYST AT FMCG GURUS

Sustainability with a purpose – how consumers are shaping their own futures

In today's world, people are feeling overwhelmed. With busy schedules, political and social uncertainty, reduced attention spans, and the growing issue of global warming, many consumers are left seeking ways to slow down, switch off, and try to regain a sense of control over their lives. One of FMCG Gurus' top trends of 2025 is "Do Good, Feel Good", encompassing the push from consumers to promote positivity and effective social-change in their actions and purchasing habits in order to boost their mood and regain a sense of control. Consequently, many consumers are taking a proactive approach to boosting their mood by making sustainable choices in their purchases and actively taking environmentally-friendly actions.

DIETARY CHANGES

Almost three quarters of consumers are concerned about the environment, and almost half fear that the damage may be irreversible, making sustainability a significant driver of stress in many consumers. This has led to 59% of consumers saying they have made changes to their diet in order to live a more environmentally-friendly lifestyle. Consumers approached this change by eating less processed food and instead prioritizing fresh food and drink, as well as making a conscious effort to reduce food waste (one of the biggest contributors to CO2 emissions).

Championing local causes has also provided a way for consumers to practice sustainable purchasing habits, while adding the extra mood-boost of supporting their local community. By choosing locally-produced goods, consumers can enjoy fresher (and often more nutritious) produce, as well as contributing to the economic well-being of their local communities. Furthermore, choosing local food and drink products limits the excess carbon emission of shipping goods from abroad, allowing consumers to both reduce their carbon footprint and push back against hyper-globalisation.

CONSCIOUS CONSUMERISM

Another way consumers are promoting sustainable practices is by demonstrating responsibility in their purchasing habits in order to adopt notions of feeling good by doing good. 38% of consumers say that they have chosen one product over another due to it being more environmentally friendly, highlighting just how important sustainability claims are. Similarly, 23% of consumers say that they have consciously engaged in environmentally friendly initiatives. One of the most popular sustainable initiatives for younger consumers is "underconsumption core". Starting on tiktok, this trend encourages the upcycling of items, avoidance of fast fashion, and using every bit of personal care products. "Underconsumption core" highlights this back-to-basics approach consumers are taking in relation to reducing environmental impact and promoting ethical and sustainable living. By limiting waste, this trend can also help to reduce price sensitivity in consumers who may otherwise be put-off paying a premium for sustainable products in an era of uncertainty.

This article is based on FMCG Gurus: Trend 2 - Do Good, Feel Good - Trend Report 2025.

GLEBE FARM FOODS

"We continuously evolve our sustainable working practices"

Glebe Farm Foods is blazing a trail when it comes to sustainable working practices, evolving its processes and operations on an ongoing basis to mitigate the business's environmental impact wherever possible.

This year, that has included installing an additional 453kW of roof-mounted solar panels, following on from the opening, in 2023, of a state-of-the-art Tetra packing plant located only 150m from the field in Cambridgeshire. This initiative enabled Glebe Farm Foods to bring all packing into one place, reducing food miles dramatically, taking hundreds of thousands of miles of HGV transport out of the system.

The processor has also built three innovative biomass boilers for its oat mill, using oat husk residues to generate steam, meaning it does not need to use fossil fuel heat – the heaviest power demand on site – for the flaking of oats. The process is now entirely circular.

In terms of responsible and regenerative farming, Glebe Farm Foods has a tried and tested strategy. Its founders believe in introducing processes that are economically viable and work well, which in turn leads to farming partners – all of which are within a 70 mile radius – adopting these organically.

For example, several of Glebe's partner farms grow beans or peas within oats, which has shown to have potential to give sustainable yields using significantly less nitrogen fertiliser.



Glebe is planning to grow by 25% annually over the next few years and has the ambition to double in size again, thanks to broadening its product range, meeting the growing demands from foodservice and retail customer demands for products with a lower carbon footprint.At present, its oat milk has the lowest carbon footprint on the market.





THE GARLIC FARM

"To reconnect food with nature and health, we need to work together"

The Garlic Farm is in many ways setting the 'gold standard' for sustainability in Britain. Not only is the farm an organic operation, but in recent years it has embraced regenerative agriculture, and these practices combined have led to healthier soil, a healthier environment, and to a wealth of biodiversity on site.

Viewing the farm and its operations holistically, and taking a nature first approach has long been important to director Barnes Edwards, who wants the business to 'lead from the front' on these issues, inspiring others to follow in its footsteps.

"We collectively fractured the food system generations ago," he says, adding that the challenge now is to come together to deliver radical socio-economic change. "The approach to a singular challenge of, for example agricultural emissions, needs to be considered in the context of the interconnected elements of wildlife, water and health," he continues. "The economics impacting these foundations of our ecology are not in balance. This is a really, really big problem."

Barnes says the changemakers reading our Green Issue "understand the issue, feel strongly and act boldly", but as a sector, they are in the minority. "How can we scale the methods and efforts on holistic impact mitigation by brands among these pages? How can speciality retail incubate, evidence and roll out the respectful, regenerative service they offer communities? And what levers can we pull to encourage and accelerate nature-led solutions?"

Thankfully, he thinks, some of these solutions exist, including organic farming with, he says, details in a recent OF&G white paper demonstrating that whole ecosystem restoration could be possible with a concerted increase in organic food production.

"Alongside other restorative farming techniques and nature-based approaches to land use such as agroforestry, adaptive grazing and a focus on soil biology, there are solutions that deliver. But how do we transition?

"The truth is, we as a business and family have no idea. We are busy asking lots of questions, listening to all sorts of impassioned innovators and doing plenty of experiments on the farm. Some stuff is working well, with visible results. Some not. What is clear is that to tackle the metacrisis and reconnect food with nature and health, we need to work together!"

ORGANIC FRUIT, VEGETABLES AND DAIRY ACCOUNT FOR **50%** OF ALL UK ORGANIC SALES

SOIL ASSOCIATION CERTIFICATION



www.islandbakery.scot

FAIRFIELDS FARM

"Our commitment extends beyond farming practices"



Fairfields Farm makes thick-cut, skin-on potato crisps that also happen to be vegan, gluten free, carbon neutral, and with no major allergens. While the brand is celebrating another year of record growth at its potato farm and crisp factory, the team is obsessed with growing sustainably and going even beyond carbon neutral to Net Zero.

It's easy to keep doing things the same way as they've been done for decades, but sometimes you need to make big changes to make big differences, plus more than a few leaps of faith.

A few years ago, Fairfields Farm put their plough in the shed and they haven't taken it out again. That sounds small, but the impact is huge. Every single time soil is turned, greenhouse gases get released into the air. Today, when the team prepares the land for planting, they take care to use what they call "minimal till" techniques that minimise carbon release.

To help recapture some of that carbon, they use a green cover crop between harvests, which sucks carbon dioxide – and other good stuff like nitrogen – out of the air and into the ground, providing them with nutritious and natural 'manure' to be used during the next crop. They also use crop rotation to make sure that land gets a nice rest after growing potatoes – around seven years, in fact!

Other crops they grow include maize and rye, which feed the farm's on-site anaerobic digestion plant, which produces clean energy and also has a marvellous byproduct called 'digestate', which they use to fertilise the soil.

Water is hugely important, too. Fairfields Farm has been busy building reservoirs and filling them in the winter, making sure they can be as self-sufficient as possible in those summer months when potato plants are particularly thirsty.

Of course, the commitment to sustainability extends beyond farming practices: Fairfields Farm maintains wild spaces for biodiversity, has created two brand new woodlands, engages with schools to promote farming, uses green energy including solar panels and even the cooking oil used to prepare the crisps is collected to be repurposed into biodiesel.



JASON GIBB
CO-FOUNDER OF BREAD & JAM AND OH SO WHOLESOME

The environmental danger of UPFs

UK consumers are hooked on ultra-processed foods (UPF). Over half of our weekly shopping baskets are filled with them. When people criticise UPFs, as they rightly and increasingly do, they mostly focus on UPF links to obesity, cancer, and mental illness. Less discussed but no less important is the damaging role they play in worsening the climate crisis. There are three key ways they contribute:

- First, UPFs drive overconsumption while offering little or no nutritional benefit. These worthless 'empty calories' are expected to double by 2050. In Australia, optional calories already account for a third of diet-related greenhouse gas emissions, land use, and water use.

- Second, UPFs heavily rely on fossil fuels. The food industry prioritises a handful of high-yield crops for UPF production. These require intensive agrochemical inputs - fertilisers, pesticides, and herbicides. Raw materials then undergo energy-intensive processing - extraction, modification, refinement. They are often (non-greenly) shipped around the globe between each stage.

- Finally, there's the packaging. Nearly all UPFs come wrapped, packed, or bottled in plastic. With only 9% of all plastic packaging ever recycled, the rest is burned, buried, or is still bobbing around contaminating our oceans.

Consumers need help to ditch UPFs and return to scratch cooking, eating a variety of fresh, minimally processed whole foods. Speciality retailers have a key role to play here – over to you.

> "Consumers need help to ditch UPFs and return to scratch cooking, and speciality retailers have a role to play here"



DOVES FARM

"We hold ourselves to the highest organic standards"

The Doves Farm name is associated with goodness, from the ground up. Doves Farm is proud to have been a leader in the organic, free-from and artisan foods market for nearly 50 years.

It was founded in the late 70s by Michael and Claire Marriage, who felt incredibly strongly that better soil health, and farming without pesticides and insecticides, could contribute to better health for people.

They were some of the first farmers in the UK to convert their land to an organic system, and the fourth business licenced by the Soil Association.

To this day, Doves Farm continues to hold itself to the highest organic standards, while adopting regenerative practices such as crop rotation on its own farm, to break pest and disease cycles, while keeping the soil in tip top condition.

The brand also works with a network of trusted and traceable organic farmers across the UK and beyond – all of whom share their vision and passion for working towards creating a better planet.

Additionally, Doves Farm is proud to further support the sustainability of local communities as the owner of the Wessex Mill brand, which processes a variety of British flours, using grains from farmers working within 50 miles of the mill. Each bag is proudly stamped with the grain variety used, and the name of the farm it's grown on.

Doves Farm also operates on around 70% renewable energy sources (including its own solar panels), and 99% of its packaging materials by weight are recyclable.

The Doves Farm range is constantly evolving, with more than 20 products available, appealing to a huge range of tastes and dietary requirements, from plain and strong white flours for home baking, to speciality varieties such as Wholemeal Buckwheat and White Spelt, Chickpea Flour, Brown Rice Flour, Coconut Flour, and the bestselling Oat Flour, alongside a range of organic cereals and biscuits.

The team say their goal is to "make organic an everyday choice, educating consumers about the benefits of organic to the planet and personal health".

> "We want to make organic an everyday choice, educating coneumers about the benefits of organic to the planet and personal health"



HUGH FEARNLEY-WHITTINGSTALL

Education is key to the future health of our planet, says the sustainability star

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF SUSTAINABLE FOOD IN 2025?

It's clear that more and more people are concerned about where their food comes from, how it's going to impact their health, and what the cost to the planet is of the way it is produced. That's a good thing. But we do need better information and better labelling to help us make better choices.

FROM YOUR VIEWPOINT, HOW DO CONSUMERS VIEW SUSTAINABLE FOOD - DO THEY RECOGNISE ITS IMPORTANCE AND VALUE (INCLUDING MONETARY) OR IS THERE MORE EDUCATION TO BE DONE?

There's always more to be done! One thing I like too emphasise when I'm teaching at River Cottage, or giving a talk - or any opportunity I get really! - is that the story of food is integral to the pleasure, and even the goodness, we get from it. I believe we have an appetite for good stories about food that goes right back to the hundreds of thousands of years we spent as hunter gatherers. We were experts at finding food in the natural world around us, and it was pretty much a full time job. And when we were successful, and took time to sit down together with our group and share the good things we had gathered or hunted, then there was time to relax and tell stories. and what were those stories about? The food we had gathered of course! The thrill of the hunt, the passing on of knowledge, the celebration of a bounty of fruit, or roots, or shellfish that our understanding of the forest, or shore had given up to us. These feelings about food and where it comes from actually run very deep.

WHAT ROLE DO RETAILERS - PARTICULARLY INDEPENDENT FINE FOOD RETAILERS - HAVE TO PLAY? IN TERMS OF HOW THEY RUN THEIR BUSINESS AS WELL AS HOW THEY UTILISE THEIR POSITION IN THE SECTOR

I think independent retailers of fine foods are in a great position to tell better stories about better food, and feed the appetite we have to find something that's authentic, local, well-made, and clearly represents the passion and skill of the growers and artisans who bring it into being.

HOW ABOUT PRODUCERS AND DISTRIBUTORS?

Producers and distributors need to have a good understanding of these stories too. They need to support retailers by making sure they have all the background about what makes each product special. That's quite a job of work if your represent hundreds of different producers, but it's important that sense of value and integrity has to be communicated right through the chain. From farm to fork, as we like to say these days.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE CHANGED/DEVELOPED IN TERMS OF SUSTAINABILITY IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY BY THE END OF 2025?

Ultimately across the whole industry I think we need labelling that has something meaningful to say about sustainability, animal welfare, and nutrition. it's complex of course, but it can be done. At the moment there is too much meaningless bluster and misleading distraction on our food labels that needs to be legislated out. But we still need to leave room for true artisan producers to tell the real story of their amazing products.

WHY IS THIS SO IMPORTANT?

I think over the coming years, as it becomes clearer and clearer that the food choices we make are absolutely fundamental to our well-being, and the health of our planet, people will be rightly demanding better and more useful information about their food. And if we can give them that, we can genuinely help them stay well, feel connected to their local food community and make a contribution to a more sustainable future. And if they are doing that, they will quite simple enjoy their food more. There's no doubt in my mind that feeling good about the food you eat, even if that's sometimes quite unconscious, actually makes it more delicious.

GOJUTE

"We welcome visitors to our production facility"

The tax on plastic bags in the UK has been a success. According to government data, sales of single-use plastic bags have dropped by a huge 98%. Instead, customers are choosing to reuse bags for life, or to invest in sturdier options such as cotton or jute.

If you're looking for a sustainable UK-based partner to print your branded jute, cotton or juco bags, GoJute could offer the best solution, with all its products being recyclable, compostable, or both.

Founder Gary Warren grew up in Cornwall, and always had a love for the environment. This led him to seek alternatives to the plastic problem, setting up GoJute's factory and mill in Kolkata, employing more than 350 people.

The business supports sustainable jute farmers in India, and GoJute ensures workers on its farms and in its factory have good conditions and a decent living wage, with the factory being accredited by SEDEX – the international standard for sustainability, environmental and social responsibility. As part of its transparent approach, GoJute welcomes client visits to the production facility, where they can see every stage of the process in the hands of highly trained, skilled local staff.



Sustainability extends beyond the bag making process. All paper within the business is FSC certified from sustainable sources, GoJute's recycling facilities process 99% of refuse waste, and on a micro level, staff are encouraged to drink from reusable cups and water bottles, and to use the company fleet of electric cars for business travel.

EMMI GROUP

"We aim to achieve Net Zero by 2050"

Consumers who love cheese are increasingly seeking out artisanal, speciality products in a bid to make more sustainable choices.

And this is something cheesemakers and producers are taking very seriously indeed. At the Emmi Group – renowned for delicious-tasting Swiss cheeses, including the Kaltbach range, which has stolen British hearts at the deli counter – a range of initiatives have been put in place, with a commitment to huge change by 2027, and achieving Net Zero by 2050.

These include the creation of an AOP 'eco-cheese network' (bringing solar power to farms and dairies producing AOP cheeses in a bid to reduce CO2 emissions by 60% within the next two years), targets to reduce water waste and water use, a move to reduce food waste by 50%, and for all packaging to be 100% recyclable.

These measures build on a business model that already seeks to be as sustainable as possible. Despite Emmi's size and growth, it remains committed to working with small, generational family businesses – around 200 farms and village dairies – typically caring for just 20 to 60 animals.

Each of these, in turn, puts great emphasis on high animal welfare and making the finest cheeses, from the best, fresh milk.

These close relationships are in many ways the secret to the success of Emmi. A typical example is Bodenacherhof. Arnold's 25-hectare farm looks after Fleckvieh and Red Holstein cows, all named (Panda is the family favourite), and grazed on Alpine pastures during the warmer months, or locally grown hay in winter. Sileage and GMO feed are strictly forbidden.

Around 60% of Arnold's operation is powered by solar energy, and by sustainably grown wood from his own 12-hectare forest.

Emmi sees its moves as an investment in the future of food and farming, and in cheeses that bring the very essence of the land to the table.



TWO FARMERS

"Our sustainability consciousness stretches beyond packaging"

Two Farmers are pioneers in 100% compostable packaging, with their innovation proving popular with sustainably-minded consumers – indeed, the team celebrated Earth Day 2024 by hitting the milestone of having sold 10 million bags of their crisps, which equates to 10 million conventional plastic bags saved from landfill and litter.

As well as offering consumers packets of crisps in 100% compostable packaging – which they are encouraged to compost using advice shared on the business's website and social media channels – Two Farmers provides crisps in 100g and 500g tins which are 100% recyclable and reusable, and are promoted online as creative storage containers, with fans sharing their composting and reuse journeys.

The business's sustainability consciousness stretches beyond packaging; the team prioritises sourcing ingredients locally to minimise food miles and grows potatoes within a 2-mile radius of the production site. By producing crisps in this way, Two Farmers are proud to champion the work of local produces and reduce their carbon footprint.

The farm houses a number of sustainably-driven technologies, including winter irrigation lakes that are used to irrigate potato crops during the growing season; an on-site anaerobic digestion plant which allows potato scraps, peelings and waste crisps to produce energy which powers the production unit; and on-site solar panels, which power many of the farm's processes.



In its bid to become carbon neutral, the farm has seen substantial savings in the past five years – including a reduction of 21250KgCo2/year thanks to solar panels installed in 2022.

With its innovative approach to production and sustainability-driven farming methods, Two Farmers are guiding consumers towards a better future one compostable crisp packet at a time.

MATTHEWS COTSWOLD FLOUR

"Healthy soils and resilient fields are a top priority for us"



Matthews Cotswold Flour has been milling artisan flours in Britain for more than a century, always putting the quality of the grain first, bringing the very best products to both home and professional bakers.

As one of the oldest family-run flour mills in the UK, Matthews Cotswold Flour feels it has a duty to lead from the front on sustainability – both of the land, and of livelihoods.

The family's own farm has been organic since the 80s, and in 2019 the team, led by Paul and Bertie Matthews, began their regenerative agriculture journey, building a set of standards for themselves, and for a number of their partner farms which had already been integrating the practices into their operations for some time.

It's Paul and Bertie's hope that 10,000 acres of land supplying Matthews Cotswold Flour will be regeneratively cultivated by 2030, encouraging on-farm biodiversity in nature and deep within the soil. "Farming methods that create healthy soils and resilient fields are a top priority for us," they say, adding that they want to put more back into their environment than they take out.

Sustainability, to the family, is about more than caring for the land, though, it's about people too, they say. Matthews Cotswold Flour works directly with local British farmers to grow their grains, helping to safeguard traditional farming jobs. The creation of The Cotswold Grain Partnership consolidates this message, fostering a sense of connection and collaboration in the industry, so those within it can share new ideas, develop new growing opportunities, and promote sustainable food and farming.

Matthews Cotswold Flour is also committed to reducing waste through animal feed, using energy efficient technology, and working to reduce the business's carbon footprint to net zero.



SOPHIE KIRKE

SENIOR COMMERCIAL MANAGER AT SOIL ASSOCIATION CERTIFICATION SAYS INDIES ARE KEY TO GROWTH

"The popularity of organic is growing"

We feel that organic is a really important part of the sustainability puzzle, a key sustainability solution. That's because organic is a whole systems approach to sustainable farming and supply chains. Organic farmers use natural and innovative methods to, say, build soil health or manage pests and as such, organic farms are havens for wildlife. They have a 30% more biodiversity on average than non organic farms. They have healthier living soils with 25% more soil carbon storage on average and more soil microorganisms. Organic farmers also practice EU KS highest standards of animal welfare, where all animals are truly free-range.

What's more, organic is legally regulated and independently inspected at all stages of the supply chain, right the way from farm to fork.

We're really pleased to report that the organic market has now entered its 13th consecutive year of growth and in 2024 it showed strong growth across all key channels – also that independent retail was one of our best performing channels in terms of organic sales growth in 2024. 70% of the independent retailers who are involved in our research reported sales growth when it came to their organic land at lines last year, and 90% report or they predict future growth in 2025, which is really positive. One of the key reasons for this is that they see organic aligning more than ever with shopper concerns around health and sustainability. We know that retailers expect good organic ranging and distribution to be key to further building organic sales growth in 2025, alongside building better connections with consumers on the benefits of organic and helping them to understand organic as well.

When it comes to products, we know that organic fruit, vegetables and dairy account for 50% of all organic sales in the UK. So having a good kind of range across this core, what we call entry, category for organic is really important. These are entry products for organic shoppers because they align so well with their needs around healthy, minimally processed and fresh ingredients. If you're new to organic, you're most likely to go and buy an organic fresh fruit or vegetable or an organic dairy product, so having a good range is key.

We also know that organic ambient products can do really well in independent retail. We've seen good sales growth across the likes of organic oils and vinegars, organic cereals and other functional products such as chia seeds and turmeric which play into the health trend. That's partly because of Tim Spector raising awareness of some of the evidence when it comes to organic and gut health. Organic plays well into the gut health trend partly because there's some new emerging studies showing that synthetic pesticides can disrupt the gut microbiome and organic farming.

Education is important when it comes to promoting organic – in-store messages about it and POS, shelf wobblers and things like that, are really key to helping to promote organic and Soil Association have a range of marketing materials for this.

Last year the Organic Research Centre did some research on organic shopper trends, and found that two thirds of shoppers are now intentionally buying organic at least once every three weeks – meaning that the majority of households are intentionally and actively looking for it, which is really good news.

There are three top reasons why people buy organic; number one, the fact that it has no artificial pesticides, so people are really recognising that that is not only better for them and their own health but also recognizing that that's better for the environment. The second reason is understanding that organic has higher standards in general, including higher standards for animal welfare, which plays into the less but better meat and dairy trend. Number three is recognizing that organic is better for personal health in addition to the planet.



COTSWOLD FAYRE

"You can't afford not to be sustainable, and doing so will increase profits"

At Cotswold Fayre's recent conference and 25-year anniversary celebration, a defined thread wove its way through every part of the day – doing good. Whether through supporting projects such as City Harvest in London or the Bala Children's Centre in Kenya, working as a B Corp to do its bit for the planet, or paying the Living Wage and supporting its employees and wider community, 'doing good' is something Cotswold Fayre holds close to its heart, thanks to staunch commitment from founder Paul Hargreaves.

"People sometimes say that they can't be sustainable and make a decent profit," he says. "I would argue you can't afford not to be sustainable and doing so will increase your profits."

He continues, "Many businesses have brought environmental and social sustainability into their businesses over the past five years when it has become more popular to do so. However, I have heard more recently from several businesses who have told me that in these difficult times they have put their sustainability agenda on hold and are focusing just on the 'business' side. I think this is a mistake and assumes that driving a sustainability agenda is mutually exclusive to profits. It isn't! Better sustainability and better profits go together."

Paul says his experience as a business leader is that the more we do for people and the planet, the better our businesses can be. "Think of it another way. It's never been that difficult to work out that businesses that treat their people well are more successful. Companies where their people look forward to coming to work rather than seeing it as a chore are far more likely to see better productivity, greater loyalty, and better financial results."

There is increasing demand from consumers, he adds, for companies to work more holistically to support supply chains, employees, and the environment. "In a survey commissioned by B Lab UK in April 2023, it was found that 78% of people believe that businesses should have a legal responsibility to people and the planet alongside maximising profits. As time moves on, businesses that can demonstrate they are good for planet will not only have better people working for them, but more suppliers collaborating with them and more customers buying from them. It's not difficult to work out that all that leads to greater revenue and better profits."



> "Our farming roadmap will be the most forward-looking plan for farming in our country's history; the blueprint that will make farming and food production sustainable and profitable for the decades to come – [one] that recognises restoring nature is not in competition with sustainable food production but is essential to it"
>
> **STEVE REED, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS AT THE 2025 OXFORD FARMING CONFERENCE**



BILL YOUNG

OF&G'S NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE, HIGHLIGHTS WHAT'S REQUIRED FOR MEANINGFUL CHANGE IN 2025

"Shifting mindsets"

ASSURANCE SCHEMES THAT BENEFIT THE UK

"When it comes to securing a sustainable, economically viable future for the food and farming sector, frustratingly, too many assurance schemes are controlled from overseas. I strongly believe UK licensees' fees should fundamentally benefit the domestic market in supporting more sustainable farming practices.

"The recent Farm Assurance Review on UK schemes omitted the issues created by foreign certification bodies. It also entirely missed the opportunity to discuss how UK schemes and standards could facilitate higher exports. Organic governance in the UK consistently evidences the delivery of environmental ambitions at the highest level, whilst being a productive system of food production. It's a position that aligns closely with EU policy."

"Having spent over half my life working in quality assurance, leading Organic Farmers & Growers has huge appeal as it is British owned and governed by a board, primarily made up of British farmers. Backing UK assurance schemes is a surefire way to reinvest in the industry."

IMPROVING FOOD SECURITY

"In just 30 years, the UK's food self-sufficiency has fallen from 78% and is rapidly spiralling towards 50%. It is disastrous. Food security is for me, one of the biggest issues the nation faces.

"If we're importing 84% of fruit and 47% of vegetables, there is an inherent vulnerability of our food systems. Increasing the level of self-sufficiency is key to achieving a more resilient supply chain. Independent retailers are well place to help drive demand by making up the shortfall in seasonal, British produce that is often evident in the multiples.

"It is a concerning development that more agricultural land area is being taken out of production and being replaced by solar farms. There have been 15 applications in Lincolnshire alone. And while renewable energy is key to supporting environmental objectives, we cannot do so when this poses a threat to our food security. It's very worrying.

BALANCING FOOD PRODUCTION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

"The disconnect that exists in terms of people thinking that you can't protect the environment while increasing food production is concerning because it's simply not true. There are schemes that have repeatedly shown that it is possible to do both simultaneously, organic being one of them.

"The speciality food sector plays a crucial role in shifting mindsets by helping lead consumers towards more sustainable and ethical choices. With 64% of Britons having a favourable opinion of environmentalism and 70% concerned about the impact of climate change3 there is a growing demand for sustainable and ethical food production.

"OF&G's commitment to transparency and local control resonates deeply with producers, retailers and consumer who value authenticity and traceability. Fundamentally, all agricultural systems exist to produce food but organic delivers quantifiable, proven solutions that fulfil both dietary and environmental requirements.

LOOKING AHEAD

"It's encouraging to see attitudes embracing sustainability throughout the supply chain. I believe it means there's tremendous growth potential within the regenerative space. In the UK 75% of farmers feel regenerative techniques are important to the future and half have expressed a desire to adopt regen practices. Organic can be seen as 'regen without the chem' – it's a natural next step for those committed to responsible farming. At the end of the day, organic stands as an undeniably robust solution to many of the challenges we face."

ISLAND BAKERY

"We are what we say we are. We really care"

Dawn and Joe Reade, founders of Island Bakery, never take their location, on the beautiful Isle of Mull, for granted.
In fact, the island's wild natural environment and close-knit community are just two of the reasons they're so staunchly committed to being organic, and operating as sustainably as possible.

Using only pure, natural, GMO-free, traceable ingredients (which you might find in your larder or cupboards at home) from organic farms and producers, is at the core of the biscuit-baking business.

Every product is palm oil-free, with the team instead plumping to use real butter, and they insist on never using artificial flavourings or preservatives.

That "honest" flavour and use of ingredients has resulted in a clutch of prestigious accolades, including wins at the Great British Food Awards.

Besides using organic produce and baking in the traditional, time-honoured way, Dawn and Joe are proud to use local and renewable energy sources to bake their sweet and savoury biscuits.

"Our electricity is generated from local wind and hydro turbines, and we are probably the only biscuit manufacturer in the world to bake all our produce in wood-fired ovens," they say. "Our sustainably sourced, Mull-grown wood fuel is part of a near-neutral carbon cycle - quite unlike mass-produced commodity biscuits, churned out from gas and oil-fired ovens."

They're also leading on artisan biscuit packaging. Each box is shipped to customers with the products tucked into little paper 'boats', replacing the typically used plastic trays.

"We're a small family-owned bakery from the Hebrides. We are what we say we are," they add, saying they're small enough to pay attention to every detail, and to really care."



COTTAGE DELIGHT

"We're taking the opportunity to make big changes"

"Cottage Delight has made multiple positive strides in the last few years to build upon its sustainability credentials. While the brand already sold its products in 100% infinitely recyclable glass jars, with recyclable lids and recycled plastic front labels, it last year introduced a digital brochure to further reduce its reliance on printed materials, and the decision was made to replace its mop top and rubber band (worn by jars for 30 years) with printed lids.

Athough a change in look is a major shift for any brand, Cottage Delight felt it was a necessary step – one that in its first year prevented 4.8 tonnes of rubber bands from going to landfill in a 12-month period.

Additionally 22 tonnes of paper and packaging has been removed from processes annually, and there's been a 30% decrease in virgin plastic usage.

"I think there's an onus on every brand and business to ensure they have sustainability plans," says marketing director, Sarah Williams.

Like so many others in the artisan sphere, Sarah says Cottage Delight is seeing growing interest from consumers around the environment. It really is impacting buying decisions – especially in food halls and farm shops. "These are the types of consumer who are probably more knowledgeable about food, and want to know more about what they're buying, who produced it and how they produced it. They expect more from artisan brands. Being sustainable is an expectation."



As last year was the 50th anniversary of the brand, there are plans to build even further on its sustainable practices. "We want to celebrate what we've done, and where we've got to, but really, for us, it's about looking forward to the next 50 years," says Sarah. "We've really taken the opportunity to make big changes."

TRACKLEMENTS

"We treat lightly and treat our team and the planet well"



We think that sustainability is a sensible ingredient within the business that informs everything we do. Every little change makes a difference, and in 10 years' time it's going to become expected – consumers will assume that businesses like Tracklements will behave in a particular way.

As we go through the business of business, leaving a furrow behind us that enables the next generation of food manufacturers, there is a question of feeling the responsibility of looking after our suppliers, staff and customers.

We tread lightly and treat our suppliers well – a lot of them have been partners for decades. We make sure our suppliers feel valued by running a Supplier of the Year Award scheme every year, and ask what sustainability measures they're implementing so they get acknowledgment for the work they're doing. We have an expression here about being a 'good citizen' – if you want to be a Tracklementeer, you have to be a good citizen even if nobody's looking. That's part of our charter of how we do things.

Part of that is environmental, so we have 10,000 solar panels on our roof which generate just over 100MW of electricity. We're currently in the process of opening another site and that will house enough solar panels to generate 300MW. After that we should be 60% covered in terms of our energy usage. We also have a water treatment plant which returns the water we use to the water table, electric vehicles as pool cars for anyone to use, plus all of our packaging is as environmental as we can get it – our glass is 30% recycled already and is infinitely recyclable. We recycle our label cores and all of the backing paper goes back to the label manufacturers. We're zero to landfill, too. We work really hard on those credentials and on being sustainable.

However, it's important to remember that we are sustained by customers taking jars off the shelf – without that, there is no business to be sustainable. We've got to communicate that to people, and make sure that we're making a very tasty product – it's not enough to be sustainable, we also have to be really good at what we're doing and making the best products we can make.

FLOWER &WHITE

"We want to empower our customers"

It's the intention of luxury confectionery brand, Flower & White, to make life just that little bit sweeter for everyone – from its suppliers and staff, to consumers.

The business fully embraces sustainability at every stage of the process, from sourcing, to energy use and waste management in the factory, even through to the team sharing an electric-run company car.

Flower & White's Imogen Smith says the business really, truly cares, adding that being sustainable is, "something we want to do for the planet, and to empower our customers".

She continues, "As a brand you have a lot of power in how people think and feel. You're not just selling a product, you're selling a lifestyle. We have a responsibility to do the right thing. We have that culture within our team."

The business is officially on its B Corp journey, and taking every measure it can to work in a planet positive way. For Flower & White, B Corp is more than just certification. "It's a bold statement that underscores our dedication to balancing people and the planet with profit."

Action so far includes the decision in 2020 to shift the dial within the on-the-go market, introducing recyclable paper packaging to the range of deliciously light meringue bars and bites. Additionally, the business works with local printers to reduce its carbon footprint, has installed LED movement sensor lights in every room at the offices and factory, and has shifted to renewable energy sources.

The taste of sustainability stretches to the products themselves too. Flower & White only uses British sugar and free-range eggs, and chocolate is sourced from Barry Callebaut, whose Forever Project focuses on protecting the natural world, while helping to lift hundreds of thousands of farmers out of poverty.



That puts a lot of weight behind this delicate, indulgent products, which come in at less than 100 calories per serving.

STOCK CHECK 2025 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE



FOOD THOUGHTS LUXURY DARK CHOCOLATE CHIPS

Melt or sprinkle into cakes and desserts. These 70% cacao chocolate chips are made with the best fairly traded, sustainably grown Colombian beans.

foodthoughts.co.uk



WILLIAMSON TEA STARLIGHT ENGLISH BREAKFAST TEA

Grown naturally, at high altitude, without the use of pesticides, this refreshing tea, grown on Kapchorua Farm, comes in a delightful keepsake tin.

williamsontea.com



HODMEDOD'S BRITISH CARLIN PEAS

One of Britain's best-kept secrets, carlin peas are a much-loved traditional food in the North of England and make a great alternative to chickpeas.

hodmedods.co.uk



FARRINGTON OILS MELLOW YELLOW HONEY & MUSTARD DRESSING

Regeneratively grown, cold-pressed British rapeseed oil, combined with sweet honey, and a punch of mustard. Full of flavour and goodness.

farrington-oils.co.uk



CELTIC MARCHES FRUIT FUSION WINE – JUICY PEACH & CHERRY

A new offering from the British cider maker, blending premium Italian white wine with 100% natural peach and cherry flavours. Only 5.5% ABV.

celticmarches.com



GNAW POPCORN & PEANUT SNACK BAR

Sustainable milk chocolate mini bars with chunks of popcorn, nougat and peanut. Wrapped in fully compostable packaging.

gnawchocolate.co.uk



SUMA OAT LINGUINE

Made sustainably in Italy, this gluten-free oat linguine cooks beautifully to an al dente texture and is full of flavour.

suma.coop



FOREVA FARMERS

A refreshing, quintessentially English-tasting tonic, made sustainably, using all-natural ingredients on the farm, using renewable energy.

forevafarmers.com





DARING TO DIVERSIFY

Flourish Foodhall's two sites in the West Country are supported by Cotswold Fayre's 25 years-strong knowledge of the industry, but their sustainably-minded operations are positioning them as retail pioneers

Creating or revamping a top tier store is no mean feat for even an experienced retailer, but for a distributor – albeit one with 25 years of fine food wholesale under its belt – it's even more of a triumph.

The story of Flourish Food Hall goes beyond a recognisable tale of independent retailer diversification into one of the convergence of distribution and commerce. In this project both sectors ably assist the other – and both retail sites also house popular restaurants – but there are still plenty of avenues to explore says Paul Hargreaves, CEO of fine food distributor Cotswold Fayre and Flourish Food Hall.

Lessons learned

"The biggest eye-opener was the hospitality side – just the number of people you need to make it work is phenomenal," says Paul. The retail side of Flourish was a more comfortable learning curve as the team had learned lessons from their two and a half decades working with fine food retailers, but hospitality was a steeper hill to climb. "In hospitality, you can ruin a customer's experience in 10 minutes so the time pressure is intense. There's more of a danger of customers not returning if they have a negative experience." Despite this heightened pressure and relative lack of experience, incorporating restaurants into the site was a must for Paul, as while it requires high levels of cost and manpower, it can often be a regular revenue booster that is required when the retail side is finding its feet.

"We didn't have enough staff – around 30 across the shop and restaurant – when it opened, and even though we deliberately didn't do much marketing as we wanted to ease ourselves in, we were completely deluged with customers." The Flourish team pulled together to make it work, with Paul often clearing tables during the first few months. "Thankfully people gave us a fair amount of grace as we were new," he says.

Powered by people

Sustainability has long been at the heart of Cotswold Fayre, and while the business has changed a lot in the past 10 years, its passion for doing good remains. "With the Flourish projects we had a blank slate and were keen to make it the very best it could be – transferring the culture of Cotswold Fayre and building on it. One thing we've learned is how to better articulate what we're about, and this has helped to attract the right people to join the team."

Caring for people and planet is at the heart of the business, and Paul and his team are proud to be part of a group of people that takes its role in the food chain – and community – seriously. "Since opening Flourish, I've realised that many people in the hospitality world get treated pretty badly but we heard some pretty horrendous stories when we were interviewing people about how they were treated by employers. We were recruiting for our Glenavon site at the tail end of the Covid-19 pandemic, and there were a lot of people either looking for work or disillusioned and wanting to start again."

As well as offering fresh starts to local employees who had previously been scarred by negative experiences, Paul is keen to sing the praises of his young team – and quash the reputation they are often given. "We have a lot more younger people working at Flourish than we have at Cotswold Fayre, and while from some quarters young people can get a bad press, they are a remarkable team. They often go beyond what we ask them to do, and the story that they are lazy and don't want to work hasn't been the case here," he explains. "Creating the right culture has been part of that, and we have had to lose a couple of people, but on the whole the young people at Flourish want to work hard and do a good job – and to be part of something. They often have a greater awareness of the issues around sustainability than older generations, and are attracted to what we do."

Neurodivergent employees are given opportunities they likely otherwise wouldn't be afforded, thanks to a team member's family connection with a local charity. Indeed, a relative of a Flourish team member who has autism commented that the role has changed the whole family's life for the better.

"We have four neuro-diverse people in our team and work with a local charity to help them get back into the workplace," explains Paul. "There are three autistic members of staff and one with downs syndrome, and they are an important part of what we do. There's a massive underutilisation of people with neurodivergence as businesses often write them off, but in the right role they are often better than other team members at certain things. Their attention to detail is fantastic, and people love having them around. Customers love them being there, and staff are learning to relate to people who are different to them, so it's a complete win-win. They get treated absolutely as equals, just as they should be."

Smart stocking

Three years after the opening of its Glenavon Farm site, located snugly between Bath and Bristol, in November 2024 the Flourish team created a second shop at Farleigh Road – a tweak on an exciting farm shop which has proudly carried a number of loyal customers staff members along for the ride.

Although branching out into retail was never part of Paul's business plan for Cotswold Fayre, the two arms of the company sit comfortably side by side. In fact, this unique ecosystem is demonstrating shared benefits – with stocking decisions on the retail sites influencing the Cotswold Fayre catalogue, and new items in the wholesaler's range getting test runs in-store.

After two and half decades in the fine food world, it may not be wholly surprising that Paul and his team are taking the smart approach – tailoring the offering at each store to support each site's individual customer preferences but at all points remaining true to the Flourish (and Cotswold Fayre) ethos. While the shops cater to slightly different audiences – Glenavon Farm, an ex-potato farm, is located next to a busy road just a few miles from Bath city centre, while Farleigh Road is off the beaten track – there are a number of details that leave visitors safe in the knowledge that they are in safe, Flourish hands. Yes, there are design touches such as rustic wood and a tasteful colour palate that bring the sites together, but features such as fridges stacked high with Himalayan pink salt in which to expertly age carcasses behind the butchery counter – faggots are a particularly strong seller – and deli products made on-site up the ante for fine food lovers.

While the bulk of both shops' stock comes from Cotswold Fayre, naturally, local suppliers are supported too. Freshly-baked loaves from nearby Hobbs House Bakery are available from both stores, honey from local beekeepers is always in-stock to keep locals' pesky seasonal allergies at bay, and items like Bath-made chorizo and pepperoni mean





that home cooks can indulge in their favourite foods while supporting the local economy.

With sustainability running through the core of Flourish, and members of its team boasting decades of experience in the fine food industry via Cotswold Fayre, it's understandable that consolidation is of vital importance for the foodhalls' buyers. "If you go to most retailers in this sector, they'll probably say that they have too many suppliers. Consolidating your suppliers can offer a sizeable reduction in carbon emissions," Paul explains. "By dealing with a huge range of suppliers, retailers can create excess work and have too many deliveries coming in and too many orders to do – with more people off the shop floor than on it in order to deal with all the admin. A lot of retailers would love to lessen their administration burden and doing more consolidation is a good way of doing that. We would always advise retailers to shop locally, as we do too, but the number of suppliers tends to creep as time goes on and if you're not careful it can get out of control." While Flourish isn't simply a Cotswold Fayre showroom, it demonstrates that you can have most if not all of your products come from one place and still be successful and an attractive place.

Creating an ecosystem

Flourish has also invested in environmental sustainability, taking valuable steps to manage and minimise its environmental impact including water harvesting and heat exchange systems, as well as placing as many solar panels as the local council will allow on their roofs, and while these adaptations form a vital part of Flourish's work the sustainability buck doesn't stop here for Paul. "As a B Corp-certified business we have gone through the assessment of which only one of five sections is about environmental sustainability," Paul explains, and while significant care is taken to reduce the business's impact on the planet – including stock consolidation as mentioned above – and strong communication with customers around the work they are doing, such as a visible meter in the restaurant which measures carbon savings, the wider community is just as important to Paul and his team.

In particular, Flourish's Glenavon site is an ever-evolving ecosystem benefitting locals and visitors alike. A pottery studio, where people of all ages and abilities are welcomed to create their own masterpiece is proving to be hugely popular – and profitable – and a tenant runs a popular martial arts gym in a space on-site that would otherwise be empty. Backing onto a lake and with an expansive Somerset skyline behind the operation, there are naturally plans afoot to make the most of its stunning (and easily accessible) location.

While Flourish Foodhall has decades of fine food expertise in its arsenal, its success in a relatively short period of time should be attributed to much more than this. The team's passion for doing good, welcoming like-minded individuals into the fold and creating a supportive ecosystem makes it an especially inspiring endeavour that we all – as consumers as well as industry professionals – can learn from.

> "With the Flourish projects we had a blank slate and were keen to make it the very best it could be – transferring the culture of Cotswold Fayre and building on it"











FINAL CALL

Are you a mindful retailer? This is something we know has become increasingly important across the independent sector.

Shoppers in speciality stores aren't putting just anything in their baskets. Today, they're more thoughtfully considering their purchases. When they pick up an ingredient or product, they're not only thinking about dinner, or how delicious whatever they've chosen might be, but scanning for more information. Is it ethical? Is it sustainable? Is it B Corp? Is the packaging recyclable? Is it organic?

As for the actual setting, consumers, say experts, are being drawn to retailers that align with their values of minimising waste, generating a lower carbon footprint, supporting local producers, and investing in higher welfare and better conditions for workers.

It's a lot to think about, but the juice is worth the squeeze. According to Euromonitor more than 60% of shoppers say they want to adopt more planet positive habits, while FMCG Gurus adds 32% want to avoid ingredients harmful to the environment.

We're still at the cusp of the beginning of the year with a clear path forward to enact meaningful change in 2025. Perhaps now, with everything you've learnt from *The Green Issue* at your fingertips, is the time to take the next step on your sustainability journey, building on a foundation that will attract more and more customers along the way who want to travel with you.

You don't need to start big. Gradual, achievable goals are key say those who've already started along the path to more eco-friendly retailing.

Every small change counts, whether that's setting lighting on a timer or replacing old, inefficient heaters, switching from open chillers to energy-saving closed units, implementing a bolder waste strategy, or swapping out a few existing brands for more sustainable alternatives.

One thing's clear. We're all in this together and by working step by step, embracing innovation, we can make a measurable difference.

We love hearing from our readers. Do you have a story to share or expertise to pass on? Please get in touch with charlotte.smith-jarvis@artichokehq.com

5 MINUTES WITH

ZARA GODFREY, FOUNDER AND MANAGING DIRECTOR OF PUKPIP



WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING IF YOU WEREN'T IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY?
In a different life, I would probably be a psychologist, as I've always been interested in learning more about why people think and act the way they do.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?
It was either waitressing at Wimbledon or working in the Food Hall at Fortnum & Mason over Christmas.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?
Bringing healthier, better products to families – particularly kids – and helping others find a better balance in life.

WHAT'S THE WORST JOB YOU'VE DONE?
I think I'm one of the lucky ones who has always enjoyed what they've done, so I don't have an answer to this!

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF YOUR JOB?
Growing a brand and seeing where you can take things is really exciting to me. I also love solving problems and working together as a team to find new ways to get customers' attention.

AND YOUR LEAST FAVOURITE?
I accept this comes with the territory of running a business, but if somebody else offers help with any tasks relating to admin, I'll take it!

HOW ABOUT THE FOOD INDUSTRY?
As much as I enjoy it, building a food business is incredibly hard – particularly now, where there are so many new brands and products launching every day and limited buyer windows.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR LAST SUPPER?
Sushi or steak tartare.

WHAT'S YOUR MOTTO?
I firmly believe in living life to the fullest and that there's always a way around 'no's'.

WHAT'S THE WEIRDEST THING YOU'VE EVER EATEN?
I ate a few bugs and a sea urchin during my gap year, but I wouldn't consider either of these things 'weird'. I don't think you can consider eating too weird to eat when you work in the food industry!

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK?
I enjoy Simon Sinek's books; they've taught me a lot about business leadership.

SWEET OR SAVOURY?
Sweet! I have the biggest sweet tooth, but I also like to try and eat well, which is why Pukpip's products offer the best of both worlds.

BE CONNECTED



@SpecialityFood

linkedin.com/company/speciality-food

specialityfoodmagazine

FOLLOW SPECIALITY FOOD ON SOCIAL MEDIA TO HEAR MORE FROM FOOD AND DRINK INDUSTRY VOICES

CONTENT

Editor
Holly Shackleton, 01206 505110
holly.shackleton@artichokehq.com

Content Creator
Charlotte Smith-Jarvis, 01206 505981
charlotte.smith-jarvis@artichokehq.com

Art Director
Lee Whiteford
lee.whiteford@artichokehq.com

Published by
Artichoke Media Ltd,
Global House, Global Park,
Moorside, Colchester
Essex, CO1 2TJ

COMMERCIAL

Senior Account Manager
Jessica Brett 01206 505901
jessica.brett@artichokehq.com

Senior Account Manager
Louise Barnes 01206 508629
louise.barnes@artichokehq.com

Accounts
artichokemedialtd@integral2.com

Publisher
Sam Reubin 01206 505936
sam.reubin@artichokehq.com

artichoke

SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE

Inside the next issue of Speciality Food

- Farm Shop & Deli Show Preview (FARM SHOP & DELI SHOW)
- Natural Products Show Preview
- Nostalgic Food & Drink
- BBQs & Accompaniments
- Meat & Butchery
- Pet Supplies
- Ice Cream & Desserts
- Store Cupboard Centrespread



DRINKS BUYER 2025
COMING NEXT ISSUE





For more information contact:
louise.barnes@artichokehq.com 01206 508629

The final word on fine food

TRIED & TESTED

FARHI DUBAI CHOCOLATE BAR

Call me a cynic, but social media-famous food trends have never really tempted my appetite... until I spotted 'Dubai chocolate'. At once crispy and creamy, coated with chocolate and rich with pistachio flavour, I sensed that it would be my new favourite thing... And Farhi's new take on the trend has not disappointed. Wonderfully indulgent and expertly crafted, this is a sweet treat sure to fly off shelves.

farhi.co.uk



WALLY & WHIZ DANISH WINEGUMS

Show me a grown-up confection and I'll show you a queue of consumers eager to get a taste of their childhood without compromising on quality. Danish confectioners Wally and Whiz have arrived in the UK to satisfy the sweet-toothed among us, and from the product's stylish branding to its moreish flavours – we particularly love the Lime Coated with Sour Lemon variant – they do not disappoint. Ideal for gifting (including self-gifting).

cotswold-fayre.co.uk



BIO&ME SUPER NUTTY MUESLI

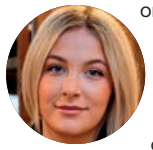
Like a great many consumers, I'm finding myself becoming increasingly invested in gut health. As someone who can't be trusted to take supplements as regularly as required, and who wholeheartedly believes in the 'food as medicine' mantra, a gut health-boosting food or drink that can slot into my daily routine ticks all the boxes. Enter Bio&Me's new muesli which is a delicious nutrition-boosting breakfast, especially when paired with protein-packed greek yoghurt and fruit.

bioandme.co.uk



THE INDEPENDENT SHOPPER

Josie Savry, director of Polygon Public House



The Ox is a gastro pub on Clapham High Street, known for being a bustling area for nightlife, we wanted to introduce a traditional pub into the area with a food offering that was relaxed in feel with a high focus on provenance of produce. Launched in October 2024, post the success of sister pub the Rose & Crown in Clapham Old Town, the pub has quickly become not only a local favourite but a London favourite, with many travelling across the city to dine on excellent dishes. Whether it's a quick pint, Sunday roast or a feasting menu, we're all about quality and our passion for British produce shines through in every dish.

I believe sourcing locally is one of the most important factors for us as a business to succeed and grow. Customers care a great deal about the provenance of their food; not only with restaurants using smaller suppliers, but local and ethically produced suppliers. Our menus put the spotlight on provenance with dishes using the highest quality, seasonal British ingredients, and we take pride in the fact that they are constantly evolving to offer seasonal ingredients and match seasonal dates.

Sourcing from local suppliers and those with heritage and provenance is hugely important to me because of the environmental factor. As society is coming to learn just how fragile our environment is, I believe we should be learning to move away from the 'more is more' view and be grateful for local and British farming crops and livestock. If this approach isn't taken, we're at risk of leaving the earth depleted for generations to follow us.

All our beef is sourced ethically and sustainably from our family farms in Melrose on the Scottish borders, and dry-aged on site at the pub in Clapham. The end result is exceptional British beef that we serve either as range of farm to fork cuts of steak, including fillet, flat iron and a porterhouse, or a rump on Sundays as a roast. We also currently use Wood Farm free-range eggs from Oxfordshire. For bread, we work with a family-owned bakery in Uxbridge and place sourdough orders 48 hours in advance due to starter culture requirement. This bakery provides the tastiest sourdough that we use across a few of our dishes.

Not only is it important for us as a business to work with local suppliers, but ultimately as we pass the cost onto the consumer, we find that customers value and find reassurance in knowing that the food they consume being of high-quality produce. So, it's important that we take care in appealing to our customers and working with suppliers that have the same value as us. Moving forward as we develop and change our menus with the seasons, we will continue to look for more artisanal suppliers in order to offer our customers evolving and exciting menus. Furthermore, changing up our produce and dishes is key to encouraging customers to return time and time again to the pub.

> "Sourcing from local suppliers is hugely important"

PARTNER CONTENT

Garofalo



VALUE MEETS FLAVOUR

It's time to give humble Italian recipes their time in the spotlight

Italian food and drink may often come with a dose of glamour, its packaging regularly beautifully considered and the promise of deliciousness to come intoxicating, but it's the everyday – often low cost – dishes that really steal the hearts of food lovers.

Dishes like gnocchi and minestrone, endlessly versatile and flexible enough to be deliciously decadent or satisfyingly spartan, form the bedrock of much Italian cuisine – and with good reason. When purse strings are tight, as they so often are in the first quarter of the year, seasonal vegetables and store cupboard staples come to the fore in kitchens up and down the country.

To make gnocchi sing, a simple pasta sauce made by roasting in-season veg with onions and garlic and blending to a loose mouth-coating paste or chunky flavour bomb is all you need – and if you have some Italian charcuterie to hand, all the better. Top with finely grated Parmigiano Reggiano, Grana Padano or an aged Pecorino, or create a twist on pasta bianco with just high quality olive oil, cheese and freshly ground pepper.

Minestrone is the ultimate versatile soup and is packed with veg into the bargain. Soffrito – carrot, onion and celery – forms a nutritious base, and a high quality stock makes all the difference in terms of flavour and goodness levels. If fresh food is scarce, fill it to the brim with tinned or dried (then soaked) beans, as well as some frozen vegetables and dried herbs, or use the soup as a showcase of the very best seasonal produce you can get your hands on. Add pasta for bolster, whichever shape takes your fancy.

These dishes show that you don't need to keep an ever-changing rotation of fine Italian foods in stock – as much as shoppers, this one included, will see you as a destination for la dolce vita if you do. By keeping a stock of great quality ambient staples – beans and pasta – and fresh produce including excellent stock to hand, customers can recreate budget and tastebud-friendly dishes the whole family will love.



International Food & Drink Event

17-19 March 2025 | Excel London

Join us at the ultimate business event for food & drink product discovery

30,000	1,500	10,000	15
Attendees	Exhibitors	Products	Event Sections

We are proudly supported by

fdf food & drink federation

fwd FEDERATION OF WHOLESALE DISTRIBUTORS

FPC ACS the voice of local shops

BRITISH FROZEN FOOD FEDERATION

Scan the QR to register for free or visit:

www.ife.co.uk

IFE is co-located with:

IFE Manufacturing | The PUB Show | HRC | International Salon Culinaire London

PART OF

Food Drink & Hospitality Week

17-19 March 2025 Excel London