

Global food & beverage trends report from Leatherhead Food Research points to new growth drivers

Leatherhead Food Research says in the past 12 months, technical expertise in nutrition, science and regulatory affairs was increasingly used to shape food and beverage innovation at an earlier stage in the product development process.

In its annual trends report, Leatherhead draws on insights from food and beverage organisations including large corporations and start-ups as well as regulatory authorities and associations connected to the industry. This year there has been a notable shift towards consumer and technical expertise driving innovation and development, rather than simply supporting or validating it.

The organisation believes this is a response to the complex and dynamic issues facing the sector. From consumer empowerment to sustainability concerns and regulatory matters surrounding public health and product labelling, the scope and scale of industry challenges calls for a different approach to innovation.

Mark Butcher, Commercial Director at Leatherhead, says food and beverage organisations are finding that traditional linear approaches to innovation no longer deliver what they need.

“The sector is in the throes of a perfect storm - even three years ago nobody could have predicted its ferocity,” Butcher explains. “Innovation is still vital, but it needs to be purposeful, focused and agile enough to adapt to multiple evolving demands.”

“We predict that in the coming months and years, the most successful food and beverage brands will put scientific, technical and regulatory expertise right at the heart of business growth, on an equal weighting with consumer, innovation and marketing functions. Essentially, consumer and technical expertise will become the starting point of the development process, ensuring new ideas satisfy market requirements and timelines.”

Leatherhead’s [report](#) suggests that this new model demands cohesive, cross-functional teams. Specialists need to work collaboratively to anticipate global trends and regulatory changes, seeking to overcome barriers to international growth. With experts in nutrition,

science and regulatory affairs informing the innovation agenda, it will be strategically aligned with the shifting global landscape.

“It is possible to unpick difficult challenges, such as boosting consumer trust while improving profitability – these don’t have to be mutually exclusive goals,” Butcher continues.

“However, decisive action needs to be taken, and sooner rather than later. It’s about creating the time and space for cross-functional teams to look at the bigger picture, investing in science and applying a global perspective to decision making early on in the innovation process.”

More information about Leatherhead’s annual trends report for 2019 is available at <https://www.leatherheadfood.com/annual-trends-report-2019-2020/>.

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About Leatherhead Food Research

Leatherhead Food Research provides expertise and support to the global food and drink sector with practical solutions that cover all stages of a product’s life cycle from consumer insight, ingredient innovation and sensory testing to food safety consultancy and global regulatory advice. Leatherhead operates a membership programme which represents a who’s who of the global food and drinks industry. Supporting all members and clients, large or small, Leatherhead provides consultancy and advice as well as training, market news, published reports and bespoke projects. Alongside the Member support and project work, our world-renowned experts deliver cutting-edge research in areas that drive long term commercial benefit for the food and drink industry.

Leatherhead Research is a Science Group company. Science Group provides independent advisory and leading-edge product development services focused on science and technology initiatives. It has 12 European and North American offices, two UK-based dedicated R&D innovation centres and more than 400 employees. Other Science Group companies include Sagentia, Oakland Innovation, OTM Consulting and TSG Consulting.

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