



IFST Oxford Food Summit 2026: Driving Food System Change

Thursday, 9 July, 2026 - 09:30 to 16:15
Environmental Change Institute,
Oxford OX1 3QY

Programme

Welcome from the Chief Executive

It is a real pleasure to welcome you to the IFST Oxford Food Summit 2026. This event is a unique opportunity to bring together leading voices from across the food system to reflect, share knowledge and explore the areas which are really driving food system change.

Over the past thirty years, I have had the privilege of working in the food and drink industry in roles that have focused on applied research, technical leadership and strategic innovation. From my early beginnings in Hull with Birds Eye Walls, to my 28 years at Campden BRI, and now as Chief Executive of IFST, I have seen first-hand how collaboration, science, and curiosity can transform our sector.

Much of my career has centred on building and supporting high-performing teams, working across disciplines from thermal processing and hygiene to new technologies. Whether coordinating near-market innovation or developing tools to support organisational learning, I have always believed that technical excellence must be matched by a strong culture of trust, integrity and accountability.

What makes our profession so exciting is the deep connection it holds with society. Food touches every aspect of our lives, and the challenges we face in climate change, nutrition inequality, and resource efficiency require bold thinking and joined-up approaches. This summit represents just that: a platform where academic research, industry application, and policy dialogue converge.

As Chief Executive, I remain focused on strengthening IFST's contribution to the food sector. That means investing in our members, widening access to evidence-based knowledge, and shaping a food system that is safe, sustainable and fit for the future.

Thank you for joining us today. I hope you find the summit stimulating, insightful, and above all, a chance to build new connections that will help us meet the challenges ahead.

Dr Craig Leadley
Chief Executive, IFST



Welcome from the IFST President

Welcome to the IFST Oxford Food Summit 2026, hosted in collaboration with the Environmental Change Institute at the University of Oxford.

This summit brings together voices from across academia, industry, policy, and advocacy—all focused on one shared goal: building food systems that are more sustainable, resilient, and equitable. It's a fantastic opportunity to connect, exchange ideas, and explore how science and innovation can help shape the future of food.

Over the years, I've seen our food system grow more complex, but also more full of possibility. What's remained constant is the importance of scientific integrity and technical expertise in driving progress, earning public trust, and strengthening the supply chain from farm to fork.

This year's theme - Driving Food System Change - couldn't be more timely. From climate change and public health to shifting consumer expectations and rapid tech advances, the food landscape is changing fast. Food science and technology are central to navigating that change. I've always been proud of the Institute's power to bring people together - days like that underline this.

As you will see from our programme, this year we're focusing on tangible change. We also have excellent sessions on the role that food scientists and food technologists can individually play in driving system-wide change.

Thank you for being part of today's summit. I encourage you to make the most of it: ask questions, challenge ideas, and build new connections. It's through shared knowledge and collaboration that we'll meet the challenges ahead.

Enjoy the day!

Chris Gilbert-Wood
President, IFST





Programme Overview

09:00 – 09:30 | Registration and Refreshments

09:30 – 10:00 | Welcome

- 09:30 – 09:45 | Welcome Address
 - Dr Craig Leadley, Chief Executive, IFST
 - Chris Gilbert-Wood, President, IFST
 - Dr Monika Zurek, University of Oxford
- 09:45 – 10:15 | **Keynote: Routes to food system change - Policy, market and community routes** – Dr Tara Garnett, TABLE, University of Oxford

10:15 – 11:05 | Session 1: What do citizens want from the food system?

Chair: Professor Niall Young

- 10:15 - 10:30 | *Citizen feedback on the food system*
– Mhairi Brown, Food, Farming and Countryside Commission (FFCC)
- 10:30 - 11:00 | *Break-out discussion: How do we close the gap between what citizens say they want and what they actually buy?*
– Paul Frobisher, Strategic Innovation
- 11:00 - 11:05 | *Reconvene for feedback*
- 11:05 - 11:40 | *Networking break and poster showcase*

11:40 – 12:45 | Session 2: The future of food

Chair: Professor Charles Brennan

- 11:40 - 11:55 | *The role of regulation in driving food system change*
– Rick Mumford, Food Standards Agency
- 11:55 - 12:10 | *How food shapes humanity* – Seamus Higgins
- 12:10 - 12:25 | *Commercial realities of food system change*
– Speaker to be announced
- 12:25 - 12:45 | *Q&A and discussion*

12:45 - 13:45 | Lunch, networking and poster exhibits

Programme Overview

13:45 – 15:00 | Session 3: But what can I do?

Chair: Professor Charles Brennan

- 13:45 - 14:00 | *Practical methods of sustainability improvement at Dalziel*
– Alex Guest, Dalziel
- 14:00 - 14:15 | *The role of individual food scientists and technologists in driving change*
– Kirsty Adams, Cranswick
- 14:15 - 14:50 | *Break-out discussion: In my sector, in the next 12 months, which lever can I pull?*
- 14:50 - 15:00 | *Reconvene for feedback*

15:00 – 15:20 | Coffee break

15:20 – 16:05 | Session 4: Food system poster presentations

Chair: Professor Niall Young

- 15:20 – 16:05 | Four 10-minute poster presentations, with time for questions

16:05 – 16:15 | Closing remarks – Dr Craig Leadley, Chief Executive, IFST

16:15 – 18:15 | Drinks reception



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Accessibility and Inclusion

IFST is committed to making the IFST Oxford Food Summit 2026 an inclusive and accessible experience for all attendees. We recognise the importance of removing barriers to participation and have taken meaningful steps to accommodate a range of needs across the day.

The summit venue, located at the Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford, has been carefully chosen for its full wheelchair accessibility. Clear signage and step-free routes will be in place to support ease of movement throughout the building. For delegates with hearing or visual impairments, seating near the speakers will be reserved and signposted to support access to presentations.

We understand that busy conference environments can be overwhelming. A designated quiet space will be available for attendees who may need a moment away from the main programme. Staff will be on hand throughout the day to assist with directions or support if needed.

IFST is also committed to providing a wide range of food and drink options that cater to different dietary needs, whether medical, religious, or personal. If you have specific requirements, please ensure they have been indicated upon registration or speak to a member of the team on the day.

To further promote a respectful and comfortable environment, delegates will have the option to wear a yellow lanyard if they prefer to opt out of networking or prefer minimal social interaction during the summit. This initiative is designed to support personal space and well-being without explanation.

These efforts reflect IFST's broader mission to foster a welcoming, respectful, and professional community in food science and technology. By prioritising accessibility and inclusion, we hope to ensure that every participant can contribute meaningfully and enjoy the day without barriers.

Venue Map

