

Operational transformation and impact:

Preparing F&B for tomorrow's challenges

JUNE 30TH, 2025, LONDON

The Food & Beverage (F&B) industry is undergoing a profound transformation, shaped by a convergence of global megatrends: climate change, supply chain volatility, digital disruption, evolving consumer expectations, and increasing regulatory scrutiny. These forces are not only accelerating the pace of change but also redefining what it means to be resilient, competitive, and sustainable in today's market.

Against this backdrop, the dss⁺ London event on 30 June 2025 convened senior leaders and transformation experts to explore how F&B organisations can respond to these challenges with agility, foresight, and purpose. The event served as a platform for candid dialogue, cross-sector learning, and the exchange of pragmatic strategies for operational transformation.



Discussions throughout the day highlighted a shared recognition: traditional models of optimisation—focused narrowly on cost, quality, and service—are no longer sufficient. Instead, organisations must embrace a broader, more integrated approach that includes resilience, sustainability, digital enablement, and a **profound shift towards cultural transformation, particularly in safety and operational excellence.**

Emphasis was placed on effective execution and implementation in operations, ensuring that strategies translate into measurable impact on the ground.

Participants explored how resilience must be embedded not only in supply chains but also in governance, leadership, and workforce capabilities. The importance of trust, curiosity, and simplification emerged as recurring themes – underscoring that transformation is as much about people and mindset as it is about systems and tools.

Technology was discussed not as a silver bullet, but as an enabler of change. Speakers and panellists emphasised the need for clean data, user trust, and cultural readiness to unlock the full potential of digital tools. The conversation also addressed the tension between innovation and adoption, and the need to balance global standards with local autonomy.

The event concluded with a strong sense of shared purpose: **To build F&B organisations that are not only fit for today's challenges but also equipped to shape a more sustainable, resilient, and human-centred future.**

Key outputs from the event included:

- A call to reframe resilience as a proactive, strategic capability – not a reactive measure.
- The need to align digital transformation with cultural change and governance structures.
- Recognition that sustainability and safety must be treated as enduring values, not shifting priorities.
- The importance of empowering teams at all levels to lead and sustain change.

Future-proofing operations in the F&B Industry

SPEAKER: ALBERT PLANS, SVP OPERATIONS & SUPPLY CHAIN, DSM-FIRMENICH

In the opening session of the event, Albert Plans delivered a compelling presentation on how dsm-firmenich is navigating the complex and rapidly evolving landscape of the Food & Beverage (F&B) industry. His talk focused on the company's transformation journey following the 2023 merger and the strategic initiatives being implemented to build operational resilience and drive sustainable growth.

Albert began by outlining the scale and scope of dsm-firmenich's operations, highlighting its presence in over 60 countries, a workforce of 30,000 employees, and a legacy of over 150 years of scientific innovation. The company's Taste, Texture & Health (TTH) business unit, which serves markets such as beverages, dairy, bakery, and plant-based foods, is central to its growth strategy. With a global network of 39 production sites and 53 application labs, the TTH unit is positioned to deliver consumer-preferred solutions that are both nutritious and sustainable.

The session then explored the megatrends reshaping supply chains, including climate change, digitalisation, energy transition, and shifting consumer expectations. Albert introduced the concept of "anti-fragile" supply chains – systems that not only withstand disruption but improve because of it. He emphasised the need for dynamic continuity planning, real-time traceability, and hyper-personalisation to meet the demands of increasingly fragmented markets.

A key theme was the GROW26 strategy, a three-year transformation roadmap designed to deliver 6% annual growth. This strategy is built on four pillars: people, mindset and behaviours, end-to-end competitiveness, and customer-centricity. Albert stressed the importance of regional autonomy combined with global capabilities, enabling the company to respond quickly to local market needs while leveraging global scale.



Two case studies illustrated the practical application of this strategy. The first focused on a 2.5-year digital transformation in supply chain planning across 24 sites. This initiative introduced over 40 redesigned processes, supported by Kinaxis technology, and resulted in enhanced visibility, automation, and scenario planning. More than 250 employees were trained, more than 800 gap mitigating actions were captured and implemented, and a global Centre of Excellence was established to sustain the change.

The second case study highlighted the IMPACT program, a bottom-up improvement initiative that empowers shop floor teams to drive performance using lean tools, digital dashboards, and continuous improvement techniques. This program fosters a culture of ownership, problem-solving, and daily learning across all levels of the organisation.

Albert concluded by reflecting on the broader implications of transformation. He challenged the traditional optimisation triangle of cost, quality, and service, advocating instead for a more holistic model that includes agility, sustainability, and growth mindset. He urged organisations to simplify operations, embrace curiosity, and empower people to lead change from within.

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Resilience is not just about surviving disruption – it's about using it as a catalyst for innovation and growth.”

Albert Plans, SVP Operations & Supply Chain, dsm-firmenich



Foundations for sustainable impact: governance, safety & growth

SPEAKER: JOHN BOYLE, DIRECTOR EHS EUROPE, KERRY GROUP

In the second session of the event, John Boyle from Kerry Group delivered a thought-provoking presentation on how organisations can embed sustainability and safety into their operational DNA. His talk, titled “Foundations for Sustainable Impact: Governance, Safety & Growth”, focused on the cultural and structural shifts required to drive long-term transformation in the Food & Beverage industry.

John began by framing the concept of **sustainable nutrition** – not just as a product goal, but as a business imperative. He described Kerry's evolution from a traditional dairy company into a global taste and nutrition leader, with a mission to deliver healthier, tastier, and more sustainable food and beverage solutions. This transformation, he noted, is underpinned by science, innovation, and a deep commitment to customer partnership.

John emphasised that sustainable impact is not achieved through isolated initiatives—it requires a holistic, integrated approach that spans product development, operations, and culture.



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Transformation doesn't stick without governance. And safety doesn't lead without trust.”

**John Boyle, Director EHS Europe,
Kerry Group**

A central theme of the session was **the importance of governance and leadership**, and the profound impact of a strong risk-based mindset in improving safety performance and ensuring sustainable transformation.. John introduced a structured safety cultural transformation model built on three phases: **Discovery**, **Deployment**, and **Sustain & Continue**. This model begins with a deep diagnostic phase, including safety perception surveys, benchmarking, site visits, and executive interviews. The goal is to understand the current state, define a compelling vision, and build a roadmap for change.

John also introduced the **dss+ Influence Model**, which identifies four key levers for changing mindsets and behaviours:

- 1. A compelling story (vision)**
- 2. Reinforcement mechanisms**
- 3. Role modelling**
- 4. Skills for change**

He stressed that transformation must be emotionally resonant and practically grounded. Leaders must not only articulate the “why” but also demonstrate the “how” through consistent behaviour and support systems.

The session also challenged traditional safety metrics. John critiqued the overreliance on lagging indicators like TRIR (Total Recordable Incident Rate), advocating instead for more predictive, risk-based tools such as:

- **Potential Serious Injury & Fatality (PSIF) analysis**
- **High Energy Control Assessments (HECA)**
- **Safety culture assessments**

These tools, he argued, provide a more accurate picture of organisational risk and help shift the focus from compliance to prevention.

John concluded with a powerful message: **safety and sustainability must be treated as core business values, not just priorities**. Priorities shift under pressure; values endure. He urged organisations to build governance structures that embed safety into every decision, empower EHS leaders as change agents, and foster a culture where everyone goes home safe – every day.



Panel (left to right): Marcos Salla, Global director F&B, dss⁺; Mike Barry, Strategic advisor, speaker, commentator on sustainable business; Neha Singh, VP Global E2E Supply Planning Transformation, Diageo; Levente Szabados, Lecturer and Senior Consultant, Data Science and AI

PANEL DISCUSSION

Turning resilience into growth – pragmatic execution strategies for F&B success

The panel discussion brought together a diverse group of leaders from operations, sustainability, and technology to explore how organisations can turn resilience from a theoretical concept into a practical, growth-driving capability.

Moderated by **Marcos Salla**, the session featured insights from **Neha Singh** (Diageo), **Mike Barry** (Sustainability Advisor), and **Levente Szabados** (AI & Data Science Consultant).

The conversation opened with a critical question: **Why do companies often fall short in operational transformation, and how can they close the gap between strategy and execution?** Mike Barry reflected on his experience launching Marks & Spencer's Plan A, highlighting the importance of branding, business case clarity, and emotional engagement. He stressed that transformation must be embedded in the culture and identity of the business – not just in PowerPoint decks. Neha Singh emphasised that resilience must be built into the foundation of operations, not treated as a contingency plan.

Drawing from her experience in global supply chain transformation, she shared how qualifying alternate suppliers and embedding business continuity planning (BCP) into KPIs helped her teams respond effectively to real-world disruptions—from factory fires to port closures. For her, resilience is not a “nice to have,” but a core operational requirement.

Levente Szabados brought a technology lens to the discussion, noting the dual role of digital tools: they can either entrench outdated systems or unlock new ways of working. He warned against the “innovator’s dilemma,” where organisations resist change because existing systems still function. He argued that technology adoption must be paired with cultural readiness and a clear understanding of the “why” behind the change.

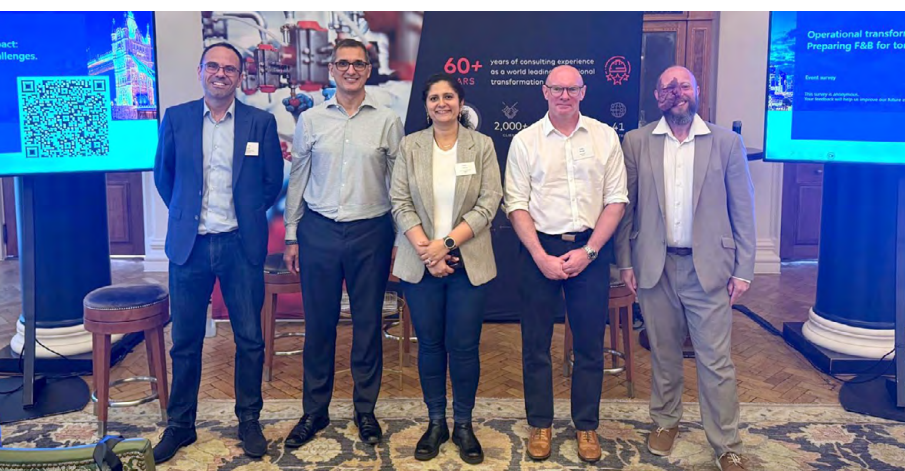
The panel further explored the critical link between strategy and successful implementation on the ground. Discussions highlighted that effective execution in operations is paramount for translating strategic goals into tangible performance improvements. Speakers underlined that operational performance is not just about efficiency but also about the adaptability and speed with which an organisation can implement changes and respond to disruptions..

The discussion also explored how to shift from a rules-based culture to one of proactive engagement and accountability. Mike Barry shared how M&S empowered teams to choose from a menu of sustainability actions, creating ownership while maintaining strategic guardrails. Levente added that curiosity and understanding are key to adoption—people need to see value and feel empowered to explore new tools, not just follow instructions. The importance of cultural transformation was a recurring element, recognising that people and their mindset are central to any successful operational change.

A recurring theme was the importance of data quality and trust. Neha shared a case where poor master data led to widespread rejection of system-generated planning suggestions. By cleaning the data and involving planners in the solution, adoption rates improved dramatically. The panel agreed that technology alone is not enough—it must be supported by training, governance, and cultural alignment.

In closing, the panellists offered their key takeaways:

- **Curiosity is a competitive advantage in a fast-changing world.**
- **Trust in people and systems is essential for transformation.**
- **Simplicity and clarity must guide technology implementation.**
- **Resilience is not a project – it's a mindset and a muscle.**



(Left to right): Albert Plans, Marcos Salla, Neha Singh, John Boyle, and Levente Szabados

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We’re not just implementing tools – we’re building cultures that can adapt, learn, and thrive.”

Panel Reflection

How **dss⁺** can help

At **dss⁺**, we partner with Food & Beverage organisations to turn complexity into clarity and disruption into opportunity. Our approach integrates deep industry knowledge with proven methodologies to help clients build the operational, cultural, and digital foundations needed to thrive in a volatile world.

We support F&B leaders in:

+ **Embedding resilience into operations**

We help organisations design and implement end-to-end strategies that strengthen supply chain continuity, scenario planning, and risk mitigation – turning resilience into a source of competitive advantage.

+ **Driving sustainable transformation**

From decarbonisation to circularity, we work with clients to embed sustainability into core business processes, product development, and governance – ensuring impact is measurable, scalable, and enduring.

+ **Accelerating digital enablement**

We guide organisations through the adoption of digital tools that enhance visibility, traceability, and decision-making. Our focus is on aligning technology with people, processes, and culture to maximise adoption and value.

+ **Building high-performing cultures and continuous improvement**

We empower teams to drive performance through lean tools, digital dashboards, and continuous improvement techniques, fostering a culture of ownership, problem-solving, and daily learning that enhances overall operational performance.

+ **Fostering safety cultural transformation**

Leveraging tools like the **dss⁺** Influence Model and the Bradley Curve™, we help organisations shift from compliance to commitment – developing leadership capabilities, fostering accountability, and embedding safety and sustainability as shared values throughout the organisation.

+ **Simplifying complexity**

We support clients in streamlining operations, reducing organisational friction, and creating the clarity needed to act decisively in fast-changing environments.

Whether you are navigating transformation, scaling innovation, or building long-term resilience, **dss⁺** brings the tools, insights, and partnership to help you move forward – confidently and sustainably.

Authors



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About dss⁺

At dss⁺ we work with food and beverage companies to strengthen resilience, improve operations, and ensure strategies translate into real impact. To explore how leading businesses are taking action, visit www.consultdss.com


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