

**Food for thought; *How
COVID-19 will
accelerate
sustainability trends***

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01 INTRODUCTION

How COVID19 will accelerate Sustainability and Wellness trends within F&B

Consumer behaviour in the UK and Europe is shifting due to COVID-19. Many of these changes were already in motion before the pandemic struck, however these are now noticeably accelerating.

The most important of these are an increasing shift to sustainable practises including reducing food waste, localised supply chains, and moving to veganism. Furthermore, we see a general societal move to wellness and health which will provide impetus to companies to reposition themselves as health conscious and ethical.

02 SUSTAINABILITY TRENDS POST COVID

Consumers have used lockdown to re-focus on their personal health and contemplate on their personal behaviours and impact on environment and society. There is evidence for increased engagement with food experts and sustainability experts through live streamed events.

As we have said before, existing trends are gaining momentum in a rapidly evolving environment, and successful brands will leverage consumer interest in trying new products and changing their lifestyle through this volatile period.

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A. COVID-19 will accelerate the growth of veganism

Personal health is a key driver behind the growing trend for veganism, but this has been accelerated by the current pandemic. For example, 17% of Spanish consumers* agree that COVID-19 has made a vegan diet more appealing. This figure rises among younger consumers and peaks at 26% of 25-34s*. Food outlets are responding by making vegan food more accessible, including Dobra Karma, a vegan ready meal brand from Warsaw, Poland, which was created in response to COVID-19. This has also manifested in various macro trends, the latest example of which is the Argentinian resistance to develop a super pig farm.

The emergence of many vegan foods (both retail and restaurant) during the past year, coupled with the agility of food brands during the outbreak, reveal the potential for vegan food to become much more mainstream

***Source:** Mintel

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B. Shift to reduce food waste

There is a move to greater transparency around ingredients in F&B and a renewed focus on locally sourced and locally made products. The lockdown has increased focus on food waste, both in the household and across the manufacturing process.

Environmental concerns are still paramount, and sustainable causes were on an upward trend pre-Covid, with increased airtime, and the initial period of lockdown highlighted how nature quickly reclaimed spaces. Sustainability will continue to gain widespread media attention and we can expect it to continue to remain important for consumers, particularly Generation Z and Millennials.

However, as spending power is still with baby boomers, in the short term, consumers will prioritise value, quality and safety over environmental concerns. However, brands should view this time as an opportunity to transition to reduce waste and reduce their carbon footprint as this both saves consumers money and is a positive sustainable practice.

Many consumers agree that the pandemic has encouraged them to [reduce food waste in the home](#). We believe this behaviour will continue – though perhaps not with the same intensity – in the long run.

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C. Transparent supply chains resonate with older consumers

Concerns around lengthy supply chains were highlighted pre-COVID, many of which were rooted in issues over provenance (potential human rights abuses) as well as de-carbonising the supply chain. In Europe, such concerns are at the forefront, with almost half of German consumers agreeing that too much food is imported from abroad, while over a third (35%) of Italian consumers aged 55+ have become more interested in on-pack details about where ingredients are sourced from since the start of the outbreak (Source: Mintel).

European countries including Italy and France are doubling down on protections for local producers. Indeed a resurgence of buying local following the outbreak should be anticipated. For example, the French dairy industry has created a campaign called “Let’s Act for Cheese”, which encourages French consumers to eat more French cheese. Elsewhere British citizens were encouraged to consume [berries](#), all of which is symptomatic of a wider [trend](#). In the US, there are calls to support local agriculture and small farmers, not just for health and national security but also economic reasons

The EU has been promoting a “farm to fork strategy” that seeks to make agriculture more sustainable and protect a diverse group of producers. Before the pandemic, US Democrats had begun to complain about Big Food, but, in the face of Covid-19, resiliency and localisation in agriculture has become a bipartisan issue. The question is how to make it affordable and available to the masses.

03 SHIFTING PERCEPTIONS

Vegan as Healthy Eating and a focus on Wellness

As the world population comes to terms with a new normal post-COVID-19, mental wellness is of increasing focus, with consumers adopting healthier food and drink and better managing their overall wellbeing. This has also been reflected in the growing number of media articles on mental health.

Younger people are demonstrating a marked interest in improving their diets. COVID-19 has reinforced the importance of having a healthy immune system, and keeping healthy is paramount to consumers during this time. A quarter of French consumers claim to be eating more fruit and vegetables - 39% of 16-24s. Similarly, just over a third of UK consumers said that the outbreak has prompted them to add more nutrients that support the immune system to their diet, with a staggering 54% of 16-24s claiming this (source, Mintel).

We expect this trend and focus on wellness to continue, and expect the F&B sector to adapt to such changes.

04 REBRANDING

Rebranding Wellness

Strict regulations from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) make it difficult for brands to claim immunity benefits. However, in the last twelve months there has been an increase in European food and drink launches with functional immune health claims. Some of these include Kellogg's multigrain flakes and Actimel Almond based drink with blueberries, and a plethora of other snacks with supposed immunity benefits.

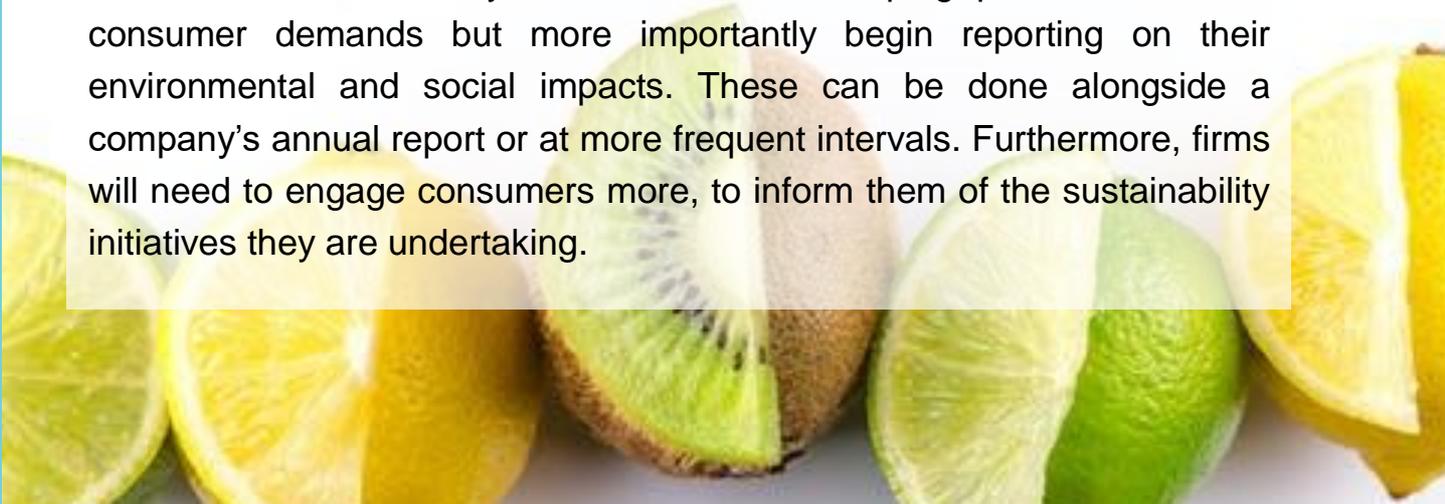
The shift to wellness and rebranding is not restricted to the F&B sector, and is permeating the consumer sector in general. Indeed, over the past few years we have seen a number of beauty and dieting companies rebranding as 'wellness', as words such as 'diet' and 'weight' become increasingly fraught. Therefore we expect this trend to continue – particularly in a post Covid world.

05 CONCLUSION

Concluding remarks

To conclude there are some interesting trends which have been accelerated due to the COVID19 pandemic. There has been a shift to healthy eating and veganism from consumers. This has prompted mainstream brands to launch vegan food verticals, the latest being Nestle which recently launched a 100% plant based burger. Furthermore, we have also seen some brands taking advantage of an increasing health conscious society by repositioning themselves as 'health' brands. Finally the pandemic has thrown into disarray international supply chains, which has pushed businesses to look at localised supply chains. Concurrently the general public is now a lot more cognisant of environmental and social issues.

Thus taken in its entirety, firms will have take sustainability and health concerns more seriously. This includes developing products to meet consumer demands but more importantly begin reporting on their environmental and social impacts. These can be done alongside a company's annual report or at more frequent intervals. Furthermore, firms will need to engage consumers more, to inform them of the sustainability initiatives they are undertaking.





06 CONTACT US

To discuss this, or to see how we can help your business, please contact;



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