



Expo Foodtech 2026 brought together 7,124 executives to address the future resilience of the food industry through technology

CEOs and executives from Nestlé, Deoleo, Unilever, Ferrero, and Danone, among others, highlight innovation, digitalization, and hands-on leadership as key to adapting to new consumer habits and demographic challenges

On May 27 and 28, Bilbao brought together the entire food value chain to define a roadmap to address inflation and the current geopolitical situation

Madrid, May 29, 2026 – [Expo Foodtech 2026](#) and [Pick&Pack for Food Industry](#), closed their doors on Thursday after bringing together **7,124 executives and professionals** from the food industry, who confirmed that automation and technological innovation are key to optimizing processes and improving the production and distribution of food and beverages. The major technology trade show for the sector has also reaffirmed Bilbao’s position as an international hub in the foodtech field, generating an economic impact of more than 20 million euros for the city.

Over the course of two days, **261 exhibiting companies** showcased their cutting-edge innovations in robotics, automation, processing and packaging machinery, food safety, and applied food science. Meanwhile, the leading food technology event welcomed a delegation from Italy to gain firsthand insight into its agri-food ecosystem, which combines the strength of a well-established industry with a growing focus on agri-food tech innovation.

In addition, the [Food 4 Future World Summit](#) brought together 329 international executives and experts from the sector to analyze, discuss, and chart a roadmap for the food industry, outlining the main challenges and opportunities in a context marked by inflation, the geopolitical situation, and changing habits among consumers committed to sustainability, health, and value-conscious spending.

From Production to Consumer: Senior Management Drives Innovation and Digitalization

The European food industry is at a turning point, where efficiency, sustainability, and technological innovation are key to competing and supply security. In this regard, the success of cultural change depends on leadership that is engaged, agile, and transparent—combining experience with decision-making ability and fostering generational diversity within organizations. *“Change is a constant. Leading the sector’s transformation means moving beyond being mere producers to create value. We want to improve consumers’ lives and care for the planet. This means listening to consumers and anticipating their needs”*, said **Susana Entero**, General Manager of **Kellanova**. Along the same lines, **Jordi Llach**, CEO of **Nestlé Iberia**, noted that *“transformation is accelerating and will be more fleeting than in the past. We must accept*

that the current food system is not sustainable on a global scale and act using data and technology as key tools”.

For his part, **Cristóbal Valdés**, CEO of **Deoleo**, emphasized the importance of agility and staying close to the consumer, stating that *“teams must understand that adaptability is essential. It’s not just about results, but about building trust with people and consumers”*. Meanwhile, **Jorge Escudero**, CEO of **Grupo Nueva Pescanova**, added that *“the world is moving at breakneck speed, and challenges arise before you can react. For us, quality and origin are fundamental. From production to the end customer, every step matters, and many decisions are made at headquarters, though we always allow for local autonomy. We operate in crisis mode constantly, ready to adapt to last-minute changes. That independence allows us to act quickly and with confidence”*.

In this context, artificial intelligence and digitalization are emerging as strategic allies. Llach emphasized that *“everything is moving faster, and we must embrace this technology by measuring our actions in real time, which gives us the opportunity to be more focused.”* For his part, Entero noted that *“we are experimenting with demand planning and its application in marketing and commercial activation, for example, to discover new flavors or select influencers. AI helps us refine decisions but never replace them”*. To which Valdés added that it is key *“to give teams the space to explore everything that can be achieved with AI without fear, while supporting their training and development.”* In conclusion, Escudero emphasized that *“we see AI as something compatible, but not replaceable. It helps us grow, be more efficient, and constantly improve”*.

Innovation, sustainability, and well-being are shaping new consumer habits

When it comes to consumer habits, disruption is driven by both technological transformation and demographic challenges. **Marta González-Mesones**, General Manager of **Unilever España**, emphasized that *“we’ve gone from trends changing every five years to changes happening practically in real time. We invest in team training and recipe flexibility to adapt to geopolitical changes and satisfy the consumer”*. Another key factor is *“the aging population and the return to seafood, which require us to rethink formats and solutions for consumers, combining health, accessibility, and convenience”*, as noted by **Óscar Vicente**, CEO of **Angulas Aguinaga**.

For her part, **Antonella Sottero**, General Manager of **Ferrero**, explained that *“consumers demand transparency, sustainability, and convenience. We must work with agility, simplify processes, and commit to innovation to constantly move forward”*. Additionally, **François Lacombe**, General Manager of **Danone**, noted that health has become a driver of transformation in the face of an aging population: *“Preventive nutrition, the microbiome, and holistic well-being are fundamental pillars for innovating and delivering real value”*.

About Expo FoodTech (May 27 and 28, 2026, BEC-Bilbao): this is the leading innovation event for professionals across the entire value chain of the food and beverage sector. Over two days, F4F – Expo Foodtech will bring together food industry professionals at the Bilbao Exhibition Centre (BEC) to learn about the latest solutions in foodtech, robotics and automation, processing and packaging machinery for different segments of the food industry, as well as food safety and science. It will also host the Food 4 Future World



Summit, the largest European congress where you can discover the latest trends, success stories, and tools to transform the food and beverage industry. F4F - Expo Foodtech, organized by NEBEXT and AZTI, will be held simultaneously with [Pick&Pack for Food Industry](#), the only event in Spain specializing in packaging and logistics solutions for the food industry.

[About NEBEXT](#): Next Business Exhibitions (NEBEXT) is Spain's largest private organizer of professional events specializing in technology, innovation, and sustainability for various industries.

[About AZTI](#): AZTI is a science and technology center that develops high-impact transformation projects and businesses with organizations aligned with the 2030 SDGs. Specializing in the marine environment and food, it provides cutting-edge, value-added products and technologies based on solid science and research.