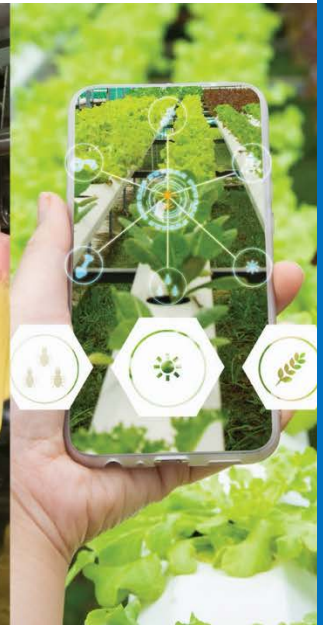




australian
institute of
food science
& technology

**UNITING FOOD INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS
IN THE SCIENCE OF FEEDING OUR FUTURE**

ANNUAL REPORT 2023





Notice of 2024 Annual General Meeting

Date:	Thursday May 30, 2024
Time:	5.30pm (AEST)
Place:	VENUE: by Zoom video conference



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AIFST proudly acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live and work and recognise their continuing connection to land, water, and community.

We wish to pay respect to local Indigenous Elders past, present and emerging and recognise the strength, resilience, and capacity of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Foreword from the AIFST President and Board Chair



Whilst the pandemic is ostensibly behind us, both global and local markets remain unsettled. Increasing costs and tightening supply chains continue to place pressure on the agri-food sector. In response, the agri-food sector must continue to innovate to grow and remain competitive in a challenging environment. In the face of this uncertainty the AIFST continues to advance and inspire all food sector professionals through education, collaboration, and recognition to champion a robust, innovative science based Australian food industry to meet future food needs. Formed in 1967 and now well over half a century young, the AIFST continues to advocate for food technology and the agri-food sector. In response to you, our members, 2023 has seen the AIFST continue to provide a range of both in person and online events to foster continuous professional development across both technical and vocational areas. In this year alone with the help of our state branches and dedicated speakers and presenters we have delivered 60 events totalling 114 CPD hours to nearly 4800 attendees. A highlight of the year was the convention. Held at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre with the theme “The Science of Food - Security and Sustainability” the event brought together both local and international speakers on a range of topics from “Plants for space and sustainability on earth” to “Sustainable packaging design”. I want to take this opportunity to recognise the invaluable work of the organising committee and the students and volunteers who helped ensure the event went smoothly. The ongoing growth and development of our members is a key pillar of our vision and purpose.

In 2023 we once again saw the completion of a successful mentor program. Students, graduates, and early career professionals have the opportunity through this program to develop and learn from seasoned professionals in the agri-food space. This year 100 members participated in the programme, and I want to sincerely thank the mentors for the time and commitment in supporting this important initiative and the mentees for engaging with passion and enthusiasm in the programme.

AIFST continues to advocate for the industry and this year prepared several submissions to government enquiries and food standards development. Not least of which was the submission on Food Security in Australia. Pleasingly our recommendations for a National Food Plan overseen by a Federal Minister for Food were embraced by the report which has now gone to the Office of Prime Minister and Cabinet. We see significant benefit for the agri-food sector in a Minister for Food that is responsible for the sector as a whole rather than the current dispersed nature of food policy which is spread across a number of portfolios including industry, health, and agriculture.

2023 also saw the launch of the membership directory allowing our members to better connect, share insights and knowledge with peers and colleagues across the sector. Our special interest groups also offer members the opportunity to stay connected in shared areas of interest including on Food Policy and Regulation, Sensory and Consumer Science, Food Microbiology and Consultants.



In 2023 we saw three Board members rotate out of their positions and I thank Suz Allen, Deon Mahoney and John Kavanagh for their service to the Institute over the past 3 years. I also thank Duncan McDonald who retired last year for his service over a number of years as President of the organisation. With these departures we welcomed Heather Haines, Marc Barnes, and Gregory Harper. Their skills and knowledge are invaluable to the organisation and the Board has welcomed their insights and commitment to the organisation and the agri-food sector.

Our CEO, Fiona Fleming and her team continue to deliver a tightly run organisation to ensure ongoing delivery of engaging events and services to all our members. Over the past year we also welcomed the appointment of Melissa Garland to the secretariat as Education and Events Manager. This has resulted in an increased focus on technical events further increasing our reach and contribution to continuing professional development.

Looking to the future, a vibrant and strong AIFST is contingent on the support and engagement of our members. I encourage all members to be involved in our programs and contribute your suggestions for our future. We are keen to hear your ideas on improvements and opportunities for our institute members to 'grow, learn, connect and champion' so please reach out to myself or Fiona. We are only too happy to talk to any member of our AIFST.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M Depalo', is written over a thin blue horizontal line.

Dr Michael Depalo

President and Chair of the Board



2023 Snapshot – by the numbers



4,797 Events & Webinar attendees



8 Special Interest Groups



114 Hours of CPD delivered education



2,100 views / 40 days viewing time of technical events & webinars



100 mentors & mentees
National Mentoring Program



4 Quarterly editions of
food australia



23 Bitesize & FoodTech Bites
e-newsletters



1613 members
3% growth year on year



Orientation webinars / Food
Science Fundamentals /
Member Directory



AIFST23 Convention - 450
delegates, 55+ speakers

Chief Executive Officer's Report – the Year in Review

This report reflects our achievements in 2023 and reminds us never to underestimate the resilience and determination of the food science community and the broader food industry.



AIFST Strategic Plan and Priorities

In 2023, the AIFST continued to unite food industry professionals in the science of feeding our future by focusing on four key strategic priorities (long term objectives):

- Grow – personal development, mentoring and peer recognition to grow the next generation of food scientists and technologists.
- Learn – learn and share knowledge about food systems, advances in food science and technology. Promote Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for all members.
- Connect – connecting like-minded members with industry networks; leveraging relationships and enabling collaboration that is relevant and engaging.
- Champion – the leading voice for food science and food scientists within industry, academia, government, and key opinion leaders, to grow respect and recognition for the profession.



UNITING FOOD INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS IN THE SCIENCE OF FEEDING OUR FUTURE



GROW



LEARN



CONNECT



CHAMPION

The short-term priorities for 2023, as set out in the Strategic Plan were:

- Broaden membership scope and strengthen engagement
- Diversify AIFST revenue streams to ensure greater financial stability
- Develop education and career pathway products and services
- Strengthen school and tertiary relationships to influence education curriculums to build a food science pipeline
- Build strategic partnerships for scale and long-term viability, and
- Communicate the role and importance of food science professionals in feeding Australians in the future



The AIFST strives to develop member capabilities, grow its community of members and strategic partners and ensure the AIFST remains financially secure and always responsive and relevant to its stakeholders

Membership

At the end of 2023 AIFST had a total of 1,615 members. This was a 3% increase from the membership at the end of 2022 of 1,566. The Board and team continued its focus on strategies to demonstrate membership value to attract new members and bring back previous members to AIFST. The modest increase in membership is reflective of the current economic climate.

Membership Engagement and Development Committee

The Membership Engagement & Development Committee (MEDC) continued to meet into 2023 under the leadership of Stewart Eddie and supported by Board Member Suzanne Allen.

Its purpose is to provide advice and recommend strategies on member communication and engagement to enhance the overall membership benefits, to attract new members, and retain existing ones.

The MEDC for 2023 was:

Stewart Eddie (Chair), Annesley Watson, Ryan Schultz, Cecilia Ngo, Maria Hoertrich, Rai Peradka, Shahnaz Mansouri and Hayley Cullen with support from Suzanne Allen (AIFST Board member).

In 2023 AIFST introduced two member initiatives:

1) New member orientation webinars were launched

Designed to welcome new members and provide an introduction on how best to get an enriching and rewarding experience from their membership. The webinars are an informative session, walking through key benefits and a virtual tour of the AIFST website and the many member resources.

2) The AIFST Member Directory was launched.

The member directory was launched as a new feature on the AIFST website. As part of the Institute's ongoing efforts to enhance members experience and foster greater connectivity the members only directory will allow members to connect and collaborate directly. Within the directory a member's name, current workplace and



member type are displayed. Members can then reach out to each other via a 'send message' option within the directory.

AIFST 2023 Fellows

In 2023 the AIFST welcomed four new Fellows.

A Fellow of AIFST is the highest level of our membership and is reserved for members who have dedicated themselves to the advancement of the food industry and of the Institute. The AIFST recognised Dr Mike Patane, Dr Yasmina Sultanbawa, Wendy Jarvis and Andrea Currie.

Figure 1: AIFST Fellows 2023: Dr Mike Patane, Dr Yasmina Sultanbawa, Wendy Jarvis and Andrea Currie



Mentoring Program

The AIFST mentoring program is an annual, six-month program that aims to bring young professionals and experienced members of AIFST together. Mentees and mentors are paired based on experience and interest and encouraged to meet on a weekly or fortnightly basis depending on their individual availability.

The 2023 AIFST mentoring program launched in April and concluded in October, with 50 pairs successfully completing the course program. We were delighted to open the mentee applications beyond students and graduates this year and included a host of young professional members in the early stages of their careers.

In 2023 AIFST continued with the successful mentee interview process which enables greater reliability in the pairing process. The interview process involved allocating each mentee, who applied for the program via written application, a 10-minute time slot in which we arranged for past mentors of the program to ask simple questions about their interests and goals for the program. From here, we were able to pair mentees and mentors accordingly. AIFST would like to thank all mentors who volunteered their time to help with this process as it continues to add ongoing significant value to the program. Another proven element of the mentoring program which contributes to its success was the establishment of mentoring catch ups. Once a month, a mentoring catch-up with the entire participating cohort took place providing an opportunity for AIFST to connect with the members and allow the mentors and mentees of other pairs to network, get to know each other and share valuable insights about the program.

The program, once again, received great feedback from both mentees and mentors. Melissa Garland, Education and Events Manager worked hard during the year to ensure the success of the program and on behalf of the mentees and mentors, we thank her!



Australian Food Safety Auditor Development Program (AFSADP)

With the generous support of a grant from the NSW Food Authority the AIFST and industry partners collaborated on the development of the Food Safety Auditor Intern program. The initiative aims to address the serious and increasing challenge of availability and competency of food safety auditors across all food categories in Australia.

The project commenced in July 2022 with the support and involvement of food businesses and certification bodies and significant progress was made during 2023. AIFST contracted Bill McBride of Foodlink EFBR as the project manager. The need for a systemic approach to developing an auditor pipeline in Australia is paramount. AIFST engaged with Australian food retailers, food service providers, food manufacturers, primary producers, regulators, tertiary and VET institutions, and certification bodies (CBs) to progress this project.

Steering Committee

The AFSADP could not have started, let alone progressed as far as it has, without the financial and resource support of the following organisations and their representatives:

Stephen Crisp	AUS-Meat
Todd Redwood	BSI Group
Andrea Currie, Jennifer Crawford	Coles
Tim Norris	Intertek SAI Global
Pari Farr	LRQA
Rachel Djokic	McDonalds
Sarah Crisp, Ben Bowering, Joey Bazinet	RuleThirteen
Nerolie Dever	Sanitarium Health Food Company
Domenic Rossitto, David Williams	SGS

Remote Steering Committee meetings were conducted monthly or more frequently if required and chaired by Fiona Fleming, CEO of AIFST and Bill McBride, AFSADP project manager.

Project Objectives

1. Establishment of a food safety auditing career path, tested and supported by food science /food technology students, universities/VET sector and industry.
2. Incorporation of contemporary auditing practices, including soft (behavioural) skills, virtual technology and AI, data analytics for a robust food safety auditing career path.
3. Food science/technology universities and/or VET sector incorporate education in food safety auditing in their curricula.
4. Industry internship established to provide practical industry experience for new auditors on food safety auditing career path.
5. The food safety auditing career path is aligned with GFSI auditor competence initiatives (Professional Recognition Bodies) and other emerging international food safety auditor initiatives.
6. A certification industry promotional campaign is established to attract young food industry professionals to food safety auditing.

The opportunity is to develop a pathway for new auditors (new or recent graduates) to take up a career in food safety auditing. The need exists (declining and aging auditor cohort), and the current development processes are cumbersome, expensive and restrictive for both aspiring auditors and certification bodies.

The planned intern pilots are intended to establish a prototype for a streamlined career pathway that is based on the foundation of GFSI and certification owner qualifications, and industry expectations.

AIFST continues its collaboration with all stakeholders on the Australian Food Safety Auditor Development program. It is committed to establishing this exciting pathway for the advancement of food safety auditing as a preferred career for professionals in the Australian food industry.





LEARN

AIFST is leading the development of food science and technology professionals, by actively supporting career development, shaping education pathways and industry participation

The AIFST Continuing Professional Development Program (CPD) continued in 2023 delivering 114 hours of CPD to members.

This program is a self-planned, structured program for developing professional skills. The program is designed with clear objectives; requires active participation; extends professional knowledge and capabilities and allows members to engage in a broad range of activities which will increase career options.



The voluntary program is designed to encourage members to maintain the currency of skills and knowledge, will provide recognition of experience and interests and align food scientists with other well-respected professions. The CPD program is intended to provide recognition of these activities and skills by formalising and recording the process in a straightforward and transportable way.

The competence of members is vital to the development and credibility of food science practitioners and a CPD program allows a formalised documentation of skills and reflects the professionalism of the members.

4,797 event registrations

114 hours of continuing professional development (CPD)

Recorded webinars registered 2,100 views during the year - 40 days of

60 events with an overall feedback score of 4.4 / 5

Food Science Fundamentals Course

In 2023 the AIFST launched the Food Science Fundamentals course. A virtual course, with the aim of familiarising all staff working in the food industry on the basic principles and language of food science.

Held over four afternoon sessions, participants gain a broad-based understanding to assist in communication with other staff and customers. They also learn how food science impacts and supports their non-science role.

The course content includes:

- What is Food Science?
- Food Policy & Regulations
- Food Chemistry – the building blocks
- Food Packaging
- Food Microbiology
- Nutrition – food and the human body
- Food Processing
- Sensory & Consumer Science
- Food Safety
- The Future of Food

The course was well received and attended and will continue to be offered to members throughout 2024.

food australia

In 2023, four issues of *food australia* were published with content provided by a range of contributors. Just over 1,400 copies per edition were distributed to members and subscribers in both print and electronic form.



The four editions featured 113 contributed articles and 63 contributors. We recorded a growing number of reads 2,500 in 2023 up from 2,000 in 2022, and 7,000 impressions on our digital platform.

In 2023 the journal was overseen by the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee: Martin Palmer, Mark Turner, Tom Ross, Philippa Harmon, Lisa Szabo, Yakindra Timilsena, Allan Poynton, Jasmine Lacin-Lee, Michael Depalo, Deon Mahoney, Hafiz Suleria, Greg Bonnefin, Dipon Sarkar and Pablo Juliano.

Melinda Stewart, AIFST Technical Information Specialist continued to manage editorial oversight.

Food Tech Bites



FoodTech Bites continued in 2023, delivering up-to-date technical content on a range of news and published research on food science related topics to members.

Eleven issues were distributed to members and continues to drive good engagement.

The average open rate for Food Tech Bites in 2023 was **49.7 %**. This is an extremely good open rate.

According to Campaign Monitor 2022 Email Marketing Benchmarks Report, the average email open rate was **21.5%**, across all industries. The industries with the highest open rates, like Education, Agriculture, and Financial Services, average between 25-28%.



CONNECT

AIFST is the go-to organisation in the Australian agri-food sector for leading trends, insights and industry news that enhances the industry operating environment

Food Microbiology conference – 30 March 2023

The AIFST hosted the Food Microbiology Conference in Sydney, 30 March 2023. A content-rich, day-long program it focused on the Australian and international food safety landscape.

The AIFST welcomed more than 120 delegates and partners to hear the latest updates on food safety and food micro. Thank you to our speakers and delegates for your support for this event.



Event partners were - Edwards, ThermoFisher Scientific, bioMerieux, R-Biopharm, Hygiena, Neogen, WISH-MED, Merieux NutriSciences, the AAFP and the Aust Society for Microbiology.

The Australian Society
for Microbiology 
bringing Microbiologists together

 australian institute of
food science & technology

 Australian Association for
Food Protection
An Affiliate of the International Association for Food Protection

2023 Food Microbiology Conference

The Highs and Lows of Food Microbiology

Thursday, 30th March 2023, 9am to 5pm at the Novotel Parramatta

Global Food Microbiology Scene

- Food safety
- Food poisoning outbreaks

Organisms - Buffet of Bugs

- FSANZ Foodborne Disease Burden Report
- Deeper dive into *Cronobacter* in Infant Formula
- *Salmonella* (the usual suspect)
- *Campylobacter*
- and more ...

Future Food Fermentation

- Cell based food
- Indigenous sources of yeast
- *Burkholderia*

The 'M' in Food Microbiology

- Microbiomes from farm to fork
- Predictive Modelling – real life demo
- Manipulating the microflora for a food safety outcome



Register Now

Thank you to our
event partners:

 EDWARDS



r-biopharm 

 Mérieux
NutriSciences
Better Food. Better Health. Better World.

 ThermoFisher
SCIENTIFIC

 WISH-MED

 hygiena

 NEOGEN
Australasia

7
If you are a member of
the AIFST Continuing
Professional Development
(CPD) Program, you will
earn 7 units from
attending this event.
**Discounted registration
for AIFST & ASM Members**

Thank you to all our event partners for your support.

 EDWARDS

 ThermoFisher
SCIENTIFIC

r-biopharm 

 hygiena



 Australian Association for
Food Protection
An Affiliate of the International Association for Food Protection

The Australian Society
for Microbiology 
bringing Microbiologists together

 NEOGEN

 Mérieux
NutriSciences
Better Food. Better Health. Better World.

 WISH-MED

AIFST23 Convention

The AIFST Annual Convention is a key event in the Institute’s calendar, supporting the continued growth of the Australian food industry by building skills, capability, and networks for food industry professionals to enable them to generate value within the agri-food system.

The AIFST23 featured a full technical program and exhibition.

Over two days with plenary and three concurrent session streams, the convention featured 55 scientific and local and international food industry speakers from across the agri-food sector. Food safety featured strongly, alongside advances in health and nutrition, sensory and consumer science, food security and resilience, sustainability, and packaging. Innovation and collaboration were a constant theme.

The Convention offered great networking opportunities. Our popular social events made a return – the Food & Wine Networking Evening and Young Professionals & 2023 National Mentoring Networking Breakfast was held at AIFST23. We also recognised excellence in the food industry at our Annual Awards ceremony.

I would like to acknowledge our student volunteers, the AIFST team and all those who volunteered their time in the organisation of this event – there is a lot that goes on behind the scenes to bring this event to life.

Thank you to all our event partners for your ongoing support of the AIFST and this event.

Thank you to our scientific and food industry speakers for sharing your knowledge and experiences – supporting food industry professionals in the science of feeding our future.

Thank you all for helping to make the 2023 AIFST Convention a great success!



Overall satisfaction of AIFST23 program – 4.2/5

55 speakers and 20 student volunteers

450 delegates



foodpro 2023

With foodpro running concurrently to the AIFST23 Convention, AIFST were represented at foodpro, having a stand for the 4 days of this event.



Thanks to our Business Development Manager, Clive Russell, for all his hard work in coordinating our attendance at foodpro.

Branches and Special Interest Groups

In 2023 AIFST continued to support the State Branches and Special Interest Groups.

The Branches for 2023 were:

Branch	Chair
Queensland	Cecilia Ngo
NSW	Annesley Watson
Victoria	Sarah Crisp
South Australia	Rai Peradka
Western Australia	Justin Whitely (Compass Group)
Tasmania	Tom Ross

A big thank you to our Branch Chairs and their committees for the work you put into organising a range of technical and social events to give members and food industry colleagues a chance to grow, learn and connect throughout 2023.

AIFST Queensland Branch

The Queensland Branch Committee organised several successful events in 2023.

This included a great turnout at the AIFST Queensland Branch food safety and NPD workshops in August. Speakers updated and challenged the audience, reminding us of food scientists' vital role in the agri-food sector. Thank you to all student volunteers, the Queensland Branch committee and event partner RADBE Consulting for a successful event.



AIFST Victoria Branch

The Victorian Branch Committee organised several successful events in 2023.

They included a site tour to the new state-of-the-art Luv-A-Duck production facility in Ballarat. It was an insightful and inspiring visit learning about Luv a Duck processing operations and a great opportunity for our members based in the region to see a modern manufacturing facility and to meet other local AIFST members.



AIFST Western Australia Branch

The Western Australia Branch Committee organised several successful events in 2023.

They included another highly successful “Food for Thought” Workshop at Curtin University. The event was held on Wednesday 8th November with 65 registered for the event. The event provided the opportunity for attendees to hear from six highly engaging speakers.

A range of presentations included a summary of the results of FSANZ’s survey regarding consumer trust and confidence in food presented by Dr. Sandra Cuthbert, Plain English Allergen Labelling (PEAL) law changes presented by Cheryl Hughes, and the food security plan for the state of Western Australia was presented by Dr. Peter Batt.

Professor Michelle Colgrave delivered a very interesting talk on innovations in protein science for future protein product development, Gerry Matera from Gather Foods talked about the foundation of a new generation of socially responsible businesses which served Australian industry, Aboriginal communities and the greater good. Finally, Stuart Johnson, Managing Director, Food Futures CRC FTFSI informed the group about the Food Technology Facility at Nambelup and what to expect.



Thanks to the speakers and sponsors - PMFresh, Rowe Scientific, Mérieux NutriSciences, and Eurofins for taking part and supporting the institute in holding this event providing great value for the members of the AIFST. A big thank you also to our hard-working Branch Chair, Justin, and the committee members who support both Justin and the AIFST!

AIFST NSW Branch

The NSW Branch Committee organised several successful events in 2023.

They included a New Product Development workshop with the University of Western Sydney (UWS).

Thursday 26th October saw a group of 50 people from industry, academia, and current students gather for the NPD event at the impressive UWS Parramatta campus. Topics discussed on the day were relevant to NPD and included consumer trends, nutrition trends, sensory evaluation and NPD case studies. Thank

you to our speakers on the day Wendy Pasco from Ingredion, Jodie Hill from Sensory Solutions, Ben Lougher from ADM. A special thanks to Malik Hussain from UWS for facilitating the event and providing the venue and a big thank you to Kathy La Macchia from GLNC for introducing the speakers on the day.



AIFST South Australia

The South Australia Branch Committee organised several successful events in 2023.

They included a native foods masterclass. Andrew Fielke from Creative Native Foods started with storytelling about his journey as a chef to a Native Food Ambassador. Andrew has a passion for promoting and incorporating native Australian foods into Australian cuisine and emphasised the

importance of recognising and utilising the vast array of unique Australian bush foods for culinary purposes.

He sees the growth of interest and acceptance of native foods in the food industry, as well as the potential economic opportunities associated with native foods. Overall, Andrew's dedication to developing the native food industry in Australia impressed the 15-member tour group. His take-home message was to taste and explore the diverse range of native ingredients available in the country and be open to new experiences.



Special Interest Groups

Special Interest Groups (SIGs) have also continued to meet and develop events. We now have 8 SIGs! As outlined below:

- Sensory & Consumer Science
- Consultants
- Food Policy & Regulation
- Innovation & New Product Development
- Nutrition
- Food Microbiology
- Food Safety
- Student Advisory Group

Social Media Platforms

In addition to monthly e-newsletters, AIFST engaged with members and the broader food industry via Facebook and LinkedIn.

2023 Overall Highlights

- 2023 saw a significant increase in AIFST followers (LinkedIn) and fans (Facebook) across the platforms collectively with a net change of +22.6%
- Overall reach also increased by 4.8%

Facebook

- Fans of the AIFST Facebook page grew over the last year by 11.5%
- The number of posts on the Facebook page were slightly less than in 2022 which is reflected in the lower reach. However, given the fan base grew shows that the frequency of posting and content resonated well.

LinkedIn

- LinkedIn continues to be a valuable channel for the AIFST with followers and reach significantly growing in 2023 (29.3% and 65.3%)

The following table captures the equivalent metrics as a benchmark across each platform and all from same source – the scheduling platform Hootsuite.

Social Media Channel	2023	2022	2021	Net change over past 12-month period	Data Source
Overall (LinkedIn & Facebook)					
Posts	678	600	591	+13%	Hootsuite metrics
Impressions	448,393	322,371	361,366	+39.1%	
Page & Profile reach	256,703	268,991	222,893	+4.8%	
Fans & Followers	18,960	15,467	7,445	+22.6%	
Facebook					
Posts	329	295	305	+11.3%	Hootsuite metrics
Followers	6,528	5,851	5,662	+11.5%	
Page reach	85,295	164,983	114,134	-48.3%	
LinkedIn					
Posts	349	305	286	+14.4%	Hootsuite metrics
Fans & Followers	12,438	9,616	7,445	+29.3%	
Page & Profile reach	171,986	104,008	108,759	+65.3%	

Notes:

1. Impressions - the number of times any content on Facebook and LinkedIn pages or accounts appeared on someone's screen.
2. Page reach - the number of people who had any content from your Pages or about your Pages enter their screen.

Website

The AIFST website is the primary channel of information for members and the food science community about AIFST and food science and technology overall.



In 2023 the AIFST website received:

34K visitors / users

Top 3 acquisition channels:
Direct via website
Google
LinkedIn

120,772 page views (GA4)

Australia and USA top users by country

BiteSize

Bitesize e-newsletter

AIFST monthly Bitesize e-newsletters continued to keep members up to date in 2023 with 12 monthly editions sent out to members. Reach and engagement remains consistent with previous engagement.



EDM's (Electronic Direct Mail)
Over the course of 2023 AIFST engaged members and the wider industry in key promotions through electronic direct emails for the 2023 AIFST Convention and events. These emails consistently reached over 5,000 key contacts and saw an average engagement of 45%

Member Communications

Over 100,000 emails sharing a wide range of membership benefits were sent to members and food industry stakeholders throughout the year.



CHAMPION

AIFST is the national independent advocate for food science and food science professionals in the agri-food sector. It is the 'voice' of the food science and technology industry.

AIFST Awards Program

Each year AIFST recognises the outstanding achievements of our members and colleagues and the contribution they have made to the Institute and the Australian food industry through the annual awards program.

AIFST congratulates our award winners and all of those who were nominated – it is wonderful that we have so much talent within the Institute and our industry here in Australia.

A special thank you to all the judges who contributed hours of their time and expertise during the award selection and judging process.

AIFST President's Award

The AIFST President's Award recognises, acknowledges, and acclaims an individual or an organisation that has made an outstanding contribution to the Institute. Professor Mark Turner was the recipient of the 2023 award.



AIFST President's Award

WINNER:
Professor Mark Turner
University of Queensland



AIFST ILSI Dr David Roberts Emerging Young Leader Award

This award was created last year in memory of Dr David (Dave) Roberts as a means of encouraging and supporting the development of a young food scientist, technologist or nutritionist for their endeavour or achievement and leadership potential, within the food industry.

Dr David Roberts was a nutrition scientist who made significant contributions to teaching and research at the University of Sydney, the University of Newcastle, and at Food Standards Australia New Zealand, the Australian Food and Grocery Council and ILSI SEAR, Australasia. The 2023 Award recipient was Dipon Sarkar from Victual.



WINNER: Dipon Sarkar



AIFST Sensory Solutions Tony Williams Sensory Award

The AIFST Sensory Award is award is open to young members of the Institute (under 35 years) including undergraduate and post graduate student members, who demonstrate an interest and passion for sensory research.

The AIFST Sensory Award is sponsored annually by Sensory Solutions in honour of Anthony (Tony) Williams. The 2023 Award recipient was Jasmine Ngo from the University of Queensland for her research – *Multiple sip progressive profiling: greater insights on the sensory experience of beverages*



Winner: Jasmine Ngo



Runner up was Saskia Urllass also from the University of Queensland for her work on the *Sensory profiling of Australian seaweed ingredients*.



Runner up: Saskia Urllass



AIFST Foodbank Hunger Hero Award

The Hunger Hero Award recognises a person or team who have gone above and beyond to tackle food insecurity. Whether it's championing a new initiative within their company or volunteering their time and expertise in the community, the award recognises an individual's or team's contribution as an inspiration to others.

The 2023 Winner was Nicci Harrison from George Weston Foods.



Winner:
Nicci Harrison
George Weston Foods



AIFST Jack Kefford Award for Best Paper



WINNER: *The antimicrobial effects of mist spraying and immersion on beef samples with plasma-activated water*

Authors: Koentadi Hadinoto
Hanxia Yang,
Tianqi Zhang,
Patrick J. Cullen,
Stuart Prescott,
Francisco J. Trujillo.



This award recognises the contribution to food science and technology of Institute members who publish research and technical papers.

The 2023 Award recipients Koentadi Hadinoto, Hanxia Yang, Tianqi Zhang, Patrick J. Cullen, Stuart Prescott, and Francisco J. Trujillo for their paper: *The antimicrobial effects of mist spraying and immersion on beef samples with plasma-activated water.*

AIFST Bruce Chandler Award



Winner: *Sorghum Grain: From Genotype, Nutrition, and Phenolic Profile to Its Health Benefits and Food Applications*

Authors: Zhongxiang Fang,
Yun Xiong,
Pangzhen Zhang,
Robyn Dorothy Warner.



This award recognises AIFST members who are authors of books or substantial reviews, considered to make the greatest contribution to the literature on food science and technology in particular years.

The 2023 Award recipients were Zhongxiang Fang, Yun Xiong, Pangzhen Zhang and Robyn Dorothy Warner for their paper: *Sorghum Grain: From Genotype, Nutrition, and Phenolic Profile to Its Health Benefits and Food Applications.*

The AIFST Keith Farrer Award of Merit 2024



WINNER:
Professor Michelle Colgrave CSIRO



This award is the Institute’s highest honour, acknowledging an individual whose work has resulted in significant positive change for the food industry, the food science and technology profession, food research and innovation, and/or food science education, and/or has promoted the health and enjoyment of the wider community regarding food.

The recipients’ achievements must also include substantial contributions made to further the aims and objectives of the AIFST.

The award is named after Dr Keith Farrer OBE, a pioneering scientist and author, who was involved in the formation of the AIFST in 1967. Dr Farrer was the second president of AIFST from 1969-71 and a recipient of the award (then known as the IFT Australian Award) in 1959.

The 2023 winner was Professor Michelle Colgrave.

AIFST Research Poster Competition

The Research Poster competition is an opportunity for students and early career researchers to showcase their work. The criteria for the competition include originality of research, quality of the research or review and the research approach, scientific and commercial value of the subject matter and presentation of the poster.

Judges Award Winner



WINNER:
Spray or Soak: Unleashing the Antimicrobial Power of Plasma-Activated Water on Beef

Accepted by:
Koentadi Hadinoto, UNSW

Authors: Koentadi Hadinoto,
Francisco J Trujillo



Judges Joint Runner Up



Runner Up:

Novel grain flours blended with chickpea for quality improvement of pasta

Accepted by: Thu Hoa McCann, CSIRO

Authors: Thu Mccann*,
Rangika Weerakkody,
Jenny Favaro,
Roman Buckow,
Regine Stockmann*

2023 People's Choice Winner: Yanyan Lao - *Effects of pre-roasting on structural and functional properties of pea proteins.*

2023 People's Choice Runner Up: Rishi R Naik - *Significance of red seaweed Gracilaria in inhibiting the advanced glycation during Maillard conjugation of Amaranth seed protein.*

AIFST John Christian Young Food Microbiologist Award

The John Christian Young Food Microbiologist Award was announced at the Food Micro Conference in Sydney. Congratulations to Wenkang Huang from the University of Queensland for his paper on '*Evaluation of the fermentation potential of plant-isolated lactic acid bacteria as starter cultures in nut-based milk alternatives.*'

Congratulations to the award runner-up Yuwei Xiang '*Understanding the role of c-di-AMP in lysis in Lactococcus.*'



Figure 2: John Christian Young Food Microbiologist Award for 2023 Winner - Wenkang Huang

Industry Collaboration / Representation

Science and Technology Australia (STA)

Strengthening its advocacy for food science the AIFST joined Science & Technology Australia (STA). By doing so it enabled the AIFST to continue to contribute actively to the discourse around food and the agri-food sector.

Industry relations

Advocating for professionals in the agri-food sector the AIFST were represented on the following industry committees, Boards, Associations and workshops.

- ◆ FSANZ Act Review – Industry Workshop
- ◆ Allergen Collaboration Steering Committee
- ◆ Binational Food Industry Dialogue
- ◆ Australian Association for Food Protection (AAFP)
- ◆ Engineers Australia as part of the AFEA – Australian Food Engineers Association
- ◆ Imported Food Consultative Committee
- ◆ End Food Waste – labelling project committee
- ◆ Food Safety Information Council – Board member
- ◆ Food Safety Research Alliance

Government Relations

Science Meets Parliament

The AIFST was represented at Science Meets Parliament 2023 annual event in Canberra. This event brought together scientist, scientific societies, government, industry, and the broader community providing opportunities to elevate the visibility and understanding of STEM in Parliament and Australian Government Departments. It was an important opportunity for the AIFST to build upon its advocacy work for food science professionals and investing in food science in the agri-food sector.

CEO Fiona Fleming had the opportunity to meet with Senator Jana Stewart and talk about the importance of food science and food scientists.

Fig 3: Senator Jana Stewart and AIFST CEO Fiona Fleming



House of Representatives Standing Committee on Food Security

The AIFST welcomed the Inquiry Report from the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture into food security in Australia – *Australian Food Story: Feeding the Nation and Beyond*.

The inquiry's remit was to look at strengthening and safeguarding food security in Australia. The Committee, chaired by Labour MP Meryl Swanson, made 35 recommendations overall.

The primary recommendation is the development of a comprehensive National Food Plan providing for the food security, including nutritional security, of the nation and its people. The National Food Plan must have clear objectives and measurable targets set out in regular updates and action plans, and subject to regular review.

Further to the establishment of a National Food Plan, the Committee recommended the Australian Government appoint a Minister for Food, within the portfolio of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, with responsibility for the development and implementation of the National Food Plan, regular monitoring and updating of the plan, and accountability for achieving outcomes and targets under the plan.

AIFST had previously provided a submission to the Inquiry in December 2022 and AIFST CEO, Fiona Fleming and Dr Michael Depalo testified at a public hearing in June 2023. In December, AIFST CEO, Fiona Fleming, attended a virtual Q & A with the Committee Chair, Meryl Swanson, to gain further insight into next steps. AIFST looks forward to the opportunity to support the progression of the recommendations in 2024 and beyond. The full Inquiry report can be accessed on the AIFST website.

Submissions

In addition to representation on industry committees, the AIFST made several submissions on a range of food policy and regulation matters to regulatory consultations in 2023. The submissions are available on the [AIFST website](#).

Supporting the Career Pathway

Evaluation of core competencies for food science graduates



AIFST conducted an industry survey (July 2022) to gain an understanding of the core competencies that the food industry value of food science and technology graduates from Australian Universities and TAFE.

The survey was built from the graduate criteria identified by the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) with additional attributes tailoring the survey to the Australian food industry.

The results of this survey were invaluable in 2023 providing a clear understanding of what competencies the Australian food industry value in food science and technology graduates. The AIFST continued its work with higher education institutions to ensure they deliver industry ready graduates for the industry.

AIFST State Branches Career Events

The AIFST State Branches hosted careers evenings in 2023, providing attendees with a unique opportunity to hear from industry experts about their journey in food science, from working in academia to actively supporting food product development.

The evenings were aimed at students studying Food Science, professionals looking to move into food science and technology through to entrepreneurs looking at pathways to innovate new food products.

All career evenings provided a valuable opportunity for the Branches to champion the industry to attendees and to give them the ability to connect with their Branch’s food science and technology network.



Acknowledgement

AIFST Partners

Throughout 2023, the AIFST has been supported by our partners in a range of events. On behalf of the AIFST Board, team and members, I wish to acknowledge and thank all our partners for your support and commitment to the AIFST and food science in the agri-food industry.



AIFST Team

Finally, a huge vote of thanks must go to the hard-working team at AIFST.

The AIFST team for 2023:

- Fiona Fleming – CEO, Company Secretary
- Cassandra Farlow – Membership Officer
- Melissa Garland – Education Services Manager
- Carilee Hicks – Membership and Administration Services Manager
- Clive Russell – Business Development Manager
- Melinda Stewart - Technical Information Specialist
- Annette Votteler – Finance Manager

I would also like to thank our outgoing Board members – Duncan McDonald, Julie Cox and Bronwyn Powell for their input, support, and expertise during their time on the Board. They have all provided amazing guidance and insights over the time served on the Board.

Thank you to the Board who are committed to a strong, relevant, and healthy Institute that delivers on our key focus areas of grow, learn, connect, and champion.

I would also like to acknowledge all our partners who supported the AIFST during 2023 – we could not have run successful events without your support.

Australia is recognised for our reliability, our ingenuity and quality of food products. Now in a disrupted global economy we can grow that reputation by continuing to invest in food science and technology disciplines critical to the future success of food manufacturing and the food industry.

As always, I invite and encourage all members to take an active role engaging with the Institute – it is only through continued engagement that we can fulfill our purpose of uniting food industry professionals in the science of feeding our future.

Fiona Fleming
Chief Executive Officer & Company Secretary

AIFST Governance and Board

In May 2023 we held our Annual General Meeting (AGM) and welcomed Marc Barnes, Dr Gregory Harper and Dr Heather Haines to the AIFST Board and farewellled Suzanne Allen, Deon Mahoney and John Kavanagh.

Duncan McDonald retired as Chair and President in August 2023. Dr Michael Depalo was subsequently appointed to the role by the Board.

Thanks to the Board for their input and direction into the review of the AIFST Constitution and subsequent approval by members at the 2023 AGM. The new Constitution can be found on the AIFST website.

The AIFST Board members for 2023 were:

- Duncan McDonald, Chair of the Board & President (retired August 2023)
- Michael Depalo, Chair of the Board & President
- Marc Barnes, Non-Executive Director
- Julie Cox, Non-Executive Director
- Dr Heather Haines, Non-Executive Director
- Dr Gregory Harper, Non-Executive Director
- Bronwyn Powell, Non-Executive Director



Dr MICHAEL DEPALO
Chair of the Board & President

Michael Depalo has over 40 years' experience in food product development, ingredient technology, and food regulation. After a distinguished career at the Arnott's Group, most recently leading the regulatory and specifications team across APAC, Michael is now the founder of ANZ Food Innovation and Compliance Network, a consultancy established to support and advise food businesses and their stakeholders in R&D, Food Labelling and Regulations.

Michael is committed to the promotion of Food Technology and the Food Industry and is a member of the AIFST Technical Advisory Committee and a mentor in the AIFST Mentor programme. Michael was also a long serving member of the Australian Food and Grocery Council Health, Nutrition and Scientific Affairs Committee serving as deputy chair for many years. Michael is a trusted advisor and has been a Board member and Trustee of several not for profit and member-based organisations and CRCs. He was awarded the 2016 Arnott's Group "Leading with Integrity Award" for demonstrating consistent and uncompromising adherence to strong moral and ethical principles and values. Michael has a Bachelor of Applied Science from UTS where he received the Institute Medal and a PhD in Biotechnology from UNSW. Michael has over 30 years of continuous membership with AIFST and is a Fellow of the Institute.



MR MARC BARNES

Non-Executive Director

Marc is highly motivated, result-driven, and internationally accomplished business leader with innate commercial acumen, he can track his success back to growing up in an entrepreneurial family in rural Tasmania.

Within that environment I was primed from a young age to manage the family business, building strong foundations as a proactive, goal-oriented professional, subsequently within the food and beverage sector, achieving tangible results and driving sustainable growth and profitability whilst managing risk for multiple enterprises throughout my career.

Outgoing and engaging, I am recognised for being passionately outcomes focussed, dedicated to delivering successful, intended outcomes, and ability to get people onboard, building momentum through inspiring individuals, teams, colleagues, and associates.

I enjoy and have a strong track record of engaging across all levels of an organisation building collaborative, high performing, multi-functional teams that exceed business targets and are aligned to a company's values. My 20 years of experience in food safety assurance and 8 years as managing director of BSI Group has given me a wealth of experience and knowledge. This experience has helped shape best practice standards to enable an organisation with the discipline and mechanisms for compliance and continuous improvement. Key to this success has been leading and coaching employees, senior leadership, and business owners to deliver beyond expectations within often complex global matrix environments, and establishing a culture committed to sales and organisational growth (organic and M&A), durable stakeholder relationships and delivery of exceptional client service.

Marc currently runs his own management consultancy Flinders Lane Advisory, is a member of the AICD and has previously held senior roles at British Standards Institute, NATA Certification Services, St Vincent's & Mercy Private Hospital and Sheraton Hotels.



JULIE COX

Non-Executive Director

Julie is a commercial lawyer with nearly 20 years' experience advising leading food, healthcare and technology businesses on intellectual property, consumer, product safety and regulatory compliance matters. Julie spent the majority of her legal career with global law firm Baker McKenzie across London and Australia before establishing her own specialist legal consultancy for the FMCG industry.

With a background in both science (biochemistry) and law, Julie is passionate about the food industry. Her longstanding work with food businesses, ranging from multinationals to start ups, has enabled her to develop close working relationships and a deep understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing the industry. Julie also has extensive experience advising media and technology businesses having previously worked as an in-house lawyer at British Sky Broadcasting.

In addition to her undergraduate degrees in science and law, Julie is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and a current MBA candidate with the AGSM at the University of New South Wales. Julie is passionate about innovation, continuous learning and promoting the Australian food industry as sustainable, innovative, and safe.



DR HEATHER HAINES

Non-Executive Director

Heather has a strong applied science background, having spent more than 35 years as a microbiologist. She has worked in the areas of (human) diagnostic microbiology, education and training, food safety research and food safety policy. While working in the Food Safety Unit of the Victorian Department of Health, she managed projects to deliver tools for food businesses and staff to improve food hygiene, to improve the Victorian government food surveillance activities, and contribute to national initiatives on food surveillance and food safety research.

Examples include the first version of the free online food safety learning tool 'Dofoodsafely' and a food surveillance app which is used by many local government officers in Victoria. Latterly her role, and that of her team, at the department was to analyse proposed amendments to the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code, then brief to and support senior officers and representatives of the Food Ministers' Meeting in their deliberations on these amendments, with the imperative of protecting the health and safety of consumers.

Heather completed a Bachelor of Applied Sciences (Medical Laboratory Sciences) and later a Master of Applied Science (Applied Microbiology and Biotechnology – Food Stream) at RMIT. Her PhD studies were undertaken at the University of Tasmania, supported by scholarships from Meat and Livestock Australia (through Mintrac) and the (then) Department of Agriculture. She has been a longstanding Professional Member of AIFST, involving periods on both the Victorian and Tasmanian Committees, and is a member and previously a Victorian committee member of Australian Society for Microbiology. She is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



DR GREGORY HARPER

Non-Executive Director

Gregory is a biological scientist who focuses on the translation of scientific discoveries into commercial, environmental, and social benefits. He is a senior manager in the University of Melbourne and Director of Business Development in the Faculty of Science.

He is currently a member of the University's professional staff, and he has been senior academic staff, as well as management and governance staff in other contexts. Adaptability has been a key attribute of his career. He also sees himself as an engaged global citizen.

Gregory has spent his career in the global R&D community and has expertise in management and governance of public and private R&D funds. The agri-food innovation system has been a particular focus, and this probably has its roots in his childhood, when his parents ran a suburban meat retailing business in Brisbane.

He has worked in five countries and for multiple Australian innovation system actors. His partnership building experience includes Australian R&D organisations; urban and regional universities; international universities; international public entities; and small, focused service organisations.

Gregory holds multiple Fellowships and was very proud to become a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology in 2022. His work has been recognised internationally through the Alliance of Technology Transfer Professionals as an RTTP.



BRONWYN POWELL

Non-Executive Director

Bronwyn is the CEO of The Australian Marketing Institute (AMI), a CMO/senior marketer, board director and senior advisor, who is known for big brand reinvention. She has over 35 years' experience transforming and positioning brands for growth, with a focus on global food brands across Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) to Retail/Quick Service Restaurants (QSR). At the heart of her success, has been her ability to develop take insights and turn that into innovative new products and services with commercial success. Driven by strategies and bold communications that connect with consumers and change businesses.

She has close to 10 years' experience as Global Marketing Director and Chief Marketing Officer for YUM Brands - KFC, Taco Bell and Pizza Hut – where she grew the brand globally from Canada to the Europe to Asia. Coupled with many years locally at McDonald's Australia.

Her experience in strategy development and execution extends beyond transformation and growth to customer experience across all touchpoints including digital, especially within Retail/QSR. Her passions are brand purpose and innovation and she loves' breathing life back into brands and categories. Some of these include time at Kellogg, Mars, Tip Top, Smith's Snackfoods, to name a few FMCG brands.

Bronwyn is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (GAICD) and a Certified Practising Marketer/Fellow of AMI and a Fellow of The Chartered Institute of Marketing- UK (FCIM). Her passionate is ensuring marketing executives continue to lead organisations for growth, with brands that connect with the hearts and mind of our consumers.

AIFST Governance

Chief Executive Officer and Company Secretary



FIONA FLEMING

Chief Executive Officer and Company Secretary

Fiona is Managing Director of the Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology (AIFST). She is an experienced Corporate and Regulatory Affairs professional who has been involved in leading and facilitating change and developing management strategies across a portfolio of food policy and regulation matters in global FMCG and NGO environments.

Fiona has more than 30 years' experience in the food industry in the areas of dairy, seafood, cereal-based foods, smallgoods, tea, simmer sauces and pastes, ingredients and infant formula. Fiona has previously worked for a large FMCG company in the role of Group Quality and Corporate Affairs Manager. In this role she was responsible for providing leadership across Australia and New Zealand in the areas of food policy and regulation; consumer affairs and communication; issues and crisis management and food quality and safety.

Fiona is a Professional member of the Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology. Fiona is currently serving as a Non-Executive Director and Deputy Chair of Healthy Kids. Fiona is a member of Allergy and Anaphylaxis Australia; an Associate Member of the Allergen Bureau and a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



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IN THE SCIENCE OF FEEDING OUR FUTURE**

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Purpose & Mission

Uniting food industry professionals in the science of feeding our future

To advance and inspire all food sector professionals through education, collaboration and recognition to champion a robust, innovative science based Australian food industry to meet future food needs.