

[News story: Food chain resilience in a changing world: conference report](#)

The 2018 Government Chemist Conference was a success, with over 100 delegates attending the event at BMA House on 13 and 14 June to hear experts discuss the challenges of providing food and drink for the public that is authentic, safe and sustainable. Approximately 50 different organisations were represented, including public analyst laboratories and contract testing laboratories, research associations, government, universities, instrument suppliers and food manufacturers.

[Julian Braybrook](#), the Government Chemist, opened the conference followed by a keynote lecture from BEIS Chief Scientific Adviser, [Professor John Loughhead](#). Professor Loughhead focused his talk on the current challenges in the provision of food that meets the needs of customers in terms of affordability, safety and authenticity at a time of global change. As well as geopolitical change, scientific advances and shifting attitudes are contributing to create a complex scenario for all stakeholders in the food and drink space. He explained how different departments within BEIS are working together and with the newly created Food and Drink Sector Council to develop and support a regulatory landscape that ensures the delivery of those customer requirements.

Other presentations across the two days included a talk by Franz Ulberth from the European Commission Joint Research Centre on the work they are doing to combat the global issue of food fraud, a theme that was expanded by Chi Singh Ng from the Government Laboratory in Hong Kong on his talk titled "Food Safety Challenge – Hong Kong perspective".

The recent Government Chemist referee work was presented by [Michael Walker](#), LGC, who highlighted some of the most unusual cases received during the year, including the classification of kratom, and definition of jelly cups. Delegates also heard presentations on the roles of some of the bodies responsible for ensuring food safety and authenticity, including the Public Analyst Service, the Food Authenticity Network, Food Standards Scotland, Public Health England and the challenges they face.

Dr Giles Yeo from Cambridge University offered an interesting introduction to the role genes play in obesity, although remarking that there are environmental factors which have a major effect, and Kate Cooper from Birmingham Food Council highlighted the need to communicate with the public in ways that are accessible and novel.

[The presentations from the conference are now available.](#)

Julian Braybrook, Government Chemist said:

The GC conference aims to bring together all stakeholders working

on issues affecting the resilience of the food chain supply, and once again it has delivered on that aim. I am particularly grateful to the excellent set of speakers who provided insightful information about food safety, authenticity and security. We look forward to continuing the conversation until we meet again in 2020.

Jon Griffin, President of the Association of Public Analysts and member of the GC Programme Expert Group:

The biennial Government Chemist Conference provides representatives from official laboratories the opportunity to gain an insight into current analytical method development and potential food and feed issues. This, together with the ability to interact with other professionals from the food and feed sector and relevant government departments, means attending this event is essential to maintain our knowledge base and professional competence.

In addition to support from the Government Chemist programme, sponsorship was received from DEFRA, FSA, Food Standards Scotland and the Association of Public Analysts Educational Trust.