

Co-op Own-Brand Technical Supplier Touchpoint Event-20260224_140117UTC-Meeting Recording

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Good afternoon, everybody. I'm Stephanie Blane and I'm delighted to welcome you to the Own Brand Technical Supplier Touchpoint. The reason we're holding this session today is that we have listened to you. We've heard that with all of the changes over the last few months, you'd like to understand how the GCL affects you, which is the Group Commercial and Logistics team, and we wanted to explain and help you understand how those changes affect you. The creation of the GCL took place just at the same time as the IGD conference back last year.

And it was set up in order to help us grow. We serve a number of customers. So unlike other retailers where we just have one set of stores to manage and buy for, we also serve 4000 wholesale outlets. We have our franchise business and we also have our societies. So we have over 8,000 points of presence and we've got a huge ambition to grow. And so change was inevitable to allow us to service all of our different customers across the group.

I've been at the co-op for just coming up two years and I've had the opportunity and privilege to understand how both commercial work, but now how technical and brand quality and agricultural works across the co-op business.

The great part about our brand is we have unwavering ethics, values and quality underpinning our co-op brand. And I've been blown away by the expertise of my team, across my technical team, my wider team, and I feel really positive about the way that we're setting ourselves up for the future.

So today you'll hear about some of the strategic priorities.

You'll get a technical plan from Phil and Martin. We'll then move over to Paul and Claire, who'll take you through the quality process. We'll have some closing remarks and then we'll open up for questions and answers. And this will be your opportunity to please ask questions and we'll hopefully be able to answer them. And if we can't, we'll certainly get back to you.

So thanks in advance. If we move over to the next slide, please.

So let me introduce you to my senior team. So as I said, you're going to hear from

some of these individuals today as we speak to you and tell you our plans. We've got Paul Dempsey, who heads up the quality and Process area. We've got Alexa, who heads up the product development area. Chris Hulme, who's our Head of Brand. Phil and Martin head up technical and Joseph heads up our agriculture Fisheries team within the GCL. If we go to the next slide.

So who are our technical experts? Well, I'm pleased to say you'll probably know most of these people. They've been around for quite some time and they are indeed our resident experts. So I'm not going to introduce everybody, but hopefully you'll be able to see who my senior team is within the technical remit. We're going to the next slide, please.

And now Cathryn doesn't directly work for me, but she certainly works very, very closely with me. And the reason I've put up this team is, again, many of you may have sat in the audience understanding, you know, how does it all work with ethics and Sustainability when predominantly my team look after the brand values across our

business. But what Cathryn does with her team is she looks after the group. So what we put out there in terms of our outward facing policies and commitments, Cathryn and her team uphold those across the group. So that includes our funeral care business and our insurance business. But let me absolutely reassure you that we all sit together.

We're all one big team and we all work on the same goals together. Next slide.

Now, what I wanted to share here is something that you'll probably, any of you who will be joining the IGD conference, which is a bigger, wider conference later this month, sorry, on the 5th of March, Matt Hood will be taking you through what is the GCL and what we're all about. And this slide really sums all of that up.

It's all about being accessible to our customers. I've already said we've got 8,000 points of presence. But the two areas that really matter within my team are the trusted value and the co-op difference. They're the areas that my team focus on, uphold and move forward.

And none of this happens, of course, without the best relationships and supplier relationships across our business. So thank you in advance for working so well with us. You come to the next slide.

And so then if I link that to what we are doing close to home, and hopefully what you'll see is that it absolutely links to the wider GCL mission and goals in terms of upholding the trustee position. My team

are here to provide consistent quality, contingency, working with you on capacity planning all the way through from our farms to our factories to our shelves.

We deliver the co-op difference through our own brand, setting the right differentiation from standards from the farm to the fork.

But none of this happens without being brilliant at the basics. We remain absolutely committed to being safe and legal at all times and we will not compromise on the food safety.

So then looking forward to the future.

Well, of course, again, I mentioned it before, working closely with suppliers is so important to us. We want to work end to end, understand all of our processes and work with you to make sure that those relationships are underpinned by great processes and making sure that our products ultimately

Hit the levels that we want.

You've talked to us already about understanding what our values are.

And some of the questions that came through from yourselves was around, you know, where are our commitments? Well, I can absolutely reassure you that our commitments to value have not changed, but some of the value in terms of, you know, our price position, our quality, etc. and the matrix between those two things absolutely need to be tested.

And we again, we want to work with you to make sure that we get that right.

Maintaining and supporting our commitments on animal welfare and sourcing British and working with the environment, of course, again, go absolutely unwavering in terms of our commitment.

What we probably haven't done as well as you've asked around is the longer term planning. So our commitment is to work on a three to five year plan and we'll share that with you when we're ready. But again, I'd really hope that our strategic suppliers work with us on these plans so that we're joining them and working on them together.

Innovation remains really important and understanding what advances there are in innovation are really important to our brand and our commitments to grow. So please share those innovation ideas. Let's work together on them.

and exploring artificial intelligence. So I know AI might mean a lot of things to a lot of people in the technical capacity, but in this instance, I'm talking about artificial intelligence. So in terms of advances in technology, hopefully with longer term plans and working with you, you feel confident enough to invest.

in advances and let's again work together on these. The next slide.

And why are we doing all of this? Well, it's all in service of products to be proud of. Where the co-op brand exists, we need to make sure we look after it, nurture it, and make sure that we are committed to the values that underpin it. So thank you. I'm now going to hand over

To Martin, who will talk you through our technical areas.

 **Martin Ford (Co-op Own Brand Team)** 10:10

Good afternoon, everyone. We're going to just give you a headline summary of our technical structure and our plans over the next few minutes. If you could click on to the next slide, please. I think the main thing to point out in the structure charts that you can see now is the stability we've had across that team. We've had very little changes in the team over the last 12 to 18 months. And we're really proud of this team. The expertise in the areas they cover gives us a real advantage, we think, over some of our competitors. If you could look to the next slide, the same is true of our central technical team, technical services and our ambient team, where again, very little, if any changes over the last 12 months. So I'm now going to hand over to Phil, who's going to talk through the top line a couple of our areas of technical strategy.

 **Phil Penny (Food Technical)** 11:17

Thanks, Martin.

About a year ago now, we started to talk to you about our technical plan. The building blocks of our technical plan were what you can see on the screen here. Our plan was around our people, our engagement with yourselves and the wider industry, and how we meet our future safe ambitions.

I unashamedly can say those building blocks still remain. Our focus on these three elements remains and we will continue to deliver on our plan and course correct where necessary to incorporate the ever-changing landscapes that we all live in. The first pillar is team focus.

Next slide, please.

Firstly, as Martin has just shown the structures and started to mention, we have a very stable team.

We filled our vacancies, but more importantly, we filled our vacancies with experts, experts in their category areas. They have knowledge of them category areas and

have worked in them areas for quite some time. We've spent the last 12 months investing in these people.

in training and upskilling, and I consider them to be the best in the retail industry. We now have a team of category experts working in your category areas, and we're here to help you. The team have lots of knowledge, they've lots of experience, and have seen lots of production sites.

So I know what good looks like and they're always on hand to assist and guide you if you have any issues.

Moving on to our engagement pillar. Next slide, please.

So here we've pulled out some of our key things from our engagement pillar. Now our supply partners, you, are our most important engagement touch points. Our relationship with our supply base is crucial and our number one priority. That's why we listened to last year's Advantage survey.

The main comments that we received from yourselves was that you didn't feel that you saw enough of the co-op technical team at your sites. So last year we increased our visits to your sites by over 20%.

And if you haven't seen us in a while, then please reach out to your technical contact and arrange for us to come and visit you.

We'd like to engage with, we'd like, we'd like Q to engage with us so that we can drive academic collaboration. So together we can be at the forefront of future thinking.

We want you to, we want to treat all our suppliers fairly. We want to fully embed our supplier performance programme. This will enable us to work with you to address any failing standards, but also to celebrate and review our engagement with our highest performing suppliers to engage on a more strategic platform.

And finally, together we can strengthen our regulatory and government engagement. We've spent the last 12 months building our relationships with these bodies so that we can lobby together where we want to achieve shared outcomes. So just to reiterate, you are supply partners.

of our key priority for engagement and I look forward to working with you all in the future. And I'm going to hand back to Martin to go through our future safe pillar.

MF **Martin Ford (Co-op Own Brand Team)** 14:46

To our future site, Kelly.

Thanks, Phil. And although this is what we describe as our future safe,



Phil Penny (Food Technical) 14:50

No, and.



Martin Ford (Co-op Own Brand Team) 14:57

pillar. I think it really follows on from the last slide, which is about engagement, because we need you guys to engage with us perhaps a bit more over the next 12 months than we've seen historically. So we're really keen to work with you on any ideas, any innovation you've got.

our teams will be absolutely receptive to working these through, hopefully to products for launch for consumers. And we're really keen on doing this in any regard, whether it can be for quality improvement, food safety, risk averse mitigation. We'll be there with you working hand in hand.

absolutely keen on doing that with you guys over the next 12 months. So please, there'll be contact details at the end of this presentation and I'm sure in the packs that we share afterwards, please make contact with Phil and myself or any of the seniors or indeed your category teams to talk through some opportunities there.

I don't think we can stress enough how much we want to develop this with you and work closely, collaboratively with all our suppliers on things that we can really drive forward for consumer safety and quality. So I'm now going to hand over to Paul, who's talking through the quality agenda.

Yeah.



Paul Dempsey (Head of Quality and Process) 16:20

Thanks, Martin. I'm Paul Dempsey. I'm the head of Quality and Process. I'm going to start by talking a little bit about co-op brand, which is a subject I actually love talking about. Now, working with you all, we expertly source, create, produce, sell products, and deliver the best we can to one of his owners and customers every single day.

Now, we as a team all care passionately about every bit of co-op brand, making sure people enjoy it. It's a brand that we're really proud of. We rigorously develop, we test, we improve, we consistently review our products so that we can be sure that customers get the quality that they want at a price that's great. Now, the role of co-op brand, as Stephanie said, is to bring to life our co-op difference across the 8,000 stores that we serve.

whilst delivering brilliant quality with great value in an easy and accessible way. Now,

it surprised a lot of people when we talk about the scale of our incredible brand. It's close to 4 billion in sales in a year. In 2026, we remain focused on where we can win. We do strategic missions, key seasonal moments with great taste in propositions, innovation,

strong value with values. We've already landed a bold health moment with the launch of Good Fuel and our Yes Health icon. This is on top of our continued emphasis on the meal mission with Served, events such as Easter and Valentine's Day, and we're still looking forward, staying true to the inside. We've got a fantastic summer offer planned, including new picnic proposition.

Other highlights include further evolution of served, a focus on driving opportunities in premium, and a market leading Christmas plan that's being developed currently. And we know that our customers will love it.

We've also made real progress and starting to shape our 2027 plans. That's been really challenging over the last few months, but we continue to look forward. We're working with teams cross-functionally here at Angel Square. We're starting these discussions with category teams and then with you in the near future. We'll also support the value mission by looking for efficiencies and cost management.

but our absolute priority is regarding our product quality and our sourcing standards. Can you touch on to the next slide, please? Thank you. So my role is to support these three brilliant teams, our labelling team, that's led by Erin, our process team, led by Diane, and our quality team, led by Claire. All will have interactions with our supplier base and work collaboratively with you and your teams on a regular basis. So labelling is a new addition.

to my team this year. I want to support their continued hard work. Unpacked messaging is a frontline communication to customers, keeping us legal, upholding our ethical standards by being honest and transparent, and showcasing the best of our brand by being really truly customer focused.

Our process team manage our activity. Every new launch, every product change, our work and project is kept on time by Diane and her team. I'm incredibly proud to say over 97% of launches last year landed in store on time. Now, that's despite the cyber attack, commercial restructure, changes to our calendar. Now, we can't do that without you.

So it's a number we can all be proud of. And continue to look for efficiencies in our process. And we've heard and are acting on the feedback about ensuring you have enough time in that process. But I did want to say thank you for the significant role

that you play with these teams. Your support is absolutely vital to the work that we do.

So the next slide. At the heart of our proposition is a clear and deliberate approach to quality as a part of the value equation. We aim for market leading quality, whereas the thing that matters most to our customers, and we manage it appropriately where price is the key driver of trust. Our quality strategy was built on data from strategic missions, category analysis, customer insights, and it ensures we invest in the right level of quality across our brand. Now, thanks to your continued support, we've made outstanding progress over the last 12 months since the new Quality Team was formed. We have implemented new ways of working and approaches that support our ambition of identifying issues and working collaboratively to find solutions that are faster.

Than any previous team setup would allow.

Our quality perception is trending positively, both from a brand tracking point of view, where we are eight points improved versus 2023, and at Your Store Your Say, which is our direct customer feedback we gather on a weekly basis. Now that scores our customer satisfaction on quality around 92%. It's one of the highest scoring metrics on our scorecard. Supplier visits increased significantly in 2025.

We've spent more than double the amount of time last year in your size and we did in 2024. We've introduced quality panels in Angel Square, including regular reviews in key categories such as produce and protein, and have driven a more product-led approach to quality with our teams. We also have robust independent data from well over 800 independent customer tests, confirming our quality position against the market, and across nearly 90% of our brand, but already either meeting our quality targets or actively reformulating products to get there.

We go to the next slide.

In the last year, we've transformed how we work with our suppliers to manage ongoing quality, using data and insights to identify risks earlier and focus our resources where they matter most. This enables us to address issues quickly, solve problems collaboratively, consistently prove outcome for customers. We spend time in stores and depots every week. We're reviewing products constantly,

We look at sales, waste and complaints data to focus our resource where it matters most to customers, and we use this to find the right solutions as quickly as possible.

I ask that you continue working closely with the quality team to ensure we deliver the

right specification and quality aligned to our customer needs and business priorities. We need to be able to build relationships with the quality team in the same way you have done with the technical and PD teams. We've mirrored the structures of both within our team, giving us expertise and focus across Chilled produce. ambient and protein teams, each led by a dedicated QA manager supported by their own teams. And we're all here to support you in delivering a brilliant brand for our customers. I'm going to hand over to Claire, our senior quality manager, who's going to talk about where we are and what's next.



Claire Yates (Food Technical) 22:10

So, we talk about where we are and what.

Good afternoon, everyone. So I'm going to take you on a bit of the journey of what we've done through 2025 and then looking ahead for 2026. So we started, we introduced a new team in 2024 and 2025 was all about setting those key foundations. And firstly, we want to thank you for your feedback.

and your support whilst we did this. So in 2025, we increased quality visits within our supply base, looking at products on the line, QAS reviews on the line, and really making quality the forefront of all those production runs, collaborating with suppliers, looking at

opportunities to improve quality and also when we had challenges where we, you know, had trying to fix it very quickly to make sure the brand was right on shelf and having those great ideas and fast thinking. Building the team for success, we've done a huge amount of training, as Phil and Martin alluded to, getting the team to be experts in those categories.

We've now got 4 QA managers who are experts in each of their category areas who can support their team with their ongoing development and training.

Feedback, we still ask for this if things aren't right or things are, you know, working great, you know, good feedback is really important to us as well, is, you know, tell us what's, you know, tell us how you feel, tell us about those visits and how we can shape that for the future.

Collaborative quality process reviews. So we started doing supply reviews on those key launches, things like served, you know, it could fuel and looking at things of the opportunities of where we can take learnings for next time, or also, you know, things that we can spread into different categories. And then increase the attendance at first production runs. So supporting the wider technical team,

and, you know, having increased attendance across the rooms, particularly on those key calendar points like Christmas and having the team there to support. So what's next? Still a journey. So what's coming in 2026 is we're going to be implementing post-launch reviews where you, our partner suppliers, will be invited to those sessions.

where we can collaboratively review quality of products together, look at opportunities, whether opportunities for value, quality, safety additions and actually having a collaborative session. There will also be the team will be going out and spending even more time with the suppliers. So the team now have set KPIs on doing visits. So you will be getting the quality team reach out to you and asking you to come to your sites, stand on the end of the line with the QAS and they're there to help and also making sure that the product is of the optimum quality and ensuring that when it gets to store It's what it should be.

Keep talking to us. That's my biggest ask from today is, you know, talk to the technical team, talk to the policy team, you know, please reach out to me. If you've got, is there any opportunities of what we could do differently? If you need support in the Depot, you know, transit trials, etc., please reach out to us because we're here to help.

Continuing our visibility, we will need, you know, we'll need some support of suppliers because there is, you know, people will come in that haven't necessarily done those products. But getting those people out into suppliers, looking at the end-to-end process and watching, you know, the products go down the line.

And the last thing for me is when we do things like QAS reviews, etc, it's having that impactful data. So what we're looking at is how we can share those key quality metrics that are not only important to you, but important to us and how we can share that to get the best out of our data.

So my last ask is if you've got any opportunities, please reach out to us. Any feedback is greatly received. I will now hand back over to Stephanie.



Paul Dempsey (Head of Quality and Process) 26:23

Thank you, Claire. And thank you to all the speakers earlier. So what I just thought I'd do is share some final reflections before we move over to the main event, which is the Q and A's. Okay, so if you could put the next slide on, please. So hopefully, you'll have heard from the team what our priorities are,

and where our focus is and how it fits in, most importantly, with the whole GCL ambitions of our business. So in summary, you've heard it a number of times, we are a stable team and we are a team of experts and we want to work with you, who are also our experts in the supply base.

We want to uphold our trusted position, delivering the co-op difference.

We must be brilliant at the basics though. So we must never lose sight of the fact that food safety is the bread and butter of what we need to do, and we need to make sure that we are brilliant at creating those safe moments and making sure that our due diligence is watertight.

We obviously want to work with you even closer, our supply base.

and our commitment is we will be clear about our proposition to support the value and values that we're heading towards.

We will maintain our commitments across animal welfare, British sourcing and the environment.

We will be looking ahead. We will be working further into the future and shaping what that looks like over a three to five year plan to strengthen and drive our quality and our brand values.

But lastly, just tell us about your innovation, including all of your initiatives that could help us reduce the risk in our supply base and improve our product quality.

Exec slide.

But before I hand over to Q&A, I suppose I just wanted to use this opportunity to say that many of you have joined this event in the past, but we are holding a celebratory event at the end of our annual IGD event in September. It's our pioneer event.

in the evening. It's an evening of celebration, collaboration and networking and all in aid of the charity that is our industry charity, the Grocery Aid. There is a link there on the slide. So if you aren't aware of it, I can tell you your commercial colleagues will be aware of it. So please do speak to them.

because we'd love you to be in the room with us and we'd love you to be able to collaborate with us.

New news this year is we will be having a technical excellence award. So as well as a night of celebration, we do hand out our supplier awards and we've traditionally always had an award for our best own label product development, but we also want to hold a technical excellence award to make sure that we celebrate the supplier that has contributed the most in this field of expertise.

So, without further ado, I'm now going to hand over to, is it Richard, and we'll hold, we'll go through the Q&A's. Thank you.

 **Richard Taylor (Food - Technical)** 29:37

and we'll hold and go through the Q and A's. Thank you.

Right, good afternoon. A couple of questions we've had come in so far. One for the quality team. Quality collaboration has significantly improved recently. Are these changes here to stay?

Yes.

 **Claire Yates (Food Technical)** 30:00

Hello, first question, Rich. Yeah, here to stay. It's still very much we're learning. Yeah, we are learning every single day. And yeah, it's here to stay. I think for me, the journey in the past 12 months has

Changed A lot; there's still lots to go out, so yeah, definitely here to stay.

 **Richard Taylor (Food - Technical)** 30:17

changed a lot. There's still lots to go at. So yeah, definitely here to stay. Good stuff.

Thank you very much, Claire. Technical, Phil Martin. Are there any plans, changes to co-ops, codes of practises or sourcing standards?

 **Claire Yates (Food Technical)** 30:24

Hi.

 **Phil Penny (Food Technical)** 30:35

Yeah, go on, I'll take that.

 **Richard Taylor (Food - Technical)** 30:37

Hello!

 **Phil Penny (Food Technical)** 30:39

I'd say that the code of practise and sourcing standards aren't a static thing. They are constantly evolving. So we have a structured plan where we review all our codes of practise and sourcing standards on a periodic basis, but we also review them when changes happen in the industry as well.



Richard Taylor (Food - Technical) 30:39

Say that the sausage time.

I think they are constantly evolving, so we have a...



Phil Penny (Food Technical) 30:59

So they'll never be static. They will continually move on. But we do try and limit the amount of changes we do to them codes of practise and standards.

Op.



Richard Taylor (Food - Technical) 31:21

Yeah.

And final question of the day, Stephanie, what are you most excited for in the role, in the new role? Well, I'm excited by lots of things.



Paul Dempsey (Head of Quality and Process) 31:30

I'm excited by lots of things. I wouldn't be able to pick out one particular thing. I'm delighted that the teams that have come together under my leadership, be it technical, own brand development, quality and agriculture, they're all areas of personal interest and

well, quite frankly, passion. So, you know, I am delighted to be in this role. So what I'm looking forward to, I guess, is just continuing the legacy that has been created already by my predecessors. I have inherited an incredibly strong team. I've inherited some brilliant ethics that are only enviable by many.

Some of you may have known that I worked in another retailer before I joined the co-op, which also had relatively high standards, but the co-op has the values that I truly believe in. And so what I'm looking forward to the most is just continuing that work and evolving it to make sure that the co-op remains relevant, current, and that we grow together.

and hopefully we have a little bit of fun along the way.



Richard Taylor (Food - Technical) 32:35

Good stuff, thank you very much, Stephanie. Thank you.



Paul Dempsey (Head of Quality and Process) 32:35

Mister, thank you very much.

So I think that probably leads us to the end of this session and there aren't any more questions. If anybody has any further questions, then please do contact us. Hopefully we've made ourselves known to you. We've made ourselves visible. So please just ask us any questions and we'd be delighted to answer those and work with you in the future.

Thank you very much and I look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you.



Eleanor Scott (Co-op Events Team) 33:24

Oh.

And.

Oh.

Oh.

Own by you, right by you.

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