



By Mike Knowles

Wednesday 15th July 2020, 12:27 GMT

Fruitbox: What will supermarkets look like in future?



Original image: Whole Foods Market

SupermarketGuru Phil Lempert explains how grocery shopping is changing and how other channels might react

Phil Lempert believes many supermarkets were selling fresh fruit and vegetables wrong even before the coronavirus pandemic began. Now, with the crisis causing dramatic changes to the entire food distribution business, he thinks a radical overhaul of the supermarket format is coming, while foodservice outlets could see new opportunities to offer consumers an attractive alternative place to buy their fresh produce.

Lempert certainly knows a thing or two about what makes supermarkets tick, not to mention where they need to improve. Known to many as the SupermarketGuru, he makes regular appearances talking about grocery trends on CNN, NBC, ABC, Fox News and even the Oprah Winfrey show.

Speaking to Chris White in the latest

"Imagine you've got a shopping list of 20-25 items. In order to acquire those items you have to walk past 45,000 items. That's not very efficient time-wise and attention-wise," he comments. "If you have a local restaurant with those top 20 items that people buy, it's much easier to go in, maybe get some prepared food, pick up your groceries and head out."

Hosted by Chris White in London, Fruitbox now attracts a big audience across the global fruit and vegetable business that tunes in twice a week to hear exclusive interviews and expert analysis.

Produced by Fruitnet Media International, the

episode of Fruitnet's conversation series Fruitbox, Lempert casts a critical eye over supermarket fresh produce departments and explains where they can improve.

In particular, he says the modern, large-scale approach to fruit and vegetable merchandising that now typifies so many of the world's grocery stores, especially in the US, is ripe for a rethink.

"We need to change that whole system," he comments. "We need to sell only those produce items that are in season."

With consumption rates all too often below the recommended level, something radical needs to happen in the stores to push the per-capita intake higher, he suggests.

"For me, it's all about taste and flavour," he explains. "If we were just to sell those

produce items that were in season, the produce department would shrink substantially, but we would have fresher, better-tasting and more nutritious produce. Plus it would be less expensive."

During the interview, Lempert looks at what the supermarket of the future might look like. He also comments on the rise and predicted fall of retail's answer to foodservice the grocerant, the apparent arrival of a new distribution channel in the form of the so-called restaumart, the expansion of e-commerce and discount retailing, an expected increase in the popularity of scratch cooking, and the great upheaval being seen in the restaurant business as a result of Covid-19.

For Lempert, restaurant businesses struggling to cope with the new post-Covid landscape may find a way out of the crisis by doing something supermarkets cannot.

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show is essential listening for everyone in the fresh produce industry.

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