



By Mike Knowles

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Fruitbox 59 - David Hughes, Imperial College London

Find out what future trends Dr Food sees ahead for fresh produce, and where you should invest next in horticulture

David Hughes, known to many as Dr Food, has just been handed a hypothetical shopping trolley stuffed with several billion dollars, then asked where in the food industry he wants to invest the money.

"Where would I put it? High-value horticulture," he replies. "I would pick the highest value crop that I can find, and one that is coming over the horizon now at pace."

Listeners to this week's episode of Fruitbox can discover the single horticultural product that Hughes, Emeritus Professor of Food Marketing at Imperial College London and a renowned food business expert, regards as the most promising.

That revelation comes at the end of a fascinating discussion about the way we eat and drink, focusing on areas relevant to the fresh fruit and vegetable business

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like health, sustainability, commoditisation, pricing, and the recent dramatic rise in the number of different retail and distribution models.

"The big change, which is not Covid-19 related, is the increasing number of routes to the consumer," Hughes comments. "In a relatively short period of time, we've seen those proliferate. Yes, there's a supermarket. Yes, you can get it online. You can be a pure-play Ocado, or a multichannel Tesco or Walmart. And then there are meal boxes, for example."

Companies that would have been beyond our imagination ten years ago – the likes of HelloFresh, DoorDash, or Deliveroo – are rerouting the supply chain, he adds.

"Suddenly that's another route to the consumer that's taking market share from traditional retailers. I think that's the big struggle and the challenge for

traditional supermarkets. If they're not on these new routes, including online, then it's bye-bye for them I think."

Hosted by Chris White in London, Fruitbox now attracts a big audience across the global fruit and vegetable business that tunes in every week to hear exclusive interviews and expert analysis. Produced by Fruitnet Media International, the show is essential listening for everyone in the fresh produce industry.

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