ENVIRONMENT SEMINAR 2026 | SESSION REPORT

The future of the FPA: practical support, a stronger voice and the next generation

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Ellen Daniels, CEO, Foodservice Packaging Association

Ellen Daniels is chief executive of the Foodservice Packaging Association (FPA). In her update to delegates, she outlined how the association is responding to members' priorities, strengthening its engagement with government and regulators, raising its public profile and investing in future talent through the Young and Emerging Professionals initiative.

KEY POINTS

- Members want practical guidance on packaging EPR, the Recyclability Assessment Methodology (RAM) and other regulatory requirements.
- The FPA is strengthening engagement with PackUK, policymakers and industry partners to communicate how regulation works in practice.
- Greater media visibility is helping establish a material-neutral voice for the foodservice packaging sector.
- The Young and Emerging Professionals (YEPs) initiative and forthcoming jobs board aim to develop talent and improve awareness of careers in the sector.

FULL SESSION REPORT

The FPA must increasingly help businesses translate packaging regulation into workable decisions, while ensuring that the foodservice packaging sector has a strong voice in the development and implementation of policy, chief executive Ellen Daniels told delegates at the FPA's Environment Seminar.

Opening the programme following interim executive chair Paul Synnott's welcome, Daniels set out the priorities shaping the association's future, drawing on feedback from a summer membership survey and the changing policy environment. She emphasised that members need more than updates on what legislation is coming: they need to understand what it means for their businesses, how to respond and how to judge whether the reforms deliver the intended environmental outcomes.

Putting member priorities at the centre

The membership survey had reinforced the importance of practical help with packaging extended producer responsibility (EPR), the Recyclability Assessment Methodology (RAM) and the wider regulatory landscape. Daniels said members wanted guidance they could use to navigate changing obligations and to understand the commercial and operational consequences of new requirements.

Members had also raised concerns about non-compliance, environmental claims and the potential disadvantage faced by businesses meeting their obligations when competitors were not. Alongside technical support, they wanted the FPA to remain visible and actively engaged in representing their interests.

Bridging the gap between policy and implementation

Daniels highlighted the FPA's regular discussions with PackUK as an important channel for communicating the practical experience of businesses. She argued that there can be a significant difference between how a

regulation is intended to operate and what happens when companies have to implement it. Trade associations can bridge that gap by drawing together evidence from across a supply chain, identifying common difficulties and ensuring that those responsible for implementation hear them.

The political landscape added to the challenge. In the months since she joined the FPA, changes in government, ministerial responsibilities and policy priorities had reinforced the need for the association to build relationships with new ministers, officials and policymakers, while remaining ready to respond quickly to developments.

She also stressed the value of collaboration with other trade associations and industry organisations where interests overlap. The fact that legislation has been agreed, she said, does not mean that opportunities to influence its implementation have disappeared. Guidance, communication and unforeseen consequences remain areas where industry can make a meaningful contribution.

Building the FPA's profile and credibility

Daniels reported increasing proactive interest from journalists and trade publications seeking the FPA's views on matters affecting the sector. That growing recognition, she suggested, was important not simply for generating coverage but for ensuring that foodservice packaging has a credible and informed voice in wider debates.

She emphasised the Association's material-neutral position and the need to challenge misconceptions or misinterpretations of the industry. A more visible FPA can help bring practical experience into public discussions of packaging performance, regulation and sustainability.

Investing in young and emerging professionals

Looking beyond immediate policy pressures, Daniels introduced the FPA's Young and Emerging Professionals (YEPs) initiative and welcomed its founding cohort attending the Seminar. She recognised Henry Lee as chair of the group and encouraged others to become involved.

The initiative is intended to help people at an early stage in their careers make connections across the foodservice packaging supply chain, learn about the breadth of roles and businesses in the sector, and develop the confidence, networks and skills needed to progress. Daniels also welcomed students from Sheffield Hallam University attending the event.

She framed the programme as part of longer-term succession planning: today's emerging professionals will eventually lead businesses, develop new products and respond to future regulatory challenges. Giving them access to industry discussions now would help prepare them for those responsibilities.

A jobs board to showcase careers

Daniels also confirmed that the FPA had been developing a sector jobs board, which was expected to go live shortly after the seminar. The initiative is designed to increase awareness of career opportunities and help the industry attract and retain talented people.

Together, the YEPs initiative and the FPA Jobs Board form part of a broader effort to raise the profile of foodservice packaging as a sector offering varied and rewarding career paths.

The priorities ahead

Summing up, Daniels identified three connected priorities: continuing to give members practical support; strengthening the FPA's influence and its promotion of high standards; and investing in the next generation of industry talent. Compliance, accreditation and consumer confidence would remain important elements of that work.

She returned to the importance of listening to members and ensuring that the association's work reflects the challenges facing businesses. Her message set the tone for the Seminar: the value of policy discussions lies not only in understanding the proposals, but in developing practical responses that support businesses and deliver meaningful environmental outcomes.

SESSION PHOTOGRAPHY

[Insert approved photograph of Ellen Daniels presenting at the Seminar, with caption.]

Source and publication note

This is an editorial account and not a verbatim transcript.