

Fellow – Abby Thompson

With a distinguished career marked by exceptional leadership and technical expertise, she made a profound impact on the food science field. As Chief Operations Officer at Miruku, she led strategic initiatives, managed multimillion-dollar budgets, and built robust national and international networks. Her tenure as CEO of FoodHQ led to significant advancements in food science and innovation, earning her a reputation as a trusted advisor and mentor. She navigated complex regulatory landscapes and demonstrated remarkable strategic planning and operational execution skills, driving successful outcomes across various roles. Her innovative approach and problem-solving acumen have consistently delivered high standards of service and quality. With a strong background in R&D, she led groundbreaking projects, secured funding, and fostered valuable partnerships. Her contributions to the food sector, including co-founding Emerging Proteins New Zealand and authoring key industry reports, have shaped policy and driven industry transformation. She has actively engaged with the Central Branch, presenting fascinating talks and embodying the NZIFST values. She invented and organised the “Food Tech Big Day Out,” enabling hundreds of high school students to explore food businesses and consider careers in Food Technology.



Fellow – Nicola Wilson

Our next Fellow stands out as a leader in New Zealand's food science and technology sector, with a career marked by innovation, industry advancement, community service, and a passion for inspiring the next generation. At Leaft Foods, she has been instrumental in developing and scaling a novel protein extraction process from green leaves, delivering sustainable, hypoallergenic, and nutritionally complete food ingredients. Her work bridges science, engineering, and product design, contributing new knowledge to the field and supporting the growth of New Zealand's plant-based food sector. During her tenure at Goodman Fielder, she contributed to the development and optimisation of food products for one of New Zealand's largest and most influential food manufacturers, furthering technology transfer and best practice within the industry. She actively shares her expertise, mentoring colleagues and engaging with students, and is known for her ability to communicate complex concepts in accessible ways, both in professional settings and public forums. She is a visible and vocal advocate for the profession, regularly participating in outreach and networking initiatives, and is a positive public image for food technology in New Zealand. Her service extends beyond her professional role: as a volunteer with the Coastguard, she has participated in lifesaving efforts, demonstrating leadership, teamwork, and a commitment to community wellbeing. Her background as an accomplished sailor and her environmental advocacy further reinforces her dedication to sustainability and responsible innovation in food science.



Fellow – Steve Taylor

Our next Fellow is a seasoned researcher and thought leader in the field of nutrition and dairy research, with 31 years of experience at the Fonterra Research and Development Centre and its predecessor, New Zealand Dairy Research Institute. Holding a PhD in Chemical Engineering from the University of Cambridge and an MBA from Massey University, his expertise spans bioprocess engineering, chemistry, physics, mathematics, and biology. His career has been dedicated to developing innovative nutritional products and exploring the potential of various protein ingredients. He distinguished himself in three key areas: protein processing, artificial intelligence, and talent development. He has been at the forefront of developing differentiated functional whey protein ingredients, leading teams in the discovery of bioactives and formulating products for nutritional applications. He championed the use of AI to enhance R&D efficiency at FRDC, driving outcomes that shape future research processes. He has been instrumental in Fonterra's talent development program, mentoring students and fostering collaboration between schools, universities, and industry. His influence is evident in his thought leadership, expert opinion, and exceptional communication skills. His dedication to adding value to the dairy industry and creating beneficial outputs for consumers worldwide positions him as a thought leader in dairy protein and nutrition research. His professionalism and scientific ethos shine in all his endeavours..



Fellow – Claire Redman

Our next Fellow is a distinguished professional in the food science and technology sector, with a career marked by exceptional contributions to food product development and safety. She worked with both small and large global food companies in New Zealand, demonstrating her versatility and expertise. At Plant and Food Research, she developed innovative processes, such as converting waste streams into value-added products and creating health-based oil spreads. Her work in regulatory compliance and quality control for FMCG companies has ensured the safe production of ready-to-eat chilled products.

Her role in managing new product development at Hemp Connect involved hands-on process and product optimisation, compliance systems management, and staff training. Her experience in planning and executing large development projects, such as the broccoli juice research project, showcases her ability to manage time-sensitive samples and complex analyses. She has also been instrumental in developing food safety policies and coordinating health and safety programs. Her dedication to food science is further evidenced by her involvement in the NZIFST, where she has served as a committee member and judge for secondary school food technology awards. Her career exemplifies the NZIFST values of professional excellence and leadership.

