



NZIFST Elected Officer Nominees

MAY 2025

WENDY BAYLISS

Chathurika Samarakoon

Chathurika Samarakoon is a professional member of the New Zealand Institute of Food Science and Technology (NZIFST) and has been actively involved since 2017. She served as Waikato Branch Chair for 3.5 years and represented the branch on the NZIFST National Board, where she contributed to initiatives including the introduction of FED Talks. In 2024, she was awarded the Mary D. Earle Mentorship Award in recognition of her support for emerging food technologists.

Ms. Samarakoon is a Principal Lecturer at Wintec and Programme Coordinator for the Diplomas in Applied Science (Levels 5 and 6). She holds a BSc (Hons) in Food Science and Technology from the University of Peradeniya (Sri Lanka), a Master of Engineering Studies in Food Process Engineering from the University of Auckland and is currently pursuing a PhD in Food Science at Auckland University of Technology.

She also brings industry experience in quality assurance, product development, and R&D across multiple food sectors. Her combined academic and professional background supports her continued contribution to NZIFST at both regional and national levels.



Craig Houston

NZIFST has embarked on a major body of work to reinvigorate the institute. I am a firm believer in this pursuit and keen put the work in to help it progress.

Most of my working life has been centred around food production and ancillary services. This has been in production, quality control, food safety and NPD project management. I have been a member of NZIFST for over 10 years and was made a Fellow last year.

It is now time to give back to the Institute.



Grant Boston

At this year's conference I will step down as Honorary Treasurer after six years, before then I was the Central branch board representative. I have worked with the rest of the Board and Executive on the development of the NZIFST strategic roadmap and am standing again to help see the results of our work.

In my day job I am a policy adviser in the biosecurity policy team at the Ministry for Primary Industries. I joined that team after 8 years in Biosecurity New Zealand working in biosecurity responses and readiness. Sometime in my distant past I worked, like many in the food industry, for the dairy industry at the NZDRI/FRDC.



Paulette Elliott

I'm currently serving as an Elected Officer on the NZIFST Executive Committee and would be delighted to continue contributing to the future of our institute and its members, so I am standing for election in 2025.

Since joining NZIFST in 2001, I've enjoyed the privilege of serving on the Canterbury branch committee for over a decade, including in the role of Chair. I've also been involved in organising several national conferences and proudly chaired the 2019 Conference in Christchurch. In 2015, I was honoured to be awarded a Fellowship of the Institute.

My career has taken me across many areas of New Zealand's food industry, a sector I feel really passionate about with my commitment driven by supporting growth, innovation, and practical outcomes for our sector. I recently returned to industry in a hands-on role as Senior Product and Packaging Technologist with Dairyworks.

I have enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about governance and strategic approaches through obtaining Chartered Director status with the New Zealand Institute of Directors and my work at KPMG, and I'm eager to continue supporting the important work already underway to refresh our vision, mission, and through leading the vibrant industry workstreams.

NZIFST has been a constant and valued part of my professional journey. I remain passionate about helping the Institute evolve to meet the changing needs of our members and our industry. As a committed Fellow, I bring energy, fresh ideas, and a collaborative spirit to the table.

