Press Release

Paul Polman, Ken Goldberg and John Elkington to headline food sovereignty debate at Gulfood Manufacturing 2026

Leading voices in business, sustainability and robotics to explore how investment and intelligent manufacturing can strengthen food security and industrial resilience

UAE, October 29, 2026: Gulfood Manufacturing 2026 will bring together three leading industry experts, Paul Polman, Business Leader, Investor, Philanthropist and Former CEO of Unilever; Ken Goldberg, William S. Floyd Jr. Distinguished Professor of Engineering at UC Berkeley AI Research Steering Committee and Chief Scientist at Ambi Robotics, and John Elkington, Executive Chairman of Volans, for a session titled 'The Food Sovereignty Agenda: Capital and the Intelligent Factory'.

Held as part of the Global Leaders Series, a high-impact leadership and investment forum organised by the **Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET) and inD Events, the session will take place on November 3, 2026, from 11:00 am to 12:00 pm at Al Multaqua Ballroom, Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC).** Moderated by Massimo Marioni, former senior editor at Fortune and CNN journalist, the discussion will examine how purpose-led business, long-term investment and intelligent technology can redefine food manufacturing, exploring who will finance the next generation of factories, how nations can build domestic production capabilities and how the Gulf can lead the next phase of industrial transformation.

Paul Polman will bring his experience in corporate leadership and sustainable business transformation to the discussion. As a co-architect of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Polman has contributed to redefining the role of businesses in addressing global challenges while creating long-term economic value.



Commenting on his participation, **Polman**, said: *"When we talk about food security, the question is not simply how we produce more food. It is also how we build a food system that is*

resilient, affordable and sustainable for the longer term. For the Gulf region, this is especially important. With limited natural resources and growing demand, the choices we make today about investments, technology and supply chains will shape the region's food future. Businesses have an enormous opportunity here, not just to improve efficiency within individual factories, but also to work across the entire value chain to create a stronger, more competitive food system."

Ken Goldberg will provide his applied research perspective in the session. His work in robotics and AI examines how emerging technologies can move beyond laboratory environments to address practical challenges in manufacturing and other industries.

"AI and robotics are going to create new opportunities for manufacturing of foods to make it more productive, adaptable, resilient and convenient for everyone. But the real question is how we are going to move beyond the existing experiments in research labs to technologies that solve real problems for real people", **said Goldberg.**

Meanwhile, John Elkington, well-known as the 'Godfather of Sustainability', will contribute his thoughts on how the sector can ensure sustainability across its operations. With decades of experience working with business leaders, Elkington has originated the Triple Bottom Line concept, which expands traditional corporate reporting from a single financial measure to include social and environmental impact.

Elkington said: *"Every food system on earth is now being stress tested by climate, conflict and disruptions in the global supply chains. I have spent five decades working with business leaders to embrace the change agenda. But I have never seen such disruption on a scale that we see today. But crisis, is also opportunity. I truly believe that winners in food manufacturing will not simply be those who produce more food, but those who produce it differently. At Gulfood Manufacturing in Dubai, I expect to meet leaders who will be thinking through how*



we address these challenges and benefit from opportunities in relation to the nexus of agriculture, food, water, nutrition and health, and crucially the sustainability agenda."

In addition to the panel discussion, Polman will take part in a one-on-one interview titled 'Leading Business Transformation in a Changing World'. Drawing on his leadership experience at Unilever and his work on Net Positive, the conversation will examine how businesses can respond to uncertainty, redesign established business models and turn long-term sustainability ambitions into measurable action. The discussion will also address the opportunities available to businesses in the region and the way leadership needs to advance to deliver lasting change.

The 12th edition of Gulfood Manufacturing will be held from November 3 to 5, 2026, at Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC). Co-located with GulfHost, ISM Middle East and Private Label Middle East, the event will bring together 2,500 exhibitors from 79 exhibiting countries across 21 halls. The four exhibitions will span ingredients, food processing, packaging, supply chain and manufacturing technology, as well as professional foodservice equipment, confectionery and private label.

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