

# Sustainabulletin: Honest Crust in Focus

A conversation with  
**Alastair Johns, Head of Brand & Category**  
at Fresh Food for Now Company

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## Honest Crust is a food to go brand that has sustainability at its core.

With its 'do good' principles encompassing issues such as food poverty and plastic free packaging, this is a brand that demonstrates through actions not words how to have a positive impact in the food to go sector.

We caught up with **Alastair Johns, Head of Brand & Category at Fresh Food for Now Company**, and responsible for bringing Honest Crust to market in what has been (in his words) 'a labour of love', to learn about his experiences...



Eat good Do good

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*“Honest Crust is a food to go brand with a difference. [...] We’re not just about food, we have a great cause too. A cause focused on tackling food poverty in the UK.”*

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Alastair Johns, Head of Brand & Category  
at Fresh Food for Now Company



**How would you introduce Honest Crust to someone who has never heard of it before?**

*“Honest Crust is a food to go brand with a difference. It stands for something more than our competitors.*

*We’re not just about food, we have a great cause too. A cause focused on tackling food poverty in the UK.*

*Our products might have a similar taste and similar price to our competitors, but Honest Crust has a little bit of good around the edges too.*

*We want to encourage people to make a different decision at lunchtime and to make that a positive choice.”*

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## How are you taking steps towards more sustainable solutions?

*"We have a number of 'do good' principles that are built into the DNA of the brand.*

*On the social front, we work with FareShare, an amazing food distribution charity which minimises food waste by acting as the middle man between the food industry and those in need of food.*

*On the environmental front, this is mainly to do with packaging at the moment. We were the first company to launch a plastic free sandwich pack into the food to go sector.*

*Health is our other agenda. 50% of our range is under 400 calories, we've reduced salt content and we offer vegetarian and vegan options too."*

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## **What feedback have you had from your customers so far?**

*“The reception has been really positive. We won a silver at the F&B Awards last year and were finalists at The Sammies, Charity Times Awards and Food & Drink Federation.”*

*In terms of trade, when we chat with buyers we have a talking point beyond product and price. Our principles are big things for buyers to hook into. We are stocked in Bugden's and Londis, but we faced competition from Urban Eat to get listings there. They decided to go with Honest Crust, which was relatively unknown at the time, partly because of the principles we have in our brand.”*

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***“Have a clear idea about what you are challenging or championing, and be single minded about it. Above and beyond anything else, that is the most powerful thing.”***

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**Alastair Johns, Head of Brand & Category  
at Fresh Food for Now Company**

Not all heroes  
wear capes.  
Some make  
sandwiches.

#ActiveAte



**What advice would you give to other brands looking to be more sustainable?**

*"If you are launching a brand, you need to think about something that will make a difference. Have a clear idea about what you are challenging or championing, and be single minded about it. Above and beyond anything else, that is the most powerful thing.*

*Timing also has a lot to do with success. If you can align with conversations that are already happening, it will help to amplify the brand.*

*An example of this was Happy Eggs, a brand I launched a few years ago. At the time, there was a big conversation going on around free range. Happy Eggs launched and become a brand that offered clarity – a voice for free range and education for consumers who didn't really understand what it was all about. Happy Eggs became a beacon of the category and the go to brand. It wouldn't have been as successful if it launched now."*

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**What other brands making a difference are you inspired by?**

*“Honest Crust is trying to be a challenger brand. We’re inspired by brands that go above and beyond, like Tony’s Chocolonely.*

*They have a clear mission - ‘together we’ll make chocolate 100% slave free’ - but they also offer a premium product experience with no compromise.”*



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With incredibly tasty chocolate we show the world chocolate can be made with better packaging and the way we treat cocoa farmers.

**Alone we make slave free chocolate. Together we make all chocolate 100% slave free. So we ask you to join in.**

The more people choose slave free and share our story, the sooner 100% slave free becomes the norm in chocolate. The choice is yours. Are you in?

Join our movement and like or follow us:

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**CRAZY ABOUT CHOCOLATE, SERIOUS ABOUT PEOPLE**

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***“What is more important – is it being fully recyclable or plastic free? How can we help the [food to go] sector to think about a picture broader than just plastic free?”***

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**Alastair Johns, Head of Brand & Category  
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## **What more could the food to go sector do to be more sustainable?**

*“We need to continue to address plastic and packaging issues. There is a great deal of discussion right now about single use plastics and rightly so, but we need to broaden that debate.*

*What is more important – is it being fully recyclable or plastic free? How can we help the sector to think about a picture broader than just plastic free? In certain areas fully recyclable plastic is the right thing to use. You might remove one piece of packaging, replace it with another and reduce the shelf life which creates more food waste.*

*There is a balance to strike about what we should be doing, there is not one answer, and it is about more than just removing plastic. It's something we're constantly discussing at Honest Crust and we need the whole sector to engage in the issue.”*

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**And finally, given your experience do you end up believing that FMCG and Sustainability can be bed-fellows or are they by definition acting against one another?**

*“The biggest thing I would say is that it’s not a choice, they have to. Fast Moving Consumer Goods are not going to disappear overnight and we are not going to stop consuming in the way that we do any time soon.*”

*Some of the biggest corporations, Coke, P&G, Unilever, are all doing the right things and have the budget and infrastructure to tackle sustainability issues. Smaller brands are nimble and can start with sustainability in mind. The challenge is in the middle ground where businesses may not be set up to be sustainable. The question for them is how quickly they can catch up.*

*Every retailer you speak to wants to know about your sustainability measures. You have to have a plan. If you don’t, you won’t be relevant. We all have to be more conscious about what our impacts are and how we can control them.”*

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