

Airline Catering Association prepares for inaugural Leadership Symposium in Amsterdam



Fabio Gamba, Managing Director, Airline Catering Association

The Airline Catering Association ([ACA](#)) is gearing up for its inaugural Leadership Symposium, set to take place in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, next month from February 26 to 28. This groundbreaking event promises to unite key players in the airline catering sector to address pressing industry challenges and chart a sustainable course for the future.

According to Fabio Gamba, Managing Director at ACA, the symposium represents a milestone in the association's journey.

“The ACA has been around for six years, but for various reasons, we hadn't had the opportunity to engage with our members and the broader industry in this way until now,” Gamba tells media partner *PAX International*.

The ACA was officially established in 2018. It is headquartered in Brussels, Belgium, and represents the airline catering industry globally, focusing on issues such as sustainability, food safety and regulatory compliance.

Gamba says the disruption caused by COVID-19 delayed such initiatives, but ACA's membership has since grown to include 20 major stakeholders, representing more than 50 percent of inflight meals globally. This includes companies such as [dnata](#), [LSG Sky Chefs](#) and [gategroup](#).

“It’s the right time to open up and establish the ACA as a legitimate, representative voice for the sector,” he explains.

Amsterdam, the ideal backdrop

Amsterdam is an ideal location for the ACA Leadership Symposium due to its status as a central hub for business and aviation in Europe, and it provides ACA President Michiel van der Eijk, CEO of [KLM Catering Services](#), the opportunity to highlight its services and capabilities.

“It felt natural to host the first edition here,” Gamba notes, adding that future editions will likely rotate locations based on leadership’s home country, reinforcing the global nature of the initiative.

Amsterdam’s Schiphol Airport ([AMS](#)) is one of Europe’s busiest and most efficient airports, serving as a key hub for passenger traffic. Its connectivity to more than 300 destinations worldwide and modern infrastructure make it a prime location for airline and catering industry professionals to gather.

AMS is also the base for KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, the world’s oldest airline still operating under its original name. Known for its prestige, KLM represents innovative approaches to passenger experience and sustainability, aligning with topics that will be discussed in Amsterdam next month.

The city itself is recognized as a major European centre for commerce, hosting multinational companies and fostering innovation in various industries, including logistics, food and technology.

Amsterdam is also a leader in sustainability and circular economy initiatives, values that are increasingly important to the airline catering industry. The city provides a relevant setting for discussing industry advancements in reducing food waste, adopting eco-friendly practices and innovating logistics. This creates an inspiring and accessible backdrop for global leaders in airline catering to convene.



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A forum for strategic thinking

Distinguishing itself from existing industry gatherings, the ACA Leadership Symposium aims to focus on future forward strategies.

“We wanted an event where the industry’s key stakeholders could come together to brainstorm and identify collective solutions to emerging challenges,” Gamba says. “Being reactive is not the best approach for this industry. Long-term sustainability and proactive thinking should guide our actions.”

The symposium will delve into topics including workforce challenges, automation, competition and sustainability. One major concern is the industry’s ongoing struggle to attract younger talent.

“The aviation and inflight catering sectors have become tough to sell to the new generation,” Gamba says. “We need to understand why and find ways to make these careers more appealing.”

Another focal point is the role of automation in reshaping workflows and business models. Gamba emphasizes the need to “extract the best out of automation” while addressing its potential impacts on the workforce and operations. Additionally, private equity’s fluctuating interest in the sector will be discussed, highlighting its influence on competition and long-term stability.

SUBHEAD: Sustainability in focus

Sustainability, particularly in managing international cabin waste, is another cornerstone of the symposium.

“For us, sustainability is core to our business,” Gamba says. “We need to move beyond simply dumping waste in landfills and instead find innovative ways to recycle and repurpose it.”

However, implementing sustainable solutions remains complex, with policies varying across regions.

“Some solutions aren’t universally applicable, and they’re often the first to be sidelined during crises like pandemics,” he cautioned. A dedicated panel will explore these challenges and propose actionable strategies to minimize waste and maximize resource utilization.

A vision for the future

The ACA Leadership Symposium is designed to be an intimate gathering, with around 60 carefully selected participants.

“We’re aiming for quality over quantity,” Gamba says. “This is a first, and we want to ensure we have the right ingredients to make it impactful.”

Looking ahead, Gamba is optimistic about the event’s potential to become an annual fixture.

“If there’s demand from members and other stakeholders, we’ll build on this success. Our ambition is to make the symposium the centre of strategic thinking for inflight catering,” he says.

With its first Leadership Symposium, the ACA is poised to elevate the conversation around airline catering. By fostering collaboration and innovation, the event aims to ensure the industry remains resilient, sustainable and forward-thinking in the face of evolving challenges.

As a media partner, *PAX International* will report live from the event, so stay connected with our website, LinkedIn and Instagram to be kept informed.