

AIFST Presidents Award Citation – Professor Mark Turner

We are pleased to nominate Mark Turner for the esteemed AIFST President's Award, an accolade that recognizes and celebrates individuals and organisations that have made outstanding contributions to the Institute, while demonstrating a clear commitment to advancing AIFST's mission of supporting Australia's food industry professionals. We feel that Mark has strongly supported AIFST's mission: *'To advance and inspire all food sector professionals through education, collaboration, and recognition to champion a robust, innovative science based Australian food industry to meet future food needs'*.

To support the Institute, Mark has actively participated in various AIFST committees, including the Publications Committee (2018-2021), Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (2022-), Green Book organizing committee (2022-), and judging panels for multiple AIFST awards (Malcolm Bird Commemorative Award, Jack Kefford Award, Bruce Chandler Book Prize and Anthony Williams Food Sensory Award). His involvement in the organising committees of several AIFST Annual Conventions since 2013 has also helped create opportunities for networking and collaboration among food industry professionals. Mark has also delivered several talks at the annual convention and in specialised webinars over the years, assisting with AIFST's goals of furthering food science education.

Recognising the importance of nurturing early-career researchers, Mark initiated the Young Researcher Session at the national convention in 2022. This platform enabled emerging professionals to present their work, develop their communication and networking skills, and receive valuable feedback from industry experts. This initiative directly supports AIFST's mission of recognising and developing future food sector professionals.

In 2019, Mark chaired the AIFST Summer School, which featured 16 speakers from research organisations, industry, recent graduates, and recruiters and included two field trips to local companies and attracted 95 registrants. The event promoted collaboration through educational field trips to two local companies, further emphasizing the practical aspects of food science education.

Mark's contributions to the food industry extend to his involvement in the Food Micro Conference organizing committee, where he facilitated a successful collaboration between AIFST, the Australian Association for Food Protection (AAFP), and the Australian Society for Microbiology (ASM) in 2023. This event brought together around 120 attendees, fostering essential connections and collaborations between professionals in the field. As part of his responsibilities on the organizing committee, Mark suggested and invited speakers who are experts in their respective fields, ensuring that the conference offered a diverse range of insights and perspectives.

Serving on the Green Book organizing committee, Mark contributed not only to the planning process but also as a chapter co-author, sharing his expertise with a wider audience and reinforcing AIFST's mission of advancing food sector professionals through education.

In his ongoing commitment to championing a robust, innovative, science-based Australian food industry, Mark recommended appointing an AIFST representative to the Australian Food Safety Research Alliance (FSRA) steering group and the AAFP Executive committee. This helped strengthen the Institute's presence and influence and ensures that it remains at the forefront of food safety advocacy, addressing the future food needs of Australia.

In line with the AIFST mission to advance and inspire food sector professionals through education, Mark has been a strong advocate for education coordination within the food industry. By chairing the national education roundtable meetings organised by AIFST in 2019 and 2023, Mark brought together representatives from universities, TAFE, industry, and government to discuss challenges and opportunities in food science education. This experience provided him with valuable insights and a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing food science education in Australia. To address these challenges and improve the quality of education for food science graduates, he led a small team that designed and implemented a comprehensive survey that was delivered nationally via AIFST. This survey evaluated the relevance of core competencies in the Australian context, as established by the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) for program accreditation. In addition, the survey assessed industry placements and the qualifications of staff within organizations, to identify areas for improvement and better align educational offerings with industry needs. With 62 respondents participating in the survey, Mark led the data analysis and reporting of the findings. This effort culminated in a publication in Food Australia in 2023, which has since garnered significant interest from both the food industry and education providers and is providing to be a useful resource for AIFST in defining competencies required of Australian food scientists. University academics have indicated plans to use this information to optimize their program offerings, directly contributing to the advancement of food science education in Australia.

Mark's passion for industry-relevant education has been engrained throughout his 15-year tenure at the University of Queensland. He has educated approximately 2,000 science students, with a significant number of these going on to forge successful careers in the Australian food industry, holding senior positions. In 2010, as the coordinator of the UQ Master of Food Science and Technology program, Mark developed and introduced a new initiative that further supports AIFST's mission: a 14-week full-time industry placement for students. This initiative not only helped increased enrolment numbers (from around 30 in 2008 to approximately 150 currently), but also provided invaluable training and experience for students. Many have subsequently secured employment within their host companies, demonstrating the program's success in preparing students for fruitful careers in the food industry.

Throughout his career, Mark has also led various industry-funded research projects aimed at improving the quality and safety of food, particularly in the dairy and horticulture sectors. These projects have resulted in benefits to the food industry through the adoption of new technical methods or technologies. These projects have also involved training junior research staff and students, equipping them with industry-relevant experience.



In conclusion, Mark's passion, dedication, and impact on the food industry through student training, education coordination, conference organization, research support, and advocacy align with and reinforce AIFST's mission. His partnership with AIFST has achieved numerous milestones that have positively impacted the food industry and thus he would be a worthy recipient of the AIFST President's Award.