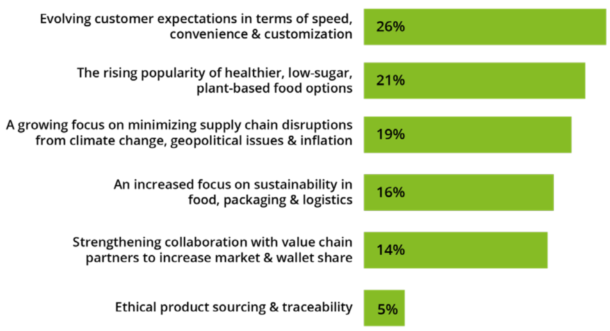
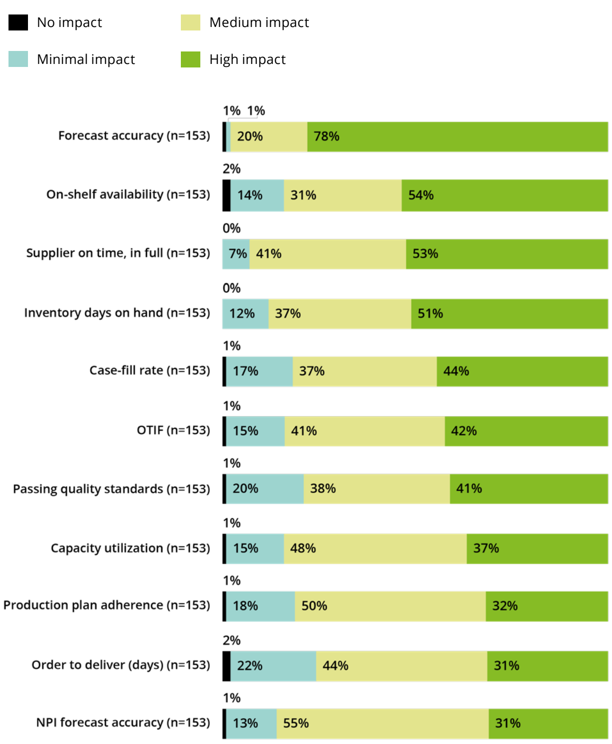
In early 2025, Deloitte surveyed supply chain planning professionals within the food & beverage sector to identify key trends and challenges in planning. The survey's more than 150 respondents represented nine B2B subsectors of food & beverage (including dairy, snack & convenience foods, frozen foods, meat & poultry), providing valuable insights into **how customer expectations for speed, convenience and customization—paired with surging demand for healthier, low-sugar, and plant-based options—are rapidly reshaping the food & beverage competitive landscape.** In reviewing our data, we confirmed that other than recent tariffs, the fundamental challenges faced by supply chain professionals today have not changed materially over the past five years.

What key industry trend do you see as a food and beverage supply chain professional?*



How relevant are the following metrics for tracking supply chain-planning operational performance at your company?*



* Percentage numbers in the charts may not add to 100 due to rounding.

A new baseline: Fast, easy, healthy, sustainable: 47% of respondents reported they believed end user expectations on speed, convenience and healthier options are the defining key trends in the B2B food & beverage (F&B) sector. In practice, these expectations are no longer nice-to-have differentiators, they are now table stakes requirements that shape where customers shop, what they buy, and at what value point. As portfolios expand (e.g., more pack sizes, better-for-you variants, seasonal flavors) and fulfillment models diversify (e.g., in store, pickup, on-demand delivery, subscriptions), the customer experience increasingly focuses on whether companies can place the right product in the right location at the right time, without excessive waste, significant markdowns, substitutions or margin erosion.

Customer experience runs on fulfillment: As customers expect faster fulfillment alongside a growing range of products including new flavors and health-forward options, and rapid stock keeping unit (SKU) proliferation, F&B companies face a step-change in fulfillment complexity. As a result, forecast accuracy becomes a critical pillar for delivering high on time in full (OTIF): small misses quickly surface as out-of-stocks on priority SKUs, inconsistent freshness, substitutions that are out of line with consumer dietary needs, and promotions that don't match real inventory.

The challenge is amplified by new product introductions, where a lack of established demand patterns and shifting demand signals increase volatility—and ripple through supply, production scheduling, replenishment and labor planning.

At the same time, F&B company leaders face explicit trade-offs between meeting emerging customer demands through rapid innovation and managing the operational burden that comes with a larger, more complex portfolio. Every new SKU or product launch offers the potential of growth and differentiation, but it also introduces additional variability and complexity across its supply chain. Without clear guardrails, SKU proliferation can erode service levels, strain production networks, and dilute focus on the highest-value products.

This raises a fundamental question for F&B companies: How much innovation is truly enough? How aggressively should organizations pursue new product introductions to capture emerging consumer trends without allowing the portfolio to become unmanageable or unprofitable? Striking the right balance between maintaining service levels, meeting evolving customer expectations, and containing the complexity that comes with SKU proliferation and portfolio breadth demands a more deliberate, data-driven approach to portfolio strategy and planning. There is no one-size-fits-all answer, but the companies that get it right are those that treat portfolio rationalization not as a reactive cost-cutting measure, but as a proactive strategic discipline.

Reach out to learn more about Deloitte's approach in solving supply chain planning complexities in the food and beverage B2B sector.

Get in touch


Manuel Peralta
maperalta@deloitte.com


Sreekanth Krishnakumar
skrishnakumar@deloitte.com