

Franchise Group Dialogue

Sideline Meeting Post Event Report

Building durable brands and enabling international expansion

EMIRATES FRANCHISE
فرانشايز الإمارات

غرفة أبوظبي
ABU DHABI CHAMBER

EIGHTH ANNUAL FUTURE FOOD 2026

تجمع الإمارات للغذاء
UAE Food Cluster

F&B

DATE
30 September 2026

VENUE
Le Méridien Dubai Hotel & Conference Centre

OVERVIEW

Franchise Group Dialogue at Future Food Forum 2026

Two connected sessions on franchise operations, intellectual property and the ecosystem for growth.

01

SESSION 1

Building a franchise business

Operations, site selection, training, food safety and service consistency

02

SESSION 2

Protecting the brand

Trademark strategy, enforcement and the cluster's role in growth

MODERATOR Mohamed Salama | Senior Consultant

Session leadership and speakers



Mohamed Salama
Moderator; Senior Consultant
Both sessions



Mohammad Almadani
Owner, Almadani Group
Session 1



Saleh Lootah
Chairman, UAE Food & Beverage Business Group
Session 1



H.E. Dr. Abdulrahman Al Muaini
Head of Intellectual Property, Ministry of Economy and Tourism
Session 2

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sustainable franchise growth begins with a business that works, a brand that is protected and a support system that can reproduce the same customer experience across markets.

WORKS
A business that works

PROTECTED
A brand that is protected

REPEATABLE
A support system across markets

The Franchise Group Dialogue examined these requirements through two complementary sessions. The first drew on Mohammad Almadani's experience of developing retail and foodservice businesses, negotiating franchise rights and supporting a growing network. The second brought the intellectual-property perspective of H.E. Dr. Abdulrahman Al Muaini into discussion with industry representatives on protecting UAE brands and enabling international expansion.

Moderated by Mohamed Salama, the dialogue moved between practical examples and wider ecosystem questions. Participants discussed site selection, commercial terms, staff training, food safety, service consistency, trademark strategy, enforcement and the role of the industry cluster in connecting businesses with government support.



Principal messages

1

PROVE

Prove the concept before selling its expansion: opening demand must translate into repeat business and reliable operating performance.

2

SUPPORT

Treat franchising as a continuing responsibility for training, product standards, partner support and performance monitoring.

3

PROTECT

Plan intellectual-property protection around the markets a brand intends to enter, with ownership and contractual rights clearly established.

4

CONNECT

Strengthen communication between businesses, the cluster and government so available support becomes easier to understand and use.





SESSION 1

Building a franchise business

Discussion on building and sustaining franchise brands

From trading experience to a repeatable model

Mohammad Almadani recounted his progression from apparel and retail into foodservice franchising. His account showed that brand recognition alone does not establish a successful franchise: the operator must understand the product, negotiate workable terms and develop the capability to deliver consistently in the local market.

The conversation distinguished operating individual outlets from master franchising. In the latter model, growth depends on the ability to support other franchisees, rather than simply increasing the number of stores directly managed. This changes the demands on the central team, particularly in training, operational supervision and partner support.

INDIVIDUAL OUTLETS

Growth through stores directly managed

→

MASTER FRANCHISING

Growth through the ability to support other franchisees

Central team demands: Training | Operational supervision | Partner support

Negotiate commitments against market reality

Using his experience with Charleys as an example, Almadani described negotiating the scale and payment structure of an initial development commitment. The lesson was to align expansion obligations with the market's actual capacity and the operator's resources, rather than accept an ambitious rollout assumption without testing it.

A launch is the beginning of the test

The discussion repeatedly returned to the temporary excitement surrounding a new opening. Almadani urged emerging brands to establish a trading record and understand their competitors, supply arrangements and customers before franchising. His advice favoured patient proof of the model over rapid expansion based on early popularity.

A launch is the beginning of the test

Trading record | Competitors | Supply | Customers

SESSION 1

Operational discipline

Select the site through evidence

1	2	3	4	5
Footfall	Visitor conversion	Rental cost	Full operating cost	Technical suitability

Almadani described location selection as a commercial exercise involving footfall, the likely conversion of passing visitors into customers, rental cost and the full cost of operating the outlet. A busy mall or recognisable address does not automatically produce an attractive store-level result.

One example concerned insufficient electrical capacity for cooking equipment at a proposed site. Resolving the problem would have required additional infrastructure, cost and time. The practical lesson was to confirm technical suitability alongside the commercial assessment before committing to a location.

Support franchisees beyond the opening

As the network developed, the business required managers able to support franchisees, organise training and supervise execution across outlets. The discussion presented this support as an ongoing function: franchisees need access to expertise and corrective guidance after launch, particularly as the network extends into other markets.



Protect product quality and food safety

Almadani described reliable sourcing, central checks, temperature management and store-level hygiene as foundations of foodservice consistency. Product specifications also mattered: substitutions that reduced cost could weaken the customer experience and the identity of the brand.

He gave an example of operators using a different type of fries from the specified product. Monitoring visits and notices were used to address the deviation. This illustrated why standards must be backed by observation and corrective action, rather than left in a manual.

FOUNDATIONS OF FOODSERVICE CONSISTENCY

Reliable sourcing	Central checks	Temperature management	Store-level hygiene

Standards → Observation → Corrective action

Make the customer experience measurable

Mystery shopping was discussed as a means of assessing hospitality, cashier interactions and service delivery across stores. Almadani referred to external service-excellence assessments alongside the business's own checks. Inventory control and point-of-sale information provided further visibility into stock use and outlet performance.



Manage cost pressure without weakening the offer

Asked about logistics and inventory pressures, Almadani said rising input costs had led to some price adjustments and a search for alternative reputable suppliers. Maintaining the quality of the core product remained a priority. The exchange connected procurement, pricing and brand trust: savings need to be assessed against their effect on the customer proposition.

PROCUREMENT	PRICING	BRAND TRUST
Alternative reputable suppliers	Some price adjustments	Quality of the core product

Adapt while keeping a clear foundation

Examples of new concepts, changing consumer preferences and brand closures showed the need to review assumptions as markets evolve. Almadani encouraged the next generation to build UAE concepts, while stressing research, competitive understanding and operational preparation before attempting to franchise them.

> **Savings need to be assessed against their effect on the customer proposition.**





SESSION 2

Protecting the brand

Intellectual property as a business asset

H.E. Dr. Abdulrahman Al Muaini positioned brand protection as an early business priority. The discussion treated intellectual property as part of the value a franchise transfers: its identity, reputation and, where applicable, protected innovations and know-how. Registration was presented as the starting point for protecting that value as the business grows.

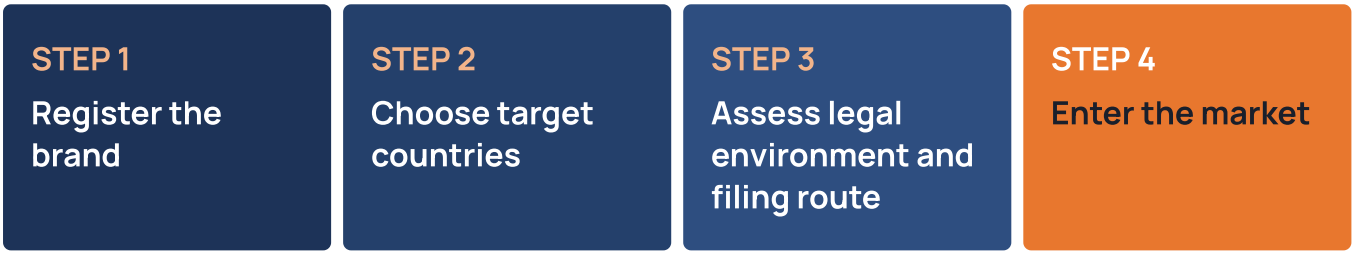
An experienced operator reinforced the commercial risk of postponing protection until a brand becomes successful. The exchange highlighted the potential cost of discovering, only when entering a new market, that another party has already secured a conflicting name or mark.

Identity	Reputation	Innovations	Know-how

Build a market-specific protection strategy

Al Muaini explained that international protection should follow a clear expansion strategy. He discussed the Madrid system as a route through which applicants can seek trademark protection in selected markets, while emphasising the need to choose target countries rather than assume a registration provides worldwide coverage.

The practical message was to assess the legal environment and filing route for each intended market before entry. International growth planning should therefore bring together commercial priorities, intellectual-property ownership and the cost of securing protection.



Keep ownership clear in franchise agreements

A particularly direct warning concerned trademarks registered in a partner's name rather than the brand owner's name. Al Muaini urged businesses to review their contracts and ensure that the ownership of the brand remains clear. The discussion connected this issue to due diligence on both the market and the proposed franchise relationship.

A DIRECT WARNING

Trademarks registered in a partner's name rather than the brand owner's name

Registration must be supported by enforcement

Al Muaini described the development of the UAE's intellectual-property framework and the importance of effective enforcement. Examples involving online content and unauthorised use of protected images illustrated how the speed and form of a response can matter as much as the existence of a right.

He discussed different channels for addressing infringement, including government authorities, economic departments, police and courts. The emphasis was on selecting a response suited to the situation and the remedy sought, rather than treating every dispute as the same problem.

CHANNELS FOR ADDRESSING INFRINGEMENT

- Government authorities
- Economic departments
- Police
- Courts

Make support visible to entrepreneurs

The exchange also referred to support measures for eligible applicants and the ministry's willingness to engage with food and beverage businesses. Industry participants welcomed this support but noted that awareness of available services was uneven. This became a wider discussion about communication and access through the cluster.



SESSION 2

Growth and resilience

From importing concepts to exporting UAE brands

An audience contribution described a UAE-developed bakery and production concept entering India, with ambitions to expand further through a franchise model. The example broadened the discussion beyond restaurant outlets to the potential for replicating a wider business system, including production capability, training and retail elements.

Al Muaini discussed the ministry's Beyond 71 initiative in the context of helping UAE brands reach international markets. Participants also described an emerging shift from importing international concepts towards developing and exporting intellectual property from the UAE.

FROM

Importing international concepts

→

TOWARDS

Developing and exporting UAE intellectual property

Three ambitions for the franchise ecosystem

Saleh Lootah set out three connected ambitions: help UAE brands expand internationally, attract global brands to the UAE and strengthen the ecosystem that supports both. He pointed to the value of government engagement, the UAE's diverse consumer base, industry events and cooperation with shopping-centre owners and other stakeholders.

Help UAE brands expand internationally

Attract global brands to the UAE

Strengthen the ecosystem that supports both

The discussion recognised considerable room to improve the connections between these assets. Experienced companies could coach younger businesses, while smaller brands could gain access to knowledge that is difficult to acquire through trial and error alone.

The cluster as a route for removing obstacles

Lootah described the cluster's role as identifying and removing barriers to sector growth, with open channels to both government and businesses. Al Muaini reinforced the value of hearing directly from industry when a policy or process creates a practical difficulty. Their exchange emphasised trust, communication and continuous improvement.

This was a substantive outcome of the dialogue: participants identified an awareness and coordination gap alongside the commercial and legal issues. Better communication was presented as necessary to connect businesses with support that already exists and to raise problems that require further attention.



Resilience requires quick decisions and daily visibility

The closing discussion extended to the response to supply-chain disruption. Speakers described frequent coordination between industry and public authorities to keep essential products moving and resolve operating constraints. These examples demonstrated the value of established relationships and rapid escalation when conditions change.

Lootah's closing advice focused on three management disciplines: understand and simplify the business model, prepare leadership to respond to change and stay close to daily operating data. He argued for short review cycles and adaptable decisions rather than relying solely on long-range plans or end-of-period reporting.

DISCIPLINE 1

Understand and simplify the business model

DISCIPLINE 2

Prepare leadership to respond to change

DISCIPLINE 3

Stay close to daily operating data

What the two sessions established

Readiness must precede replication.

A brand needs evidence of repeat demand, viable outlet economics and dependable operations before it expands through partners.

Consistency is a managed process.

Training, approved specifications, supplier controls, service checks and corrective action must work across the network.

Protection must follow expansion plans.

Target-market assessment and clear brand ownership need to be considered before commercial entry and partner commitments.

Support depends on communication.

The cluster can help connect business needs with government services, expertise and routes for raising barriers.

Resilience is an everyday capability.

Responsive leadership and current operating information support decisions when demand, costs or logistics change.

Recommended follow-up priorities

The following priorities translate the discussion into practical next steps for consideration by the franchise community:

1 READINESS

Develop a franchise-readiness checklist covering trading performance, outlet economics, training, food safety, supply continuity and the capacity to support partners.

2 ACCESS

Create an accessible route through the cluster for businesses seeking intellectual-property guidance and information on relevant government services.

3 MENTORING

Connect experienced operators with emerging UAE brands through focused mentoring on market selection, negotiation, operating systems and international expansion.

4 DIALOGUE

Use a follow-up dialogue to examine recurring barriers raised by businesses, including site readiness, partner standards and target-market protection.



CONCLUSION

The Franchise Group Dialogue connected the ambition to grow with the discipline required to sustain growth.

The operating discussion showed how location, training, sourcing, safety and service determine whether a franchise can deliver its promise. The intellectual-property discussion showed why ownership, protection and market planning must develop alongside those capabilities.

Together, the sessions presented a clear direction for the UAE franchise community: build concepts with a proven foundation, protect what makes them distinctive and strengthen the partnerships that help them expand. The opportunity is to turn successful local businesses into durable brands whose quality and value can travel across markets.

BUILD

Concepts with a proven foundation

PROTECT

What makes them distinctive

STRENGTHEN

The partnerships that help them expand



Our Partners

EXCULSIVE PRESENTING PARTNER

foodtech valley

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Dubai للاقتصاد والسياحة Economy and Tourism

ECOSYSTEM ENABLEMENT PARTNER

الصندوق الوطني للمسؤولية المجتمعية NATIONAL CSR FUND MAJRA

RETAIL PARTNER

LuLu RETAIL

RETAIL PARTNER

تعاونية الاتحاد UNION COOP

STRATEGIC PARTNER

ICCA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR CULINARY ARTS DUBAI | ABU DHABI

ENABLER PARTNER

EMIRATES FRANCHISE فرانشايز الإمارات

BANKING PARTNER

دبي الإسلامي DIB

FOUNDING PARTNER

Nestlé Good Food, Good Life

FOUNDING PARTNER

IFFCO إفكو

TRUSTED DATA PARTNER

GS1 UAE

PLATINUM PARTNER

AL ISLAMI Food is a blessing

PLATINUM PARTNER

pepsico Food. Drinks. Smiles.

ASSOCIATE PARTNER

مركز أبوظبي للأغذية ABU DHABI FOOD HUB KEZAD كيزاد

ASSOCIATE PARTNER

MCBG مجموعة عمل الشركات متعددة الجنسيات MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES BUSINESS GROUP

ASSOCIATE PARTNER

UAE FOOD BANK بنك الإمارات للطعام

ASSOCIATE PARTNER

SFS TECHNOLOGIES

ASSOCIATE PARTNER

SOMA MATER

GOLD PARTNER

مزارع العين Al Ain Farms

GOLD PARTNER

المراعي Almarai

GOLD PARTNER

سادیا Sadia

GOLD PARTNER

Spinneys

GOLD PARTNER

Tilda

SILVER PARTNER

Barakat

SILVER PARTNER

Coca-Cola

SILVER PARTNER

DPI DUBAI PACKAGING INDUSTRY

SILVER PARTNER

معكرونة الإمارات emirates macaroni

SILVER PARTNER

FLOUR MASTERS

SILVER PARTNER

MARS Tomorrow starts today

SILVER PARTNER

nutridor

SILVER PARTNER

rakez RAS AL KHAIMAH ECONOMIC ZONE

SILVER PARTNER

SGS

SILVER PARTNER

الأغذية المتحدة United Foods

SILVER PARTNER

YOKOGAWA

ENABLING PARTNER

RUSSIA-UAE BUSINESS COUNCIL

HOSPITALITY PARTNER

wasl hospitality

NETWORKING PARTNER

SMITHS EST · 1982 DUBAI

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PARTNER

apco

POLLING PARTNER

PINAR

AI AGENTIC PARTNER

CloudNate

LOGO DISPLAY PARTNER

ARAB & INDIA SPICES LLC Premium Pulses and Spices

PRODUCT DISPLAY

DOLPHIN Bakery

غرفة أبوظبي ABU DHABI CHAMBER

EIGHTH ANNUAL FUTURE FOOD 2026

اتحاد الإمارات للغذاء UAE Food Cluster