

The ACA Corner: May insights from Niche & Bespoke and PlanTolt

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The ACA Corner presented in partnership with Official Media Partner PAX International is a column dedicated to voicing expertise directly from ACA members. ACA represents more than 65 percent of the worldwide airline catering market. ACA invites all members to share their views in future editions of the ACA Corner by contacting Mercedes Dieguez.

Caterer's perspective: Daniel Robinson, Group CEO, Niche & Bespoke

Geopolitical instability and the growing pressure on aviation catering supply chains

We are all aware of how the current geopolitical climate is reshaping the aviation industry, however the impact extends far beyond just airlines and airports. Increasingly, the pressure is being felt throughout the wider aviation supply chain, including aviation catering suppliers, like ours.

Ongoing instability in the Middle East with the disruption to shipping routes, evolving sanction regimes and continued fuel price volatility are all contributing to significant operational challenges. Recent concerns surrounding jet fuel availability and the closure of critical trade corridors have already forced airlines to reduce capacity, reroute services and absorb significantly higher operating costs. Sadly, for some operators it was all too much, resulting in administration or market exit.

For aviation catering suppliers, like Niche & Bespoke and Deluxe Catering, these pressures can be particularly challenging. As independent U.K.-based suppliers, we rely on tightly coordinated local supply networks built around precise timing, stable food pricing and uninterrupted cold-chain logistics. Today, those systems are under strain.

Rising costs for ingredients, packaging and transportation, combined with shipping delays, are reducing reliability across the supply chain. In simple terms, this is creating shortages in key products and ingredients, making it increasingly challenging to consistently meet customer demand.

As businesses, we must adapt accordingly to survive and thrive; resources are being redistributed, recruitment plans are being reviewed and capital expenditure carefully evaluated. We are shifting to an operating model focused on resilience and continuity, as well as continuous growth.

What was viewed some eight weeks ago as temporary instability is now becoming a structural feature. The suppliers that succeed in this environment will be those capable of balancing operational agility with long-term resilience, while continuing to deliver the high standards our aviation industry clients demand.

This is the real-world consequence of sustained geopolitical uncertainty for aviation catering at this

current moment in time.

Daniel Robinson

Group CEO

[Niche & Bespoke Limited](#) and [Deluxe Catering Limited](#)



Daniel Robinson, Group CEO, Niche & Bespoke Limited and Deluxe Catering Limited

Supplier's perspective: Roy Treger, Co-Founder and CEO, PlanTolt

Right ingredient, right time

In airline catering, most decisions happen before the first tray is assembled. Menus are set ahead of time and orders go in early. Once production starts, there is very little room to adjust. At the same time, there are still signals that show what passengers are likely to eat. Booking data, route patterns and past consumption all point in a specific direction. But these signals do not move cleanly into purchasing.

This is where the problem begins.

Passengers choose meals, kitchens have to buy ingredients. Turning meal demand into ingredient quantities takes place ahead of time, under fixed ordering windows. If that translation is slightly off, the result shows up quickly as either missing items or excess stock. Since the products are perishable, both outcomes matter. The issue is not only accuracy. It is also timing.

Planning is often done at a higher level, while execution happens at the level of individual items. Often, by the time demand is clear in the system, orders are already in place and no longer flexible. Looking at it more closely, the issue appears where decisions actually happen. At the level of individual ingredients, it becomes easier to spot where signals arrive late or are interpreted the wrong

way.

Improvement comes from bringing planning closer to that moment. When decisions happen within the same time frame and constraints as operations, kitchens can respond more precisely. In that situation, service reliability and waste come from the same set of decisions, instead of being handled as separate trade-offs.

In airline catering, improving outcomes depends on when decisions are made, not only how they are calculated. When planning reflects real operational timing, both waste and service performance become more predictable.

Roy Treger,
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Roy Treger, Co-Founder and CEO, PlanTolt