
What does the future hold for the Airline Catering Association?

By **Rachel Debling** on April, 26 2019 | Catering



Fabio Gamba, Managing Director of the Airline Catering Association

Hamburg, Germany: Nearly one year to the day of the [Airline Catering Association's](#) (ACA) launch in April 2018, *PAX International* sat down with Fabio Gamba, the association's Managing Director, at the [World Travel Catering & Onboard Services Expo](#) (WTCE) to look back at its first 12 months of growth.

Headquartered in Belgium and founded by the "big five" – [gategroup](#), [dnata](#), [Newrest](#), [LSG Group](#) and [DO & CO](#) – as founding members, the ACA is in good position to act as the voice of the industry, helping guide legislation and policy that affects airline caterers worldwide, no matter their size.

Putting the initial group together wasn't a hard task, Gamba explained. "They understood the time was right for such a trade body," he told *PAX* in Hamburg. "The original idea was to make sure they wouldn't disperse their efforts or compromise, and they would do this with likeminded companies." He noted that in the weeks following WTCE the ACA plans to announce it is opening up to additional members, further solidifying its position as a true representative of the international inflight catering industry.

During its first year, the groundwork was laid to ensure the association would blossom. As it grows in size and support, the ACA will leverage this foundation to help make impactful change across the industry landscape.

But don't expect to see its board canvassing for members; Gamba said he believes the product speaks for itself.

"I believe the best members are those who are convinced to join – we're not sales prospecting," he

noted.

It's no secret that during this year's WTCE the industry was humming with the buzzword of the moment: sustainability. Though the group has set multiple priorities, Gamba recognizes that the shift to a more ecologically aware onboard experience is needed, post haste.

"We're hearing a lot about sustainability," Gamba admitted. "Now that catering sustainability is being coined, it shows that the industry is understanding it is there and has a role, it is expected by the customer and the market, and [airlines are] expected to be compliant in its environmental gestures and policies. We will try to mastermind it and work in a deeper way." Look to this space in the future for specific efforts the ACA will make on the industry's - and the environment's - behalf.

Another announcement that came on the heels this year's Hamburg event was Gamba's appointment as Director General of the [Airport Services Association](#) (ASA). How these two roles will complement each other remains to be seen, but Gamba is hopeful for fruitful collaboration.

Looking ahead, the association is aiming to build its membership base and establish a series of goals, especially around the sustainability front.

Gamba explained: "We do have targets but not for how many members. We have targets around how efficient we want to be and how to fend off legislation, such as the plastic directive. That is passed now, so we can't change it, but this is an opportunity, not a challenge, to showcase it across our industry.

"I know a lot of airlines have come out and said that by 20-something [they] will be plastic-free. For us it's an interesting challenge that we're happy to face."

Above all, the association recognizes the necessity of staying ahead of the curve, as opposed to playing catch-up once decisions are made. As Gamba told *PAX*: "We want to make sure that we're not only in reaction mode. We want to say to the legislator that we want you to have a better understanding of who we are and what we represent, so when you make legislation, you take that into account, so we aren't the collateral victim of their legislation."