

## PET FOOD FORUM 2026

# How Humanization, Biotechnology, and Automation Offer a Paw-sitive Outlook on the Petfood Industry



**With over 3,600 attendees and 375 exhibitors, Pet Food Forum 2026 put the spotlight on a fast-evolving industry value chain. Two major forces shaped this year's event: science-backed nutrition and automation-enabled manufacturing. As companies navigate rising labor constraints and changing consumer expectations, the market is actively shifting toward "humanized" premium products, enzymatic innovations, and advanced process automation.**

### Humanization of Flavors

The increasing humanization of pets was the defining theme of this year's Pet Food Forum.

Pet parents increasingly view their animals as integral members of the family, and they are demanding products that mirror human food and offer nutritional health benefits. This shift drives a consumer emphasis toward brands with natural origins, easily recognizable ingredients, and values that align with their own. Exhibitors highlighted how their ingredients meet evolving regulatory standards and sustainability metrics that reinforce consumer trust. Human food flavor houses and ingredient providers such as McCormick and DSM-Firmenich are also expanding their petfood portfolios to include scent and taste profiles that more closely resemble those of human food, enhancing both taste and the perceived "human-



End-of-line automated packing robot

like” quality of pet products.

## The Convergence of Biotech and Pet Nutrition

Underpinning the growing complexity of pet food is the increasing application of biotechnology, giving rise to a new generation of functional pet nutrition solutions. For example, exhibitors such as Kerry and Specialty Enzymes & Probiotics showcased how enzymes can improve digestibility, enhance nutrient absorption, and support specific health outcomes, including improved oral health



through antimicrobial activity. Similarly, companies like Phileo by Lesaffre and Rangen Pet Nutrition highlighted the growing role of fermentation-derived

ingredients, which offer benefits ranging from improved flavor to increasing nutrient density. These innovations reflect a broader shift toward science-backed, health-oriented formulations, consistent with trends previously established in human nutrition.

## Automating the Petfood Value Chain

Another prominent theme we observed as we walked the floor of Petfood Forum 2026 was the accelerating transition to automated manufacturing. Exhibitors such as Repete, BESTMIX, and Sterling Systems & Controls showcased recipe management and control systems that integrate disparate equipment and quality control protocols to enable greater cost-effectiveness and minimize errors in the manufacturing process. To address workforce challenges, front-line and end-of-line packaging automation solutions from Cleverttech North America, Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions, BluePrint Automation, Schmalz Inc., and BC Automation are leveraging robotics to handle the heavy lifting in packaging, replacing historically labor-intensive, high-churn roles.



## What This Means for the Industry

- Humanization drives demand for transparent ingredients and premium human-grade tastes
- Biotech convergence creates science-backed, highly functional pet foods, using advanced fermentation and enzymes to unlock superior health outcomes



FOSS quality instrument optimized for conveyor belt

- Manufacturing automation eliminates labor bottlenecks and optimizes cost and throughput through smart robotics and software

## Navigating the Next Era

As pet food production transforms into a high-tech, science-driven enterprise, organizations navigating this rapidly evolving landscape need to ask themselves critical questions as they evaluate their operational future. What consumer trends are shaping the future of pet food? What advanced technology capabilities will have the greatest impact on recipe and ingredient innovation? How will manufacturers measure ROI on next-gen automation software and robotics?

## The BroadBranch Advisors Impact

BroadBranch helps clients answer these questions through:

- Voice-of-customer and end-user research
- Competitive landscape and positioning analysis
- Technology adoption and disruption assessments
- Commercial diligence and growth strategy development

In an environment increasingly defined by operational complexity, cross-disciplinary integration, and rapid innovation, independent market intelligence has never been more critical.



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