

Expert Commentary

GCC food resilience under pressure: Why businesses must move beyond reaction

What does the current Middle East situation mean for food security in the GCC, and why are reactive responses no longer sufficient? Huseyin Binzat, Partner at commercial growth and pricing consultancy Simon-Kucher, explains why simultaneous disruptions across sourcing, logistics, and agricultural inputs are turning a supply issue into a structural commercial challenge and what businesses must do now.

Dubai, April 29 2026 – The GCC imports more than 85 percent of its food, making resilience a permanent priority. The region has invested heavily in reserves, sourcing diversification, and logistics. But the current situation is different. Three pressure points, sourcing disruption, supply chain friction, and fertilizer constraints, are hitting simultaneously and reinforcing each other in ways that fundamentally change how the food system operates. This is no longer a temporary supply issue, but a structural stress test for the commercial model across distributors, retailers, and regulators.

When availability and affordability diverge, standard responses fall short

What makes the current situation particularly challenging is that its impact does not play out evenly across the food basket. Instead, it creates a split dynamic. On one side, fresh categories are increasingly exposed to availability risks, as fragile logistics, longer transit times, and perishability reduce reliability on the shelf. On the other, staple categories are becoming an affordability challenge, driven by rising input costs and contract repricing.

This divergence makes standard, one size fits all responses ineffective. Applying uniform price increases or blanket stock policies forces trade offs that could be avoided. It risks weakening demand where affordability is critical, while failing to protect availability where continuity matters most. In this environment, decisions on pricing, assortment, and sourcing are no longer operational adjustments. They directly determine how resilient a business can be.

Food resilience must be managed as a commercial system

Leading players are moving beyond short term fixes. They treat resilience as a commercial system that links sourcing, stock policy, pricing, and decision making into one coordinated model. Our Simon-Kucher experts structure this response across six commercial levers, each operating in parallel and across two time horizons: stabilization within 30 days and structural reshaping within 90 days.

Within the first 30 days, the priority is to stabilize exposure. This typically involves redesigning sourcing around alternative origins, securing priority categories, and introducing clear pricing guardrails to avoid reactive decisions.

As visibility improves, the focus shifts toward the 90 day horizon. Here, leading players begin to reshape the system more fundamentally by converting contingency sourcing into scalable programs, reallocating working capital toward critical categories, and embedding value based pricing and decision frameworks across the organization.

Structure and timing matter more than speed alone

In volatile environments, speed without structure often amplifies disruption. Ad hoc sourcing shifts, blunt price pass through, or reactive assortment cuts tend to increase volatility rather than reduce it.

What distinguishes leading organizations is their ability to connect operational signals such as delays, supplier risk, and stock levels with commercial decisions on pricing, allocation, and mix. Real time visibility becomes the backbone of better decisions. It allows companies to anticipate disruptions and act before they materialize on the shelf, rather than reacting once the impact is already visible to customers.

Four priorities for businesses now

To navigate the current situation, four priorities stand out. Companies need to build transparency on their exposure across categories, suppliers, and customer segments. They must differentiate their responses between fresh and staple categories instead of applying uniform measures. Pricing needs to be actively managed as part of the resilience strategy, not treated as a simple cost pass through tool. And finally, strong cross functional governance is essential to ensure coordinated and timely decisions across the organization.

The leadership question: react or redesign

The question is no longer whether the current situation will affect availability and pricing. It already has. The real question is whether businesses respond with short term fixes or use this moment to redesign their commercial model for sustained volatility.

Reactive approaches may stabilize operations temporarily. But only structured, system level responses will build lasting resilience, protect margins, and maintain customer trust over time.

Simon-Kucher expert opinion: Food companies in the GCC should act early, but in a structured way. Decisive, but not uniform. Commercially disciplined, while maintaining a clear focus on availability, affordability, and customer trust. Those who treat resilience as a core capability will be better positioned to navigate future disruptions and emerge stronger from the current situation.

***Huseyin Binzat** is a Partner in Simon-Kucher's Dubai office, where he leads the Consumer practice in the GCC region. With over 18 years of experience, he specializes in growth strategy, portfolio restructuring, international expansion, commercial transformation, and new business building. Huseyin has deep expertise across key retail sectors including grocery, home retail, personal care and beauty, and consumer electronics, as well as adjacent consumer product categories. He is a trusted advisor to local, regional, and international consumer groups, family-owned conglomerates, and government entities.*

Further information and interview requests are available upon request.

About Simon-Kucher

Simon-Kucher is a global consultancy with more than 2,200 employees in 30+ countries. As a trusted commercial advisor focused on unlocking better growth, we combine deep consulting expertise, growth specialization, and technology to scale lasting impact. We optimize every lever of commercial strategy – product, pricing, innovation, marketing, and sales – based on what customers want and value. With over

40 years of monetization experience, we are recognized as the world's leading commercial growth and pricing specialist.

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