

## Audio file

[ubvo jeremy brice TT22 edited.mp3](#)

## Transcript

So very warm welcome. It's a real pleasure to introduce Doctor Jeremy Brice. He's a postdoctoral researcher in the Oxford Martin School, where his current research examines how environmental, ethical and public health issues surrounding food and livestock production are problematized within financial markets. And governed through responsible investment practises. His work examines the politics of valuation and the governing of futures within markets for food and agricultural products. His position is at the interface between economic sociology, human geography and science technology studies. He is currently co-editing a forthcoming special issue of the Journal of Cultural Economics on the topic of digital eating, which I have had the joy to co-edit with him. And Karin Eli. So the floor is yours. And the talk is entitled 'Curating good choice, digital marketplace platforms and the framing of eating'.

Wonderful. Thank you, Tanya. And I will just share my screen a second. OK. Are you all now seeing my slides? Excellent. And I take it people can hear me OK as well. Wonderful. This is a surprisingly smooth start in that case. So thank you all for coming to this talk and you know, I'm very impressed to have people actually listening in the first week of the summer term, so I really do appreciate it and hopefully this will be, you know, interesting and enjoyable for the group.

To start things off, this talk is about how consumer choice is governed, protected, and cared for by firms which operate digital platforms, from Deliveroo to the likes of Amazon Fresh and Karma Food, which are designed to provide a space, a little bit like a physical marketplace, in which prospective eaters can browse, compare, and purchase food that's offered by a wide range of different sellers.

These digital marketplaces I guess are starting to play an increasingly important role in contemporary systems of food commerce and consumption, certainly in the cities of Europe and North America, but also across increasingly large swathes of the global South and I guess their impact is perhaps most obvious in the case of takeaway delivery platforms like Just Eat, Deliveroo or Uber Eats, which tend to be kind of the largest of such marketplaces. In 2020, 24.8 million people in the UK alone were using these platforms to order takeaway meals. But the use of digital marketplaces to buy and sell other categories of food products and food related services. Including prepackaged foodstuffs, catering services and surplus food, is also starting to become increasingly mainstream. The Food Standards Agency's National Consumer Survey found last year that 14% of people in the UK had used an online marketplace such as Was It Fresh or Farm Drop. Actually, I guess probably not Farm Drop anymore because they went bust a few months ago, but had used a marketplace of that type to purchase groceries, and 11% of people were using a food sharing platform such as Odi, and just to be clear about what it is that these entities actually do, they don't actually produce, process or prepare food. They don't buy food from its producers and sell it on either. In fact, some of them never actually handle any food at all. Instead, they describe themselves as operators of neutral platforms, communications infrastructures that many different vendors can use to advertise food, and which potential customers can use to browse and compare different product services and sellers, and which also process those customers orders and payments. And I should say at this point that platforms of this type usually view both consumers and sellers as paying customers. Consumers usually pay for access to this commercial infrastructure via a delivery charge

and in a lot of cases businesses which are selling food via these platforms will also pay a monthly fee or a portion of their revenues from sales via the platform in return for being listed on the marketplace and hopefully getting orders through this sales channel. So, rather like a traditional physical marketplace, these platforms are really designed to create a spatial and institutional framework for food commerce, which gathers vendors and buyers together and brings them into contact so that they can compare each other's offers and engage in commercial transactions. And that's why in the piece of work that I'm talking about today I tend to refer to them as digital marketplace platforms.

These digital marketplaces do not, to put it mildly, have a reputation for being particularly caring spaces. I guess most notably, prominent takeaway delivery platforms such as Deliveroo and Uber Eats have become pretty notorious for precarious working conditions, low pay and lack of sickness benefits endured by the couriers and drivers who work for them. And incidentally, a lot of the restaurants which sell food via their marketplaces have also complained pretty bitterly about their profit margins being eroded by ever increasing delivery fees. And their labour practises have in recent years become the focus of a kind of seemingly never ending cycle of court cases by aggrieved gig economy workers and also disputes with regulators. Indeed, Deliveroo's stance on labour rights has now become so controversial that its IPO last year was shunned by a number of major institutional investors, allegedly on the grounds that its business model posed reputational risk and was also at risk of being rendered unviable by future regulatory change. Although depending on who you talk to, their objections may also have been related to the kind of inflated valuation of the company's shares. So take that one with a pinch of salt.

But beyond those labour issues, some of the largest digital marketplaces for food have also been subject to repeated food safety scandals in recent years, albeit ones which have perhaps attracted less attention than the controversies over their approach to labour rights, which I just mentioned. And in some cases these controversies have risen because restaurants, which were unlicensed or prohibited from trading due to past food safety lapses, were permitted to sell food via digital marketplaces like Deliveroo or Uber Eats, while in others the issue seems to have been that the development of platforms like Facebook Marketplace, for instance, has enabled novel and largely unregulated food commerce to emerge, in which foods being sold in unusual ways by private individuals or other entities which wouldn't traditionally have been considered to qualify as food businesses and aren't usually kind of inspected and controlled by food regulators. But in both cases the basic issue is that the rise of digital marketplaces for food seems to have created both new opportunities for the sale of unsafe food, and there are new questions about how these new forms of marketplace might best be governed to ensure that the food they sell is safe now.

Such episodes have drawn increasing attention to the question of what role platform operating firms play and what role they should play in defining expectations or standards that the vendors which trade within their marketplaces, and the products which get sold via their platforms. It's an important question because the firms which operate these platforms have the capacity to impose and enforce food safety and quality standards on their vendors and thus to decide which products and sellers should or shouldn't be allowed into their marketplaces. So they have the potential to act as fairly powerful de facto regulators of the online food sector. But while all of these regulatory controversies have generated a fairly expansive literature, dealing with the question of how food platform operating firms are or should be regulated. With the exception of work looking at how platform firms govern the conduct of gig economy workers, there's still a lot less scholarship examining the role of such firms in framing and governing the markets that they construct and administer, and that was why back in 2018, I ran a small project in partnership with the UK's Food

Standards Agency, which investigated the role of platform operating firms in regulating food safety and quality. And in part this project was oriented towards practical policy development. It was designed to assess the effectiveness of existing food safety measures within the digital food marketplace sector and to identify ways of addressing any regulatory gaps that were emerging. But it was also an attempt to understand what imperatives or logics might underlie variations in the ways in which digital marketplaces operated by these platforms are framed and governed, and in which competing concerns like consumer choice and consumer protection are accommodated within them. Actually I should say for anyone who heard Shima Barakat's presentation of her report for the FSA last term, this may all sound a little bit familiar because the project I'm talking about today was actually the first iteration I guess of the FSA's Food in the Platform economy work stream. Of which the report that she put together also forms a part, and the talk I'm giving today is actually kind of an intermediate form between the version of this material that's in the report I prepared for the FSA at the time and what will hopefully become a journal article for a special issue of the Journal of Cultural Economics which I'm co-editing with Tanya and Karin Eli. And actually the proposal for that special issue was accepted just a couple of weeks ago. So you're some of the first people to know about it. But anyway, as a result of that, I'm going to be trying out some rough ideas in later bits of this talk. See what does and doesn't work and you know, I'll appreciate your feedback on which bits of what I'm trying sort of resonate or stick, and which might need a little bit more thought. But returning to the original project, our key research questions for that piece of work were who's allowed to sell food through these online marketplaces and who gets to decide what standards of food safety, quality and authenticity to online food vendors to meet, and what if any, role do platform operators play in setting and enforcing food safety standards for vendors and for products sold via their marketplaces. And the final question, which I might talk about a little bit less today, was how can state regulators better help to ensure and improve food safety standards in these spaces, which I guess was the implied the applied bit of the project for the FSA.

So during the first phase of the project, which is kind of the meat of what I'll be talking about today, really I interviewed representatives of 11 out of roughly 35 to 40 digital marketplaces for food which were active in the UK at the time, although I should say the platforms I spoke to are not necessarily the ones represented in pictures on these slides, so don't read too much into that. And in a way, one of the projects kind of major findings was the sheer diversity of these various platforms and their user and vendor bases. Interviewees included several of the sort of Just Eat and Deliveroo style online takeaway ordering marketplaces that most people would probably think of if they were asked to imagine what a digital food marketplace is, and that included a couple of the big players in that sector. But they also included representatives of marketplaces for pre-packaged food. We might think of the likes of Amazon Fresh, plus marketplaces for catering services, which allow mobile caterers like food trucks or market stores to take bookings to cook food at customers events. And also marketplaces for surplus food, which allow businesses or private individuals to sell food at reduced price or to swap food, which is still safe to eat but is approaching its expiry date and would otherwise go to waste. Examples of that kind of platform would include Too Good To Go. If you're familiar with it. And the final group was what I've taken to calling home cooking platforms, marketplaces, which allow private individuals to sell food that they've cooked in their domestic kitchens online. Whether that's as takeaway meals or in the form of tickets to a supper club or pop-up restaurant.

The companies which took part were also diverse in size and market share, ranging from kind of tiny startups, whose number of employees you could count on your fingers, to far larger digital marketplace platforms, which at that time operated in over a dozen countries and had annual revenues in the hundreds of millions of pounds and, you know similarly the number of sellers using

these marketplaces ranged from a few dozen to kind of tens of thousands. And as a result of the kind of broadness of the sample, a very broad range of vendors were selling food via these platforms, so while takeaway delivery platforms tended only to be opened to High Street takeaways, which were kind of recognised by and registered with regulatory agencies, marketplaces for pre-packaged food might be open to kind of quite informal, sort of micro traders selling small quantities of food alongside a variety of other goods, and home cooking platforms often included private individuals who were selling tickets to meals prepared and hosted in their homes, or even sort of swapping surplus food with their neighbours. And I should say that this research was expanded towards the end of my time working with the FSA through a second round of interviews with 18 vendors based in the London area who were trading via takeaway delivery platforms, home cooking platforms and catering platforms. Although kind of for reasons of time, I don't think I'm actually going to be drawing on any of that material in my talk today. And that range of vendors was important because the more kind of unconventional and informal vendor groups often had quite a distant relationship with state food regulators, they tended not to be visible as a shop on the high street. So it was often quite difficult for officials to actually find out that they existed and spot them when they started trading, or to ensure that they were compliant with food law.

So, how platform operators, and especially those platform operators whose sites were open to more informal vendors, decided who should and shouldn't be allowed to trade in their marketplaces was actually quite important. But interestingly, the food safety requirements which platforms imposed on their vendors and the ways in which they assessed who was or wasn't compliant with them, seemed to depend much less on the size or the characteristics of their vendors than on which of two quite different logics of consumer choice shaped the way that platforms ran their marketplaces.

So, one group of platforms was very eager to, as one interviewee put it, screen the market by setting their own proprietary food safety standards, which exceeded the legal minimum, and to ensure that only vendors whose products or menus were judged by platform operators to be of good quality gained admission to their marketplace. So for instance, all foodservice businesses in the UK periodically get a rating of one to five for food hygiene. It's called the FHRs rating and most of the platforms in this group actively sought to exclude from their marketplace vendors with an FHRs score they judged to be low, and what a low score was sort of varied from platform to platform, but usually it was sort of anything below a two or a three, and beyond that kind of narrow food safety form of screening, four of these platforms routinely sent staff to visit and evaluate prospective vendors, products and premises before deciding whether an applicant ought to be permitted to sell food via their marketplace.

Mostly these site visits seem to focus on tasting the applicants food and on evaluating the vendors' customer service quality. But one of the home cooking platforms had kind of sort of gone belt and braces on this and had gone so far as to work with government environmental health officers to develop a proprietary food hygiene inspection process, which its representatives claimed was in some ways more rigorous than official food safety inspections. And these interviewees often described their platforms as being curated marketplaces, which is a term I'm going to chew over quite a lot in this presentation, because curation is kind of an interesting word to choose.

To describe this activity, this sort of activity, it's derived from the Latin verb *curare*, meaning to take care of, and it's long been associated with the work of those who care for the collections of art galleries and museums, preserving or restoring pieces, classifying them and arranging them for exhibition. Now, even in this context, curation involves making decisions about which items should be accepted into a collection and which are worthy of display. So it involves evaluating items and screening. Not those which don't meet a certain standard or lack of particular attribute in order to

produce a grouping that's thematically consistent, but for reasons which will hopefully soon become clear. I don't think that that characterization of curation completely captures what's at stake in the activities that my interviewees described as being part of the work of marketplace curation. And in order to grasp that, I want to turn instead to a more recent set of arguments that processes of digitalization have given those who curate a new significance and power in commercial life.

So authors claim that the rise of digital marketplaces like Amazon and eBay, and I guess potentially also streaming platforms from YouTube to Netflix, have given shoppers access to a near limitless range of products and this has sort of created a dystopia of boundless choice in which would be buyers are condemned to kind of scroll endlessly through interminable lists of products which are either indistinguishable or suspect quality or just poorly suited to their requirements. And that in order to escape that kind of paralysis, consumers are increasingly turning to specialist intermediaries. Curators select on their behalf from amongst the excess of goods and services which confront them. And in such accounts, I'd suggest the objective curatorial care kind of changes slightly. Curation becomes less a matter of collecting and caring for valued items, and more a practise of taking care of consumer choice through screening out substandard or irrelevant goods to ensure that shoppers are presented with a manageable and compelling assortment of options, among which they may choose.

And I want to argue today that this specific form of curation as a way of caring, for assembling market spaces in which choice may be exercised well, is what is often going on within the seemingly uncaring worlds of digital food commerce. But when platforms operating this curated marketplace model engaged in their curatorial work, they were often caring for a very particular form of consumer choice. All of these platforms base their identity and their appeal to consumers on a promise that the goods and vendors listed in their marketplace had been carefully selected by the platform operator and therefore, that only high quality food, and for that matter, trustworthy vendors could be found on their platform. All of these interviewees presented this quality promise to consumers as being integral to their platforms, identity and commercial positioning. And an important way of differentiating their marketplace against competitive platforms operating offering more goods of more variable quality. And following a very helpful suggestion made when I presented this material elsewhere, I've taken to referring to this very particular notion of what constitutes good consumer choice as a logic of careful choice. The reason for adopting the qualifier, careful choices, that these interviewees were very clear, that adopting a curated marketplace model was an investment in caring for the shoppers using the platform first and foremost by protecting them from unsafe food, but also by ensuring that food sold via their platforms was going to be acceptable and palatable to the consumer, that it met certain quality standards and whatever some shopper picked, they wouldn't be disappointed in it.

I want to suggest here that these platforms are showing their care for consumers by restricting the range of choices available in their marketplace, so as to ensure that all the options available to prospective eaters have already been judged to be good choices. Now, if marketplace curation is taken to be a practise of caring for consumers, then. I guess the more permissive approaches to product and vendor selection that the operators of several other platforms had adopted might easily be taken for carelessness. Such platforms base their commercial appeal on offering consumers the widest possible choice of vendors and products. So these platforms pitch to consumers, whatever you want, you can find it on our marketplace. So you will never need to use any other platform. These firms ran their platforms differently from those who curated their marketplaces. Interviewees stated that their platforms didn't require vendors to meet any food safety or quality standards other than being compliant with food law. Indeed, they sought actively to be open to any vendor who

hadn't actually been banned from selling food by state regulators. So in order to keep the barriers to entry to their marketplace low, these platforms carried out only a few very basic checks on their vendors before they signed them up. Usually they just looked for documentary evidence that they were registered with their local council as a food business. And assumed that if they were registered, then state regulators would ensure that the food that they sold was safe enough on the platform's behalf and they didn't really need to do anything further. A couple of these interviewees actually defined their platforms, ethos, identity and commercial strategy in opposition to the curated marketplace models. So these platforms were, in some cases portraying themselves explicitly as uncurated marketplaces. Now I'm going to say here that in an analytical sense, arguably no market is ever completely uncurated because all processes and marketplace design necessarily incorporate some degree of selection, filtering and exclusion in order to make sure that consumers using the marketplace are able to browse a relevant selection of vendors, products and services, and that they're equipped to make meaningful comparisons among them. To take the popular Just Eat takeaway ordering marketplace as an example, while the list of dishes that it presents to consumers may seem endless and all embracing it actually invites users to choose them on a very specific range of vendors and foodstuffs. The selection of products that you can buy by the app is limited to mostly hot meals. Prepared mostly by restaurants and cafes within a certain distance of each other. And in framing out the rest of the world of eating, from supermarkets to restaurants in post codes, the app is a generated if a defined space marketplace containing a finite range of goods and sellers which can be compared on a narrow range of predetermined criteria, such as customer review scores, proximity at estimated time to deliver. And it's this process of framing, selection and exclusion that enables buyers to compare different goods and restaurants to evaluate their worth and to choose the one which best manages matches their desires.

Notwithstanding those analytical reservations, which are fairly major. I nevertheless want to retain and explore the terminology of uncurated marketplaces in this talk, because I think it captures these interviewees' rhetorical strategy of positioning themselves in opposition to their self-consciously curated competitors, and in doing so it highlights something quite important, which is that representatives of uncurated platforms didn't justify their approach to running their marketplaces solely in terms of commercial constraints and commercial strategy, but also in ethical terms, they considered it a matter of care. Now, three of these four explicitly uncurated marketplaces were takeaway delivery platforms, and in many ways this is probably quite unsurprising. After all, curation work is tight, and Labour intensive visiting and inspecting prospective vendors, premises entering product ingredient lists into a database, checking out food safety or animal welfare certifications, assessing customer service standards and all the rest of it, is fiddly. It's hard to automate. It takes attention to specificities and a willingness to make situational judgments. And for all of these reasons, and this was something that often came through in interviews with operators of curated marketplaces, as some of the quotes I put up earlier may suggest, it doesn't scale well. It's a lot harder, not to mention more expensive, to visit and inspect 500 vendors scattered across 20 different cities than it is to check out a small number who are all based in one town. And I guess the place where this really comes out, if I can go back a slide, is in interviewee two's claim that his takeaway delivery platform had started out wanting to have a more curated marketplace, which was only open to vendors with high food hygiene ratings, but had had to abandon this in order to reach a large enough scale to compete against more established take away ordering apps, and that it would have been too difficult and too much work to get all of the restaurants with low hygiene ratings which were already trading on the competing marketplaces up to the minimum standards that his platform had originally hoped to impose on its end.

As the biggest platforms in the sample, the major takeaway delivery firms perhaps had stronger incentives than most to find ways of dispensing with the non scalable forms of care work involved in marketplace curation, whereas by contrast the curated marketplaces, and my sample tended to be fairly small operations, they were even newly founded startups whose vendor base was still small and which were kind of petrified of tainting their image before they established themselves in the public mind. All they were targeting niche markets such as consumers of organic food, for instance. And I guess the obvious common sense analytical move to make here would be to suggest that, by contrast, uncurated marketplaces are defined by lack of care and absence of the kinds of intense attention too, and concern about the characteristics of products and case by case decision making about the suitability of prospective vendors, which curated marketplaces engaged in. But in a really rather good recent article it is suggested that it's important to actually unbundle this assumption. That care is indeed indissolubly bound up with smallness of scale, and the human touch, and that by teasing apart care from smallness and disentangling an absence of care from sort of largeness of scale, it becomes possible to attend to the forms of care which underpin and flourish within large scale and automated digital systems. Seever has called it decorrelation, ceasing to assume that care and scale are inversely correlated to one another, and in his paper he applies it to highlight that such seemingly impersonal and uncaring systems as the music recommender algorithms used to build automated playlists on streaming service on streaming platforms like Spotify or Amazon Music are actually premised on intensely laborious forms of care for data sets which have to be exercised in order to ensure that recommender systems direct listeners towards music that they'll enjoy and produce a positive user experience.

So care, Seever argues, can emerge and flourish even in systems as seemingly uncaring as algorithmic music recommender systems. Building on his insight, I want to ask whether uncurated takeaway delivery platforms really do belong in that bottom right, low care, large scale, quadrant on the second diagram on this slide, or whether there are unexpected forms of care which might be lurking within the hyper competitive, precarious economies of takeaway delivery platforms. If so, what might they look like?

Well, it seems significant that the firms which operated these platforms described themselves as having a responsibility to their vendors, who don't forget who are also paying customers their platform, and that responsibility was to act as a neutral intermediary and to ensure that everyone who's legally permitted to sell food can do so via their marketplace. They argued that platform operators had a moral responsibility to maintain a neutral marketplace in which no vendor held an unfair advantage over any other, which meant, as interviewee 15 put it, not presuming to judge what constitutes good food. Setting standards in excess of the legal minimum, they noted, might oblige them to remove businesses from their marketplaces, which, despite being non compliant with the particular platforms' proprietary requirements, have nevertheless been judged by regulators to be safe enough to continue trading. And they argued that under such circumstances, their platform would effectively be preventing businesses which were legally permitted to trade, from selling online and acts which they felt would violate their platforms' duty of care towards its vendors. Indeed, expanding on this, they tended to argue that the fairest way to raise standards of food safety and quality was to allow free competition between vendors with the aim of obliging poor quality vendors to sort of up their game or be forced out of the marketplace, and as such they tended to favour regulating food safety through introducing features designed to facilitate comparison and competition between vendors, for instance by displaying all vendors customer reviews or food hygiene ratings on their website.

Now it's entirely possible that these justifications may have been a little self-serving. Certainly this drive to ensure that the platform was open to as wide a range of vendors as possible seems suspiciously well configured to align with the tendency for platform firms to focus above all else on accumulating users in order to generate and exploit network effects, which authors such as Nick Srnicek and Paul Langley described in their analysis as platform capitalism. But there's arguably something more, and perhaps something more significant to them, because in an odd sense, in these accounts, the maximisation of consumer choice is being positioned not as an end in itself, but as a means of caring both for the platforms vendors, and via competition and ranking system, for food safety and quality. So to this extent the operators of uncurated marketplaces seem to have developed their own logic of care, one that's more compatible with the intense pressure to scale, which seems to characterise the takeaway delivery sector in particular. That is the labour intensive process of marketplace curation and logic, which I'm tempted to call choice for care.

With this in mind, I'd suggest that a platform operators orientation towards marketplace curation is starting to become quite an important access around which different logics of digital commerce, choice and care pivot. So that as the table on this slide summarises, different orientations towards curation seem to be aligned with different commercial strategies and modes of marketplace governance, which in turn precipitate contrasting ways of framing a marketplace, of governing the goods and vendors coming into it, and of caring for Consumer Choice. Curated marketplaces filling their platforms narrowly through excluding any vendor which failed to meet their platform specific standards of food safety and quality, meaning that all vendors that were eligible to participate in their marketplaces already operated to their exacting standards in the name of caring for the health and also for the trust of consumers.

By contrast, interviewees who represented uncurated marketplaces tended to justify their platforms decisions to remain open to vendors with more chequered track records on the grounds that this enabled them to exercise care towards those businesses which were struggling to comply with food safety legislation. And several of those platforms had demonstrated an interest in using the aggregation, search and ranking capabilities of their marketplaces, to improve standards of food safety among their vendors through directing both consumer retention and potentially orders towards more highly compliant, or vendors with better standards of food safety. This suggests that both platforms pursuing curated marketplace strategies and those operating uncurated marketplaces do actually care for food safety and quality, but they do so in different ways. And much of this caring is being articulated through the curation of their marketplaces to promote varying visions of what constitutes good choice. So curation and, symmetrically, its adamant disavowal, is actually emerging as a means of articulating care and choice into coherent logics of market governance.

And in the final few minutes of my talk, I want to suggest that this is starting to matter in ways which, to be honest, I wouldn't really have expected at the time when I did this research, because in the intervening years the FSA's secured voluntary partnerships with the UK's three largest takeaway delivery platforms, Just Eat, Deliveroo and Uber Eats. Under which these platforms have agreed to introduce safety mechanisms, all three now require vendors to have at least an FHRS rating of two or above, and they display all restaurants' FHRS ratings to consumers by their apps and Just Eat and Deliveroo actually go further by offering sellers which net an FHRS rating of one or two in an inspection, support and training to increase their compliance with food law. So, these platform firms are intervening increasingly proactively, both to prevent non compliant vendors from trading and to raise food safety standards among their sellers, and over the last year or so, the FSA has been talking about rolling out this regulatory approach to other digital marketplaces like Amazon for instance.



All of this suggests that marketplace curation is starting to become something subtly different from the informally developed and commercially driven set of marketplace governance practises employed by platform operators, that it was when I was doing this research, and it may be beginning to fall off into an established element of formal regulatory enforcement strategies, which State agencies are increasingly seeking to embed into the operating procedures of digital marketplace platforms as part of the routine work of ensuring food safety, much as they currently work through instruments and strategies like food safety inspections, to embed practises from hand hygiene and temperature control, to due diligence checks on suppliers, into the practises of traditional food businesses.

Given the recency of these initiatives, I don't want to prejudge or make claims about the likely impact of this move on standards of food safety within digital marketplaces or indeed on commercial operations or power relations within the food sector. And I also don't want to overstate the newness of these approaches, after all, food regulation has always been precisely about framing markets through making stipulations about which products and sellers are and aren't allowed access to various spaces and sales channels. And much of that work has always been done by food businesses, albeit operating on the assumption that they'll be taken to court if they don't do it properly. But I think that these developments may be significant nevertheless, because if we extrapolate from previous analysis of the two different logics of care for consumer choice that are being built into curated versus uncurated marketplaces, then it seems that a decision to regulate through encouraging platform owners to adopt the curated marketplace model involves an implicit choice about who and what is to be cared for through the governance of food platforms. One which probably hasn't been subject to that much explicit reflection, consideration, or deliberation, because it suggests that if this regulatory model is rolled out more widely across the digital marketplace sector, then it may create a platform ecosystem in which the main object of care is the consumer, and a mode of governance which aims to protect those consumers from bad choices for excluding vendors which fail to meet platform specific standards of food safety and quality. Now it's a choice that's probably pretty uncontroversial to the extent that it reflects the FSA's mandate as a consumer protection regulator, and indeed in many ways, this kind of consumer first approach to regulation is a very good thing, and certainly it's in line with my personal preferences for what I prefer to see the digital marketplace world prioritise.

But I still wonder what might be getting left out of the forms of regulatory care created through this mode of food governance, through curation in particular, and notwithstanding the packages of support and training for existing vendors that struggle to meet new food safety standards which form part of these regulatory partnerships. I wonder whether these developments might lead gradually to a marginalisation of the notion that a platform has a responsibility to its vendors and to any other groups of workers or sellers obliged to sell food via its marketplace. So might those other regulatory concerns that I noted briefly the outset, the labour struggles of Uber drivers and delivery riders, for instance, once again slide from notice. That's a very speculative question and I don't want to go out on a limb here, so I'll simply conclude by coming back to decorrelates of ethics to ask, might it be possible to decorrelate a platform standard or stance upon curation from the way in which it distributes its care among different groups of users? So that vendors and workers don't slide from view in the urge to regulate through curation, and if so, what might it take to bring about that decorrelation? For reasons of time, I'm going to wrap up here and invite questions. Thank you very much for sticking with me during a talk which actually went on for slightly longer than I planned. I hope it was interesting rather than tiresome and tedious, and I very much look forward to your feedback and thanks very much for having me again for the seminar.