

Food Futures Lab Workshop Insights

Date: 16th July 2026

Venue: Bhavan's Vidya Mandir, Elamakkara

Participants: Grade 7 (Six divisions)

Facilitator: Riya Francis

Workshop Format

The workshop was conducted simultaneously across three Grade 7 divisions. The first three divisions were completed between **9:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m.**, followed by the remaining three divisions between **12:45 p.m. and 2:30 p.m.** To accommodate the schedule, the introductory discussion and imagination activities were facilitated with one class until the first challenge, after which the facilitator moved to the next division. Once all three classes had completed the discussion phase, the facilitator returned to each classroom for the making activity and group presentations. This staggered format ensured that every class experienced the complete workshop despite limited facilitation time.

Workshop Observations

1. How did the format work for the students? (Talk → Do → Share)

Overall, the structure was engaging and well-suited to the age group.

Talk

The opening conversation around food was an accessible entry point. Students were enthusiastic when discussing favourite foods and quickly recognised that food can represent memories, celebrations, and relationships before moving into future-oriented thinking.

Do (Making)

The making activity was the strongest part of the workshop. Working in groups encouraged collaboration, discussion, and collective problem-solving. Students were visibly more engaged once they began building their ideas, and the hands-on component helped them translate abstract concepts into tangible outcomes. The theme of food also proved highly relatable, making it easier for students to contribute regardless of their artistic confidence.

Share

Students were generally excited to present their future foods. Presentations revealed a wide range of imaginative ideas, and listening to other groups appeared to spark additional thinking and creativity among the class.

Challenges Observed

While students enjoyed imagining new foods, several initially found it difficult to think about "the future" as an abstract concept. Some groups tended to redesign existing foods rather than imagine fundamentally different possibilities. They required additional prompting to move beyond the present.

2. How did the format work for the facilitator/workshop leader?

The Talk → Do → Share structure provided a clear rhythm that was easy to facilitate.

Strengths

- The introductory discussion created a shared understanding before students began designing.
- The challenge prompts provided enough structure while allowing creative freedom.
- Group work reduced the need for constant individual guidance and encouraged peer learning.

Areas for Improvement

- Students would benefit from more scaffolding before the imagination exercise.
- Additional examples of speculative thinking could help students distinguish between improving today's food and imagining future possibilities.
- More time could be allocated for the sharing session, as the presentations generated rich discussions and reflection.
- The workshop was delivered across three divisions, requiring the facilitator to move between classrooms. While the staggered format worked well overall, the school timetable included short breaks between sessions, interrupting the continuity of the workshop. Students generally re-engaged quickly, but these pauses affected the flow of discussion and making.
- Future implementations should take the school's schedule into account when planning workshop durations. Aligning the session with class periods and break times or allowing buffer time for transitions would help maintain momentum and provide more uninterrupted time for reflection, making, and presentations.

3. Recommendations for the Future Toolkit

Based on this workshop, the following additions would strengthen the toolkit:

3.1 Introduce a clearer future context

Rather than asking students to simply "imagine the future," establish a shared scenario, for example:

"Imagine it is 100 years from now."

This provides a common frame of reference, making speculative thinking more accessible.

Possible future contexts could include:

- 100 years in the future
- Earth after climate change
- A city floating on water
- Life on another planet
- A future where food is scarce
- A future where nature and technology work together

3.2 Include a short Futures Warm-Up

Before the design challenge, include a brief activity that encourages students to think beyond today's world.

For example:

- What might schools look like in 100 years?
- How might people travel?
- Where will food come from?
- What problems might people face?

This would help students transition into futures thinking before focusing specifically on food.

3.3 Add visual prompts

Illustrations or photographs of speculative foods, future kitchens, or imaginative environments could help younger participants understand that there are no "correct" answers and encourage more imaginative responses. This can be tried out, but also has a possibility of their imagination being streamlined or restricted.

3.4 Emphasise making

The workshop clearly demonstrated that making is central to engagement. The toolkit should prioritise hands-on creation, collaborative group work, and prototyping rather than extended discussion alone.

3.5 Adaptability

The facilitator guide should include recommendations for adapting the workshop to different school timetables, including suggested timings for single-period, double-period, and multi-class formats. Factoring in school breaks and transition times will help maintain continuity and ensure sufficient time for discussion, making, and sharing.

Key Takeaways

The Food Futures Lab successfully engaged Grade 7 students through a combination of conversation, collaborative making, and storytelling. The topic of food provided an accessible and familiar starting point, while the making activity encouraged creativity, teamwork, and imaginative thinking. Although some students initially found speculative futures challenging, simple contextual framing, such as imagining life 100 years from now, would likely strengthen their ability to think beyond the present. Overall, the workshop format proved effective and offers a strong foundation for developing a scalable Futures Literacy toolkit for schools.