



MONTANA FARM BUREAU *News Brief*

We Care for the Country

May 2020

TOP STORIES



Matt Pierson, right, with his wife, Kris, and son, Nik, are ready to present donated ground beef to the local food bank. Local ag producers are stepping up to help the hungry due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Farmers, ranchers help those in need

Recent news headlines and social media posts swirling around COVID-19 often focus on concerns about the pandemic's effect on our food supply. Farmers, ranchers and agricultural organizations are working hard to ensure the public that there is plenty of food and they are working on solutions regarding concerns about distribution channels. Locally, farmers and ranchers are stepping up to help their communities.

One is Park County Farm Bureau member Matt Pierson who started Producers Partnership to donate beef to local food banks and food pantries.

"It started with me calling area ranchers I know to see if they could donate a cull cow," said Pierson. What started as one rancher's idea snowballed not only for cull cow beef donations, now totaling 6,500 pounds of beef, but in raising \$12,000 for processing.

The beef is being processed by Matt's Butcher Shop and Deli in Livingston and Pioneer Meats in Big Timber.

Northwest Counties member Dan Lake of Ronan explained how Lake Seed got involved in helping out his community.

"In light of all the Coronavirus challenges going on, we heard there was a shortage of potatoes in stores, so I thought it would be good to donate our oversized potatoes to the general public. Our seed potato customers need a medium size, so we cull the larger ones," Lake explained. "We put those culled potatoes in large boxes, then ran a Facebook ad saying 'Free potatoes at Lake Seed.' In the first four days, the Lakes gave away 9,000 pounds of spuds.

"The fact we had a lot of culled potatoes to give away is no big deal," Lake said humbly. "It's good to help people."

For the full stories visit mfbf.org.

Summer Conference cancelled, new plans

Due to many unique complications surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, including social distancing and directives for gatherings, the Montana Farm Bureau Board of Directors has chosen to cancel the 2020 MFBF Summer Conference which had been scheduled June 8-11 at Fairmont Hot Springs. The board will still be meeting in early June with the summer committee meetings scheduled as ZOOM meetings.

MFBF President Hans McPherson has enclosed a letter in this *News Brief* explaining the tough decision as well as providing information on alternative plans.

Have any questions about MFBF during these challenging times? Feel free to contact the MFBF office, 406-587-3153.

Mental health resources available

MSU Extension and an associated statewide advisory council, which includes Montana Farm Bureau, have developed an online clearinghouse of resources for a wide range of topics related to stress and mental health.

The clearinghouse was created specifically for ag producers and their families, but it contains a wealth of information for anyone interested in learning more about causes of stress, stress prevention and management, and overall mental health.

To access the site, visit https://msuextension.org/wellness/stress-management/mt_farm_stress_clearing_house/.

Support our PAC

The Montana Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) PAC was created to help elect individuals interested in promoting the business of production agriculture in Montana. The changing political climate in Montana makes it increasingly important to put more boots under the desks in Helena. Our rural lifestyle and agricultural interests are sorely under-represented in our state's Capital.

The MFBF PAC is a nonpartisan, voluntarily funded committee of people who support candidates that support agriculture.

We need your help pursuing this mission in the upcoming 2020 election, and that's why we are asking you, as Farm Bureau members, to voluntarily contribute to the Montana Farm Bureau PAC. All donations, regardless of size, truly make a difference.

For additional information, contact Rachel Cone, PAC treasurer, at 970-646-8001, rachelc@mfbf.org. To contribute, send your check to: Montana Farm Bureau PAC, 502 S 19th Ave, Suite 104, Bozeman, MT 59718.

Brucella comments

The Montana Farm Bureau has submitted comments to USDA and CDC that is encouraging them to remove *brucella*—the bacteria that causes brucellosis in cattle and livestock, from the Select Agent list.

"*Brucella* being on the select agent list forces limited research. By removing it from the list, research can move to open-air facilities. This can be done with less expense and provide better information for the livestock and agricultural industries – therefore helping reduce the burden on livestock producers and possibly the impacts it could have on the general public."

MFBF members are being encouraged to comment in support of the removal. Visit [regulation.gov](https://www.regulation.gov) and insert the IDs in the search bar.

CDC : ID: CDC-2020-0024-0001;
APHIS: ID: APHIS-2019-0018-0001.

Questions: Contact Rachel Cone, rachelc@mfbf.org, 406-587-3153.

Welcome new MFBF members

Montana Farm Bureau welcomes the following voting/ag producer members to the state's largest ag organization. It's important to belong and have a credible voice in Helena and Washington, D.C. Invite your farm and ranch friends and neighbors to join MFBF today. *May is Membership Month!*

Big Horn – Frank Berlogar; Carbon-Stillwater – Melissa Oswald, Tim and Rebecca Stahl; Cascade - Robert and Sue Ann Neill; Custer-Fallon – Tyrel and Morgan Rose; Dawson-Wibaux - Bradie Schmidt; Fergus – Glen and Amanda Gillett, Donald and Mary Ellen Lageschulte; Front Range – Travis Field; Gallatin – John and Rose Brouwer, Renee Daniels-Mantle, Tom Finley; Hill-Liberty-Blaine – Dennis Hull, Travis and Darcy Reum, Mark Suta; Judith Basin – Bret and Patricia Vaskey; Lewis & Clark – Kent and Charlotte Terry, Dianne and Steve Wilson; Northwest – Randy and Mary Campbell, James and Christine Gibson, Kevin and Dana Kirsch, Shawn and Jennifer McDyre, Greg Perzanowski, Charles and Susan Waite, Leon and Amelia Wieder; Phillips – Howard Hammond, Dave and Yvonne Hinman, Mark and Ronna Holman, Adam Johnson, McCall Lammerding, David Majerus, Justin Wiese, Jay and Carolyn Yeska; Ravalli- Cindy Jimmerson, Kristen and Jason Tack; Richland – Jared Rosaaen, Henning Skov; Rosebud-Treasure – Ryan and Jan Banks, Katy Cardwell, Billy and Sheena Schiffer; Sweet Grass – Morgen and Nick Conver; Valley – Claudia and Jerry Davenport.



Virtual Farm Fair

Montana Farm Bureau's Virtual Farm Fair is scheduled to run on social media May 11-15.

The Virtual Farm Fair will feature videos from Farm Bureau members' farms and ranches, and will be directed toward a fourth-grade learning level, but appropriate and fun for all ages.

These videos, activities and lesson plans will cover topics typically experienced at a farm fair, from honey bees and pollinators to ATV safety and home-made ice-cream. The only thing lacking will be the wagon ride. The videos will be accompanied by activities and recommended resources on the MFBF website under MY-Ag.

"We want to encourage parents and teachers to check out this opportunity as most of our schools are continuing with at-home learning for the remainder of the school year," said MFBF Central Regional Manager Rikki Swant.

People

Many MFBF members have stepped up to the "Right This Very Minute" video campaign to show what they are doing on their farms and ranches to keep producing safe and abundant food. In addition, several members posted on their social media sites for Ag Day and Earth Day. Several members read ag books LIVE during Ag Week.

Many thanks to Suzanne and Hans McPherson, JM Peck, Mark Boyd, Jacob Stenberg, Fiona Mott, Bonita Cremer, Rocky Forseth, Jess Bandel, Garrett Hamm, Mariah Shammel, Katharine Taylor, Todd Standley, Teddi Vogel, Casey Mott, Joy DePuydt, Klayton Lohr, Dominique Woodham, Travis Brown, Sheridan Johnson...to name a few!

Jess Bandel was featured on RFD-TV discussing grain bin safety. JM Peck was featured in the Dillon Tribune/Ag Today insert. Conni French was featured in an Earth Day story on Northern Ag Network. Hans McPherson was featured in a podcast and Ag Noon News with Lane Nordlund.

Check out all of the great videos on the MFBF Facebook page.

Haying time almost here

Start the haying season off on the best foot possible with a new Case Self-Propelled Windrower. With your Montana Farm Bureau discount you can receive \$500 off selected models for your next dependable Case IH purchase. To learn more and download a discount certificate, visit mfbf.org. Combine the Montana Farm Bureau incentive with other discounts, promotions, rebates or available offers. Check out *all* of the many MFBF benefits at mfbf.org.

At-home learning for kids

Wondering where to find ag lessons about agriculture? Each week AFBF's Foundation for agriculture provides a round-up of free ag-focused educational resources, in addition to promoting trusted resources from other organizations. Parents and educators can choose from grade- and subject-specific activities to help round out the at-home learning experience while expanding students' understanding of where their food comes from.

Visit www.agfoundation.org.

Keep up with market news

It's more important than ever to get the facts when talking about agriculture. Market Intel, produced by the Farm Bureau economic analysis team, provides market and policy insight and analysis for our farmer and rancher members nationwide, as well as policymakers on Capitol Hill.

From the pandemic disrupting slaughter figures and beef prices to USDA's food purchase plan, the AFBF economists have it covered.

Visit fb.org/market-intel to learn more.

Resources to help during pandemic

Since the Coronavirus was detected in the United States and Montana, information has been rampant as agriculture, small business, restaurants, entertainment venues, schools and many more try to find ways to stay solvent in this disruptive time.

For farmers and ranchers, trying to determine where to go for what help and information on COVID-19 as it affects the productivity and finances on your farm or ranch can be daunting. Following are sites to help navigate these difficult times, keeping in mind that programs and the available government relief funds available are ever-changing.

The COVID-19 link on the MFBF website has articles and links to many helpful federal programs/information. Go to mfbf.org.

Another good site to check to out for available programs is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Federal Rural Resource Guide Matrix at usda.gov/coronavirus.

Although the number of COVID-19 cases are low in Montana, it's important to know the rules and recommendations to prevent the spread of the disease.

General information on the Coronavirus in Montana can continue to be found at: dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/cdepi/diseases/coronavirusmt.

The MT Department of Livestock has additional guidelines.



Courtesy: Beef: It's What's for Dinner

Beef price investigation

Montana Farm Bureau was one of the first ag organizations to raise concern about the discrepancies on prices of beef in the grocery stores vs. prices cattlemen are receiving.

In an early April letter to USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue, the Montana Farm Bureau joined 26 other state Farm Bureaus requesting his attention on two important mat-

ters: relief to cattlemen seeing increasingly volatile markets and investigating any price manipulation that may be occurring in the cattle industry. In addition, the states asked that the USDA look into ways to use the Commodity Credit Corporation funds to help in this time of crisis.

"While we are pleased the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provides \$9.5 billion for various agricultural industries, we must ensure struggling cattle producers receive enough assistance to help make up for the significant losses they have endured," noted Montana Farm Bureau National Affairs Director Nicole Rolf. "Specifically, we asked the department to direct support to the stocker and cow/calf producer, the actual rancher or farmer, as these people have shouldered the brunt of this market decline. Farm Bureau supported the passage of the CARES Act and worked to secure funding that will help cattle ranchers, as well as producers of all commodities, affected by the COVID-19 pandemic."

Rolf had visited previously with Montana Senator Steve Daines about difficulties farmers and ranchers are facing. "One of the concerns we discussed was this discrepancy between retail demand and futures prices. Senator Daines has signed on to a letter to Attorney General William Barr asking the Department of Justice to investigate possible anti-competitive behavior and price fixing in the beef markets."

Farmers reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions

A new analysis of updated data from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, combined with U.S. Department of Agriculture data, shows U.S. farmers and ranchers continue to reduce per-unit greenhouse gas emissions. All told, the U.S. agricultural sector accounts for less than 10% of total U.S. emissions. That's less than the emissions from the transportation, electricity generation and industrial sectors. Globally, agriculture accounts for about 24% of GHG emissions.

The EPA's U.S. Inventory of Greenhouse Gas Emissions provides a first look at 2018 U.S. emissions data, which is incorporated into a new Market Intel report from the American Farm Bureau Federation. The Market Intel report finds that per-unit methane emissions from livestock have declined since 1990 as livestock producers have increased productivity. Meanwhile, American farmers are producing more crop yield on fewer acres, according to an analysis of USDA data.

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COUNTY NEWS

County Farm Bureaus get creative during the COVID-19 pandemic

At press time, **Sweet Grass County** contributed \$1000 to the Big Timber Food Bank and \$1500 to the Pioneer Medical Center (PMC) COVID-19 Crisis Fund. This fund provides, among other things, vouchers to be used at local restaurants, the local grocery store or other local businesses for essentials.

Each day during Ag Week they featured their officers and directors on the Sweet Grass County Facebook page with a photo and short biography as a way to “introduce” county officers and directors, as well as highlight them for their roles in keeping America fed and clothed; #stillranching even during a global pandemic. In addition, the county held an April board meeting via conference call.

Park County held a virtual board meeting, working on policy development and a candidate forum for fall 2020.

Northwest Counties ran a radio ad for Ag Week on Western Rockies Radio.

Richland County and Sidney Chamber of Commerce is hosting the Montana House District 35 Candidates Forum at 7 p.m., Thursday, May 14. This Facebook Live event will allow the public to hear from the candidates as well as ask questions.

Carbon/ Stillwater held a ZOOM conference call board meeting on May 12.

Southwest Counties awarded two \$750 scholarships sponsored by their Women’s Leadership Committee to Jessica Pauley and Jordan Smith, both from Red Lodge.

Lewis & Clark is battling proposed zoning in their county that would essentially create an un-funded conservation easement for farmland and open ground in the Helena Valley. The county has teamed up with local building associations, realtors and others. President Karl Christians has visited with the county commissioners regarding opposition to plan. “This land is our investment and our future retirement,” Christians said.



Northwest Counties Farm Bureau member Dan Lake, Lake Seed, Inc., from Ronan, has been donating potatoes to local community members.

With people out of work and struggling, community members are urged to help out their local food banks or consider donating to the Montana Food Bank Network.

According to Bill Mathews, MFBN development director, the MFBN generally sends one or two semi trucks per week around the state to deliver food to their food banks. As a result of need due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they are now sending five to six semi-trucks around the state.

MFBN is the charity that MFBF’s Young Farmer & Rancher Committee supports with the Hoofin’ it for Hunger race in October. MFBN is made up of more than 280 Network Partners working together throughout Montana in order to increase access to emergency food resources for Montanans living with food insecurity.

Visit www.mfbn.org to see how you can help or call (406) 721-3825.



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Dear Farm Bureau Members,

The past few months have been particularly trying for all of agriculture. Markets which were challenging last year further deteriorated with the advent of COVID-19. We are all treading unfamiliar waters in search of answers on health and the economy. I wanted to reach out to each of you and assure you that we here at the Farm Bureau have continued to work on your behalf. During the past two months, the staff of the Montana Farm Bureau has been busy working with our congressional delegation on developing an ag stimulus package that meets the needs of Montana farmers and ranchers. We were also among the first to call for a congressional investigation of the price spread between retail and producer receipts in the cattle markets.

We will continue to follow our members' policy as we address future issues that arise out of the pandemic while continuing to be involved in meetings on statewide issues such as the elk management plan and water adjudication. The Montana Farm Bureau Foundation Centennial Initiative has awarded \$100,000 in grants to local economic development projects and we are in the process of awarding thousands of dollars in scholarships to high school seniors.

This is an important time for all of agriculture and we take our charge seriously. Therefore, your board of directors will meet in person in June but we have been forced to cancel our summer committee meetings at Fairmont Hot Springs. Understanding that important items need discussing, we plan on holding virtual committee meetings during the next month in order to surface policy suggestions to address these trying times. Watch for notification on the times of those meetings on social media and emails.

Due to the shutdown and social distancing, we recognize that in-person meetings and events have been cancelled or postponed for your county Farm Bureaus as well. This is a great time to mix things up with virtual meetings and events. We've already moved many programs online that we would have otherwise cancelled. Check out our Facebook Farm Fair, recorded reading of Accurate Ag Books and other informational videos. Contact your regional managers to organize virtual opportunities for your members to engage with each other and your communities.

If you are looking for resources, please look at the COVID-19 page of our website where we have compiled the latest on federal assistance programs, state rules and up-to-date information. If you have questions about any issue, please contact your local county Farm Bureau leadership or the state office as we need to stay connected now more than ever before.

May is membership month and the membership team at MFBF created, 'The May Day Way,' an exciting plan to help with recruitment and retention. We're reviving the May Day tradition of leaving a delivery on the porches of friends and neighbors. Instead of flowers, we're delivering membership information!

While we realize we cannot have face-to-face conversations with neighbors, now is a good time to ask them to join this great organization. Phone calls, emails and handwritten notes are all great ways to encourage membership recruitment while social distancing.

Suzanne and I want to let you know that we care about you and this organization. We will make it through these difficult times and continue to provide food and fiber to our country and the world.

We are open for business and want each of you to know that we  Care for the Country!

Sincerely,

Hans McPherson
President



May 14, 2020

Montana Farm Bureau applauds beef pricing investigation

The Montana Farm Bureau is applauding President Trump calling for the Department of Justice to investigate the meatpacker pricing activity which has seen skyrocketing profits while the price of live cattle plummeted by 30 percent. Additionally, MFBF appreciates that Secretary Perdue and the USDA are expanding their existing investigation into pricing practices in the beef industry to also include recent developments brought about by the spread of the coronavirus.

“On the national level, we want to thank President Trump, as well as Senator Steve Daines, Senator Jon Tester and Congressman Greg Gianforte, for their work to ensure there is a formal DOJ investigation into beef price discrepancy,” said MFBF President Hans McPherson. “We appreciate that attention has been paid to this subject by some statewide officials as well, like our Attorney General, Tim Fox.”

Senator Daines sent a letter to U.S. Attorney General Barr March 19 where he pointed out that while packers have enjoyed considerable profits over the past few years, cattle ranchers have been producing at a net loss and noted that allegations continue to surface against packers for price-fixing schemes. In April, Congressman Gianforte sent letters asking U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue and U.S. Attorney General William Barr to investigate the beef industry to make sure anti-competitive practices are punished. In addition to the efforts of Montana’s members of Congress, eleven state Attorneys General, including Montana A.G. Tim Fox, sent a letter to U.S. Attorney General William Barr asking for a DOJ investigation.

“Competition issues arising from agricultural markets existed long before the COVID-19 pandemic and will persist long after we defeat the current crisis. The US beef processing market is highly concentrated, with the four largest beef processors controlling 80 percent of the U.S. beef processing. In this highly concentrated industry, meatpackers have achieved sizeable profit margins. Cattle ranchers, however, who for generations have supplied our nation’s beef, are squeezed and often struggle to survive. Consumers, moreover, do not realize the benefits from a competitive market,” said the attorneys in their letter.

“I sincerely appreciate that so much attention is being paid to the struggles of Montana’s ranchers and farmers,” stated Nicole Rolf, MFBF’s director of national affairs. “Senator Daines and Congressman Gianforte have been inquiring regularly about the needs of farmers and ranchers and actively seeking solutions. We’ve been doing our best to address the needs of our farmer and rancher members; providing input on federal legislation like the CARES Act to address immediate needs and seeking out answers to long-standing questions. There are many factors at play here, but our members want to know what all is contributing to the record jumps in the beef cutout.”

On April 3, the Montana Farm Bureau joined 26 other state Farm Bureaus in signing a letter to Secretary Sonny Perdue requesting his attention on relief to cow-calf producers seeing increasingly volatile markets and investigating any price manipulation that may be occurring in the cattle industry.

“The cow/calf producer and the stockers—have shouldered the brunt of this market decline,” noted McPherson. “We had asked the USDA to investigate the drop in cattle prices after the Holcomb Packing Plant fire back in August. Cattlemen were having a hard-enough time before COVID-19; now with many packing plants shuttered or having reduced processing capabilities, our farmers and ranchers are having an exceptionally difficult time. We look forward to the DOJ doing a much-needed, timely investigation into this matter, and urge them to do so with haste.”



May 19, 2020

Farm Bureau Welcomes Announcement of CFAP Direct Payment Details

The Montana Farm Bureau welcomes today's announcement by President Trump detailing how the \$16 billion in direct payments to farmers from the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program will be distributed.

Payments will go directly to farmers who have suffered a 5 percent or greater price loss and who are facing significant marketing costs due to the coronavirus. Eligible commodities include cattle, hog, dairy, specialty crops and row crops. Payments will be limited to \$250,000 per person.

"Montana Farm Bureau understands that the coronavirus has caused considerable financial damage to farmers and ranchers. We are so grateful that help is on the way for our struggling ag producers," noted MFBF Executive Vice President John Youngberg. "The fact that sign-up for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program can begin next Tuesday, May 26, is good news, indeed. With this help, agriculture can continue to keep planting and growing our safe and nutritious food."

American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall, who was at the White House for the announcement, noted, "This aid can't arrive soon enough as many farmers file for bankruptcy, facing unprecedented losses. We are grateful to the Administration and to Congress for sending aid to America's farmers and ranchers reeling from the breakdown in distribution channels resulting from COVID-19. Although supply is strong, the shutdown of restaurants and school cafeterias caused the markets for meat, dairy and produce to shrink drastically almost overnight.

"The Coronavirus Food Assistance Program is critically important, but the long-term effects of this pandemic are still rippling through the farm economy. The livestock sector is a prime example. As America begins to reopen for business, it's imperative that we ensure the nation's farms and ranches are able to hold on through this season and next to help put this country back on the road to recovery."

For more information, visit farmers.gov/cfap.

Background on COVID-19 Impact:

- Farm bankruptcies increased 23% in March 2020 compared to a year earlier.
- By mid-April 2020:
 - Hog futures prices fell 53%.
 - Live cattle futures fell 25%.
 - Ethanol futures fell 33%.
 - Cotton futures fell 25%.

Background on CFAP Direct Payments:

- Direct support sign-ups will begin on May 26, 2020, through local Farm Service Agency offices.
- There is a payment limitation of \$250,000 per individual as well as a \$900,000 adjusted gross income limit for individuals who do not derive 75% or more of their income from farming.
- Corporations with up to three individuals actively engaged in farming will be eligible to receive up to three payment limits.
- Eligible farmers will receive 80% of the total payment, up to the payment limit, upon approval of the application. The remaining 20% will be paid at a later date as funds remain available.
- The \$16 billion includes \$9.5 billion appropriated by the CARES Act and \$6.5 billion from the Commodity Credit Corporation Charter Act.



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jana McGuire, jana.mcguire@foodintegrity.org, (402) 430-8723

Sustainability Shifts: Three Consumer Trends Brewing

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Tuesday, May 19, 2020 – While not mainstream quite yet, three pandemic-era consumer trends are bubbling just beneath the surface and set for significant growth, according to new online ethnography research that monitors millions of conversations in real time. Regardless of the topic, consumers are looking to the food industry to find sustainable solutions using technology.

“The dominant motivation driving the consumer here is this notion of overcoming human limitation through technological innovation,” said Ujwal Arkalgud, chief executive officer of MotivBase, a big data ethnography research company, and member of The Center for Food Integrity (CFI) Consumer Trust Insights Council.

Pre-pandemic the sustainability conversation was peppered with criticism about large corporations and their profit motives, he said. “That sentiment is now taking a backseat as online conversations revolve around the use of technology for the betterment of the food system, particularly as it relates to the supply chain.”

Three emerging trends

Shortening the supply chain, which has been crippled as a result of the pandemic, is the most dominant of three emerging trends that help us understand the current consumer psyche, he said. Arkalgud shared his insights as one of three panelists during a recent CFI webcast on shifting sustainability priorities.

Consumers are talking about “food miles,” a term Arkalgud said is “something we haven’t seen in the consumer language. They want to buy foods that potentially travel shorter distances.”

While the conversation is happening among early adopters, those at the front end of the adoption curve, the number of people talking about this issue is expected to grow by nearly 50 percent over the next 48 months. A topic that once was confusing is now accelerating and gaining understanding.

The second emerging conversation is around hydroponics and vertical farming as sustainable solutions. While there has been online chatter about both to some extent, they are coming into increased focus, particularly in terms of leveraging the technology to improve taste. “We’re seeing more discourse now in the mainstream media and more consumers sharing these types of articles.”

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Currently in the U.S. 17-million people are engaged in this conversation, a “relatively tiny segment,” said Arkalgud. “What’s interesting is the growth in consumers’ knowledge about this. We’re predicting this topic of hydroponics to be relevant to an additional 10-million consumers in the next two years.”

Finally, lab-cultured meat is gaining traction primarily as a means to reduce the environmental impact of traditional animal agriculture, as well as to solve for the concerns around animal welfare.

“While there is plenty of growth in the conversation around this topic, it is one that exhibits the most amount of volatility, suggesting that consumers are still quite hesitant about the idea of consuming meat produced in a lab,” he said.

Innovation and acceptance

All three are seeing growth so now is the time for the food system to step forward with innovation solutions that can address the emerging needs. “Consumers want to advocate for solutions that are scientifically driven,” he said. Whether consumers accept or reject innovation going forward largely depends on how its brought to market by food and agriculture, according to Charlie Arnot, CFI CEO.

“As we think about shifting sustainability priorities, particularly when it comes to consumers’ new appetite for technology solutions, it’s important for the food system to engage early and often in transparent conversations about how technology benefits people, animals and our planet, not just the food industry,” said Arnot. “Often the conversation revolves around technology as it relates to productivity and efficiency. While that’s important, consumers want to know about the greater societal benefit.”

Arnot encourages the food industry to acknowledge the risks and challenges, as well. Authentic transparency is the most effective strategy to build trust, he said.

Strategic approach

It’s anticipated that pressure from groups with sustainability demands will come back even stronger once the pandemic subsides. Arnot warns against making knee-jerk sustainability decisions and caving to demands that are deemed sustainable, but may fall short. Instead, approach sustainability carefully and strategically.

“The first step is setting priorities based on company values and those of its stakeholders; defining values provides a framework from which to make all decisions going forward,” said Arnot. If a proposed change falls within the values framework it should be considered. If it falls outside, it’s discarded – a non-negotiable.”

Next, conduct a comprehensive assessment of the potential impacts of recommended changes on the company, its supply chain and consumers.



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“Understanding the tradeoffs is a critical step and can take some time, but it’s worth the investment,” he said. “Leave no stone unturned.”

Finally, with values as the foundation, communicate sustainability decisions to both the group making the request and the public in a way that’s transparent and earns trust.

“If you’ve done your research, you can confidently justify any decision that speaks to your commitment to topics like food safety, worker safety, animal well-being and environmental stewardship,” said Arnot.

For more information, visit www.foodintegrity.org. To access the sustainability webinar, visit www.optimizingsustainability.org.

The Center for Food Integrity is a not-for-profit organization that helps today’s food system earn consumer trust. Its members and project partners, who represent the diversity of the food system, are committed to providing accurate information and working together to address important issues in food and agriculture. The Center does not lobby or advocate for individual companies or brands. For more information, visit www.foodintegrity.org.

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