

Food in a Pandemic: Nine Areas

Curated Cream of the Crop from Presbyterian Hunger Program

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Will we have enough to eat?! Great attention is being paid to our food and farm system given the fault lines laid bare by the Covid-19 pandemic. There is much for us to assess, learn and change. I have selected articles on the nine topics listed below and hope these are helpful as we envision more equitable and sustainable ways to structure this most essential area. If you only have time for one article, I've chosen my favorite from each category. The full compilation follows.

1) Spring is Here and the Grassroots Solutions are Emerging

[Farmers in Puerto Rico are Growing a Culture of Social Justice and Climate Resilience](#) *By Jake Price, Civil Eats*

2) Yes, the Systems Need Changing

[Food Workers Platform – HEAL Food Alliance and Collaborators](#)

3) A Sustainable and Just Way Forward

[A Green New Deal for Agriculture](#)
By Raj Patel and Jim Goodman, Jacobin Magazine

4) The People Who Enable Us to Live

[Food Workers Have Always Been Essential—Give Them What Is Theirs](#)
By Erik Hazard and Leila Mzali, Food First

5) Knowing What's Wrong Helps Us Figure Out How to Change

[The Coronavirus Pandemic Could Force Half A Billion People Into Poverty](#)
By Kyla Mandel, Huffington Post

6) The Gap Between Food, Farms & Hungry Mouths

['A disastrous situation': mountains of food wasted as coronavirus scrambles supply chain](#) *By Susie Gagle, The Guardian*

7) Food Banks & Nutrition Programs

[As Child Hunger Soars Across USA, National Poll Finds Nearly One in Four Parents Reducing Food for Children](#) *Press Release from Feeding America (4/14/20)*

8) International Dimensions

[Agroecology Is Becoming A Global Movement. But Where Does the U.S. Fit In?](#)

By Antonio Roman-Alcalá, *Yes! Magazine*

9) Understanding Money Matters

[We can't let this economic crisis go to waste](#)

By Thomas M. Hanna and Carla Santos Skandier, *Open Democracy*

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**1) Spring is Here and the Grassroots Solutions are Emerging**

[The Moment for Food Sovereignty is Now](#)

By Katie Brimm, *Civil Eats*

From panic planting to cooperative gardens, farmers focused on equity and food justice know that ‘if you can feed yourself, you can free yourself.’

[Farmers in Puerto Rico are Growing a Culture of Social Justice and Climate Resilience](#)

By Jake Price, *Civil Eats*

After Hurricane Maria, hundreds of young farmers, many women, have established bold approaches to agriculture—and their ideas are resonating beyond the island. “People are simply used to going to the supermarket and buying what they need—they don’t see themselves without it,” said Angélica of El Josco Bravo. “But the moment you don’t have it, there’s no certainty. We’re trying to educate the people—ever since the storm, everyone [has] to be responsible. We have to build food certainty for our families, for our communities and the whole country.”

[Direct Marketing on Upsurge](#)

*Politico – Morning Agriculture*

Farmers are increasingly rethinking their business models to include delivering their products straight to consumers, while those who have been doing so for years have seen a spike in traffic with people stuck at home, cooking their own meals and wary of venturing out to the grocery store.

[COVID-19 Resources and shared practices for Food Policy Councils](#)

[The Covid-19 Crisis: Planning for Extra Care on your Farm](#)

*From the Agricultural Justice Project*

Make a farm health and safety plan for this crisis to reduce worker and customer exposure and make sure everyone on the farm is trained in how to carry out the plan.

[Affirmative Agroecological Responses to Coronavirus](#)

By Stephen McFadden, *Chiron Communications*

Driven by the shuttered economies and supply chain disruptions provoked by the Coronavirus, and our basic human survival instincts, people have churned up a tsunami of

affirmative agroecological activity toward securing garden seeds, growing food cooperatively, and otherwise connecting with local farms.

### [How to Support Farmers and Safely Shop at Farmers' Markets](#)

By Brie Mazurek

A farmers' market expert shares 12 tips to sustain farmers, access fresh, healthy food, and avoid crowds at supermarkets.

## 2) Yes, the Systems Need Changing

### [The Deeper Source of Grocery Panic: How COVID-19 exposes the flaws in industrial agriculture—and invites reforms](#)

by Judith D. Schwartz, *the American Prospect*

**Excerpt:** Legislation that gives windfalls to the industrial food sector exacerbates fragility—particularly as Big Food is pushing toward more automation. Given the added stress of climate change, IATP's Ben Lilliston says, “a more climate-resilient system includes more farmers on the land. We want to empower people who produce our food. How do we set up a farm system that doesn't overproduce, builds soil health, and is climate resilient? We want to help farming communities have ownership, and make sure these are places people want to live—and not have rural areas as sacrifice zones.”

### [Food Workers Platform – HEAL Food Alliance and Collaborators](#)

Invest in food workers, farmers and local communities first: Our response to Congress' COVID-19 aid package

### [National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition Food-Farm Policy Recommendations](#)

## 3) A Sustainable and Just Way Forward

### [A Green New Deal for Agriculture](#)

By Raj Patel and Jim Goodman, *Jacobin Magazine*

Agriculture policy in the original New Deal sprang from a heady mix of class struggle and uneasy alliances. The Green New Deal will have to stitch together a different coalition that can challenge the dominant mode of agriculture and create a more just food system.

### [Coronavirus Could Usher In A New Era Of Local, Sustainable Eating](#)

By Olivia Paschal, *Huffington Post*

Small farms are finding new ways to stay in business as the pandemic shuts down farmers markets and restaurants.

### [As Coronavirus Ravages Businesses, Small Farms and Independent Restaurants Rally for Economic Relief](#)

By Lisa Held, *Civil Eats*

The fate of the industries are inextricably linked. Will the government bail out airlines and Big Food over small food businesses, farms, and workers?

### [We Can't Stop Climate Change Unless We Drastically Change How We Use Our Land](#)

The latest IPCC report warns that we need to fix deforestation and agriculture to fix the climate

### [Just Transition for Agriculture? A Critical Step in Tackling Climate Change](#)

Charlotte E. Blattner Harvard Law School

Full PDF - <https://www.foodsystemsjournal.org/index.php/fsj/article/view/796/782>

### [COVID-19 Stimulus Package for the Food System](#)

The fourth stimulus package in response to the COVID-19 is already being developed. on the President, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the Secretary of Commerce to declare a national disaster in the agriculture and seafood sectors to unlock existing federal disaster funding and services, and enable Congress to appropriate further relief funds for the farm and seafood sector. In addition, federal agencies must use every tool available to keep people in their homes, on the land, and on the water.

### [Pastured Meat Producers are Facing Catastrophic Losses. These Efforts Could Help Them Weather the Pandemic.](#)

By Lynne Curry, *Civil Eats*

Community-based initiatives have sprung up to support independent livestock producers shift to new markets.

## 4) The People Who Enable Us to Live

### [Food Workers Have Always Been Essential—Give Them What Is Theirs](#)

By Erik Hazard and Leila Mzali, *Food First*

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed how an economic system dependent on low-wage labor creates as many issues as it purports to solve. When profit determines every outcome of social and economic life, working people lose. This reality is on full display in our food system.

### [Essential or Expendable? Farmworkers Condemn Lack of Protection and Economic Help During Pandemic](#)

*Democracy Now!*

As the coronavirus sweeps through the United States, the country's 2.5 million farmworkers are continuing to go to work every day, often facing crowded and unsanitary conditions without personal protective equipment, for poverty wages. We speak with Gerardo Reyes Chávez, a farmworker leader with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, who describes the conditions farmworkers in Florida are facing and how they are calling on Florida Governor Ron DeSantis to protect farmworkers during the COVID-19 crisis, and with Mónica Ramírez,

president and founder of Justice for Migrant Women and co-founder of the National Farmworkers Women's Alliance.

### [Amid shades of Great Recession, day laborers struggle to find work during coronavirus](#)

By Ruben Vives, *Los Angeles Times*

Gabriel Reyes was \$600 short of his \$1,800 monthly rent and April was around the corner. The day laborer was so desperate for a job he created a cardboard sign that listed his welding skills and cellphone number. "I figure this way they know what I do since there's so many of us out here," he said.

### [As pandemic spreads and growing season ramps up, farmworkers deemed 'essential' but still largely unprotected](#)

By Esther Honig, *Food & Environment Reporting Network (FERN)*

Florida's Coalition of Immokalee Workers, which successfully fought for better pay and working conditions, now sounds the alarm on coronavirus risk.

## 5) Knowing What's Wrong Helps Us Figure Out How to Change

[When It Comes to Hunger, the Worst Is Yet to Come](#): Unless we demand a change from the current system

By Raj Patel and Jim Goodman

The food system in the U.S. is holding together in the early weeks of the COVID crisis — aside from the price spikes that come with panic buying, the supply chain of commodity crops looks fairly solid. But an overabundance of commodity crops doesn't solve our country's hunger problems. And doubling down on this flawed system won't just fail to fix hunger — it'll spawn new disease.

### [The Coronavirus Pandemic Could Force Half A Billion People Into Poverty](#)

By Kyla Mandel, *Huffington Post*

Economic calamities spurred by the health crisis could erase decades of progress in raising standards of living.

### [Farmers are forced to let crops rot and throw away milk while food bank demand soars](#)

By Manuela Tobias and Robert Rodriguez, *Calmatters*

For many farmers, it's more cost-effective to let crops rot in the fields. They can't afford to harvest it if there is no market for it, and food banks can't cover the full cost of labor.

### [Critical Food and Farm Rules Have Been Rolled Back During the Pandemic](#)

By Gosia Wozniacka, *Civil Eats* (4.14.20)

During the coronavirus crisis, inspection suspensions, enforcement freezes, and rule rollbacks by the EPA, USDA, and the FDA could have dire impacts on the food system.

### [Coronavirus and the food system: a shock in logistics, not supply](#)

By Doug Hertzler, ActionAID Senior Policy Analyst

I have just returned from my family's farm in Pennsylvania, where I was helping my retired parents avoid exposure to coronavirus. It's impossible to go back to business-as-usual when we consider how this pandemic will affect the whole world and how we don't yet understand its extent or which countries will be most affected. But we can be sure that the effects won't be limited to the disease itself. Food systems around the world will be disrupted, and this will primarily affect people with the least ability to buy or produce their own food.

### [Smithfield closes pork plant indefinitely; hot spot for coronavirus](#)

By Chuck Abbott, Food & Environment Reporting Network (FERN)

Under pressure from state and local officials, Smithfield Foods said that its mammoth pork plant in Sioux Falls "will remain closed until further notice" and suggested Covid-19 cases could jeopardize the U.S. food supply. The pork plant was linked to 38 percent of confirmed Covid-19 cases in South Dakota.

### [Wild Animals and Factory Farms](#)

By Carl Safina, Tenderly

Markets for wild animals as food or as medicinals, and the continual intensification of factory farming, function as incubators for new diseases.

### ['Tip of the iceberg': is our destruction of nature responsible for Covid-19?](#)

By John Vidal, The Guardian

As habitat and biodiversity loss increase globally, the coronavirus outbreak may be just the beginning of mass pandemics.

## 6) The Gap Between Food, Farms & Hungry Mouths

### ['A disastrous situation': mountains of food wasted as coronavirus scrambles supply chain](#)

By Susie Gagle, The Guardian

Farmers are seeing produce rot in fields and dairy wash down drains as they rush to find areas of demand and prevent closures

### [How Panic Buying Has Put an Incredible Strain on Food Banks Even As the Need for Them Explodes](#)

by Beena Raghavendran and Ryan McCarthy, ProPublica

Here's the dismal equation for food banks: Panic shopping and hoarding have led to supply shortages. Volunteers frightened of the virus have stopped showing up. And a newly jobless population has sent demand soaring.

### [Online purchasing expands to one-third of SNAP recipients](#)

From Food & Environment Reporting Network (FERN)

Anti-hunger advocates have been pushing for years to allow SNAP (food stamp) recipients

to use their benefits online. Now, it's possible that California could roll out online grocery shopping for the state's 4 million SNAP recipients in a few weeks, thanks to some recent policy changes. Other states, that are part of a USDA pilot, are rushing to get their systems in place to respond to the pandemic, and some, including Pennsylvania and California, are petitioning USDA to expand the pilot so more SNAP recipients can shop from home.

## 7) Food Banks & Nutrition Programs

### [As Child Hunger Soars Across USA, National Poll Finds Nearly One in Four Parents Reducing Food for Children](#)

Child Hunger Rate Has Increased Seven-Fold Since Crisis

Press Release from Feeding America (4/14/20)

“37 percent of parents nationwide cutting the size of meals or skipping meals for their children because they did not have enough money for food in the last month”

### [COVID-19 Federal Update: What the Stimulus Package Means for Federal Nutrition Programs](#)

On March 27<sup>th</sup>, President Trump signed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act ([H.R. 748](#)). Of the roughly \$2 trillion in federal funding that the CARES Act unlocks, \$25 billion will go to food assistance. Nearly \$16 billion of the \$25 billion will support the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and another \$9 billion will fund school meal programs.

### [Three Ways the Coronavirus Crisis Is Also a Food Crisis](#)

Karen Perry Stillerman, senior analyst, Food and Environment, Union of Concerned Scientists

- 1) The coronavirus is exacerbating food insecurity.
- 2) Isolation is jeopardizing key food businesses and industries
- 3) The pandemic is creating gaps in food safety inspection

### [Finding Meals for Kids](#)

The newly created "Meals for Kids" interactive map can help families find meals for their children during coronavirus closures; 20,000 meal sites in 23 states are listed with more being added.

## 8) International Dimensions

### [Agroecology Is Becoming A Global Movement. But Where Does the U.S. Fit In?](#)

By Antonio Roman-Alcalá, *Yes! Magazine*

If there's one thing the American food movement could learn from the global movement for agroecology, it's that movements move government policy, not the other way around.

### [Ensuring Food Security in the Era of COVID-19](#)

Thanawat Tiensin, Agnes Kalibata, and Martin Cole, *Project Syndicate*



Experts say the pandemic will unleash a food security crisis not seen since the Great Recession. As we learned during the 2008-09 Great Recession, governments – with the support of financial institutions, the United Nations, and others – can mitigate the risk of global food shortages and high prices.

### [Agroecology in Times of COVID-19](#)

*By Miguel Altieri and Clara Ines Nicholls, Univ. of CA-Berkeley and CELIA*

Most of our global problems: energy shortages, water scarcity, environmental degradation, climate change, economic inequality, food insecurity and others cannot be addressed in isolation, as these problems are interconnected and interdependent. When one of the problems is aggravated, the effects spread throughout the system, exacerbating the other problems. Like never before, the systemic nature of our world has been revealed to us by the coronavirus pandemic: human, animal and ecological health are closely linked. Is this one of the lessons that COVID -19 is here to teach us?

### [Protect the market access of small and medium-scale farmers and peasants in these difficult times](#)

*La Via Campesina*

In the midst of the huge crisis that Europe and the entire world is experiencing because of COVID-19, the question of rethinking our economic model and the importance of food sovereignty is once again a key issue.

### [A battle plan for ensuring global food supplies during the COVID-19 crisis](#)

*FAO Chief Economist Maximo Torero Cullen maps the ways the world can mitigate shocks to agriculture and food systems.*

The COVID-19 pandemic has put the world on a crisis footing, with unprecedented actions to restrict movements and plans for radical deployment of public funds to combat the threat posed by a novel coronavirus that knows no boundaries. Success will entail coherent and robust plans for our food systems. outlines a framework for how countries can think about and craft these plans.

## 9) Understanding Money Matters

### [We can't let this economic crisis go to waste](#)

*By Thomas M. Hanna and Carla Santos Skandier, Open Democracy*

During this, or any future, economic crisis, public support and funding to stricken industries must be conditioned on public ownership and control within the overall perspective of a Green New Deal and a just transition for workers and communities affected by the required shifts to renewable energy and less carbon intensive modes of transportation and production.

### [Wall Street Is High on Government Supply](#)

*By Dante Dallavalle and Christian Parenti, Jacobin Magazine*



Excerpt: "... there is a possible silver lining in this gathering crisis. It is this: the old monetarist tricks are structurally played out. The Fed Funds rate is effectively at zero and the central bank has already taken over and semi-nationalized whole sections of finance. In the face of a new slump the cheap money strategy won't work. The only polices that will revive growth will be the sorts that socialists are already demanding on purely ethical grounds: debt cancellation, free higher education, [single payer health care](#), government jobs programs, and a [Green New Deal](#) to drive an energy transition.

### **[Spanish Government Aims to Roll Out Basic Income 'Soon'](#)**

*By Rodrigo Orihuela*

The Spanish government is working to roll out a universal basic income as soon as possible, as part of a battery of actions aimed at countering the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.