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NBA Weekly Update for April 17, 2020

The Weekly Update is a service designed to provide National Bison Association members with news and information affecting bison production and marketing. Many items in the Weekly Update are reprinted from outside sources. The content of those articles does not necessarily reflect the policy position of the National Bison Association. The articles are reproduced here only as a means to keep our membership informed as much as possible of all information and opinions relating to bison that is circulating publicly.

NBA Summer Conference Postponed

The National Bison Association will unfortunately have to postpone its 2020 Summer Conference to summer 2021, which the regional host association, the Rocky Mountain Bison Association, graciously agreed to again host then.

The NBA executive committee voted unanimously yesterday to postpone the event due to the COVID-19 situation. The NBA is now working to host a virtual bison learning seminar in lieu of the Summer Conference, stay tuned for details.

Thank you for understanding and stay safe out there.

ND Ag. Commissioner Conveys Bison Industry CARES Act Request to USDA

National and North Dakota bison leaders yesterday hailed the work of North Dakota Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring for weighing in with U.S. Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue with specific policy recommendations to assist commercial and tribal bison producers impacted by the fallout from the COVID-19 outbreak.

“The bison industry will likely experience the lingering effects of the current market situation for another two years. The drop in the carcass price for bison has declined rapidly since the pandemic and producers and plants are struggling,” the Commissioner wrote in a letter sent to Secretary Perdue earlier today. “Therefore, we are proposing a market facilitation payment based on the herd inventory on February 21, 2020 and reflecting the drop in the market value of bison.”

The National Bison Association sent a letter to Secretary Perdue on March 27th, requesting that bison producers be included in any livestock assistance program crafted by USDA utilizing the \$9.5 billion allocated under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARE). The Secretary responded that he will consider the needs of bison producers “as we continue to assess how we can best help our hardworking farmers, ranchers, and agricultural producers.”

In early April, the National Bison Association began to develop an in-depth analysis of the COVID-19 impacts throughout the bison business.

Dave Carter, National Bison Association executive director, explained, “Because USDA does not maintain extensive industry data on bison, we felt it important to provide an analysis that could be utilized as the basis for policymaking.”

The NBA analysis identified severe disruption and financial impact because of the loss of foodservice business, which has served as the primary outlet for high-value bison steaks. Even though retail demand for bison meat has spiked since the COVID-19 outbreak, that demand is driven primarily for lower-priced ground bison. Additionally, bison processors are facing increased costs as they work to maintain a healthy and safe work environment for their employees.

As the NBA was conducting its analysis, Goehring reached out to leaders of the North Dakota Buffalo Association and the InterTribal Buffalo Council to identify specific policy recommendations that could be developed. The North Dakota, National Bison Association and Tribal leaders put a working group together that established the proposed assistance that was conveyed to Secretary Perdue Thursday.

That package proposes compensation of \$210 for bison cows and bulls, \$252 for finishing stock weighing between 400 – 800 lbs., and \$294 for finished bison weighing more than 800 lbs. Additionally, Commissioner Goehring’s letter encourages expanded use of bison meat in school lunch and other nutrition programs when the nation begins to recover from the COVID-19 shutdowns.

Kevin Leier, a Rugby, ND bison rancher and executive director of the North Dakota Buffalo Association, said today, “We commend Commissioner Goehring for his commitment to bring together key stakeholders in the bison business, and to help us develop specific recommendations that will help producers across the country weather this storm.”

Mike Faith, chair of the Standing Rock Sioux Nation and vice chair of the InterTribal Buffalo Council, added, “We want to not only help producers get through this immediate crisis, but also look for opportunities to utilize the meat from this magnificent animal to help restore the health of our families and communities as we emerge into a brighter day.”

Carter noted, “Just as bison stick together when adversity threatens the herd, the community of bison producers at the national, state and tribal level worked together to develop sound, constructive proposals. We thank Commissioner Goehring for helping us

carry those proposals to Secretary Perdue.”

A Message to NBA Members

As Congress prepared to pass the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Stimulus Act last month with \$9.5 billion directed to provide assistance to livestock, dairy, fruit and vegetable growers, your NBA Board of Directors unanimously passed a resolution urging U.S. Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue to include bison producers as eligible recipients in any assistance program implemented for the livestock sector, and to assure that any compensation for bison producers be based upon the prevailing market prices before March 2020.

After 140 senators and representatives sent a letter to the Secretary urging swift action to assist cattle producers, many of you responded to our request to contact members of your congressional delegation with a reminder to urge him to include bison as well.

This week the Secretary responded, writing, “I will keep your comments in mind, including those about the impact of using ‘beef’ rather than ‘bovine’ in any upcoming assistance to the livestock sector, as we continue to assess how we can best help our hardworking farmers, ranchers, and agricultural producers...”

Meanwhile, USDA officials, along with the ag staff of several of the congressional offices contacted, have also responded with a request for information regarding the actual impact of COVID-19 on the bison business, along with recommendations on what type of assistance would be specifically helpful.

Because USDA does not collect and report the level of market data that it does for the beef and dairy industries, the National Bison Association staff reached out to 25 NBA members in various segments of the business to compile an analysis of the COVID-19 Impacts on the bison sector.

Meanwhile, North Dakota’s Agriculture Commissioner, Doug Goehring, signaled his willingness to help convey the bison business’ policy recommendations to Secretary Perdue and other USDA officials who are developing the ag assistance program under the CARES Act. Leaders of the North Dakota Buffalo Association worked with the National Bison Association to develop this recommendation:

The following recommendations are based on an analysis conducted by the National Bison Association among cow-calf producers, finishers, processors/marketers, and farm-direct marketers. The formulas in this recommendation reflect the value differences in live bison and cattle as of February 21, 2020.

Bison value compared to beef cattle 1.4/1

The beef program compensation is based on payment of \$150/hd. with inventory being calculated as of Feb. 21, 2020. The bison payment will utilize the same inventory date, but will reflect the market value of bison animals on that date:

Category 1 : Cows/Bulls- \$210/hd.

This reflects current bison market trends for bison cow/calf operations. It covers most of the depreciation on a breeding-age animal, which allows for producers to proactively recover and plan for a market disruption in the fall calf selling market while mitigating the feed costs that have been accrued with rising hay prices due to weather conditions from 2019/2020 (i.e. flooding and drought in the Dakotas, Minnesota, etc.)

Category 2: Feeder Stock 400-800lbs — Weighted Multiplier 1.2- \$252/hd.

This formula is based upon the anticipated additional expenses incurred because of the increased cost of distillers grains of up to 30%, and lower daily gains as finishers reformulate their feed regimens. The increased daily expense is compounded for bison finishers because of the additional time required even under normal circumstances to

bring a bison to finishing weight. Additionally, producers in this category may be impacted by a decrease in demand for heavy carcasses because of the lack of demand for ribeyes, striploin and tenderloin, which currently account for 25% of the carcass value.

Category 3: Finished Bison 800+lbs — Weighted Multiplier 1.4 — \$294.00/hd.

This will offset the real price disruption in the commercial market as carcass values decrease due to food service closures and retail demand changing to grind product. This will decrease the value added to a finished carcass by up to \$300/hd., in addition to likely higher finishing costs of up to \$140/hd. because of the loss of distillers grains.

The recommendations were endorsed by the NBA Executive Committee this week, and were delivered to the Secretary yesterday.

Additionally, the NBA is working with a coalition of farm organizations who are urging USDA to implement specific steps to address the disruption being experienced by farm-direct marketers who are being impacted by restaurant and farmers' market closures, and by the loss of revenue from agritourism.

Those recommendations include:

- Aid for Local and Regional Food System (LRFS) producers commensurate with their expected losses;
- Simplified and accessible applications for aid, with the lowest barrier to participation possible, including;
- Not requiring the producer to already have an FSA farm number; and
- The USDA Office of the Inspector General should be provided with any material necessary to conduct a robust audit of the implementation of all CARES Act-related agricultural provisions.

We are again reaching out to NBA members with a request to contract their congressional delegation. We will be sending an e-blast to all members shortly with some key talking points. We hope you will take the time to weigh in and make sure that you and your fellow producers have access to the tools needed to help weather the economic storm ahead.

Thanks for your help.

Sincerely,

Donnis Baggett, President
Dave Carter, Executive Director
Jim Matheson, Assistant Director

Wholesale Prices Slightly Stronger in March

Wholesale prices paid for dressed bison carcasses were up in March, according to the latest monthly wholesale price report issued today for USDA's Livestock and Grain Market News Service.

In the report, which captured data recorded largely before the impact of foodservice closures hit the marketplace, dress young bull carcasses averaged \$408.09/cwt. which was \$0.88 higher than in February, but \$56.71/cwt. lower than in March 2019. Dressed heifer carcasses averaged \$403.90/cwt, which was \$5.74/cwt. higher than in February, but \$19.49 lower than in March 2019. Older bulls and cows were both higher for the month as well.

Year-to-date, 16,452 bison have been processed under federal inspection. That is 14 percent higher than the same period in 2019, and the highest year-to-date figure since USDA began tracking bison processing in 2000.

The USDA price report can be found here.
https://www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/nw_ls526.txt.

USDA Preparing to Initiate Annual Bison Weaning Report

USDA's Livestock and Grain Market News Service has been granted the official go-ahead to begin compiling an annual weaning report on bison.

The report, which was formally requested by the National Bison Association Board of Directors in January, would be compiled each spring with information provided from a segment of the larger commercial cow-calf operations in the country.

Dave Carter, NBA executive director, explained, "Even prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, our business has faced challenges of having processors trying to adapt their production and marketing plans on the fly because of an unusually large or small crop of animals coming to the market. An annual weaning report can provide a valuable periscope that will help the marketers ramp up or scale back their programs, based upon the crop of animals headed their way in the next 15-24 months."

Carter noted that the report will not identify the exact number of calves weaned each year, but will instead identify trends in weaning.

"We appreciate the willingness of USDA to develop an additional tool that can help us manage our business."

Earth Day Spent Inside? Send Us Your Ideas

Next Wednesday, April 22, marks the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, the annual event dedicated to increasing the public's understanding of the importance of protecting our environment.

With most people confined indoors, though Earth Day organizers are talking about a delayed celebration this fall. But bison producers shouldn't pass up the opportunity to remind folks that enjoying bison at home—or as a take-out meal—is helping to protect the Earth. After all, anyone enjoying bison meat is a partner in bison restoration. And, that, in turn, is helping to restore healthy grasslands.

Don't forget to promote deliciously healthy bison on your social media platforms this weekend. And, send along your ideas on how best to promote bison meat to a shelter-in-place public, and we'll post on our social media accounts as well. Send your ideas to Karen Conley at karen@bisoncentral.com, or Jim Matheson at jim@bisoncentral.com.

Adam Ulbricht Hired as New MnBA Executive Director

The Minnesota Bison Association announced today that Adam Ulbricht of Melrose, MN has been named the new executive director of the Minnesota Bison Association. He will officially take over the role beginning on May 15th.

For the past five and a half years, Ulbricht has worked with AgCountry Farm Credit Services in Willmar, Minnesota, in marketing communications. His role primarily focuses on external communications and governmental relations.

His work history includes three years spent as a journalist, including a year and half in Washington, D.C.; five and a half years in radio; and as a ghost writer on behalf of members of the Minnesota House of Representatives.

Ulricht holds both a bachelor's and master's degree from St. Cloud State University. From 2016 to 2018, Adam participated in the Minnesota Agriculture and Rural Leadership (MARL) Program. Following competition, he joined the MARL Board of Directors.

Editor's Note: The following news stories were distributed by organizations not affiliated with the National Bison Association. They may not reflect the opinions or the positions held by the NBA on matters such as genetic integrity, animal management, and other issues.



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Northern Kentucky's Bison Herd Has A Tiny New Member

(From WLWT – NBC)

A bison calf was born at Big Bone Lick Historical Site earlier this month, state park officials said. Bison typically have calves between April and May.

The park, located in Boone County, is known around the area for its free-roaming bison herd.

Great bison herds once roamed this area and provided food, clothing and shelter for the American Indians and pioneers. Hunted to near extinction, the last of the wild bison were seen in Kentucky around 1800. The bison herd today recalls the park's prehistoric past and are our only living mammalian link to the Ice Age.

Big Bone Lick is equally known across the area for its unique name and scientific finds. The park's name derives from massive mammoth fossils found in the area from the Pleistocene megafauna. The mammoths are believed to have been drawn to the area by a salt lick deposited around the sulfur springs.

Read [more](#).

Rewilding Bison In The Carpathians To Preserve Wilderness Strongholds And Migration Routes

(From phys.org)

Nature is significantly degraded across much of Europe, impacted by factors such as infrastructure construction, intensive agriculture and forestry, and the disappearance of naturally occurring, large-bodied animals such as large carnivores and bison. This is the finding of new research published today by a coalition of NGOs and research institutes, consisting of a series of maps and policy papers which provide policy-makers with critical and effective new tools to decide why, where and how to restore nature using rewilding principles.

The policy papers demonstrate the urgent need for European politicians to prioritize nature restoration in the upcoming EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030. Using ecological integrity as a baseline, the tools can help identify EU-level priority areas and corridors that

need to be protected and restored to improve the overall coherence and connectivity of the Natura 2000 network.

Rewilding bison in the Carpathians will help maintain ecological connectivity and keep ecological corridors open.

The European bison (*Bison bonasus*) is one of the most threatened large mammals in the world, and it is protected at the European level. WWF Central and Eastern Europe's and Rewilding Europe's Life Bison Project aims to establish a wild bison population that is demographically and genetically viable, by reintroducing individuals in the south-western Carpathian Mountains of Romania, where one of the largest wilderness areas in Europe survives.

Bison bonasus, the largest land mammal in Europe, is a key species for preserving wilderness strongholds. The bison's browsing ability in the search of food helps maintain a mosaic of forested areas and grasslands, a landscape which is highly valuable for its biodiversity and natural resilience in the face of climate challenges. Moreover, the bison is a species that, if successfully re-introduced and its habitat actively preserved across the entire Carpathian Mountains, will help maintain ecological corridors on a large scale, allowing for species migration, be it the bison itself or other large carnivores such as the brown bear, the wolf or lynx.

Read more [here](#).

Study says Yellowstone's Bison Are Exerting An Unhealthily Heavy Footprint

(From the Montana Free Press)

Yellowstone's Lamar Valley has been called the American Serengeti, a landscape where people can see bison, elk, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, moose, wolves, coyotes, grizzly bears, black bears, otters and beavers.

But the habitat of Lamar Valley has been degraded in recent years, thanks in large part to record numbers of bison eating, trampling and rubbing their horns on woody plants. These behaviors drastically alter plant communities, stream and river channels and food webs, according to a new study published last week by researchers at Oregon State University.

"This system is on a trajectory that is not so good ecologically for everything except for bison," said Bob Beschta, a professor emeritus of ecology and lead author of the study, which was published in the journal *Food Webs*.

For the past two decades, Beschta and his colleague Bill Ripple have published dozens of papers on one of the most heartening environmental stories of recent times: the trophic cascade caused by the reintroduction of wolves in Yellowstone National Park.

In the 1990s, wolves reintroduced from Canada started hunting Yellowstone's overpopulated elk herds. Elk numbers quickly dwindled, and plants started growing in places they hadn't grown for decades. Yellowstone's streams rebounded to conditions that existed prior to predator eradication, leading to more willow, more aspen, more beavers and more birds. In areas like Blacktail Deer Creek, plants like serviceberries and chokecherries have returned, Beschta said.

But that recovery hasn't happened everywhere in the park, particularly in Lamar Valley.

"If you drive through Lamar Valley, and we've been telling people about everything getting better, you'd say, 'You've got to be kidding me. Nothing is getting better here,'" Beschta said. "We're finally now saying it's not all roses. There's a problem, and it happens to be bison."

Read [more](#).

USDA Meat Inspectors Told To Find Or Make Their Own Masks

(From AgriPulse)

Meat packers need federal inspectors to produce the pork chops, T-bone steaks and ground beef that consumers are counting on to be in grocery stores, but the USDA inspectors on the front line are being told they are on their own when it comes to securing masks to protect against the spread of COVID-19.

USDA, despite calls from meat inspectors at slaughtering and processing plants across the country, is still not distributing face masks or other protective gear, a government source told Agri-Pulse Friday.

The government just doesn't have enough supplies, USDA told its employees, including the roughly 6,500 meat inspectors at slaughtering and processing plants across the country, in an internal memo dated Apr. 4 and viewed by Agri-Pulse.

"While the department is unable to provide masks to all mission essential employees at this time, we will notify our workforce as soon as possible as additional ... supplies become available," states the memo distributed by USDA's Office of the Deputy Secretary.

As to the message directly to meat inspectors, USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service is telling them to buy masks, get them from packers or make their own.

"FSIS realizes that due to increasing demand, the availability of commercial face coverings ... may be limited," the agency said in a notice to employees Thursday that offers to reimburse the cost of buying or making them.

masks for inspectors, but said, "The food supply chain is a critical industry in the United States and Secretary Perdue fully recognizes the need to keep workers and inspectors safe during the COVID-19 national emergency ... USDA, together with the FDA and CDC, will continue to support a whole of America approach to ensure the food supply chain remains safe and secure."

USDA Unveils Tool to Help Rural Communities Address the COVID-19 Pandemic

(From USDA Press Release)

WASHINGTON, April 13, 2020 – U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue today unveiled a one-stop-shop of federal programs that can be used by rural communities, organizations and individuals impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 Federal Rural Resource Guide (PDF, 349 KB) is a first-of-its-kind resource for rural leaders looking for federal funding and partnership opportunities to help address this pandemic.

USDA has taken many immediate actions to assist farmers, ranchers, producers, rural communities, and rural-based businesses and organizations impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information on these actions, visit www.usda.gov/coronavirus.

[Source.](#)

USDA wants direct coronavirus payments to farmers: Perdue

(From Fox Business News)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture intends to make direct payments to farmers as part of a roughly \$15 billion effort to protect the nation's food supply amid the coronavirus pandemic, Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue told FOX Business' Stuart Varney on Wednesday.

"We want to have direct payments to farmers, but more importantly ... we want to

purchase as much of this milk or other protein products, hams and pork products, and move them to where they can be utilized in our food banks and possibly even international humanitarian aid," Perdue said.

Read [more](#).

Meat Processing Plants Are Closing Due To Covid-19 Outbreaks - Beef Shortfalls May Follow

(From the Washington Post)

The coronavirus has sickened workers and forced slowdowns and closures of some of the country's biggest meat processing plants, reducing production by as much as 25 percent, industry officials say, and sparking fears of a further round of hoarding.

Several of the country's largest beef-packing companies have announced plant closures.

Before the coronavirus hit, about 660,000 beef cattle were being processed each week at plants across the United States, according to John Bormann, program sales manager for JBS, the American subsidiary of the world's largest processor of fresh beef and pork.

This week there probably will be around 500,000 head processed at U.S. plants still in operation. That's 25 percent less beef being produced.

Some of the slowdown is because of facility closures. Two of the seven largest U.S. facilities — those with the capacity to process 5,000 beef cattle daily — are closed because of the pandemic.

Read [more](#).

Food Makers Get Shot of Reality Now that Panic Buying Has Waned

(From MSN.com)

After weeks of consumer hoarding, panic buying is abating and the lack of demand from shuttered restaurants, schools and coffee shops is starting to set in. Sanderson Farms Inc., the U.S.'s third-largest chicken producer, is slowing production at plants that supply restaurants, and protein giant Cargill Inc. has idled an egg facility due to the lack of demand from the food services industry.

Americans spend more than half of their food budget eating out, and an increase in retail among grocery stores can't fully compensate for the lack of demand from restaurants. Every 10% decline in out-of-home food spending translates into a gain of just 3% in the retail channel, according to Rabobank, one of the largest lenders to the food and agriculture industry.

Nowhere is the effect of restaurant shutdowns more obvious than in the dairy industry, with almost 50% of American cheese production going to food services. Farmers in top-producing Wisconsin are being asked to dump milk to boost low prices with overall demand for dairy products expected to drop 10% to 15% in the second quarter, according to Mary Ledman, a global dairy strategist at Rabobank.

Read [more](#).

Guide to Applying For CSP During The Time Of Coronavirus

(From The Center for Rural Affairs)

As millions are socially distancing, the work of agriculture has not stopped, although in many ways it has shifted.

For farmers who have been considering applying for Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation programs in 2020, opportunities to apply are still available.

But, the application process has changed to allow for appropriate social distancing and improved safety for both customers and staff. All U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) offices are conducting business with special provisions in place. As of this writing, staff members are conducting most business over the phone, through email, or via video chat technology, with field appointments when appropriate.

What does this mean for farmers and ranchers seeking to apply for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)? Below, we have compiled some tips and advice for farmers and ranchers seeking to apply to CSP.

The USDA may change procedures at any time in response to the coronavirus—check with your local NRCS office for the most up-to-date information about applying.

Read [more](#).

NCAT Accepting Applications for Arkansas Armed to Farm Training

NCAT is moving forward with accepting applications from military veterans for the week-long Armed to Farm (ATF) training in Fayetteville, Arkansas, currently scheduled for June 15-19, 2020. We are monitoring the COVID-19 situation and following guidance on travel, social distancing, and group gatherings. If it is not yet safe to hold the training in June, we will postpone the event.

ATF allows veterans and their spouses to experience sustainable, profitable small-scale farming enterprises and explore agriculture as a career. ATF's engaging blend of farm tours, hands-on experience, and interactive classroom instruction gives participants a strong foundation in the basic principles of operating a sustainable farm. All military veterans are welcome to apply by May 8, 2020.

Read [more](#).

New Livestock Compass Spreadsheet Available

(From Univ. of Wisconsin Press Release)

Compass Toolbox is an ongoing project at CIAS that involves the development of whole farm profit management tools and workshops. Our tools are designed to help growers improve on-farm decision making and financial farm planning in order to maximize profitability and ensure the continuation of sustainable farms.

The system focuses on comprehensive spreadsheets designed to facilitate the analysis of farm records. Using cost, sales and labor data, the tools calculates the costs of production and the profitability of market channels (e.g., CSA, farmers market, wholesale, retail). For example, a grower can learn if broccoli sales are more lucrative at farmers markets or through wholesale distributors.

The spreadsheets require farmers to enter financial, labor and sales data, creating a holistic picture of their farm financials. The tools can also be used to predict the financial impact of different farm scenarios for the future and to assess financial progress. Such information can help farmers locate their efficiencies, set prices based on actual costs of production, and increase farm profits.

A new and improved Livestock Compass spreadsheet is now available for meat and egg producers on the Compass Toolbox website.

Read [more](#).

Analysts Slash Farm Income Forecast Due To COVID-19

(From AgriPulse)

Without government relief, some analysts are sharply lowering their estimates of net farm income because of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on agricultural markets, with the livestock sector and corn growers bearing much of the hit.

A forecast released Monday by the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute, based at the University of Missouri, estimates net farm income in 2020 at \$86 billion, down 11% from the Agriculture Department's estimate of farm earnings for 2019. The new forecast doesn't account for payments that the Trump administration is preparing to send to farmers.

The Agriculture Department is expected to announce plans for a package of \$16 billion in pandemic-related assistance in coming days, and USDA will have an additional \$14 billion available starting in July.

USDA estimated net farm income for 2019 at \$96.7 billion. FAPRI had previously forecast farm earnings would rise to \$106 billion in 2020 because of the benefits of the "phase one" trade agreement with China. But in the new analysis, FAPRI lowered its estimate by \$20.1 billion to \$86 billion based on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

The new forecast doesn't take into account the possible effects of supply chain disruptions, including the closure of meatpacking plants, that could further reduce prices paid to producers, said FAPRI Director Patrick Westhoff.

The analysis also assumes the United States will have a relatively short, V-shaped recession, followed by a rebound in the latter part of the year, he said. That is "far from being a worst-case scenario," Westhoff said.

"We're in a Save-Our-Farm-From-Collapsing Mode"

(From Slate.com)

Business was slow at the Union Square farmers' market in New York City last week, which is why Zaid Kurdieh had time to talk. Over the past month, he's been working 17-hour days to change the entire business model of Norwich Meadows Farm, the organic farm he owns with his wife upstate. The old model was no longer cutting it: Their farm stand, where the Kurdiehs do almost 40 percent of their business, hasn't been drawing enough customers. Most of the rest of their revenue came from selling produce to stalwarts of the city's restaurant scene: Grammercy Tavern, Blue Hill, Eleven Madison Park. Then the coronavirus pandemic hit. "We're in a save-our-farm-from-collapsing mode," he said.

But farmers like Kurdieh may have some hope: The pandemic seems to have made people more thoughtful about where their food comes from and how many steps in the supply chain it takes for groceries to reach them. Demand for community-supported agriculture shares and one-off deliveries from local farms has increased rapidly since quarantines started. But farms are struggling to meet this demand: Most don't have the infrastructure, even as they desperately need the new source of revenue.

In general, food production in the U.S. is tailored to big purchasers such as restaurants and wholesale distributors. The collapse of the restaurant industry in recent weeks has left farmers—particularly small ones with low profit margins—at risk. According to a report by the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, local and regional farms could see a decline in sales from March to May of nearly \$689 million. Suddenly, food needs to be redirected from restaurants to homes and grocery stores. "The scale of this shift is extraordinary. It's actually breathtaking," said T. Garrett Graddy-Lovelace, an American University professor who researches agricultural policy and agrarian politics. As Kurdieh put it, "In the end, everybody's got to eat. So, it's just a matter of: How are we going to go about providing that food?"

Some of it is going to waste. Produce farms that cater primarily to restaurants, for instance, are seeing their harvests rot. “The model in that business is ‘sell it or smell it,’ ” said Daniel Sumner, the director of the University of California Agricultural Issues Center. Dairy is another sector that’s facing large amounts of waste, in part because milk is so perishable. Dairy farms throughout the country have been dumping milk for the past month.

Other farmers are working to develop home-delivery systems or expand their CSAs on the fly. Dena Leibman, the director of Future Harvest, a group that supports farmers in the Chesapeake region, told the Washington Post she’s been overwhelmed by the interest in local food from people who aren’t just part of the typical CSA crowd. Community-based food sources have traditionally been limited by price and availability—CSAs require a large upfront payment, and farmers market hours are limited. The pandemic is now pushing local farms to become more accessible—to attract more people than, as Sumner puts it, foodies who have discretionary income.



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- 1/23/2021 - NBA Gold Trophy Show and Sale - Denver, CO

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