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The National Bison Association (NBA) Weekly Update is an exclusive service for NBA members.

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## ***NBA Weekly Update for May 8, 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 Announces Virtual Bison Learning Seminar, June 22 -26**



NATIONAL BISON ASSOCIATION

## 2020 SUMMER VIRTUAL BISON LEARNING WEEK

In lieu of our postponed 2020 NBA Summer Conference, the NBA is pleased to offer its members a virtual learning seminar that will span three days and can be viewed live, or later online. Each day will have a different bison focus with roughly 2 hours of programming each day from expert speakers in the bison business. Join us!

**Monday - June 22 - The Bison Market and COVID 19**  
**Wednesday - June 24 - Bison Management/Production Tips**  
**Friday - June 26 - then The Bison Advantage - Beginners day**

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### BuySome Bison Ad Campaign Launches this Weekend

Readers of the online versions of *Food & Wine*, *Health*, *Shape*, *Eating Well*, *All Recipes*, *Midwest Living*, *Southern Living*, and *Martha Stewart* will discover that buying deliciously healthy bison meat is as easy as downloading the National Bison Association's new *BuySome Bison* mobile app.

The two-month advertising campaign launching this weekend will specifically promote the *BuySome Bison* app, which allows consumers to connect with bison producers to source meat and other bison products. The advertising campaign, and the *BuySome Bison* app are both underwritten through funding from USDA's Farmers' Market Promotion Program.

Jim Matheson, NBA assistant director, stressed that producers wanting to be included in the app simply need to enter their information into the Buyers' Guide on the NBA website at [www.bisoncentral.com](http://www.bisoncentral.com). Last week, Matheson sent an email to the NBA membership with step-by-step instructions for entering information in the Buyers' Guide. If you need any assistance getting listed, don't hesitate to contact him at [jim@bisoncentral.com](mailto:jim@bisoncentral.com).



Dave Carter, NBA executive director, noted, "While the ads will mention the *BuySome Bison* App, the over-arching message will be for consumers to enjoy some delicious bison as we head into the summer grilling season. We will be particularly focusing on steaks and higher-end cuts in this campaign.

The digital advertising campaign will run through July 4<sup>th</sup>.

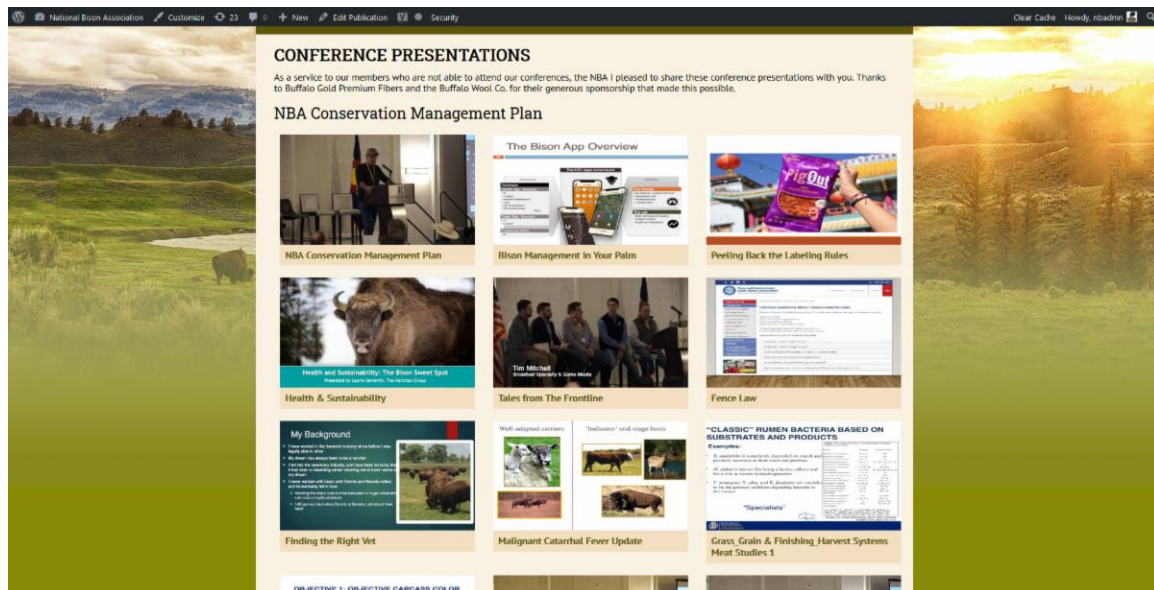
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## 35 NBA Conference Presentations Available Now

If you're still stuck in doors due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the NBA now has 35 past conference presentations available for viewing at [bisoncentral.com](https://bisoncentral.com/publication/conference-presentations/) to help pass the time in a constructive manner.

For the past few years, the NBA has sought sponsorships to cover the cost of having our presentations professionally filmed and edited to allow members to reference again, or view for the first time in the member's area of the website. Thanks to our most recent video sponsor, [Herd Wear](#) and [The Buffalo Wool Company](#) for their generous support.

This week, the NBA worked to reformat the Online Conference Presentation page to allow for easier navigation. You can now view a total of 35 conference presentations at this page - <https://bisoncentral.com/publication/conference-presentations/>. Log in required. Presentations are posted chroni



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## National Western Stock Show Anticipates Ability to Host Live GTSS in 2021

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and some monetary challenges, officials at the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) anticipate that the new live animal sale arena will be completed in time for the Gold Trophy show and Sale next January.

In a recent teleconference meeting with breed representatives, which NBA assistant director Jim Matheson and NWSS Bison representative, Bob Dineen, participated in, NWSS reports that construction at this time is on schedule for completion for the 2021 event.

The redevelopment of the stockyards, which hold the bison during our Gold Trophy Show and Sale, will include the construction of permanent "bison pens", just adjacent to the stockyard arena where Gold Trophy entries have been shown and sold for nearly 40 years.

Stay tuned to their progress at <https://nationalwesterncenter.com/construction-updates>.



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## Center of Excellence Nears Formal Launch

Representatives of the NBA Science and Research Committee, South Dakota State University (SDSU) and the National Buffalo Foundation will meet by teleconference next week to finalize the bylaws and other details required to formally launch the Center of Excellence in Bison Studies.

Establishment of the Center of Excellence is the culmination on a three year effort to bring together key stakeholders in the bison business to coordinate efforts on bison research and education.

The Center of Excellence will be housed under the SDSU system, with the office located in Rapid City, SD. Dr. Kristi Cammack will serve as the director for the Center. The proposed bylaws call for the Center to be governed by a board consisting of representatives of SDSU, the NBA, the National Buffalo Foundation, and tribal colleges.

Dave Carter, NBA executive director, noted that the idea of establishing a center first emerged during the association's policy Roundup in Washington, D.C. in 2016. Dr. Sonny Ramaswamy, head of the National Institute for Food and Agriculture, suggested to the NBA delegation that establishing a Center of Excellence could expand the bison sector's access to grants and other federal resources.

The following April, the National Buffalo Foundation and NBA's Science and Research Committee convened a meeting in Brookings, SD with several researchers and veterinarians from the university. Participants at the meeting agreed that additional resources were needed to address the needs of the bison business.

Dave Hunter, DVM, chair of the Science and Research Committee, said this week, "It's exciting to see the seeds planted in Brookings three years ago coming to fruition. The Center of Excellence promises to be a valuable asset to bison producers across North America, and around the world."

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## Spring Bison World Magazine Now Available

One of the perks of NBA membership is access to the Bison World magazine before the printed copies arrive in the mail!

Production on the Spring issue has wrapped up and it is available on the website at:

<https://bisoncentral.com/publication/bison-world-magazine/>

The flipbook version of the magazine can be viewed right on your computer. Handy links allow you to open it into a new window, make it larger, magnify certain features and even print pages if desired. The realistic page turning sounds make it feel like you are reading the printed version of the magazine.

The hard copy magazine is currently being printed and will mail shortly to North American members.



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***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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## **'Our Capacity Is Down': Bison Producers Impacted By COVID-19**

*(From 9 News – NBC)*

DENVER — One of the largest bison producers in Colorado is feeling the impacts of COVID-19 after several of its workers contracted the virus in March.

Rocky Mountain Natural Meats said 17 of its employees tested positive for COVID-19. The first case was reported on March 20.

Chief Operating Officer Ace Ward said since then meat processing has slowed down at its facilities to about 60 percent of capacity.

"We've had some employees who have been quarantined and gone home," Ward said. "And we have been trying to work through that. So, our capacity is down quite a bit."

Rocky Mountain Natural Meats said it has brought in social distancing protocols and other employee safety checks to keep production going.

The company is still processing about 100 head of bison a day from 30 affiliated ranches. Rocky Mountain Natural Meats supplies product to more than 500 grocery stores in Colorado including Costco, King Soopers, Target, and Whole Foods. So far, they have been keeping pace with demand.

Some of their employees are still off the job recovering from COVID-19. Two workers who contracted the virus were hospitalized but there have been no fatalities. More than half of the employees who got sick are back on the job.

Rocky Mountain Natural Meats has more than 200 employees who work between two meat processing facilities.

Chief Executive Officer of Rocky Mountain Natural Meats Bob Dineen said retail sales have increase at grocery stores but restaurant sales are down 25 percent due to the virus and most places being closed.

"There is some positiveness in it but the restaurant trade was important to us too. Until that gets opened back up, it's going to be a real problem for us to move the more expensive steaks," Dineen said.

Full story and video [here](#).

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## **Department of Interior Announces in Bison Conservation Initiative**

Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt this week announced the Bison Conservation Initiative (BCI), a new cooperative initiative that will coordinate conservation strategies and approaches for the wild American Bison over the next 10 years. The Department of the

Interior (DOI) and its partners have been successful in restoring the populations of the American Bison and supporting healthy herds.

With unprecedented interest and cooperation among partners – including states, tribes, nations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – bison conservation is well equipped to move beyond the confluence of strong analytical assessments and toward coordinated conservation action.

“Interior is uniquely positioned to lead the way for shared stewardship of this iconic American species,” said Secretary Bernhardt. “This 10-year plan will guide our collaboration with states, tribes, private conservationists and managers across public lands to advance conservation efforts and honor iconic wild bison.”

Bison were hunted to near extinction in the late 19th century. Today, there are about 11,000 plains bison in 19 herds on 4.6 million acres of public land across 12 states because of successful public-private conservation partnerships. In 2016, Congress recognized the importance of the American Bison to the country’s history, celebrating it as our national mammal.

“We are doing something that has never been done. It shows what is possible when business, philanthropy, and government work together to create multiple bottom line initiatives supporting the environment, people, fiscal responsibility, and Native nation building,” said Rosebud Economic Development Corporation’s CEO, Wizipan Little Elk.

“We are living through unprecedented challenges; times that demand new ideas, new strategies, and deeper and more diverse partnership. Our collaboration with the Department of the Interior’s Bison Conservation Initiative embodies this and represents a pivotal approach to the conservation of a species that is vital to both our ecological and cultural heritage. Launching a collaborative strategy for the ecological and cultural recovery of our national mammal, a symbol of unity, resilience, and health, could not come at a better time for the American people and our unique natural heritage,” said Director of U.S. Conservation for Wildlife Conservation Society, Cristina Mormorunni.

The DOI Bison Working Group (BWG)—comprised of representatives from the National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of Indian Affairs—has worked with its partners to strengthen resource coordination, institute a conservation genetics framework and publish investigations into metapopulation management and herd health.

The BWG will now:

- Develop and launch a DOI bison metapopulation strategy
- Develop and implement a DOI bison stewardship plan
- Improve and expand mechanisms to support ecocultural restoration of live bison
- Adopt low stress capture and handling practices

These actions will be organized around five central goals:

- Wild, Healthy Bison Herds: A commitment to conserve bison as healthy wildlife.
- Genetic Conservation: A commitment to an interagency, science-based approach to support genetic diversity across DOI bison conservation herds.
- Shared Stewardship: A commitment to shared stewardship of wild bison in cooperation with states, tribes and other stakeholders.
- Ecological Restoration: A commitment to establish and maintain large, wide-ranging bison herds on appropriate large landscapes where their role as ecosystem engineers shape healthy and diverse ecological communities.
- Cultural Restoration: A commitment to restore cultural connections to honor and promote the unique status of bison as an American icon for all people.

As one of the BCI’s first actions, Secretary Bernhardt announced two bison transfers will take place later this year, demonstrating the focused direction toward enhanced intra-departmental cooperation and partnership. The transfer of bison among the Department’s herds and across bureaus maintains genetic diversity of wild bison populations, especially for smaller herds that are managed in isolation. These transfers will support ecological and cultural restoration of bison.

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## **Industry Grapples With Plant Closures Nationwide**

*(From Progressive Cattle)*

A report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released May 1 says

4,913 cases and 20 deaths have occurred among some 130,578 workers at 115 meat and poultry processing facilities in 19 states.

More than 20 plants across the country have seen closures due to the spread of COVID-19 among plant employees. Meat processors are working with state and local officials to write reopening plans that include coronavirus testing for employees, distancing and sanitization protocols.

The CDC report provided table information on the number of COVID-19 cases emerging from 115 meat packing facilities as a percent of the total employees. Of the 19 states that comprise the 115 affected plants, South Dakota and Iowa rated the highest percentages of COVID-19 cases among all workers, with 17.3% and 18.2%, respectively. Wisconsin (8.8%) and Washington (7.1%) were next highest, all other states rated below 4%. Of the 20 COVID-19-related deaths, the highest number came from five at Colorado.

Read [more](#).

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## **Farm Broadcasters Highlight Bison Challenge**

*(From a National Association of Farm Broadcasting Podcast)*

Bison. The first thing that may come to mind is hundreds of Bison thundering down the prairie a long time ago. Did you know we raise bison on farms across the country? In fact, the U.S. has bison production in every state in the union. While it's been a growing industry for many years, the impact of COVID-19 on raising Bison has been anything but positive.

"We're a small segment of agriculture," says Dave Carter, the Executive Director of the National Bison Association. "However, we've been growing for the last 15 years and turning into a strong and steady business. Most producers have been pretty profitable over that stretch."

Bison is marketed in two locations, similar to the other major protein segments in U.S. agriculture. Those markets include the restaurant/foodservice sector and the retail sector. Carter said because bison processors tend to be smaller than their counterparts that process beef and pork, they often specialize in one market or the other.

"When COVID-19 hit and restaurants shut down, those processors serving the foodservice customers really took a hit," he said. "Some have had to lay off up to 60 percent of their employees almost overnight. Those folks who saw restaurants shut down were suddenly scrambling and trying to adapt as retail demand went up."

"Herein lies the problem," Carter added. "Most of the higher-end cuts like steaks go into the restaurant and foodservice sector. On the retail side, customers are going into stores to buy ground bison. When the higher-end cuts like tenderloins at \$24 a pound aren't selling while people are buying ground bison at \$9 a pound, it has a significant financial impact."

The prices that processors have paid to ranchers over the past month have dropped around 40 cents a pound, a significant price cut for a large animal like bison. Prices have been around \$3.70 a pound. He admits while other livestock sectors would love to see that price, it's still a significant drop for bison producers in just one month's time.

The ranchers in the finishing segment of the bison industry are the ones being hit hardest because they've got animals that are ready to go and are having to hold onto them longer. Processors aren't working as quickly as they normally would due to layoffs and illness. Animals that stay longer on the farm tend to gain more weight than is optimum and it adds more expense to the bottom line.

One of the biggest challenges the industry faces is getting enough feed because of what's going on in the ethanol industry. "Distiller's grains have been a big part of our feeding formula," Carter said. "Because of the crisis in the ethanol industry, the price of distiller's grains is going up significantly and the availability is going down."

"That means we now have ranchers who will get less for their animals when they deliver them to their processor," he added, "but their feed costs are going up at the same time."

He is thankful that none of the bison processing plants in the country have had to shut down entirely because of the outbreak. Unfortunately, a high number of workers have tested positive for COVID-19 and that's made other employees hesitant to come to work. But Carter says those bison processors are doing a "great job" of caring for their workers through social distancing, through testing, and by providing Personal Protective Equipment,

Livestock producers in the pork sector have had to make the horrible decision to euthanize some of their animals as they don't have anywhere to send their hogs for processing. Carter says the bison industry isn't at the point yet.

"We still have enough supply chain capacity that our ranchers haven't had to make that decision," he said. "One reason for that is, unlike our friends in the cattle industry, we don't have fall calving. Most of our calves are born between April and June, which meant they were weaned and already sent to other ranchers for finishing between November and February of last year."

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## **The American Prairie Reserve Is Donating More Than 4,000 Pounds Of Bison Meat**

*(From KBZK TV)*

The American Prairie Reserve is donating more than 4,000 pounds of bison meat to the Montana Food Bank Network.

They say this is equivalent to more than 12,000 servings and will help Montanans facing food security concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Montana Food Bank Network is the state's only statewide food bank... and will distribute the bison meat across the state to food pantries around Montana.

The American Prairie Reserve says the goal was to help fight hunger during a difficult time for Montanans.

"Harvesting bison is something that we do on a regular basis to help the health and sustainability of our herd. So, it just made sense and it was a good fit for us to reach out to the Montana Food Bank Network which has been doing so much for people all around the state," said Beth Saboe, senior external relations manager at American Prairie Reserve.

[The American Prairie Reserve](#) is a non-profit conservation organization in Montana, with a wildlife reserve outside of Lewistown Montana.

[Source.](#)

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## **More Than 300 USDA Meat Inspectors Sidelined By Coronavirus**

*(From The Minneapolis Star Tribune)*

More than 300 federal meatpacking inspectors are either sick from coronavirus or in self-quarantine after exposure to the virus.

As of Tuesday, 197 inspectors from the Food Safety and Inspection Service had tested positive for the virus, the U.S. Department of Agriculture said. Another 120 employees are under quarantine.

The FSIS has about 8,000 employees, and a USDA spokesman said, "our dedicated personnel are still meeting all of their inspection responsibilities so that consumers can continue to enjoy a safe supply of meat and poultry products."

But the growing number of infected inspectors illustrates the breadth of the outbreaks at



meatpacking plants. Thousands of workers have been infected, dozens of plants have been idled and the plants that have remained in operation are generally running at reduced capacity because of worker absenteeism.

A USDA spokesman said the FSIS is allowing part-time inspectors to work more hours to make up for inspectors who aren't able to work. Slower production and shuttered plants has also helped the service keep up, since there is less need for inspection.

FSIS now has enough masks and face coverings on hand to keep inspection personnel supplied for "the next few months," the USDA said.

"The safety and well-being of our employees is our top priority," the spokesman said in a statement. "We thank those working on the front lines of our food supply chain for remaining on the job and for making sure the American people have access to safe food."

[Source.](#)

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## **Eleven Attorneys General Seek Probe Into Meatpacking Industry For Price-Fixing**

*(From BakersfieldNow.com)*

ELLE PLAINE, Kan. (AP) - The attorneys general for 11 Midwestern states urged the Justice Department on Tuesday to pursue a federal investigation into market concentration and potential price-fixing by meatpackers in the cattle industry during the coronavirus pandemic.

In a letter to U.S. Attorney General William Barr, the state attorneys general noted that the domestic beef processing market is highly concentrated, with the four largest beef processors controlling 80 percent of the industry.

Although their letter does not name them, the nation's largest processors are Tyson Foods, JBS, Cargill, and National Beef. The companies did not immediately respond to emails seeking comment.

Mark Watne, the president of the North Dakota Farmers Union, said in a statement that in all the years they have called for stronger antitrust enforcement, they have rarely seen such obvious market abuses by the meatpacking industry.

"They're posting record profits, while ranchers are suffering significant market price losses," Watne said. "The situation definitely smells rotten, and it not only hurts ranchers, but consumers, too."

The state officials criticized the disparity in the price of live cattle and the retail cost of boxed beef that is sold to consumers, arguing that it shows the market lacks fair competition. Live cattle futures recently hit 18-year lows, while both the price of boxed beef and consumer demand remain healthy as consumers stockpile meat in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The letter was signed by attorneys general in North Dakota, Missouri, Colorado, South Dakota, Montana, Arizona, Idaho, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska and Wyoming.

Read [more](#).

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## **EIDL Loan Application Portal Opened to Agricultural Enterprises Only**

*(From The SBA)*

Notice: Economic Injury Disaster Advance Loan and New Eligibility

In response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, small business owners in all U.S. states, Washington D.C., and territories were able to apply for an Economic Injury Disaster Loan advance of up to \$10,000. This advance is designed to provide economic relief to

businesses that are currently experiencing a temporary loss of revenue. This loan advance will not have to be repaid.

SBA has resumed processing EIDL applications that were submitted before the portal stopped accepting new applications on April 15 and will be processing these applications on a first-come, first-served basis. SBA will begin accepting new Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) and EIDL Advance applications on a limited basis only to provide relief to U.S. agricultural businesses.

The new eligibility is made possible as a result of the latest round of funds appropriated by Congress in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Agricultural businesses includes those businesses engaged in the production of food and fiber, ranching, and raising of livestock, aquaculture, and all other farming and agricultural related industries (as defined by section 18(b) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 647(b)).

SBA is encouraging all eligible agricultural businesses with 500 or fewer employees wishing to apply to begin preparing their business financial information needed for their application.

At this time, only agricultural business applications will be accepted due to limitations in funding availability and the unprecedented submission of applications already received.

Applicants who have already submitted their applications will continue to be processed on a first-come, first-served basis. For agricultural businesses that submitted an EIDL application through the streamlined application portal prior to the legislative change, SBA will process these applications without the need for re-applying.

Eligible agricultural businesses may apply for the Loan Advance [here](#).

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## **DeLauro, Peterson, Andrés And Former Ag Secretaries Push COVID 'Action Plan' For USDA**

*(From AgriPulse.com)*

Two former secretaries of agriculture, the chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, a well-known chef and restaurant owner and Consumer Reports have joined Rep. Rosa DeLauro in releasing an “action plan” addressing food and worker safety during the coronavirus pandemic.

DeLauro outlined the plan in a [letter](#) to Ag Secretary Sonny Perdue.

“The plan includes detailed steps the USDA should immediately take, including diverting surplus food that is currently being wasted, protecting workers — from the farm to the grocery store — who make feeding America possible, and fully utilizing existing authority and resources provided by Congress to help farmers, ranchers, and grower operations,” a [news release](#) from DeLauro’s office says. “It also includes a plan for USDA to partner with Congress on additional innovative solutions to feed all Americans.”

In her letter to Perdue, DeLauro notes the \$19 billion in direct payments and commodity purchases announced last month “can play a role in stabilizing farm income and market prices,” but alone are “inadequate solutions to the ongoing disruptions to the food supply chain caused by COVID-19.”

The planks of the plan are:

- "Establish an ad hoc public-private partnership with members of the food processing and distribution sectors to expedite diversion of surplus foods," including creation of a “detailed food distribution plan” before obtaining surplus commodities to provide “an efficient and equitable distribution of food and to minimize food waste and supply shortages.”
- "Create an intergovernmental task force to protect food workers, meat processing workers, and farmworkers to ensure continuity of supply." “USDA’s Food Safety

and Inspection Service should immediately create an intergovernmental task force with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to establish, implement, and ensure compliance with recommendations to ensure worker safety during this pandemic.”

- "Fully utilize all resources provided by Congress to assist family farmers, ranchers, and grower operations affected by COVID-19," including use of "the unbiased expertise of USDA's Economic Research Service to estimate and project current and future losses for various agricultural sectors."
- "Partner with Congress on bold and innovative solutions to utilize excess capacity to feed Americans," such as by increasing "the food purchasing power of low-income and recently unemployed people by increasing the monthly Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit, and expand SNAP spending flexibility by granting nationwide eligibility for online purchasing, allowing for low-cost, hot meal purchases at retailers and restaurants, creating an incentive program tied to the purchase of perishable food items."

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## **Report: 50% Of Consumers Now Shopping For Healthier, More Sustainable Choices**

*(From Sustainable Food News)*

The covid-19 pandemic is causing consumers to more seriously consider the health and environmental impacts of their shopping choices, according to a new report from professional services company Accenture plc.

The multinational (NYSE: ACN) said results from its latest survey of more than 3,000 consumers in 15 countries, conducted between April 2-6, shows that consumers overall said they were currently buying more canned and fresh foods as well as personal hygiene and cleaning products, than they had been two weeks prior – while purchasing fewer fashion, beauty and consumer electronics items.

The survey's findings also show that consumer behaviors are likely to be altered permanently and cause lasting structural changes to the consumer goods and retail industries.

The survey's findings also indicated that many of the changes in consumer behavior are likely to continue long after the pandemic.

For instance:

- 64 percent of consumers said they're focusing more on limiting food waste and will likely continue to do so going forward
- 50 percent of consumers said they're shopping more health-consciously and will likely continue to do so
- 45 percent of consumers said they're making more sustainable choices when shopping and will likely continue to do so
- 60 percent of respondents are spending more time on self-care and mental well-being, with 57 percent saying they have started exercising more at home

"The pandemic is likely to produce a more sustainable, healthier era of consumption over the next 10 years, making consumers think more about balancing what they buy and how they spend their time with global issues of sustainability – suggesting a healthier human habitation of the planet," said Oliver Wright, managing director and head of Accenture's global Consumer Goods practice. "What is surprising is the scale and pace – compressing into a matter of weeks changes that would likely have taken years. The new consumer behavior and consumption is expected to outlast the pandemic, stretching far beyond 18 months and possibly for much of the current decade."

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## **Beyond Meat And Its Rivals Rely On Chinese Ingredients, Opening Food-Safety Debate In The Covid-19 Era**

*(From Newsweek)*

While America's biggest beef and pork producers were nearly laid low in April by COVID-19 cases in their workforce, sales of what detractors call "fake meat" boomed. But the pandemic may in time affect sales of plant-based protein, too, as U.S. consumers become more wary of all things China—which supplies a majority of the products' ingredients.

The market research firm Nielsen said nationwide sales of meat alternatives rose 224 percent in the week ending April 25, compared to the same period in 2019. During the last eight weeks, the gain over last year was more than 269 percent.

China's food-processing factories provide most of what goes into vegan burger patties and other meat replacements made by market leaders Beyond Meat and Impossible foods—an arrangement that could damage their standing among consumers in the coronavirus age.

Beyond Meat recently signed a significant deal with Shuangta Foods, located in China's Shandong province. Shuangta will provide 85 percent of the pea protein for its products. The company said its first purchases will total some 285 tons.

Ever since the emergence of the novel coronavirus in China's Wuhan province, the world press has criticized the Middle Kingdom for its sanitary standards and its lack of institutional transparency.

[Source.](#)

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## **Retail Update: Meat Sales In Dollars, Volume Still Up Over 2019**

*(From Meatingplace.com)*

Since March 8, the meat department has been the undisputed sales leader of the perimeter. Year-to-date through April 26, meat department dollar sales were up 21.7%, boosted by double-digit growth for seven weeks running. Year-to-date volume sales through April 26 were up 15.9% over the same period in 2019 as volume has been trailing dollars throughout the pandemic.

Additionally, the gap between volume and dollar sales is widening — signaling significant upward pressure on pricing due to tightness in the supply chain.

For the last full week of April, ending April 26, dollar sales were up 49.7% and volume increased 34.8%. For the week, there was an increasing amount of coverage of the various plant closures in consumer media which likely caused additional trips and purchases by shoppers looking to stock up some more. In addition to the continued strong performance by the meat department, overall perimeter sales gains rebounded in the holiday-free week in either year, up 23.1%. For the total perimeter, significant decreases in deli-prepared, fresh bakery and seafood pulled down the increases achieved by meat but fresh foods overall are still positive.

### **Dollar vs. volume gains**

Volume gains have been trailing dollars for years, but the gap is widening. The latest four weeks ending April 26 versus the comparable period in 2019 show volume/dollar gaps ranging from nearly 13 percentage points for turkey, 12 points for pork, 10 points for beef to just 4 points for chicken. Volume/dollar gaps for processed meats are significant as well, whether smoked ham/pork or frankfurters. Bacon continued to see dollar and volume sales track closely given the ample supply due to the decline in foodservice demand.

Supply is likely to continue to impact the dollar and volume performance in weeks to come.



Latest 4 weeks ending April 26, 2020 versus comparable weeks in 2019	Dollar gains	Volume gains
Total meat	+36.9%	+25.7%
Fresh beef	+40.2%	+30.2%
Fresh chicken	+28.6%	+24.4%
Fresh pork	+43.2%	+31.3%
Fresh turkey	+34.5%	+21.8%
Fresh lamb	+7.9%	-0.9%
Fresh exotic	+52.2%	+43.6%
Smoked ham/pork	+16.2%	+1.7%
Sausage	+41.1%	+32.4%
Frankfurters	+38.8%	+23.8%
Bacon	+47.8%	+46.6%

Source: IRI, Total US, MULO, 4 weeks ending April 26, 2020

## Trade Negotiations Launched with UK

(From a USTR News Release)

United States Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and United Kingdom Secretary of State for International Trade Elizabeth Truss this week announced the formal launch of trade agreement negotiations between the U.S. and the UK.

In light of the ongoing global pandemic caused by Covid-19, the first round of negotiations will be conducted virtually, with U.S. and UK negotiators engaging in discussions over the next two weeks in nearly 30 different negotiating groups covering all aspects of a comprehensive trade agreement.

Both parties agree that a Free Trade Agreement would contribute to the long-term health of our economies, which is vitally important as we recover from the challenges posed by Covid-19.

An FTA is a priority for both countries and we share a commitment to secure an ambitious agreement that significantly boosts trade and investment. We will undertake negotiations at an accelerated pace and have committed the resources necessary to progress at a fast pace.

## WOTUS Rule Draws Legal Fire From 17-State Coalition

(From Meatingplace.com)

The finalization of the rule defining what are considered the Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) for the purpose of protection under the Clean Water Act has spurred lawsuits, [as expected](#), including a 17-state coalition that filed suit May 1.

The Navigable Waters Protection Rule, which was published by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corp of Engineers in the Federal Register in April, defines the scope of what streams and wetlands are covered by the law and limits or removes protections from most wetlands, headlands and streams.

The coalition filing the case includes the attorneys general from California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin, plus the District of Columbia and the City of New York. The [complaint](#) was filed in U.S. District Court in San Francisco.

In announcing its lawsuit, the coalition argued that by removing protections for smaller waterways, the final rule ignores science on the interconnectivity of these water bodies and poses a higher risk of pesticides and other pollutants reaching larger bodies of water. The case follows lawsuits filed in at least three other district courts.

Since its publication, the WOTUS rule also has come under fire by ranchers represented by the New Mexico Cattlemen's Association, who argued in their lawsuit filed at the end of

April that the rule contains unclear definitions and will subject large areas of farmland to federal oversight.

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