

Global Food Forum 2020 Virtual Conference

This conference gathers leaders in agribusiness, food production, consumer products, government and non-government organizations to explore key risks and opportunities shaping the global business of food. This year a virtual conference replaced the high energy conference that was characterized by spirited discussions among over 25 keynote-caliber speakers in an exhilarating and interactive one day session.

Corona Virus and The Food Business: The Outlook.

The focus for food producers this year has been on employee health and safety to supply the unexpected and wildly changing needs of consumers worldwide. American food manufacturing facilities have raised already high sanitation standards to the point that food plants resemble healthcare facilities. The importance of social distancing in food plants is expected to encourage continued automation in production facilities. When employees go home, environments are inconsistent and leading manufacturers have increased their attention beyond the factory to support workers and their families.

Meat Versus Plants

One of the most heated debates at last year's conference was between representatives of the dairy, beef and plant food associations regarding product labeling and regulation. The point of view presented this year was notably one sided with no speakers from the dairy or beef industry

Heightened Awareness of Health

The global pandemic is driving awareness of health matters yet indulgence is here to stay. According to a recent study by **Culinary Visions®** (culinaryvisions.org) of more than 2,000 Covid-era consumers, 83% said they are looking forward to returning to healthier eating, yet 72% agreed that a little bit of indulgence was likely to become part of their daily routine.

Big Revival for Big Food

At last year's conference, the challenges facing big food companies were sobering. Today, time honored brands that have struggled to re-invent their appeal to consumers are working overtime to meet demand. Although the pandemic fueled disaster planning and a return to traditional comfort foods, this provided an opportunity for major brands to connect with a new generation of consumers. Big food companies are investing in marketing and innovation to continue to build meaningful value for future generations.

Implications for Food Marketers

Cooking Confidence – Access to foodservice evaporated almost overnight, and the subsequent shift to retail food purchases is likely to be sustained as quick scratch products have increased consumer confidence in cooking meals at home. 81% of consumer participants in the recent **Culinary Visions®** survey agreed that their new normal included more dining at home.

Brands With Purpose Matter – Today's consumers are relying on brands they trust for the products they provide and the responsible way in which those products are brought to market.

E-Everything – The impact of technology on every aspect of the food chain has been growing and the pandemic has accelerated this trend exponentially.