

COVID 19 + Lessons for Food Systems

Video Transcript

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Rene Van Acker: My name is Rene Van Acker. I am Dean of the Ontario Agricultural College at the University of Guelph. Welcome to this first seminar. This is a combined seminar of the Arrell Food Institute at the University of Guelph and the Food from Thought initiative also at the University of Guelph. The intent of the seminar is to bring expert perspective and insight into questions about potential impacts in the near and longer term of COVID-19 on Canada's food system, and the myriad of questions and implications that may arise because of that. The theme of today's seminar is in fact what can Canada's food systems can take away from the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have a great panel today. Our panelists include Larry Goodridge. He is the Lee Young Professorship in Food Safety and the director of the Centre for Research in Food Safety. Jess Haines, who is an associate professor in the Department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition and one of the leads of the Guelph Family Health Study. We have Dana McCauley, who is the director of New Venture Creation in the Research Innovation Office of the University of Guelph, and Mike von Massow. Mike is the OAC Chair in Food Systems Leadership and an associate professor in the department of Food Agricultural and Resource Economics at the University of Guelph.

The question I want to start off the panelists with is: once the dust has settled on COVID-19, what key lessons will there be for us and how will Canada's food system be affected? I'll ask each of the panelists to respond to this initially with about a five-minute response, and then we will have a chance for questions and answers after that. So, the order will be as the order of introduction. We'll start with Professor Goodridge, and then Professor Haines, Dana McCauley and finally Mike Von Massow. So, Larry if we could start with you please.

0:02:11

Lawrence Goodridge: Thank you thank you good morning everyone. My answer to the food systems question will be related to food safety aspects of that. I think some of the key lessons and key questions that will emerge when this pandemic ends with respect to food safety will relate to some questions that I've heard from consumers. This includes "can the virus survive on food and can we get it from consuming food?". Now the food safety agencies in Canada and the US and Europe have all been consistent in their statements that there is no evidence that this virus is foodborne and there's been no evidence that anyone thus far has contracted COVID-19 from consuming food that may have been contaminated with the virus. That being said, I think there are lots of questions that remain to be answered. For example, we

don't have good empirical data regarding the survival of the virus on food. We think that that's unlikely from previous studies done on other corona viruses, but we do not have good empirical data for this virus. So, I think there is research and questions that need to be asked about that.

The same thing relates to takeout and delivery of food, which we are seeing is increasing because of physical distancing and other social distancing practices. Questions surround survival of the virus on surfaces. We've certainly seen some studies suggesting that the virus can survive on materials like cardboard and plastic that are used as food containers, for various periods of time from twenty-four hours to perhaps up to three days. There are questions surrounding take-out food and what happens if the containers are contaminated. I think as with the survival [of the virus] and food, those are questions that need to be asked.

Moving more directly to food systems there are implications for food processing. In the food processing sector, we are seeing increasingly that for example meat plants in both Canada and the US are being shut down because employees are testing positive for the virus and so they can no longer sustain their activities. And there's some perhaps concern that food safety guidelines may begin to be relaxed because of lower profit and lower margins. And so there's concern about that. The same thing applies to food retailing where we've seen very good practices put in place to deal with this pandemic with respect to physical distancing and so forth, but with respect to food safety there could be concerns regarding whether practices will be sustainable following this pandemic, given the economic losses.

And then I would just like to finish with what I call indirect consequences and that really relates to what happens in the home. We've seen panic buying of food. That's a concern because people may not have enough storage space in their refrigerators for example to store the food properly, and that could actually lead indirectly to people becoming sick with food-borne illnesses. So not necessarily [from] this virus, but as a consequence of this [virus] people could become sick with food-borne pathogens. Same with other panic practices, like washing fruits and vegetables with soap that we've heard of and it's something that is to be avoided. This can cause illness due to consumption of soap. Leaving groceries in the garage in an attempt to kill the virus which can also lead to growth of food-borne pathogens. I think there's a number of consequences that will emerge from this pandemic with respect to food safety and those consequences will be as a direct result of the pandemic and there will also be indirect consequences. Thank you.

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Rene Van Acker: Thank you very much Larry. We will now move to Jess Haines.

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Jess Haines: Yeah thank you and Larry that was so interesting. I've searched some of the questions you identified, so for sure those are of interest to consumers. When I think about some of the key lessons, we can take away from COVID-19, I think this pandemic has really underscored what we need to do as a society to make sure that all Canadians have access to healthy and nourishing foods.

First, I think we need to make sure that every adult has adequate income to purchase the foods they need for themselves and for their families. This recent shock to our economic system has shown us that our social safety net as it is now is not equipped to handle these types of situations. It is leaving many people without access to adequate food we have seen huge increases in the demand at food banks across the country. At the same time, donations to these food banks have decreased in part due to the higher demand for food at our grocery stores which Larry made reference to. This COVID-19 outbreak has really reinforced the fact that emergency food systems like food banks are not a solution for addressing food insecurity. I would argue that instead we need an income-based solution; a program such as universal basic income would help ensure that all Canadians have the income required to buy healthy food even when these shocks happen to our system, and these shocks can be things like pandemics but also major weather events or economic downturns. A basic income approach could ensure that all Canadians can survive these shocks and survive these shocks without the need for all of these new sort of reactive stopgap programs that both the federal and provincial government has had to come up with over these next few weeks.

The second aspect of food access that I think this pandemic has highlighted is the need to make sure all Canadians have the skills and resources needed to prepare healthy meals. A local example of this need is here right on the University of Guelph campus. We have students who couldn't go home due to the outbreak who are living on campus and who no longer have food services preparing meals for them. A concern arose as to whether these students have the food skills required to prepare meals for themselves. There's a number of great people in Student Services who are working to support these students with things like recipes and cooking tips and equipment and that's all really great and helpful, but I would argue that our society should be set up so that we ensure that when students graduate from high school they have this very important life skill of being able to prepare healthy meals for themselves. I would argue to ensure that happens I think we need a national school food and nutrition program that can provide meals for students while they're in school but also ensures that students develop food skills to support healthy eating for life even through pandemics. I think this pandemic has really highlighted the need for this government action to ensure food access for all

I think, interestingly, the pandemic has also shown us what's really politically possible. We've seen really swift action from governments and response to the pandemics so we certainly know that governments can act as needed and when needed. I would argue the

next right step for the government is to ensure our population is protected from these future shocks to our system by ensuring adequate income and food skills among all Canadians. Thanks.

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Rene Van Acker: Thank you very much. That's great, next Dana if we could have your perspective.

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Dana McCauley: Thanks for giving me an opportunity to join in and I have a lot of shared opinions with Larry and Jess. I'm going to move through and talk about something that I think is maybe uniquely my own in this space and that's about product development and restaurants. For those who don't know my background, beyond my great role at the University of Guelph, I was a chef and food writer for many years and product developer. I do a lot of work with both academic entrepreneurs now and entrepreneurs on the other side of the divide out there in the real world. I know that product development right now is really thrown a loop. Everyone a month ago was talking about plant based, plant based, plant based. Now everyone's talking about bread. So wow (*gestures emphatically*), what a shift in consumer interests and I think some of this is acute and temporary but I also think that this is — I'm hearing people calling it the Great Lockdown as a reference to the Great Depression and that there's going to be a massive economic ripple effect that will probably mean that consumers are going to be much more price sensitive than they were in the past. And for product developers who have been creating premium products with specialty ingredients and specialty technologies that have been utilized to create some of these innovative new plant-based products, I think that we're already seeing this return to basics and to people wanting to — and needing to — find affordable foods that will have broad appeal in their families. For product developers and manufacturers, that could mean that they had made a whole new innovation pipeline when this lockdown period ends, and we hopefully start to go back to some normalcy.

But to Larry's point, in our manufacturing settings we follow in line manufacturing which means it goes from person to person to person. There's a lot of close contact and it's not necessarily reasonable to expect a manager to be able to completely retool and change their production system in a plant because they just won't be able to keep their costs in line. There will be inefficiencies and potentially new dangers if you have to do a lot of walking in a manufacturing setting. There's going to be an adjustment period there which probably will lead to a lot of companies pulling the trigger on technology that they didn't do before because the cost of wages versus the cost of that capital investment often made it more desirable to have inexpensive labor doing handwork versus technology but I think [now] we will see a lot more systems that rely on robots and machines versus people. I think that there's going to be a whole new way of thinking about critical control points in a

manufacturing setting because all of a sudden, where just gloves and a hairnet was okay, I think now we're going to be seeing a lot more face coverings and a lot more rigorous protocols around food safety and that'll extend to restaurants as well.

I was on a call earlier last week and there was a chef from Vancouver who's continuing to run his operation and he's doing something I thought was really novel. He's requiring all of his employees to sign a pledge that they will maintain social distancing inside and outside of the workplace. He's giving, if for instance they normally take the bus, he's giving them money to pay for parking and that kind of thing. It stipulates right there in writing with a wet signature that if you break that social distancing rule, you will lose your job. We're going to see a lot of really interesting changes in the way that restaurants market themselves. I think he's using that as a not just a marketing tool but as a marketing tool to give assurance to the people who are feeling worried about take-out.

And there's going to be a lot of disruption and probably a really awesome labor pool of chefs looking for jobs which leads me to the other thing I wanted to touch on briefly: entrepreneurship. Which of course is a big part of our venture creation. We're going to see a lot more people who want to be entrepreneurs who have the skill set and who have got the grit, who really have the will, but I am sure that funds and backing from banks and investors is going to be tighter than ever. And of course, who's going to want to sign a lease when this could come in waves and you could have business disruption happening throughout a number of years. I think home-based businesses and businesses that are sort of single shingle are likely to be the types of entrepreneurship we see more of in the future. So yeah, there's going to be a lot of fallout in the areas of the food business that my job touches due to COVID. It's like all the balls are in the air right now and I'm just kind of waiting to see where they're going to land.

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Rene Van Acker: Thanks Dana that's great and we will go to Mike as last on the panel. Mike, what perspectives and ideas do you have?

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Mike von Massow: Well thanks Rene. And one of the benefits of going last is I can tie a few things tie together, and as with Dana, I've enjoyed the conversation and actually heard some things that I hadn't really thought about. It piqued some thought.

Before I talk about the food system in the future, I think it's worth mentioning that our food supply chains have shown some actually pretty spectacular robustness and resilience in the face of an unprecedented shock. We did see some shortages on the shelf. I would argue those were demand based shortages rather than supply based shortages. We're continuing to see the system catch up and we're continuing to see some stock at least come onto the shelves

and to me that's a profoundly good news story; that while the system bent, it didn't break. I think it argues for some significant confidence in our food system for Canadians. We did see some shortages, but they were short-term. I think we're seeing things catch up. The irony in the time of shortages was we also heard of some dumping of milk in in Canada and some plowing down of produce in Florida and other in other areas, and again I would say these are short-term phenomena as the food system reallocates some of this supply to different customers and to different processors. It's much easier to ramp down when supply goes away than it is to ramp up when demand goes up. And so we're talking about different products. We heard stories of forty-pound bags of flour being sold in grocery stores. That's not what we usually buy, so we have to change packaging. The relative demand for things; we drink more milk at home than we do in food service and so we have to change a little bit from say cheese production to fluid milk production and that doesn't happen overnight. So many of these overages at the production level were a function of perishable products and no buffer storage inventory. That caused us some grief and so I think all of those things are going to go away in a matter of days not months and we will see sort of that the reallocation in the new normal.

That said I think we've discovered some, what I would call, pinch points in the food supply chains. Where we might have a little bit more risk, as Larry mentioned earlier, we've seen some plants shut down. There was a pork plant in Quebec that shut down, [now it] looks like it's reopening. There's some discussion about a beef plant in Calgary where there are significant numbers of staff who have COVID-19 and dealing with [questions of] should we close the plant? Should we change capacity of the plant? Processing really becomes that pinch point because the numbers are smaller. If in the unfortunate circumstance where an individual farmer may get sick or have some other interruption, we've got a large pool of farmers who will continue to supply. At the grocery level most communities, although not all communities, have several store options and so if we had trouble with one store, we would continue to have access. But at the processing level, we have considerably more concentration [of businesses] and that's where we might potentially run into issues.

Now I would say again we've seen significant resilience in the system. I had several people ask me yesterday, this plant in Alberta represents almost 40% of the packing capacity in this country, does that mean if it closes, we're going run out of beef? And I would say one of the benefits of the integrated food market—the food system, is that we're not a Canada centric beef system. We export and import both beef and cattle and so while it represents 40% of the Canadian packing capacity, it does not represent 40% of the North American packing capacity. And so while we may see some short-term, temporary shutdowns, and I think as Dana said ,we may see some retooling in plants that reduce capacity, I think right now there's not a lot of fear of long-term loss of processing capacity and we can work around it.

In fact, if processing plants close it probably hurts producers more than it hurts consumers because it's much easier to reallocate processed products than it is to reallocate the raw products and so, at least in the context of beef, we probably won't be throwing beef out. We may be feeding them [cattle] at lower rates to sustain rather than then grow in order to allow us to wait until that processing capacity comes back. But I expect product will flow across North America so we will continue to see beef and other livestock products, and in fact all food products, on the shelves in the grocery store.

But that said, processing is probably a pinch point, something that we that we need to think about and think about how we can reduce those risks going forward. But again [in the instance of COVID], the system adjusted. The last point I wanted to make was: after we get through this, and we will get through this, we will have an opportunity to look back and say where were there bumps in the road? And where were there things that we can do differently? And we need to do that in a holistic way, so that we don't sort of, rob Peter to pay Paul. And there were some things, again, that were bumpy in this process that maybe we could change but we need to think about what are the implications for other things in the system? I had someone ask me, well should we have more smaller plants so if one plant closes down, we don't run into the trouble as if a big plant closes down? Well that is potentially an option but there's a reason we have big plants and that's efficiency and maybe we shouldn't all worship at the altar of efficiency and think about that. But to deal with Jess's issue, where she talked about access, efficiency keeps costs lower and if we're worried about access we need to think about those trade-offs as well. Having a fulsome look at what went well and what didn't and then thinking in a holistic way about what we can do better, I think will have some significant value.

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Rene Van Acker: Thanks very much Mike. I know that Larry, you're looking to make an additional comment just following on Mike so please go ahead.

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Lawrence Goodridge: Thank you. In listening to all of the panelists, it really struck me that when we emerge from this pandemic and the introspection occurs, one of the, I think one of the lasting legacies will be a critical dive into the fact that we largely still remain a reactive society. We've seen many examples of that during this pandemic and I think this will allow the nation as a whole to really begin to have that critical discussion around moving from reactive to proactive. I note that this is the third coronavirus outbreak in the last sixteen years. I think that we unfortunately will continue to see this, and I think a lot of public health experts agree. So we really have to ask ourselves, and to Mike's last point, how do we solve these bumps in the road, assuming that we will see another outbreak hopefully not as major as this in the future; how do we deal with that? And I think one solution is to really develop proactive approaches. For example, just yesterday the federal government

announced that it was giving twenty million dollars to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to improve food safety practices and this is largely surrounding just general food safety practices not necessarily to do with COVID-19, however there were some aspects that related to that. For example, the idea is that the CFIA would transition to flexible means for conducting inspections including using electronic devices during this pandemic and that's something that could be used in the future.

Also, Mike made a comment about packaged food and I know that with this funding CFIA will work to make packaged foods more available at grocery stores and other retail outlets so that the idea is to hopefully reduce food waste, which is certainly one of the consequences of this pandemic. And then finally in Alberta, in collaboration with the federal government recently announced that federal and provincial inspectors would cooperate and work together during this pandemic. These are things that while useful now, certainly could be adopted as a roadmap going forward in a proactive manner so that if or when we see additional diseases and pandemics develop, we are in a much better place to respond. Thank you.

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Rene Van Acker: Thank you, Larry. When this seminar was being set up we reached out to the community that our partners interact with at the Arrell Food Institute and the broad Food from Thought project and they provided some questions that they had that they were hoping the panelists could dig into and so I'm going to ask some of those questions. The first one relates to what a friend of mine calls the *universal thought of the day* which is "what am I going to eat?" and in that respect, I would be interested in the panel's perspectives on how COVID perhaps is changing our perspectives on food and maybe our priority around food and what impacts that may have on what consumers do, what families do, and maybe what the food industry does? And so maybe in particular I would look to maybe Jess to start with a perspective on that question?

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Jess Haines: Yeah I think as Dana said in her initial answer, I think we're going to see some changes that might be just due to the fact that you know sort of temporary because our situation has changed so much but I think what's really interesting to think about is what are the ones [changes] that might sustain afterwards. At the Guelph Family Health Study we look at families and look at how families interact around food and engage around food. One of the questions we're really interested in is, we have certainly heard from families and if you look on social media etcetera, [you see] that people have time to cook. My joke is we have time to do everything, right? A lot of time on our hands. And lots of people are spending it cooking and so that is a shift. We previously had lots of families who just described themselves too busy, "I don't have time to come home and prep a big meal so I use prepared

meals to feed my children”, but now they do have time. So, it'll be interesting to see. We're looking at what would happen before but we're doing a measurement now to see how are families engaging their children in meal prep, how much prep time are families taking and I think the really interesting question is what do we see afterwards? Is it possible there's a bit of a shift to acknowledge like “oh actually you know the better I get at this the faster it is”, “I can do this efficiently” or hopefully sparking a bit of passion, as opposed to something they have to do. Maybe they start to really enjoy it and maybe their children are motivators to do it because they're interested. So I think that's one change that we're really interested to see because we know that when you prep meals at home, they typically are healthier than the foods you buy as prepared, or out at restaurants so it has some health implications so we'll be interested to see if that's sustained

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Rene Van Acker: Thank You Jess. Are others interested in chiming in on that question? Dana?

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Dana McCauley: Yeah I am. I'm really heartened, as somebody who loves to cook herself that so many people are getting into the kitchen with their children and I'm hopeful that this means that kids are going to be enabled to be more involved. Even if families go back to being super scheduled, which they will and I bet they'll enjoy that for a month or so, I think this is ingraining meal planning [habits] we can only go to the grocery store once a week so we really have to think about eating. In the last ten years or so we've been able to have that *Universal question of the day* be answered on a whim “I want sushi”, “I want this”, “I want that” whereas now that's not exactly [plausible]. We can still get takeout but still we're having to plan more and hopefully those types of behaviors will mean that we are seeing people do more meal planning and a little more cooking, even if it's just for the weekend and it becomes sort of like knitting or another type of household project that used to be a daily chore but is now a, you know, a sometimes thing. Hopefully we'll see people developing those skills and practicing the skills because I think once you realize that making a stir-fry is faster than waiting for Chinese food to arrive, you'll look at it a little differently and that'll mean there'll be again a shift in what entrepreneurs and food companies can contribute to consumers. Of course, I think for the online shopping, this [pandemic] has been the motivator to click people over into using online platforms to order their groceries. I think that a lot of people are looking forward to getting back to wandering around stores and chatting with the butcher and that kind of thing, but again I think that in the long term, there's now no question that online grocery shopping is going to be part of the fabric of day-to-day urban life, and if not, [because] it's not possible on the outskirts.

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Rene Van Acker: Thank You Dana and I suspect Mike will want to follow exactly on that perhaps.

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Mike von Massow: Well I think the first thing I'd say is I agree with Dana I think we had seen relatively slow growth of the online either delivery or click and Collect model, [now] we've seen a rapid escalation. I think some of that slow growth was people wanting the experience, as Dana described and maybe having some uncertainty about the quality of produce they were going to get if someone else was selecting it for them, or not wanting to wait and those sorts of things. And I expect for some people the experiences has been better than they expected and that they won't go back, and I expect for others they'll say "well now that the risk is reduced I will go back to groceries, back to the grocery store", but I think without a doubt we'll have seen a growth in that in that approach that would not have happened in the absence. One thing that will be interesting to see is one of the industries hit hardest by this change in physical distancing has been restaurants. They are a relatively low margin business and so we're seeing significant pain. Food service employees over a million Canadians and probably eighty-five% of those Canadians are now unemployed. And even then, I think we're already seeing stories that some of these restaurants will not survive this closure even with some of the government support we're seeing out there, and to me that's sad. And I think that also the restaurant industry is going to be one of the slowest to recover because even as we get away from physical distancing, some people, particularly those who perceive themselves as vulnerable will say "I'm going to wait until a vaccine is available and proven and tested before I am willing to do things like go to restaurants again", and I think that will be something that goes beyond the next however long we are working from home and in home isolation. I think that the restaurant industry will recover more slowly, and I think that's unfortunate. I also wonder if the way we shop might also change a little bit, in that, in that, those of us who are still going to the grocery store are going less frequently and because we're saying "well we want we still want to shop" or "there's a long wait for the delivery" or whatever and we're shopping once every seven or eight days rather than every couple of days as more and more people, particularly empty nesters like us, are doing and that will also change how we eat at home to a degree. The last point if I may is, that we're I think we're probably seeing a change in what we're eating at home, not only are we cooking more but many Canadians are feeling an income pinch and so we're probably buying simpler items we're probably buying cheaper cuts of meat, and so the relative prices of some of those things may change just as we see some of those relative demand changes going forward.

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Rene Van Acker: Thank you, and finally Larry I know you wanted to comment on this question as well.

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Lawrence Goodridge: Yes. We know that many cases of foodborne illness occur as a result of improper food handling and preparation by consumers in their own kitchens and so, if it is in fact true that as a result of this pandemic more and more people will prepare food in their own homes, then I think we might expect an uptick in foodborne illnesses. And so, I think one thing that would need to be done is that the government, federal government and provincial governments should really begin to think about more education and our educational material regarding food safety for consumers.

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Rene Van Acker: Thanks Larry. Another question that came up, and it was it was really a follow on to this last question and I know many of you talked about shopping patterns. There was a question about whether COVID and the way it's shifting in the very near term immediately shopping patterns will also have an impact on what consumers are looking for in terms of domestic versus imported or local, what will it do in terms of that that trend? I don't know who would like to weigh in first on that. Jess I might ask you to go first on this one again in terms of how families are perceiving that or might perceive that.

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Jess Haines: Yeah I think it's an interesting question and I think it links to what Larry had said, it will depend I think on how much people see food potentially as a risk, so where they're accessing their food, if they believe there's risk related to the illness. I think the other thing will also be the price sensitivity; some of those options for local, potentially local artisan type things that can be more expensive, it's just going to be difficult for families who are struggling economically to afford them. I think it will be interesting to see people's response because I think there are a few factors that could be influencing some of those choices around local foods versus some of those imported options.

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Rene Van Acker: And Mike I think you wanted to comment.

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Mike von Massow: I think that we when we see times like this, we have this impulse to be maybe not insular, but to be supportive of our local communities and I don't think that there's anything wrong with that. I think a lot of those things make a ton of sense. If we can find ways to support local producers or local retailers or local entrepreneurs, as Dana said, I think those are those are great things. One of the beauties of our food system is that we have all of this choice and I think that there will be an inclination to find some of those local sources. I think something that we should we should think a little bit about is, I've heard some arguments that we should sort of become more insular as a nation and really shorten supply chains and focus on local production. I think in many ways there are some benefits to that but I'll go back to what I said at the beginning, is we shouldn't throw the baby out with

the bath water and think about some of these relative risks. If we if we stopped buying imported goods altogether, we wouldn't have Brussels sprouts and broccoli in the winter, notwithstanding some greenhouse capacity in this country but there are also other risks. We talked about the beef plant outside of Calgary representing forty percent of the packing capacity in this country given our integrated system we don't have it representing forty percent of our beef production within the system and that buffers the risk. Crop production is a biological process, and if we have as an example, an exclusive focus on a specific region and we have a drought or hail or other weather calamity that we don't have the ability to sort of supplement. I think buying, local, supporting your local, if it makes sense and if it's something you want it makes perfect sense, but cutting ties to a global marketplace brings its own risks along with it.

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Rene Van Acker: Dana I wonder if I could ask you to comment on how the start-up and entrepreneurial community in the food sector might view that sort of question.

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Dana McCauley: Yeah, it's an excellent question because you're right; big companies do think differently and market themselves differently and have different decision-making trees at play. Entrepreneurs generally in the past, and I think will continue into the future are advised to try and be a hometown hero first, and a lot of the education I do with growing companies is how to take that unique selling point of being the local supplier and the champion of your area and become able to branch out into other parts of you know their geographical reach. They probably will continue to do that because it's simple and it gives them an opportunity to know a lot of people in their community and to leverage the brands and reputations of their partners in their supply chain. But I do think that maybe a little bit outside of food-food itself but into other types of household goods and in other parts of our basket, I do think being Canadian made will continue to be a really big motivator. I see a lot of people on social media right now talking about how vulnerable we are at not being able to make particular items at this point in time because they have to come from ingredients that come from other countries, parts that come from other countries and I think that nationalism will probably cast a shadow and an effect into the future. For the companies who are really just trying to rebound and get back out there, I think that if they're entrepreneurial, they're owned and operated in a particular province or town, that regardless of where they get their stuff from, I think that to Mike's point, there's a lot of heart for helping our neighbors right now. In my local community we have a really vibrant farmers market that starts usually in May and goes through October every Thursday between like five and eight p.m., and there's all kinds of people saying "how are we going make the farmers market work?", "can we move it online?", "can we do this", "can we do that", so there's this bridge between community activism and entrepreneurs and suppliers that is keeping people I think feeling connected

even when they can't literally see one another. There's an interesting social dynamic there that I am probably not qualified to dig into and understand but that I can note.

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Rene Van Acker: Thanks very much, Dana. I'm going to ask one more question and then we will have to wrap up. The last question is really around a much broader perspective and it's a question about how this crisis might be impacting both provincial and federal strategies in relation to Canada's food system. I wonder what perspectives our panelists might have in that regard? What changes may be coming, both provincially and federally? What shifts there might be? What refocus there might be around our food system, given the pandemic? Who would like to have a first go at that very broad question? Mike maybe can I ask you to go first?

0:45:16

Mike von Massow: Sure, I'll jump in. I'm going to steal one of Larry's ideas given that I'm getting to go first. We've seen to a significant degree, reaction historically to issues and I think we'll probably see a real focus both at the provincial and the federal and frankly at the municipal level to planning. I mean we can't plan for everything and we can't anticipate everything and there may be some risks that we say the low probability high impact there's not a lot we can do for those. I think we will see a much more proactive planning, relating to the food system. I think Jess made a good point in her opening to say that food security in this country and in many developed countries is about income and not about availability. We've heard the federal government talk about a food policy for Canada I think we're seeing the provincial governments talk about those sorts of things as well. Having a conversation around food security that focuses on income rather than access, I think will be something that we will be looking at in more detail.

The last point I'll make is around food processing strategy where I talked earlier about processing being a pinch point, and even if it's not in anticipation of another outbreak, finding ways to add more value to our agricultural products here in Canada rather than shipping raw ingredients out and importing processed products back that, not only gives us some risk reduction in terms of emergency preparedness, but frankly creates economic activity in this country that we can use. And I expect that that initiatives around enhancing our food processing capacity will be a wonderful outcome of the pinch that we had here in this circumstance.

0:47:39

Rene Van Acker: Would one other panelists — we are getting short on time, but I wonder if one other panelist would also like to chime in on that very broad question. Dana?

0:47:57

Dana McCauley: Yeah. I'll just say that, I've been and I can't remember who said it, I think it was Jess, that it's been remarkable how quickly the government has jumped into to try to shore up our foundation of social safety. When they decide to open the economy, I think that businesses will see a lot of incentives for helping them to ramp up very quickly. Whether that support for doing R&D or to be more competitive etcetera. I'm quite hopeful that what this government has shown us at every level, at least provincially here in Ontario and federally, that they're going follow that up. They seem to be remarkably thoughtful and I think that they are already planning to have incentives in place to help reinvigorate manufacturing and restaurants and many other sectors. I got my fingers crossed that that's going help a lot of businesses to recoup what they're losing right now.

0:49:09

Rene Van Acker: Well thank you everyone. I'd like to thank our panel; Dana McCawley, Larry Goodridge, Jess Haines and Mike von Massow here at the University of Guelph. Excellent insights it's a pleasure to be able to tap into your expertise and to get your perspectives on what is arguably such an important sector for all of us, and a not an optional sector—our food. I would like to thank the Arrell Food Institute for organizing this seminar. One of a series that will be developed to allow for these kinds of deeper perspectives—expert perspectives on important questions, especially in relation to food. And I'd like to thank all of you for watching please stay safe and stay healthy. Thanks everyone.