



## Feeding the Nation During COVID-19: Food, Hope, and Recovery

Tuesday, April 21, 2020

In this webinar, leaders discussed the impact of COVID-19 on the nation's food system. **Ryan Shadrick Wilson**, senior advisor to the Milken Institute, led this critical discussion with:

- **Chef José Andrés**, Humanitarian and Founder, World Central Kitchen
- **Claire Babineaux-Fontenont**, CEO, Feeding America
- **Mike Milken**, Chairman, Milken Institute

The four speakers emphasized the need for new partnerships, investments, and policy to fix this unprecedented food-security crisis. A video of the call, with slides, [can be viewed on our website](#).

### Panelists touched on the following:

- All panelists agreed that the United States is in the midst of an unprecedented food security crisis. As unemployment has risen and schools have closed, nearly 60 million Americans may now need food assistance. Yet, while demand surges, supplies are dwindling. Donations to food banks and pantries have declined, and supply chain disruption has led to food wasted at farms and dairies around the country.
- Babineaux-Fontenont noted that before COVID-19, Feeding America's network of over 200 nation-wide food banks were feeding over 40 million people. A projected additional 17+ million people will be undernourished as a result of the pandemic.
- Andrés of World Central Kitchen noted that the organization has been providing meals in arenas and stadiums across the country, helping first responders, and working to keep restaurants in business that are engrained within communities across the United States. As restaurants are the DNA of communities, keeping them in business will be necessary for keeping everyone fed throughout this crisis.
- Babineaux-Fontenont mentioned that when thinking about social determinants of health, people who experience food insecurity in this country are 3x more likely to have diabetes, and 2x more likely to have hypertension. These same people are, of course, at a higher risk to contract COVID-19.
- Milken noted that the US is the most charitable country in the world, and one of America's strengths is its social capital, aka people helping others. We need a call to action to many of our creative technology companies to absorb the millions of people who can help distribute food from point A to point B.
- Andrés called for our leaders to recognize that we have a humanitarian crisis right now. The moment that those words of recognition come forward, everyone across all sectors—public, private, and nonprofit—will work together to fix it. Until we hear this from our leaders, we won't be able to fix the many ongoing problems. Further, he noted that in this country, we should be able to meet that goal through empathy and policy.

To donate or learn more about the COVID-19 food-relief programs led by our speakers, visit [feedingamerica.org](https://feedingamerica.org) or [wck.org](https://wck.org). To share ideas or to work with the Milken Institute on this issue, please email [rwilson@milkeninstitute.org](mailto:rwilson@milkeninstitute.org).