



Farmer and Rancher Ag COVID-19 Survey

Survey Results Report

By New Mexico First

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Introduction



“The public needs to be provided with options. Those that need should be given. Those that are hungry should be fed. Those that are able should give. Those that produce should be supported.”

New Mexico First’s Resilience in New Mexico Agriculture collective impact work began in 2014. The underlying goal has remained to address evolving challenges and trends in New Mexico’s agricultural industry. The agricultural industry is understood as a complex sector that has a vital role in New Mexico’s food systems, economy, health, culture, and natural resources. Further complicating agricultural issues are the extraordinary time New Mexicans and our world are facing due to COVID-19. This complexity further highlights the essential role that agriculturalists play. Agricultural resilience efforts have had support from many stakeholders throughout the process. The foundational supporters are New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service (NMSU), New Mexico First, the Thornburg Foundation, the McCune Charitable Foundation, other philanthropic supporters, organizational stakeholders in non-profits and government, and industry leaders in farming and ranching throughout New Mexico. We thank these partners for their collective efforts in ongoing work as well as their ability to pull together quickly to begin learning and responding to the challenges and opportunities presented by the need to respond to COVID-19.

This report is based on a survey released in late March of 2020. The core goal of this survey was to gain insight from the agricultural industry about impacts within the first 30 days of the COVID-19 pandemic. This data, while a snapshot in time, will be used to inform policy and systems change needs to build recommendations for relief and recovery efforts to sustain and build agricultural resilience in New Mexico.

Historical Context

Through the life of the project, New Mexico First has convened stakeholders in 13 regional meetings across the state, with over 600 stakeholders attending regular scheduled and ad hoc meetings, as well as statewide face-to-face and remote-supported gatherings.

Significant issues have been identified as challenges to the agricultural industry:

- An aging population of farmers and ranchers;
- Increasing pressure on water and other natural resources;
- Rising costs for land, energy, equipment, and other production needs;
- Challenges accessing or understanding farm loans, grants, and repayment programs;
- Unsustainable farmer and rancher incomes;
- Insufficient processing, storage, and market access;
- Complex regulations;
- Public health needs regarding nutrition and food access;
- Food waste;
- Workforce issues are unique to agriculture.

Following the completion of the first round of regional meetings, a compilation of findings was published in a background report. A 35-member team of industry leaders and experts was assembled to develop this report along with tangible solutions. The team worked in committees to develop recommendations and strategies in each of the policy areas: land and water, K-12 agriculture education, workforce, the economic viability of agriculture, and the agriculture value (supply) chain. The result of this work is documented in The Resilience in New Mexico Agriculture Strategic Plan. Simply referred to as “the Ag Plan,” its broad recommendations are coupled with specific strategies.

Part of the ongoing commitment to implement the Ag Plan, New Mexico First convened an agriculture community meeting in November 2019. Participants and the action teams reviewed the 17 recommendations and 69 strategies that are identified in the Ag Plan and proposed strategies and set policy and other action-oriented priorities for 2020 and 2021. The meeting was sponsored by the Thornburg Foundation, the New Mexico Department of Agriculture, and the McCune Charitable Foundation. The event drew 78 people representing multiple sectors and organizations within the agricultural industry and multiple communities from across New Mexico to Los Poblanos Historic Inn and Organic Farm in the Village of Los Ranchos de Albuquerque. The event was moderated by Lilly Irvin-Vitela, New Mexico First President and Executive Director, and small group discussions were facilitated by a talented and diverse team that included New Mexico First staff and community partners.

Those priorities informed advocacy efforts in the January/February New Mexico Legislative Session. In general, the following priorities guided next steps.

The priorities identified in November 2019 included:

- Systematically build passion and commitment to agriculture in the next generation through K-12 education;
- Advance business practices that grow the viability of this industry;
- Consider the land and water issues that New Mexicans encounter while engaging in agriculture in a unique ecosystem;
- Develop and advocate for the needs of the agricultural workforce; and
- Promote local food systems by continuing to strengthen the value (supply) chain.

A special legislative session in New Mexico is in development. Several media outlets in New Mexico are reporting that budget shortfalls are anticipated, meaning that previously earmarked appropriations could be underfunded or even worse unfunded. New Mexico First and stakeholders in our agricultural resilience collective impact efforts are committed to public policy that recognizes agricultural resilience and food systems are a funding priority.

Current Impacts of COVID-19

This report is based on a survey that asked six open-ended questions which prompted New Mexico agriculturalists to reflect on the following key questions:

1. As essential workers, how are stay-at-home orders affecting New Mexico farmers & ranchers?
2. What are NM agriculturalists doing to respond to food insecurity brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. Please describe any new or growing collaborations with the emergency food sector (Food banks, food pantries, coordinated food relief efforts at a community-based level.)
4. Has the COVID-19 pandemic caused farmers and ranchers to change production practices?
5. What is challenging farmers and ranchers during the COVID-19 pandemic?
6. What is being done to support New Mexico farmers and ranchers during the COVID-19 outbreak?

An optional seventh question asked what industry and area of New Mexico people represented. Responses confirm that people represented various regions of New Mexico, pueblos, and tribal nations. Respondents were farmers, ranchers, orchardists, beekeepers, and other affiliated members of the agricultural industry, such as value-added producers, and advocates.

Some of the strong themes that emerged were concerns about health and safety and related policies; volatility in agricultural and related markets; disruptions and break-downs in the supply/value chain; labor and social distancing; impacts on income and access to credit; emerging roles in getting food to markets, and an emerging or expanding role in contributing to emergency food relief efforts on a neighbor-to-neighbor level as well as a farmer to an institutional level.

Highlights of Findings

- 65% of the people who responded confirmed that changes in farming and or ranching practices were the result of COVID-19 and related public health policies.

- Not everyone in the agriculture industry was experiencing immediate impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 47% of the people who responded to the survey identified rapid and ongoing efforts to create innovative changes so that food and water needs can be met for New Mexico's people and animals.
- Market volatility and supply/value chain issues were the most commonly identified challenges.
- 41% of respondents reported new or growing partnerships to support the emergency food sector to feed New Mexico.
- 63% of respondents reported shifts in production based on safety need, market fluctuations, labor, seed supply, materials/equipment supplies, and distribution and marketing patterns.
- 96% of respondents reported one or more challenges that have impacted their work as a result of COVID-19.
- 40% of respondents were uncertain or saw no immediate COVID-19 relief efforts for the agricultural industry.

Acknowledgments

A special thank you to New Mexico State University for helping in the dissemination of this survey, as well as our many partners from the Agricultural Resilience collective action work who graciously broaden the circle to include many voices.

Many thanks to the Thornburg Foundation, the McCune Charitable Foundation, and the New Mexico Gas Company for their generous support of New Mexico First's work to promote and sustain agriculture as a vital economic, cultural, and health-promoting part of New Mexico.

The data was analyzed and this report was authored by Lilly Irvin-Vitela, MCRP, the President and Executive Director of New Mexico First. Jonas Moya, Strategic Civic Engagement and Policy Manager, led development and dissemination of the survey and contributed to compiling data and reviewing the report. Melanie Sanchez Eastwood, MA, Deputy Director of New Mexico First, edited the report.

Methodology



Grounded in Deliberative Democratic Practices

New Mexico First knows that public policy and systems change efforts are best accomplished when those most impacted by policy and most likely to impact the implementation of policy have a say in decision-making. Public policy that is meaningfully informed by stakeholders and community is not only more democratic, but it is also more practical, more useful, and less likely to result in undesirable and unintended consequences.

Both in convening people and in conducting research, participatory design is core to the work of New Mexico First. In the survey efforts that inform this report, six open-ended questions were asked to facilitate learning from the experiences, perspectives, knowledge, and wisdom of a diverse group of stakeholders across the agricultural sector. In return, these results will be shared with those who were invited to complete the survey, those who completed it, policymakers, community partners, the general public, state personnel at the New Mexico Department of Agriculture, and the state emergency response team assigned to food relief efforts. It is also posted on the New Mexico First website in the library tab. The six open-ended questions in the survey were:

1. As essential workers, how are stay-at-home orders affecting New Mexico farmers & ranchers?
2. What are New Mexico agriculturalists doing to respond to food insecurity brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. Please describe any new or growing collaborations with the emergency food sector (Food banks, food pantries, coordinated food relief efforts at a community-based level).
4. Has the COVID-19 pandemic caused farmers and ranchers to change production practices?
5. What is challenging farmers and ranchers during the COVID-19 pandemic?
6. What is being done to support New Mexico farmers and ranchers during the COVID-19 outbreak?

The lead researcher on this effort identified the framing of core questions, analyzed qualitative data to identify key themes within and across each interrelated question in the survey, and formulated recommendations based on survey responses. The co-researcher helped develop the questions, implemented distribution, and compiled raw data. There was a total of 75 respondents within a three-week timeframe in March-April of 2020. Given the incredible workload that the industry always experiences and the increased pressures and demands due to COVID-19, the level of response was strong, informative, and deeply appreciated. We thank everyone for continuing to trust New Mexico First with their experiences, information, and knowledge.

Survey Distribution

The survey was distributed via e-mail using a link to an online survey. New Mexico First used our distribution list of over 597 unique participants. They have been engaged with developing and implementing the Agricultural Resilience Plan as well as stakeholders in the Food, Hunger, Water, and Agriculture Policy Workgroup.

Honoring Community Voices

While New Mexico First is committed to nonpartisanship, as we ask members of the community open-ended questions, partisan perspectives arise. We strive to represent perspectives as they exist while working toward building and extending the organizational values that we practice at New Mexico First with our community partners on a broad range of public policy issues. We use direct quotes from people who participate in our community-building conversations and research and strive to identify consensus perspectives as well as dissenting opinions and perspectives so that all voices are honored.

In all our survey-based reports that use qualitative questions, spelling and minor grammatical errors are corrected, but no other changes were made to the text of survey responses. No responses are omitted. If more than one person shares the same response, the response is tabulated. If a response is not a verbatim match, the variations on the response are bulleted beneath the main idea but included in the response. For example, in question 3, when respondents were asked to identify new or growing collaborations between farmers, ranchers, and the emergency food sector, 24% of respondents reported No/NA. When they expanded on that statement, the response was included as a subsection. When a response to a question was multi-dimensional and cut across categories, it was included within the theme that was the emphasis of the comment. While categorization of ideas is used to help the reader make sense of the ideas, experiences, and knowledge shared by people in the agricultural industry, it is not meant to imply that issues are not complicated and interrelated.

Chapter 1

Question 1: As essential workers, how are stay-at-home orders affecting New Mexico farmers & ranchers?



While slightly less than a third of respondents reported little to no change as a result of public health-related stay-at-home orders in New Mexico, most people reported meaningful impacts of COVID-19. Of the nearly two-thirds of respondents, many identified ways that they are rapidly responding to pressing demands and opportunities. The response speaks not only to the resilience within the industry but a characteristic that has been demonstrated throughout the nearly seven years of New Mexico First's work on agricultural resilience. People within the industry are smart, resourceful, entrepreneurial, community-minded, and able to build strong, trusting relationships that allow them and the industry to weather difficult times. However, those protective factors alone cannot wholly buffer the emerging realities of a pandemic. Challenges included concerns about health and safety, changes and instability in the market, disruptions in the supply/value chain, and challenges to ways of life.

Challenges: Health Challenges

- “Our health comes first, and we need to heed the advice of scientists and medical experts even though it is a financial hardship for all of us. Our ranch manager has underlying medical issues, so we are worried about others in Harding Co are not taking social distancing seriously.”
- “Speaking for our ranch, we are used to being home and social distance is not a problem. I respect the importance of not spreading the virus. Many of my rancher friends do not take the pandemic seriously and not abiding by orders. I find that irresponsible and dangerous. I went to the Logan Food Market arriving at 7:00 a.m. wearing a mask, scarf, long-sleeved shirt and gloves for protection. I was the only customer in the store; however, the store staff wore neither gloves nor masks. I won't go back.”

Market and Supply/Value Change Challenges

- “It is making it difficult for them to get food to market, and direct market sales like Farmers' Markets could be dangerous due to contagion.”
- “Farming and ranching are essential at their core. We work, we do our best to remain safe when acquiring our supplies, and we worry. It is always the farmer that bears the volatility of any emergency. We typically can't afford health insurance, we put every dime we have back into the land, and we live with the insecurity of supply and demand. As a sheep producer, the largest market of the year, Easter, was canceled at Cattleman's Livestock Auction in Belen. So, our entire year was dynamited. What will happen now? WE DON'T KNOW. Our government finds farmers and ranchers a joke. They think we are illiterate and backward and that our jobs are easily performed by any old bloke that wanders into the barn. I, for one, could see where this situation could reinvent the farming and ranching industry. It is NOT in our best interest to have major percentages of our meat, milk, and produce being "handled" through major corporations. It is not healthy. A movement in the country is recognizing sustainability. My wish is for NM to get behind the small producer here. Not simply vegetable production, but ethical and gentle meat production, wool production, cotton production, and milk should all have an equal support system to re-educate the consumer in sustainable necessities.”
- “When it comes to the stay at home order and its impacts on NM Farmers & Ranchers, I think of Pueblo Agriculturalists and their need for supplies and materials from local vendors in highly impacted areas. We have seen how the crisis is impacting goods such as toilet paper and paper towels, and now elastic and fabric. I am certain that as many more individuals and families begin gardening, the supply chain for these types of goods may be impacted, given the increased need for many items to begin planting, even equipment used. “It hurts our production and sales.”
- “Farmers markets are not able to operate in a standard manner.”
- “From where I sit, the biggest challenge is getting whatever might be deliverable produce to consumers. We can work outside, even with others, maintaining proper distance, but without something like a CSA, market farmers must get their creativity in gear. (Your question is not worded coherently. I hope I interpreted it correctly).”
- “It's hard to watch commodity prices fall. Cattle bought last summer, grazed on wheat, are not break even.”
- “We are unable to meet our obligations to CSA and other outlets. Cash flow has dropped to record levels.”
- “Cattle prices have tanked! A friend just bought some fats for \$.80--below the cost of production.”
- “My sales are through growers' markets. Stay at home impacts how customers interact at the market. The need for volunteers to help at the market is also an impact.”
- “As small-scale farmers working under a cooperative model, farmers on a regular cycle never get a day off. As food producers, we have been able to keep our farm to market system going but at a very limited pace. Our farm training program with 6 trainees and 10 incubators has continued with strict protocol in place to keep everyone safe.”

- “Impact my contact (with) and sales to customers.”
- “The stay at home order has affected the sale of our cattle and the cattle prices and the supply chain.”
- “Has not yet. Except being able to get certain medications for livestock.”
- “Mentally, the effect is large. Living with uncertain markets creates farmers and ranchers to think twice about continuing to increase production.”
- “We are professional beekeepers, and many of our apiaries are located away from the home farm, so since we are essential, then there is no fully staying at home...”
- “It is not much of an issue to me personally, but I buy my work boots and clothes at the western wear store. It has been temporarily closed, and I can do business locally now.”
- “Purchase of supplies- feed, tack, tools.”
- “Loss of about 10% of our workforce.”
- “(Limited) Access to supplies and deliveries.”
- “What is affecting the farmers and ranchers are the markets and processing facilities that buy the products farmers and ranchers produce are in turmoil. Restaurants, schools, and other commercial businesses are almost shut down, so they aren't buying as much, and Grocery Stores are having shortages because people are eating at home. The markets are having a hard time adjusting to the changes that COVID-19 is causing.”
- “Just no access to certain business. Otherwise, no real impact. However, cattle prices have tanked, and in that respect, it is a huge impact.”
- “However, I had to stop all of my homestead teaching classes and am getting some push back for being out until the community selling our goods.”
- “It is important to shift our practice to include safety practices when we can. However, this is not always possible. Also, more work has fallen upon me as others cannot travel to the farm.”
- “Making it hard to get supplies from businesses deemed non-essential.”
- “Difficult to get supplies for the farm.”
- “Harder to get the parts needed.”
- “It is making it hard to obtain parts and supplies. Seems like the governor changes her mind from moment to moment as to what is essential.”
- “It is hindering commodity market development. As an example: Marketing of pecans has slowed down in other countries. COVID -19 caused currency devaluations, which impacts other counties buying power.”
- “The capacity for safety and cleaning operations and transporting.”
- “The equine industry should be considered essential.”
- “It has caused a drop-in demand for fresh produce as restaurants are closed. Price gouging is being seen at the grocery stores while we, as producers are seeing record low prices for our crops. Labor is in short supply. Also, rumor has it that agriculture should be required to pay hazard pay, which will cause further economic hardship.”
- “Everything takes longer. Labor unavailable. Crops and livestock don't wait to be tended, so work can't just be postponed. Markets are reduced.”

- "So far- farmers have been out in their fields; no one disagrees about that. We have been stopped by city code enforcement officials for conducting a sale in a parking lot- they were amenable once we told them what we were doing."

Challenges to Way of Life

- "Creates conflict when children who have to be homeschooled now are involved."
- "We are essential. The only impact is being to purchase groceries and prepared food. With store hours shortened, it is hard to make sure I get there on time."
- "It's a good thing we stocked up on groceries before this happened or we would be very hungry!"
- "I stay on the farm. I only go for parts, seed, fertilizer and chemicals. I have customers that I must interact with, but I keep my distance from them when they pickup hay at the barn."
- "We are already socially distanced and there hasn't been any impact on us except when we go to town to shop or purchase supplies there isn't any place to eat. How long is this social distancing supposed to last? My wife keeps trying to come back into the house!!"
- "Everyone is essential, and no one person or persons has authority to decide otherwise. Again, no one person or persons has authority in America land of FREEDOM to order anyone to stay at home. Yes, some ill-informed individuals have given themselves so-called authority to do the and it is causing great harm to Agriculture and every aspect of the American way of life and it's freedoms. By the People for the People! Absolutely unbelievable, (essential workers)?! Shame on America and Americans for ever labeling one another or letting themselves be labeled!!"

Emerging Opportunities

- "Most of our farmers and ranchers here in Sandia Pueblo continue to farm as they have in the past. The Pueblo is currently on lock down due to the pandemic. Safety precautions to keep our community as well as surrounding communities safe. Farmers and Ranchers have been given information on social distancing to protect themselves and others they might come into contact with while out in the farms and ranches. We have noticed more people wanting to participate in the community garden program as well as planting small gardens at their own homes."
- "We've been trying to stay home but have found that we tend to take a couple of days a week to deliver eggs and meat to people staying at home. Delivery requests have gone up."
- "Many farmers we are working with are working together and with organizations to develop new and alternative markets for their produce like CSA's. This is helping many of the small-scale producers in the immediate. There is a mixed message for some nursery producers, one that got shut down by their county. We shared the COVID19 NMDA and state directive that includes nurseries as essential businesses if they are selling vegetable plants and seeds."
- "We are still caring for the land, water and cattle. We do not have the luxury of staying at home."
- "We are still doing the same thing day in and day out as far as care for our livestock and crops."
- "Feeding and care of livestock and plants and trees."

- “As the value chain coordinator for the New Mexico farmer marketing association I would be traveling the entire state. I work with small to medium growers in many ways. I assist with production planning and a tiered food safety training for those looking to scale up production. In this I also help them with the business of business. We have assisted many growers reach their goal of selling to schools, senior centers and retail grocers. This has been greatly affected by COVID-19. The Association has gone to on-line food safety trainings. I've connecting growers to different outlets that normally they would not use.”
- “Not sure what this question means. Because farmers and ranchers have been deemed essential, we are able to continue operating our businesses on a day to day. These orders do of course affect our markets, but for small- mid size producers who are used to selling direct to farmers markets and consumers, we are seeing home delivery CSA's reach capacity quickly and aggregated food distribution services also helping to purchase food to cover the loss in sales from restaurants and schools. The closure of nursery's has affected a few of the small-scale growers, but for the most part the other businesses that support ag have remained open and been deemed essential (feed stores). We are seeing folks who participate in federal programs (FSA loans, NRCS, etc) have extremely long wait times and issues accessing these programs because of the social distancing limitations in these offices.”

Limited to No Impacts Experienced as of April 2020

- “Very little difference personally, other than my son has been running the errands to local suppliers for the most part in order to keep me distanced. Farming for a living is pretty solitary, and now is the incredibly busy time. “They (the stay at home orders) are not possible.”
- “I’m still feeding and caring for the cattle we have. No change, maybe even busier. Just when needed to go to town difficult to find supplies.”
- “It really does not affect us.”
- “They don’t affect farmers/ranchers too much because the farm is the primary place of work.”
- “All farm and ranch workers I know are still working.”
- “Normal day on the farm.”
- “We are naturally stay at home workers. We are thankful feed store was allowed to stay open.”
- “Not much effects.”
- “They really don't we just keep doing our jobs.”
- “Not at all.”
- “It doesn't seem to be affecting the ability of farmers and ranchers to get their work done, because it's easy to practice social distancing in the field.”
- “These only seem to be affecting us if we need to go into town to have equipment fixed. Otherwise, for us (cow/calf and ewe/lamb) the majority of our work is performed on our own or leased property with minimal human interaction normally.”
- “It has very little affect since farmers and ranchers still have to care for their livestock and crops. You cannot do that is you don't get out of the house.”
- “The land is where we work all of the time.”

- “No affect.”
- “It’s not”.
- “Life as usual.”
- “We work outside every day, so it doesn't seem to make any difference to us.”
- “Has had minimal effect.”
- “They don’t.”
- “I am doing normal tasks at the ranch try to get all supplies delivered and only go to town when necessary.”
- “No change for us at all. We rarely go anywhere in normal times.”
- “They do not.”
- “Farmers and ranchers must continue to tend to their livestock and farmers are just now gearing up for planting season.”

Chapter 2

Question 2: What are NM agriculturalists doing to respond to food insecurity brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic?



Just over a third of respondents reported moving forward based on standard practices and existing knowledge and capacity. From understanding their roles in food production and distribution to the unchanging demands and hard work entailed in the industry and way of life, for a minority of respondents, they had not changed practices to address food insecurity above and beyond their regular and worthwhile contributions.

However, 47% of the people who responded to the survey identified rapid and ongoing efforts to create innovative changes so that food and water needs can be met for New Mexico's people and animals. People are exploring, experimenting, and adapting to develop a local food system that is stronger, more sustainable, and geared toward greater self-sufficiency. Some New Mexico farmers and ranchers are working with the emergency food sector and humanitarian relief efforts to supply food. Given disruptions in the market and supply chain, many farmers and ranchers are pivoting production, marketing, and distribution to cultivate or grow ways to get food to people. The industry is also innovating around safety practices to strengthen an existing commitment to healthy and safe practices that can withstand the risks of a pandemic.

As the survey was released early in the pandemic, 17% of respondents reported no changes in practice to address rising food insecurity in New Mexico.

Standard Practices-Build on Existing Knowledge and Capacity

- “The Ag Producers are resuming life, producing food for the public as usual, we have no choice! Livestock will die without us, crops will die without us, THE PUBLIC WILL DIE WITHOUT US.”

- “We always have and always will strive to bring the most nutritious and abundant food products to the American people. Buy Locally raised and USA origin labeled foods.”
- “Grow most of our own food.”
- “We are taking care of our cattle. Calving is in progress and then we will brand, etc.”
- “Continuing to produce.”
- “I am not doing anything different as I raise a safe, healthy animals to provide beef to consumers.”
- “We continue to plant seeds and grow crops. There needs to be more funding to purchase produce and goods from farmers and ranchers in this time. We can't pay for labor to harvest and process product to then donate it for free. Even if we are making less money and getting a reduced price per lbs, there needs to be some kind of compensation.”
- “Still planting and hoping for the best in the future.”
- “Being a beef produced makes me a NM agriculturalist. My response to the pandemic has been self-quarantine and usual stockpile of groceries.”
- “WE continue to farm as normally as we can.”
- “I am selling retail meat and making many deliveries a week. I have not raised our prices and am trying to keep up with demand.”
- “Not much right now.”
- “Not much change.”
- “Business as usual. Prepping fields for spring planting.”
- “Keep on farming. Most crops don't begin to become available for harvest until late May. Ranchers need to continue tending to cattle right now as they are calving.”
- “As ranchers we are continuing with our ranching operation and hoping the cattle prices rebound in the fall.”
- “We are still producing the food and fiber necessary to help feed America.”
- “Nothing different, we always make sure whatever we sell is healthy.”
- “Have continued to care for my cattle.”
- “Nothing at current, though that could change during a harvest time.”
- “Still working business as usual.”
- “we are trying to keep customers supplies with our healthy beef but finding lack of USDA processors in NM to be our bottleneck.”
- “We can only produce commodities below breakeven for short periods of time.”
- “I'm doing the same as I've always done.”
- “We keep doing things that keep our operation afloat. The media and the Democratic party have and are creating these insecurities by presenting false info and perspectives.”
- “So far we have no produce to sell as of yet.”
- “Preparing to plant spring crops as per usual.”

Innovative Practices: Exploring Solutions for a Changing Food System

- “We have some NGOs working to get food to people who are in need. I was asked to connect some ranchers with an NGO who is getting food to the Native American Communities in NM, because they are experiencing shortages of meat in some of their communities.”
- “The southwest New Mexico Food Hub has been working with food pantries across southwest New Mexico to ensure they have access to foods- one of these programs we are doing allows us to purchase food from regional farmers who have been impacted by market closures and then distribute that food free of charge to food pantries.”
- “Some are gifting produce to emergency food assistance programs.”
- “Fortunately, for our Pueblo communities, they have families that have continued this long generation of agriculture and now, it gives Tribal Departments the opportunity to expand into the food security and work to establish community gardens and farmers markets. The Santo Domingo Pueblo's Natural Resources Department is very much interested in building this capacity for the farmers and ranchers of the Pueblo.”
- “Sharing with neighbors and family and friends who don't have the security of their own farm, chickens, eggs etc.”
- “Many are giving away food, including food to their workers. Our own farm is not yet in production, but we do have laying hens and we are giving eggs to neighbors.”

Production and Market Innovations

- “Farmers are working together to create new systems of product aggregation and delivery. Other farmers have found funding to get paid to deliver fresh produce to Roadrunner food bank.”
- “Discovering avenues to connect virtually with online orders and delivery.”
- “Requests for our grass-fed beef has increased many times over and is surpassing our ability to meet demands. The bottleneck is at the processing level. It is not possible to timely book livestock for processing to meet demand.”
- “Creating new ways to deliver product; joining forces to create CSAs.”
- “Mainly doing CSA and co-op goods into one pick up location.”
- “Many CSA's have just exploded sales as well to senior centers. The senior sales also depend on food safety practices that can be proven. They also have aggregating together to deliver to points sale. This has been spotty at best only because many raise the same crops.”
- “We continue to provide fresh local organic produce to community in need. Our farm to market system and local distribution continues through retail, equitable food access through Food Banks, and other non-profit organizations.”
- “We are concentrating on planting more veggies. Also volunteering at another farm while they are planting. Making more deliveries to home. Planning to produce more.”
- “Promoting the need for nutrient dense food and trying to help the public understand the added safety local food provides.”

- “We are currently trying to rebuild our greenhouse to supply fresh vegetables to our community.”
- “We have seen an increased demand for our direct to consumer products, such as whole and half lamb and beef. The problem comes in some areas with overbooked meat processing facilities and a seeming shortage of USDA certified meat processors. I have both heard this and experienced this.”
- “Selling direct to the local population where they can. Most do not have the ability or resources to easily do this.”
- “Direct to consumer.”
- “We are very concerned about cattle prices and trying to come up with another enterprise we could start just in case.”
- “We've made efforts to include barter & exchange with community members who are interested in honey.”
- “We built a greenhouse to plant early, hoping to yield a crop sooner to feed our community.”
- “Attempt to allow beef producers to sell directly to retail stores and direct to consumers. Trying to navigate through the Big 4 Packer crisis.”
- “They are referencing growers in other states who will plow their crops under due to market loss from lack of school and commercial consumption. To either sell at cost or donate agriculture products to food banks.”
- “Grow most of our own food.”
- “Seizing an opportunity to develop more relationships with local customers.”
- “I hope they are willing to grow more local food and markets will be developed.”
- “Finding new ways to get food to market to make the cost lowest.”
- “Seeking to look to partners, networks, and early planting.”

Safety Innovations and Best Practices

- “I'm seeing more mask and glove use, and some planning around payment transactions that obviates the need for close contact. More needs to be done in both areas.”
- “Making appointments and keeping strict sanitary methods.”
- “We are Global GAP and therefore we are already food security.”

Sharing Information

- “NMSU is hosting webinars to keep the cattle producer informed and help make decisions going forward.”
- “They are keeping optimistic, but now is the time to explore how corporate agriculture is hurting small scale, family operated farms and ranches.”
- “We are waiting with ideas and readiness to meet the needs of the community!”

Uncertainty- Holding out on an Assessment in Challenging Times

- “We raise all-natural beef, selling market calves in the fall. The market grows lower by the day. I realize there are crops to plant now and will need care through the summer before harvest. I don't know what they are going to do. We all have a rocky road ahead facing many unknowns. “
- “Huge problems marketing livestock. Prices are extremely low, even though the stores are running low on meat. The packers are making a killing, and the farmers and ranchers are dying. Those, like me, who have no outside income, are in extremely dire straits with no clear path to help. With no USDA processor in the area, animals are trucked out of state for finishing and processing. We lose both the relationships and the value-added benefits of in-state processing. Having been in the dairy business for 60 years, having left in 2017, I still keep up with dairy. Loads and loads, as in truckloads, of milk are being dumped because there is no processing need, yet the food banks are low on supply. Dairy was already extremely stressed, thus our exit, so this will likely end with more going out of business except for the largest, who simply cannot afford to go under. The banks own huge interests in them based on loans, so...”
- “Still growing but not at full capacity.”
- “Not sure but I am sure that they are doing everything they can!”
- “I'm not sure on this but I think farmers are sharing or giving produce to people in need. I have not been reading any articles or have not heard of any news regarding this.”
- “Nothing that I can see. Food security is present because of our incompetent rules pertaining to water usage.”
- “Not sure.”
- “Nothing right now.”
- “Not as much as they should.”
- “Question has me confused.....”
- “There is very little they can do.”
- “I don't know if they have done anything.”
- “Unsure.”

Chapter 3

Question 3: Please describe any new or growing collaborations with the emergency food sector (Food banks, food pantries, coordinated food relief efforts at a community-based level).



Pre-COVID-19, children in New Nation were rated first in the nation for food insecurity and hunger. Our elders are not faring much better.¹ A significant majority of New Mexico's counties have food insecurity at rates higher than the national average.² With increased economic instability, disruptions in the national and state food supply chain on the producer and consumer end, and 17,000 claims for unemployment in a single week in March alone,³ the demand for emergency food relief has grown exponentially. Through food banks, pantries, school meal programs, faith-based and non-profit organizations that are providing meal programs and food distribution, the growing need is evident. According to Mag Strittmatter, the Executive Director of the Road Runner Food Bank and Sherry Hooper the Executive Director of The Food Depot, from late March through April 2020, their food banks spent \$1.2M and \$450K respectively on purchased food in 30 days to address the increasing demand for food relief.⁴ Individuals and families, as well as for-profit and not for profit organizations and Tribal and State governments, have reported challenges in accessing food supply. The need for more reliable and self-sufficient local food systems has become more evident. 41% of respondents reported new or growing partnerships to support the emergency food sector to feed New Mexicans.

¹ Rick Nathanson. Journal Staff Writer. May 2019 "New Mexico Again Leads the Nation in Child Hunger" <https://www.abqjournal.com/1310364/new-mexico-again-leads-nation-in-child-hunger.html>, retrieved November 2019

² Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap 2017, <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2017/overall/new-mexico>, retrieved November 2019.

³ Derek Lin, MPH. New Mexico Voices for Children research and Policy Analyst. "How New Mexico can use the safety net to respond to COVID-19" <https://www.nmvoices.org/archives/14155>, retrieved April 11, 2020.

⁴ Meeting Minutes, Food, Hunger, Water, Agriculture Policy Work Group. Posted April 2020 <http://nmfirst.org/event-details/covid19>

New Collaborations

- “I used this time to help connect local ranchers to consumers. I am developing a free directory on my website to contact consumers and producers of all ag products.”
- “Food was donated to NM Pueblos when they shut down their reservations.”
- “Rep Dow connecting w/local beef growers to allow meat to be purchased directly by consumer. Roadrunner Food bank working w local ranchers to purchase on-the-hoof. Beef then distributed to food banks directly from processor.”
- “One of the ranchers that I connected with is getting meat processed in southern Colorado to be delivered to Native American Community Food Banks here in New Mexico.”
- “Our community on the Navajo Reservation has received food donations from the National Guard. Our schools are providing take home meals. However, the volunteers delivering the food have to come up with their own safety gear.”
- “Front line food bank workers are handing out food through drive-up situations.”
- “Finally, state agencies are seeking outsources for local ag products.”
- “MoGro has shifted entirely to emergency relief (for Jemez, Zia, and other pueblos, Three Sisters Kitchen, The Food Depot) and is purchasing as much as possible from local growers.”
- “We have a dry food distribution going out to all Tribal Members.”

Growing Collaborations

- “Work with food banks.”
- “I am aware of efforts in Albuquerque and Vanderwagon to pool food from farmers and make it available to food banks.”
- “As mentioned above- the food hub is working with individual pantries to identify fund matching opportunities to help them stretch their money further as some pantries in our region have seen a near 60% increase in recipients.”
- “For the past 10 years we have worked with Rio Grande Food Bank, and Road Runner Food Bank, with community pantries coordinated through ministries and have food relief efforts with La Cosecha CSA 320 low-income members making local organic produce accessible and equitable.”
- “I am on the board of the Store House and they are cooperating in different ways with Road Runner Food Bank. The Store House is a food pantry that provides food to those who need, up to 50,000 annually. Not all know about this service.”
- “We are not able to give our hive products away, but we have lowered prices.”
- “There have been some connections made with the local food bank in Santa Fe.” (The Food Depot)
- “I’m unaware of specifics but have heard that some excess produce is going to food banks, etc.”
- “The expansion of teamwork through collaboration is very encouraging if only to put emphasis on local food supply chain. All have benefited but also has highlighted the lack of infrastructure and cold storage within the state.”

- “Additional CSA opportunities.”
- “We have seen requests for meat from food pantries in general, but that is as far as our knowledge goes.”
- “Better Together CSA, Crisis Collective, NM Harvest (not new but expanded to meet demand), Squash Blossom CSA (not new but expanded to meet demand), La Cosecha/Agri-Cultura Network (not new but expanded to meet demand). Note that many of these are not really serving families who cannot afford food (aside from La Cosecha and their long-time model to serve EBT/SNAP families) but are more serving farmers who need outlets for their produce.”
- “Farmers and ranchers want to bridge the gap to help those in need.”
- “Supporting the outreach efforts of my church.”
- “DOH distributed senior vouchers at food pantries and a farmers’ market for purchases at Farmers Markets, this helped connect food insecure populations directly with the grower/producer.”
- “Collaborations with food banks/pantries with some tribal nations have limitations re: funding, safety protocol support, and capacity.”
- “Chispas Farm and Downtown Growers Market are able to take EBT payments which has been important since that method of payment doesn't work online or during delivery in most cases.”
- “There is a growth in NM and across the country in CSA's (Community Supported Agriculture) as an option to sell produce because their structure uniquely benefits the situation for purchasers.”
- “We have had relations with local food pantries for years, although many do not accept fresh fruits and vegetables.”
- “I am impressed with our local school who provides an order sheet for families to purchase bulk foods usually ordered for the school cafeteria. Families go together and share the orders and it has helped tremendously to reduce community members traveling to town for groceries. We do not have a grocery store in Harding County and this kind and courteous service is a blessing for everyone. I am grateful and proud of our school leadership for stepping up to help the community. It's brought everyone together.”
- “We have donated to many food banks.”
- “Direct to consumer at the community level.”

Other

- “The public needs to be provided with options. Those that need should be given. Those that are hungry should be fed. Those that are able should give. Those that produce should be supported.”
- “We are fortunate to have a Fire Commander who has coordinated community needs, particularly for shut-in and high-risk residents.”
- Neighborly inquiries as to what needs we might be able to help with.
- Farmers and ranchers have always been responsive to the general need to help people in need of help with having food to eat if they are in need.
- “Running short on most.”

- “Several new greenhouses are coming on board. Bigger vegetable plots are being planted for the future.”
- “Minimal support from local food banks and relief efforts.”
- “We are a bit remote from city. I’ve made efforts to help people who may need.”
- “No one wants to butcher beef anymore. The cost of processing and availability of processing restrict small producers.”

None/NA

- None or NA (24% of respondents)
 - “None seen in rural Colfax County.”
 - “None at this time. Don’t have any crops to share/donate.”
 - “Don’t participate so can’t comment.”
 - “I don’t have enough to do that.”
 - “I have not contact with that sector.”
 - “There are no Food Banks, Pantries, or coordinated food relief efforts in our entire County.”
 - “There isn’t any right now.”
- Not sure (4)

Chapter 4

Questions 4: Has the COVID-19 pandemic caused farmers and ranchers to change production practices?



Changes in production practices do not change overnight; they are built on thoughtful consideration and planning. At the time the survey was taken, 28% said that their practices have not changed due to COVID-19. However, a more significant percentage of survey respondents, 63% reported the need to make shifts in production based on safety and needs, market fluctuations, labor, seed supply, materials/equipment supplies, and distribution and marketing patterns due to COVID-19. While most respondents noted that life is different due to COVID-19, those needing to make significant changes include farmers, ranchers, and beekeepers.

Yes 63% of Respondents

- “Yes, it will affect the supply chain. Once the onion harvest starts here in a week or so, we will be able to see those changes.”
- “Not going to sale until cattle prices go up.”
- “It is affecting our branding crews. It is a little more difficult to get the help we need.”
- “The cattle market disaster has brought on more efficiency and economic attention”
- “This has affected the farmers markets the most. To practice social distancing the markets that are open have next to no customers. Also, an additional expense of single use bags, gloves, sanitizer and the labor to bag the produce. There has also been a rush of backyard growers purchasing up all the seeds. so, when they can find seeds they double and triple the price.”
- “Production no, sales yes.”
- “We have cattle in feedlot ready to be slaughtered. Today we learned the cattle will be placed on hold because slaughterhouses are closing due to high rate of workers infected with virus. The c cc’d style we’re already losing money. Now losses will go even higher because they will have to be fed longer.”
- “Rancher not so much. Planting season for farmers will be impacted by the group max.”

- “I was told by a USFS Ranger that they are having to change how they are working with Ranchers who pasture their animals on the national forest. They aren't able to complete all the steps required to prepare for the grazing season this year, like in person meetings and range readiness inspections with permittees because of the fear of spreading the corona-virus at these events.”
- “I am tempted to sell more livestock for butcher than I normally would. Otherwise, we are not changing our production.”
- “We are starting a hydro plant system for vegetables. But this was in the plans already.”
- “Meat processors are closing nationwide. Future meat production will be compromised.”
- “Using more gloves when handling produce; prepackaging in plastic.”
- “More scrupulous in creating food safety plans, wearing masks and gloves while packing shares, some folks are planting more, some are planting less due to fears of getting sick and not being able to follow through with growing season. Labor is a big question for those farms and ranches that depend on immigrant and H2A labor.”
- “Yes, I believe so. The health and safety of farmers and ranchers producing the cattle or produce to stocking shelves, has everyone washing hands and protecting themselves.”
- “Yes, now in NM were dealing with drought conditions on top of this pandemic.”
- “We are righting our budgets because of the 30 percent drop in cattle prices.”
- “Yes. Without labor, practices must change. Food safety practices must be reviewed, modified where necessary. Distribution practices, markets must change.”
- “We are three weeks into the harvest season seedlings have been grown and have been planted for production harvesting from June - October. Our Farm to Market production and distribution is what has had to scale down drastically from a crew of 4 to 1 1/2 people. Making the burden much harder on them. At the SVEDC we are working under the Governors mandate and have limit of 5 people in the entire building that houses 65 food businesses.”
- “My main cash crop has been flowers. As this is not an essential item, I am changing my planting to more food items. I am doing so mainly for my family's needs and expect to have more that I can use. Because I am a coordinator for the local growers' market, I do not expect to be able to manage a regular booth at the market. I plan on channeling extra food production through local resources that collect for food banks and pantry locations.”
- “Yes, we will not be placing hives that are far away from the home farm in order to keep fuel costs down...”
- “Somewhat, here in Sandia we are 99% Alfalfa Producers. This year we are seeing more Garden beds being prepped.”
- “We've making fewer, but bigger feed orders. Trying to better coordinate deliveries. Have to plan better as we can't just go and get whatever it is, we need.”
- “Yes. Some are planting early. Others who don't have enough income at the moment, may hinder their ability to plant to the capacity they are used to.”
- “Farmers' Market growers and Produces are looking at how to produce more food to bring to the direct market.”
- “It's made a tremendous loss of income.”

- “Absolutely. with changing markets, we have changed our crop plan. we're decreasing the diversity in our planting and focusing on varieties we can wholesale and store. we've also increased planting to meet increased demand.”
- “It’s disrupting the food chain. The big processors have closed packing plants. Farmers in California plowing lettuce as harvest cost exceed price received.”” I think there is less collaboration because we keep our district from each other. A farmer that gets sick and is out for three to four weeks could be in a tight financial bind. I can’t afford to miss that time with our irrigation schedules and harvesting sequences.”
- “Yes, as mentioned above. I do believe that we will need to INCREASE production to meet the upcoming needs of our state.”
- “In regard to supplies and deliveries.”
- “It has disrupted a lot of things that have forced farmers and ranchers to change production practices. The huge fluctuations in prices we receive for our goods produced makes it extremely difficult. Couple that with rising costs attributed to the pandemic it creates changes.”
- “It is harder to get parts and supplies. Shipments are really slow and businesses we deal with are closed.”

No or Not Much 28% of Respondents

- “Very doubtful! Other than social distancing, which we are accustomed to anyway.”
- “No, however when we sell commodity cattle, we are taking a huge loss, but have to do it to pay our bills.”
- “As a rancher my practices have not changed.”
- “I don’t know about others, but I don’t see that the timing allows for much of that.”
- “Not necessarily, especially as small-scale producers.”
- “Not that I have heard of yet other than they are all preparing for the season.”
- “We are ranchers and we cannot change our practices. It has caused us to not work as closely with other family members as we usually do.”
- “No. The only difference for our direct marketing of our grass-fed beef is at delivery.”
- “Hard to go to town for supplies, people approach you and tell you stay home, been stopped many times, why we are out.”
- “We will be keeping more yearling heifers because we are so uncertain about cattle prices.”
- “*Change production practices....* wow. It takes years to make changes. What I do today, I reap in two or more years. When growing crops or livestock, the results of changes are years away. The current situation is very fluid and undetermined, so risking making changes now, guessing what the situation will be in 2 years is a little crazy if your life literally depends upon those decisions. For example, based on research, I invested in meat goats last September. The first kids won't be ready for sale until November, with the goal to have kids for sale Christmas through March. That's a commitment I made, an expensive one, that won't reap reward for almost another year. COVID-19 doesn't really change that. I made a decision on what bull to use on my cows months ago. 9-month gestation, another year, to year and half to sale or

feedlot (retain ownership through slaughter), so that's a 3-year commitment. I have to feed these animals. I made a commitment last summer to NMSU to allow the forage specialist try out goat pasture plants not grown here previously on one of my fields. That's a three-year commitment, again. I planted alfalfa in some fields last fall. Expensive investment. That's a 5 to 8-year commitment. The other fields are rotational grass forages. Not a lot of choice there if I'm going to feed my animals. In short, for those whose sole income is derived from agriculture, changing long term practices based on so many unknown factors is too risky. Things have to settle down. I'm extremely happy that I didn't jump on the hemp bandwagon. I made the analysis, decided it wasn't a good risk as the supply chain and processing wasn't really clear. A lot of folks lost a fortune on that deal. The market will certainly mature, but if that's all you have, you can't afford to risk on so much uncertainty."

- "We have crops already planted so we have to forge ahead with hope that this will be resolved before harvest. We are however afraid that many small businesses will become bankrupt and demand will fall along with prices."
- "I don't think so. It is difficult to change production practices on short notice."

Not Yet or Uncertain 8% of Respondents

- "At this point in time, I am uncertain."
- "Maybe not production, that I am aware of, but distribution."
- "Yes. The extra layer of safety protocols remains uncertain. Challenges for training in rural communities is a barrier."
- "Right now, we are half-way through calving. We are continuing normal management practices although we are in need of moisture. The future is unknown."
- "Not yet. The market is a major problem."
- "No. Not for beef."

Skipped the Question 1% of Respondents.

Chapter 5

Question 5: What is challenging farmers and ranchers during the COVID-19 pandemic?



The pandemic is leaving its mark on New Mexico's agricultural industry. 96% of respondents reported one or more challenges that have impacted their work as a result of COVID-19. The most critical challenges are supply chain issues, market instability, labor issues, health and safety concerns, banking and lending barriers, and technology roadblocks. Living our day-to-day lives and how we address public policy has also changed and is a concern. Of all the challenges suggested, 37% of respondents are having supply chain issues. Similarly, market instability remains a challenge among 17%. Associated with market challenges are labor shortages, and 12% of respondents noted that labor shortages and workflow were a concern. Some respondents, 8% noted that they are concerned about health and safety. Amplified by COVID-19, 4% reported banking and lending practices as a challenge. During emergencies, public policy is made more difficult. 5% reported changes in public policy as a response to COVID-19 as their top challenge. While technology issues may have been a concern before COVID-19, 3% reported shifts to higher-tech business practices as a critical challenge. For most, COVID-19 has changed our lives in so many ways and 9% of respondents reported changes to our way of life is a top challenge.

Health and Safety

- "Health of the family and associated public."
- "Working with municipal government to keep direct marketing open. Administrations have understandable concerns for their residents. Promoting the need for keeping local food resources open is not at the top of their list for using local resources."
- "Staying Healthy and bringing food to the consumer, needing more help to grow and sell more food directly to the consumer. Help making the food affordable to all, i.e. snap/double up food bucks."
- "Uncertainty. anxiety around personal safety. social distancing among farm crews."

- “We are misunderstood and maligned and have been. Changing demands, new perspectives on consumption, reducing waste, and cooperation will be necessary to move forward. A LARGE impediment to productivity has been lack of access to medications and treatments. It further solidifies the notion that farmers and ranchers are too unintelligent to administer treatments properly. Legislation needs to address this. The shift from New Mexico State Meat Inspectors to USDA inspectors years back set up an "us against them" situation in the processing of meat. We need to return to the in-state inspection and licensing framework.”
- “Prices are bad, but expenses are the same and getting higher. Our industry wants to produce the best and safest food that we can for this nation.”

Labor

- “I think labor will be a problem.”
- “Not to have an empty barn or field. Workers are needed and not having the workers there to get products to the supply chain, there is no way we can bring farm to table.”
- “Limiting workers for branding.”
- “Helping each other. Work still gets done but we have to keep distance with co-workers. Not sure how branding will go, probably close to the same as years before.”
- “Labor.” (2)
- “Labor shortages are worse. I don’t even want to interview with somebody I don’t know. Fuel prices are down thank goodness that will help with some of the lost production.”
- “Difficult to schedule branding under these circumstances. We may have to do it ourselves.”
- “Demand, prices, increased costs and shortage of labor.”

Supply/Value Chain Issues

- “As mentioned, the seed shortage will affect greatly in the upcoming season. Availability and pricing.”
- “The trucking transportation of agriculture products is experiencing a few changes.”
- “Getting the tools, we need to do the various jobs.”
- “Not much other than the limit on how many can be in a facility at a time so it takes longer when getting things in town.”
- “Stay at home, sales are slow to none.”
- “Get feed and selling livestock.”
- “Lack of access to businesses.”
- “Getting equipment fixed and the price of concrete right now. We are going into fence fixing/building season, and concrete prices are over-inflated due to the outbreak.”
- “No place to take product. No meat packers. Milk being poureNationhe ground. Not that the nation doesn't need it. This is crazy. There is food there to feed everyone but there is failure in the Nation.”
- “Access to customers.”

- “There is a large demand and people are turning to their local producers to meet this demand. Not all producers are set up to be able to handle the larger demand, and there is no guarantee that the community will continue to be so hungry for local food once this pandemic is over. There are issues facing chile producers and other larger scale growers dependent on H2A labor. There are issues for producers to access federal relief funds (ag can't apply for SBA loans) and for small scale producers to feel confident in applying for those funds that they do indeed qualify for (Economic injury relief, PPP, etc).”
- “Distribution issues.”
- “Getting supplies, and low markets like livestock for one as prices have hit rock bottom.”
- “Many businesses are closed, or reduced capacity.”
- “Getting parts for repairs when the business that carries those parts are not considered essential. Extra-long delivery times.”
- “Person to person distribution and marketing. Guessing what’s next, how long will shelter in place, quarantine go on? The usual unanswerable questions that folks have when they are not in control of Mother Nature. It’ll be different next year. ha-ha.”
- “For farmers we work with its primarily market closure- while some farmers have adapted well to this on their own by expanding the number of farmers markets they sell to and the volume they sell at those markets, but other farmers have struggled to find markets for their food.”
- “Getting food to those who need and want it.”
- “Production and distribution.”
- “We rely on specialty stores and events for selling our hive products and with them closed or cancelled, that has impacted our ability to sell in public settings...though I've begun researching more options for selling online.”
- “Quarantining and limited trips for Animal Feed and Supplements as well as Supplies, Parts and Repairs for tractors.”
- “Ability to reach the customer as easily. Not enough supply to fill the current demand.”
- “Finding certain supplies. Shifting immediate markets.”
- “The longer shipping time for needed supplies and materials.”
- “Keeping up with demand for beef. Lack of USDA Processors in NM is our bottleneck. We have butcher ready steers but nowhere to go with them.”
- “Milk flew off of shelves at the start, now demand has demonstrated because of school closers, restaurants closer, and consumer spending food dollar in a more normal way.”
- “Marketing! Shortages of supplies.”
- “Accessing supplies and material where business' have closed.”

Market Instability and Compounding Factors

- “For us, drought and the realization that we may not be able to sell our calves is extremely stressful. The economy is upside down and shall take time to recover. This is difficult; however, we are well, we are sheltered, we have food and we are busy with our work. Everyone here feels compassion for the thousands of people who have lost family members, friends, jobs and

business. We are grateful for what we have and try not to spend too much time thinking about challenges. This business is filled with risk, so we are familiar with it. We are getting by alright. “

- “Getting yearlings to the feedlot and the finished product to the packer. Prices have tanked. What looked like a good decision in December/January is not such a good decision today. Welcome to agriculture.”
- “The demand for beef is up, can’t find it on the shelf and our prices on the hoof have gone through the floor. Makes no sense.”
- “For me, my income from classes, a larger part of my planned income for this year, went down to zero. So, I am pivoting and looking for other avenues of income from the farm. We beefed up our egg production and chick production.”
- “The cash value of our livestock and national fiber.”
- “Prices to producer going down. Prices to us (as a consumer) going up.”
- “Markets are weak, low prices. Normally our pecans are sold by end of January. We just sold the last of crop at prices about 1/2 of prior years for the last 300,000 lbs.”
- “The price cut we receive from commodity cattle.”
- “Beef cattle price gouging.”
- “Some market changes.”
- “Instability due to change in purchasing patterns (though not necessarily less sales overall as demand for local seems higher at the moment), increased risk for workers without increase in pay / pricing.”
- “The market is very much of an issue as it’s lost a fourth of its value.”
- “Market uncertainty, futures traders speculation on market is driving prices down, lack of competition amongst packers (Tyson, Cargill, JBS, and National Beef control virtually all of the slaughter in the US), uncertainty in export opportunities, imported competition that does not have the same quality and operational constraints as domestic production, lack of in-state processing for local distribution, high cost of feed, high cost of labor particularly as many will make more being unemployed than while employed under the phase III corona virus bill, reduced demand with school and restaurant closures, fear that demand will be reduced even after the closures are ended because many people will have meat in the freezer and not be buying (this also drives market down), and more trespass and theft issues as people of all sorts don’t have anything to do. Ultimately, agricultural production is price-taking, not price-setting like a lot of services are. We are stuck with the price we get regardless of input costs. And when dealing with perishables, this lack of control over input costs becomes particularly problematic. If the shutdown persists, there will many farms out of business. There will certainly be some even now. The land will either become hobby farms, subdivisions, or simply abandoned. Of course, the hobby farms will be fine, those with alternative incomes will probably be ok as well. It’s just the folks that farm for a living that will be gone. The ones who really produce food in sufficient quantity to actually feed a population.”

Banking, Lending, Finance

- “Banking, face to face contact with public agencies, marketing later on.”
- “Access to financial resources. We live on the Navajo reservation. The local government is closed, and we cannot rent the community tractor to plow our fields.”
- “Meeting payroll and bills.”

Way of Life Challenges and Resilience

- “The same things that challenge the general public in this crisis situation except most farmers and ranchers maintain a food supply in their homes and are able to sustain themselves longer than city dwellers since they live farther away from a grocery store and cities and towns.”
- “Social distancing. As Pueblo peoples, we always been community organized and with large families, during the COVID-19 outbreak, perhaps many Pueblo farmers and ranchers have to alternate and schedule times to visit the fields and to ensure that they are maintaining social distancing, even when travel to and from the field.”
- “Access to basic resources for farming is a challenge. Water access has been a challenge. NAPI the Navajo Agricultural Production Industry has been short of products such as beans and potatoes that many depend on. Migrant workers are not receiving health benefits, safety equipment, safe housing, or are not able to work at all. I am an agriculture teacher. Agriculture producers for show animals are not being able to sell livestock. Students cannot get to school farms to take care of animals. The responsibilities are falling on the FFA and Agriculture teachers. Veterinarians are continually at risk and animal medical emergencies are cannot use proper facilities at all times do to quarantined areas in clinics.”
- “Second incomes not happening, school schedules, supplies and deliveries.”
- “To continue as so many are shut in.”
- “Going to town a lot less now and no pleasure traveling.”
- “Getting toilet paper.”

Technology Barriers

- “I think it is very challenging for Farmers and Ranchers to adjust to doing so much online. From meetings, working, and applying for programs with agencies (NRCS, BLM, USFS, FSA, SWCD County Extension Service, etc). It seems like the only way to talk with some is on the phone or through virtual meeting online. That doesn't work well for older farmers and ranchers who don't use computers.”
- “Network capability to join online training.”

Policy Barriers

- “Accommodating shelter in place and social distancing mandates.”
- “Politicians who think they can order at a whim to destroy rights of the peoples and unwarranted panic spread by them and the media.”
- “Having ignorant government officials trying to tell farmers and ranchers how to do their work. Rural NM is very different from urban NM and no one in the Governor’s Office or State agencies understand that or care.”
- “The governor not having a plan to return to limited operations.”

No Changes

- “Haven’t seen any changes.”

Chapter 6

Question 6: What is being done to support New Mexico farmers and ranchers during the COVID-19 outbreak?



The need for support and recovery systems within the agricultural sector as a critical economic development and public health initiative is evidenced in the responses. 40% of respondents reported uncertainty in supports or lack of supports to farmers and ranchers. People reported finding support in their spiritual faith, within the agricultural industry itself, from some Federal, Tribal, and State efforts, from non-profits and non-government organizations, and from neighbors and community. The need for a greater public policy emphasis on resilient agriculture that is guided by the industry is warranted.

In terms of the economy, continued economic development support is needed. Governor Michelle Lujan-Grisham and the NM Economic Development Department had identified agriculture as a priority economic development sector Pre-COVID-19. While access to fresh and healthy food is core to the health and well-being of New Mexicans and core to reducing rates of hunger and food insecurity, the importance of agriculture in our New Mexico's economy is evident. Meaningful opportunities exist to contribute to public health goals while investing in local agriculture.

Faith

- “My prayers are in the to God in Heaven, He is the only one who can protect man from himself. I pray that He guide us and protect us and make His face to shine upon us that He our Lord, Father of Jesus forgive us our sins and bless this world which He created and He give us the good wisdom to Love one another as He directed. Amen. The only protector is God. I pray that He forgive us for being in control and realize that we need to be a nation under God again. Lord forgive the ones who have decided to give themselves authority to decide of whom is essential. We know Lord that You expressed that whoever is least will be with You in Heaven. God Bless this weary nation. Amen.”

Overall

- “Low interest loan programs. I think all ag loans should be deferred for two years.”
- “Besides what is happening for everyone, and gig workers, I am not aware. Personally, I feel particularly blessed (and possibly ignorant of what I hope is available) because I'm retired.”
- Nothing (18)

- “Not much that I've been able to find.”
- “Nothing in particular that I am aware of.”
- “Not much of anything.”
- “Nothing I have seen.”
- “Nothing that I can see. Consumers seeing the need for local food and coming to the farmers' market to support local growers in an open-air environment.”
- “We have not felt the need to seek assistance yet.”
- “Very little.”
- “I'm not aware of anything.... we are waiting for information on the Federal Government loans/grants, which should be available soon. We keep on caring for livestock, wildlife, birds and community.”
- “Nothing that I can see. Covering employees isn't the real issue. Crashing prices is the issue. Determining how to make up for that is a complicated business, and I expect the largest to be better able to deal with the paperwork and justifications better than the smaller who are personally working hard just to stay alive and don't really have the time or energy to navigate the complicated business required to try to make sure no one is cheating.”
- “Not one darn thing!”
- Not sure (12)
 - “Not sure. I am hearing mixed reviews about whether or not funding is available.”
 - “I'm not sure.” (2)
 - “???????”
 - “I'm uncertain.”
 - “Not sure. At least they are still considered "essential".”
- “Little that I can tell. We can apply for loans through the SBA I am told but few of us really need more debt no matter the interest rate. “
- “Hopefully non-essential medical care will return.”
- “For me personally, the impact has been minimal with the exception of not being able to meet the increased demand for our grass-fed beef. Extending tax filing deadline is April 15th that we were meeting the April 15 deadline anyway.”

The Agriculture Sector Itself

- “We are addressing our employees/families concerns. We are social distancing as much as possible which is normal for us. Need to be aware of the emotional/mental status of employees and families.”
- “I think the outreach to both producers and consumers is important. Customers need to believe in producers dedication to providing access to food resources.”
- “Farmers, support organizations, and agencies are working together to coordinate market opportunities, safety measures, shared information, and continual communications. Advocates are focused on advocating for support for farmers and ranchers in the federal funding

mechanisms and are also working closely with organizations and policymakers to make sure the programs are accessible.”

- “It takes lots of money, great business plan, dependable markets and good weather to be successful. Don’t see much help yet. May change when people regain freedom to travel and a normal lifestyle.”
- “Letting them continue work to produce the food.”

Federal Government

- “Lower interest rates are a help, but it is being offset by our low prices of beef and lamb.”
- “Farmers and ranchers were eligible for the SBA loans and there may be some USDA funds come available.”
- “Nothing except using the PPP federal program.”
- “Federal Financial relief available.”
- “Ag. is exempt so normal day to day is still up and going. Livestock sale barns are still open.”
- “The Farm Bill programs as well as some state programs like the healthy soils act are still there for NM farmers and Ranchers. However, because of the changes in the last farm bill, new interim rules are taking effect and deadlines for applying for some of these programs are quickly approaching. And because of the lack of understanding on how these programs work and how to apply for them, I think most older and smaller farmers and ranchers aren't going to be able to apply for most of these programs.”
- I know through the USDA they are offering financial and technical assistance.”
- “Agriculture is deemed an essential business, so that helps.”
- “Loans that are being offered are so risky, especially since farming is already a gamble to begin with since we are not able to control weather and other variables. Grants would be much more supportive and could be offered such that future product is either donated or proceeds from sales can be paid forward to food industry workers, or the like.”
- “A stimulus check from federal government will help pay this year’s fertilizer bill.”
- “I haven’t heard of any support offered other than talk from Washington.”
- “Some markets opened, business loans.”

Tribal Government

- Prior comments in the survey were made about efforts at several Pueblos and the Navajo Nation.

State Government

- “NMDA and NMSUE Extension are conducting outreach with up-to-date information.”
- “Most farming operations are in their planting season. When the harvest of chile and onions is done there will need to be social separation incorporated. Also, laborers cannot travel to work in large groups.”

- “Unaware of any state efforts.”
- “...as some state programs like the healthy soils act are still there for NM farmers and ranchers.”
- “Institutions are working to help with delivery of product.”
- “The various organizations throughout NM are trying to go to the Governor to get aid.”
- “Allowing farmers/ranchers and their employees to move about. A few more online resources.”
- “Our Republican senator is doing all he can to keep markets open.”

Local Government

- “Will trickle down to small businesses. the self-employed/small biz support from CABQ seems to be beneficial.”

Non-Government Organizations

- “NMFMA is offering as some small grants to help with increasing costs. We have created a link on our website to help farmers find alternative point of sales.”
- “NM Cattle Growers Assoc requested that our attorney general look into the price ranchers are receiving, and the huge profits the packers are making at the grocery stores.”
- “Clearinghouse-type lists on websites; sharing information on Facebook.”
- “Nothing. Come to the New Mexico Livestock Board and ASK them what is challenging our producers. They will have a solid list of what can REALLY help our producers.”
- “Resource aggregation, online platforms collecting info about CSA's and farm stands so the public can find their farmers, some foundation support to purchase food for donation to food banks and distribution on tribal lands, CSA members making masks for farmers, etc.!”
- “Collaboration and more integration and cooperation.”
- “The food hub is working diligently to help our growers find markets- we are also fortunate enough to have a little bit of funding available to purchase food from these growers that we cannot find a market for and distribute that food to food pantries.”
- “Some orgs and companies are trying to buy more local product and develop new revenue streams like CSAs.”
- “We continue to work within community to keep local production on the radar and have made an effort to educate folks on the safety standards that ACN has set in place. The farm to market production is practiced within a USDA certified kitchen that allows to meet all permitting to market raw produce, ACN follows a strict tracking system with all farms, all farms are inspected for safety health harvesting methods, and ACN carries a three million dollar insurance policy.”
- “Some foundations or private donors are helping by donating funds, seeds, etc. More significant investments should be made to purchase equipment and support labor of farmers to ensure good security throughout the rest of the pandemic.”
- “Working closely with grassroots organizations and/or established food hubs.”

Neighbors/Community

- “Customers are definitely reaching out and supporting our businesses. NMFMA has been very active. Downtown Growers Market has pivoted to provide a sales outlet via their website and pickup location. Not sure if anything the governor does.”

Conclusion and Recommendations



Artist: Juan Wijngaard, New Mexico

- Use Federal and State revenue to bolster the agricultural industry to maintain and grow capacity to contribute to New Mexico's public health and economic well-being.
- Relief opportunities are made more accessible to New Mexico agriculture when they are deployed via grants rather than loans. In times of economic insecurity, loans are too risky.
- Grant opportunities should have reasonable timelines, be accompanied by significant technical assistance, and have the minimal application and reporting burden to meet the need for mutual accountability, data sharing, and thoughtful analysis of emerging industry trends.

Working diligently to address supply chain issues requires the industry itself, non-profit and philanthropic organizations, all levels of government, and bankers and lenders to work together to find and sustain creative solutions that have the potential for positive impacts well beyond COVID-19 relief and recovery efforts.

- Build upon reliable local and regional food systems by re-enacting the State of New Mexico meat inspection service.
- Invest in regional meat processing facilities and markets to secure protein in the local food supply.
- Support and invest in innovations in producers, value-added production, marketing and distribution of both fresh produce and shelf stable produce directly to consumers, institutional purchasing within governments at all levels within the state, and through market development in New Mexico to achieve stable local food systems.