



Dear America,

The news is almost overwhelming: infection and death counts by day, panic buying in stores, schools and universities shut down, public transportation halted, entire cities shut off. And for most of us, who aren't epidemiologists or trained infectious disease experts, it is hard to know how afraid to be.

On top of it all are fears about running out of the essentials you need to keep your family fed, safe, and healthy—like food, cleaning supplies, over-the-counter medicines, and even toilet paper.

I wanted to send you this note, which can be summed up in two words: stay calm.

According to the latest FDA information:

- There is no evidence of food or food packaging being involved in transmission of the disease. This is not a foodborne illness and it is not known to be transmitted via food.
- Low stocks of some items reflect demand, not supply. There are no food shortages and manufacturers and retailers are working to replenish shelves.
- The FDA is working to monitor the food supply chain and to ensure food workers can get to and from their jobs despite any local travel restrictions, since the agriculture and food industry is considered critical infrastructure under homeland security laws.

What does that mean to you? Simply put, the United States won't run out of food, precautions are being taken to ensure your local grocery store is as safe as possible, and those stores will remain open.

The facts are on your side: there are the same number of mouths to feed (and bottoms to, uh, care for) today as there were a month ago. The same number of produce farmers,

dairies, ranchers, canned good producers, and consumer package goods companies today as a month ago. There is plenty of food in our country.

On top of that, it's important to understand the American food industry is a marvel of modern logistics. We can get fresh food from almost anywhere in the world to any part of the USA—even the most remote areas of our amazing country—and it happens every day at one of the lowest costs to consumers of any retail business (specifically on a good day, a two percent profit margin). That same system that can get fresh blueberries in and out of season to remote areas of Alaska, urban Seattle, or rural West Virginia can also get toilet paper, milk, bread, and ice cream to your stores now.

While being concerned about the possibility of shortages is only natural, responding to that fear with panic buying is ironically the leading contributor to those shortages. Most stores get trucks daily, but they can only carry so much at a time. Overbuying is creating unnatural out-of-stocks, which adds even more stress to the system.

In this uncertain time, please know that your local IGA is working to keep you safe with extra precautions around cleaning and sanitation, working to satisfy demand, and helping you prepare no matter what the future brings.

Serving you is our top priority, and I promise you that our stores will be there the next time you need to restock. Really, truly, we won't let our communities down.

John Ross
Independent Grocers Alliance
President, CEO