

Unpacking the Impact of a More Sustainable Food Future

February 2022



Our panel, moderated by David Manilow, Creator & Executive Producer of “Check, Please!,” unpacked the impact that food has on our economy and the wellbeing of all Chicagoans. With perspectives from the Greater Chicago Food Depository, the Illinois Restaurant Association, and World Business Chicago, this wide-ranging conversation showed that, with more than 300 food and agricultural companies that call Chicago and Illinois home, investing in the local food ecosystem is a win-win for our economy, our city, and our neighbors.

Program Takeaways & Links

Food insecurity is a persistent issue in Chicago, and one greatly exacerbated by covid: [one in seven people in Cook County will experience food insecurity this year.](#)

New approaches to food insecurity are helping to meet community needs, such as [Growing Home on Chicago’s South Side, an urban farm that aims to “shrink food deserts.”](#)

Younger generations are also more interested in local, seasonal, and natural/organic options, which is helping to drive Chicago's growing urban gardening and farm community.

Local restaurants, too, are increasingly rising to meet higher sustainability expectations. Restaurants have suffered greatly during the pandemic. [The Restaurant Revitalization Fund](#) can help these businesses rebuild, particularly those that are majority owned by women, veterans, and the socially and economically disadvantaged.

Diversity is our city’s strength. We have always been on the forefront of food innovation with more black and brown food entrepreneurs in Chicago than anywhere else in the country.

The City of Chicago, the Illinois Restaurant Association, and World Business Chicago are working to support the economic potential of local restaurants, food startups, and food production industries. Food tourism can serve as an important economic driver in our less-visited neighborhoods.

Food innovation remains crucial to the city’s economic recovery, job growth, and neighborhood expansion. [The 2022 Chicago Venture Summit Future of Food \(May 25–26\)](#) will connect local founders with venture capitalists from across the country, inviting investors and corporate leaders to explore the city’s startups and innovation ecosystem, and promote Chicago as a global destination.

Additional Food-Focused Resources

[Chicagoland Food Sovereignty Coalition](#): A coalition of autonomous mutual aid groups in Chicago and Cook County, working together to cultivate food sovereignty and autonomy for all people in all communities.

[Fight2Feed](#): This organization rescues food from restaurants, chefs and food distributors and repurposes the food to create healthy, hot meals to share with the community.

[The Greater Chicago Food Depository \(GCFD\)](#) has more than 700 food distribution programs operating across the city, including pantries, food trucks, library branches, and more. Volunteering is encouraged!

[Illinois Restaurant Association](#): Visit to learn more about the Association’s jobs, trainings, and resources as well as the Restaurant Revitalization Fund.

[Mutual Aid Groups](#): Search for a group in your area to learn more and get involved.

[South Side Healthy Community Organization](#): SSHCO is a health delivery transformation project involving several hospitals and FQHCs on the south side. As a health care provider, the downstream effect of lack/none of grocery stores and affordable healthier food options has created a crisis of chronic diseases beginning as early as 5 years old.

[WhatsGood app](#): Allows buyers to purchase seasonal ingredients directly from local farmers and vendors.

To watch the full event:
[Unpacking the Impact of a More Sustainable Food Future](#)