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FFAR oral comments

I am Thomas Burke with the Institute of Food Technologists. IFT, a global organization of individual members that brings together professionals from academia, government, and industry to apply the science of food and technology to solve the world's greatest food challenges. We believe that science is essential to ensuring a global food supply that is sustainable, safe, nutritious, and accessible to all. IFT appreciates the opportunity and applauds FFAR's focus on COVID-19, climate, and agricultural research. Climate change has tremendous implications on the planetary ecosystem and on global food systems.

We support investments in research to develop and deploy global agricultural, climate-smart solutions. However, significant investments are also needed to understand how climate change affects the various facets of food safety and what solutions need to be developed. A recent 2020 report by the FAO on climate change highlights food safety issues, such as foodborne pathogens, harmful algal blooms, pesticides, and mycotoxins, that are escalating due to climate change, impacting public health and international trade. As food production and distribution evolves due to changing consumer demands and international trade, innovations in digital technologies are critical to improving traceability for enabling the monitoring of food supply chains in real-time, especially in the face of climate change. Food safety is imperative to ensuring that sufficient, nutritious and safe food is available to achieve food security.

The COVID-19 crisis has escalated food insecurity and exposed weaknesses in our food systems, which have been optimized for efficiency and cost. The disruption is affecting the entire food system from supply to demand. Long-term implications of COVID-19 on food systems will continue to affect food security and sustainability, particularly within vulnerable populations. This crisis is a wake-up call and emphasizes the urgency for increased research investments across the food supply chain to address the multiple complex food system challenges.

IFT urges FFAR to invest in research priorities across the food supply chain, including research in the science of food and technology, which plays a crucial role in providing solutions for challenges in food systems and to make these food systems more agile, resilient to crises, equitable, and provide healthier and more nutritious foods. We look forward to engaging with FFAR to advance these common priorities.



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