

Coronavirus outbreak is stressing supply chains, but America isn't running out of food

The aisles and aisles of empty store shelves give the appearance that the United States, improbably and alarmingly, is running out of food.

But the nation's biggest retailers, dairy farmers and meat producers say that isn't so. The food supply chain, they say, remains intact and has been ramping up to meet the unprecedented stockpiling brought on by the coronavirus pandemic.

Even so, shoppers can most likely expect to see empty shelves intermittently, as the nation's network of food producers, distributors and retailers are stretched as never before. Industries that are calibrated to supply consumers with just enough of what they need on a given day cannot keep up with a nationwide surge of relentless shopping fueled in large part by fear.

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For now, the most pressing issue is getting more food on the shelves

"Will there potentially be some hiccups, and might you go to the store and not see everything every time?" said Lowell Randel, vice president for government and legal affairs at the Global Cold Chain Alliance, a trade group representing the refrigerated warehouse and delivery industry. "Yeah. But that's a short-term disruption and not an indicator that the overall supply chain is not functioning."

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