

Viewpoint: Coronavirus pandemic accelerates progress toward tech-driven, sustainable food system

COVID-19 presents our food system with unprecedented challenges that we must learn from. We must also remember that COVID-19 is something of a vanilla virus — with a mortality rate of about one per cent, it pales in comparison with the truly terrifying pathogens like Ebola or even Avian Influenza.

In short, the next pandemic could be worse It may be that history views COVID-19 as a sort of dress rehearsal, or warm up act, for what will almost inevitably be the Century of Disruption.

Set against this apocalyptic nightmare scenario, however, COVID-19 has the potential to usher in an Agricultural Renaissance that will drive economic recovery, make us healthier and heal our planet. The convergence of data science, robotics and genomics is poised to herald a new agricultural revolution that will be as significant as the Green Revolution was almost 100 years ago.

For instance, we already knew that the world's protein systems were on the cusp of a radical transformation due to new products coming on the market (e.g. Impossible and Beyond), an awareness of the environmental impact of traditional livestock, and changing consumer demands. COVID-19 is driving us to embrace shorter-supply chains, greater decentralization and more regional self-sufficiency

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