Food system stress-test

Resilience of the food system is being tested by the COVID-19 pandemic. We must take stock, learn — and transform.

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit the food system hard. It's a global crisis, played out as much in the aisles of the supermarket as the corridors of government.

Our reliance on a small number of large retailers is evident. The pandemic has exposed their power, our dependence on their just-in-time logistics, and the responsibility divested to them for feeding the public in a crisis. But it has also exposed the valued place of the supermarket in today's society, where we turn for sustenance, where work is

considered 'front-line', and where small acts of compassion have been shown to the most vulnerable amongst us.

Tied into that, we must ask serious questions about where our food is produced — would local or global food production enhance resilience? In last month's issue, Jill Edmondson and colleagues [showed](#) that growing fruit and vegetables in 10% of a UK city's gardens and other urban green spaces could provide 15% of the local population with their daily fruits and vegetables. In this issue, Pekka Kinnunen and colleagues

[show](#) that less than one-third of the world's population can meet their demand for specific crops within a 100-km radius; for up to two-thirds of the world's population, that distance is greater than 1,000 km.

It is a time to take stock of all this — and more. This COVID-19 stress-test presents an opportunity for serious thought about transformation of the food system.

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