



## How the Food Supply Chain Survived the Early Days of the Pandemic

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

Kevin Sheehan is the Director of Processor Engagement for the National Pork Board. Kevin is a 30+ year meat industry veteran and spent 26 years with Cargill. He was Vice President of Pork Livestock Procurement for Cargill as well as Vice President of Retail Business Management for Cargill's poultry division.

I met him for the first time on one of the Pork Board's weekly Zoom calls during those first scary weeks of the 2020 pandemic. His insights were invaluable, and he evoked a steady calm and a hopeful tone as our fresh food supply chain went through the gyrations in those first months of lockdown.

Since then, all of us are learning so much all along the food supply chain. We have more intimate knowledge of the farm gate to family plate than ever before. The hope is our food supply chain can be more agile. Plus, we learn that the empty shelves were about disruptions, not that we'd run out of food (except the grocery store shelves). Here's why.

**Arizona Agriculture: The complexity of the food supply chain certainly has challenges. What makes the fresh product supply chain so unique and explain, besides the obvious, why it's so delicate?**

**Sheehan:** While we often talk about one national supply chain of pork, the reality is that the U.S. food system is made up of smaller regional and local supply chains that are very finely balanced and built around "just in time" inventory systems. Because of the "just-in-time" nature of the system, farmers must work the same way. For hog farmers, they're working up to a year ahead to make sure they have a plan for sow breeding, farrowing, weaning, growing and delivering hogs to the processor. And it's planned out pretty meticulously, because there are more pigs coming right behind.

Because the system is built around efficiency, most business up and down the supply chain (from processors to brokers to retail and food service operations) only have storage capacity for a few days' supply. When something like a large-scale restaurant closure, shelter-in-place orders, panic buying, or a processing plant closure happens, it has a major impact on the system. When all those things happen simultaneously like it did during the early stages of the pandemic, it throws the system into temporary disarray. Fortunately, we had tal-



Outline: While we often talk about one national supply chain of pork (for example), the reality is that the U.S. food system is made up of smaller regional and local supply chains that are very finely balanced and built around "just in time" inventory systems.

ented people working up and down the supply chain to find creative solutions to keep meat -and other consumer goods - available to consumers.

**Arizona Agriculture: Plants look so different today than what they did just a few months ago. As a result of the pandemic, explain what plants have had to do to protect workers and keep plants running at 75% to 95% capacity?**

**Sheehan:** Plants look a bit different for sure. Sanitation was a priority long before coronavirus, but now you're seeing more personal protective equipment like face masks and face shields. Plexiglass dividers have been installed on many plant floors between workstations.

Giving workers more space to social distance when they're not on the line means changes to break rooms, locker rooms and cafeterias, and those non-production areas are being cleaned and sanitized more frequently. We're also seeing plants staggering work shifts, lunch and break

times so fewer people are in one place at the same time. And several companies are prescreening employees prior to their shifts looking for employees who have a temperature or signs of illness.

**Arizona Agriculture: Of course, the toughest part of this whole experience has been pork producers having to depopulate their herds. How is the industry working to mitigate the financial and emotional devastation to producers?**

**Sheehan:** Once we saw the impact the coronavirus was having on the supply chain, the Pork Board started communicating with pig farmers about the resources available to them. This included education on how to slow down growth with a "hold diet" to keep hogs from getting too big. We developed overstocking recommendations and, in some cases, assistance in finding other places to house hogs.

The goal of course, was to help producers avoid the possibility of herd depopulation, which is absolutely a last resort. However, once depopulation became a reality for some farmers, we were there with resources to help them make a very difficult decision in the right way by identifying who needed to be notified and which processes were approved and appropriate based on where the farm was located. Moreover, the Pork Board helped with resources around emotional support for animal caregivers.

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## Pandemic

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**Arizona Agriculture:** You mentioned back in May on a Zoom call that innovation will come out of this crisis. Talk about this.

**Sheehan:** We are still early in the process to determine what specific innovations will occur long term for the industry, but what you'll likely see are changes to workspace, sanitizing, distancing and personal protective equipment.

Certainly, there will be advances in automation and changes to employee safety and health protocols.

**Arizona Agriculture:** We hear that while some industries might have a more transparent supply chain, the food supply chain is not as transparent and seamless as it could be. The pandemic highlighted this. What's the fix? Is it in part because of all the links in the chain and are there ways to streamline this?

**Sheehan:** The food supply chain has been fairly forthright and transparent with what has been happening in their industry. Just like everyone else, the food industry was learning about COVID-19 and how to best deal with it as the issues progressed. There was no playbook for this, and I think that you see a different world today than six months ago. The food industry adapted to the immediacy of the challenge quite well, and there will be long-term changes to the industry based on what we learned and experienced.

**Arizona Agriculture:** Beyond the bottlenecks the pandemic created, what role can you see the producers (farmers and ranchers) serving to advance supporting a streamlined supply chain in the food industry?

**Sheehan:** The pandemic clearly demonstrated what we all learned in our Marketing 101 classes: when something happens at any point in the supply chain, it has effects in both directions.

For farmers and ranchers, I think this reinforces the importance of finding alternative outlets for livestock. It's not just, "What's Plan B?" but "What's Plan C and D?"

**Arizona Agriculture:** If the price-point for investing in a local or regional packing plant (whether for beef or pork or any other type of livestock) can be overcome, what kind of landscape might we see? And, would this also mitigate the bottlenecks we've witnessed as a result of this pandemic?

**Sheehan:** We've certainly seen producers become investors in smaller regional packing plants and production systems, and there are many reasons why producers take this approach. While more plants mean more marketing options for producers in a normal operating environment, global pandemics don't discriminate by size of employer. Plants of all sizes were affected by the coronavirus. 🇺🇸

## Fill Your Plate: Frosty Strawberry Squares

By Taylor Rogers, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director



All my family get-togethers are built around food and fun. Especially during this time of social distancing, I eat out less and have had to put my cooking and baking skills to the test! Thankfully, FillYourPlate.org constantly gives me recipe inspirations.

Arizona Farm Bureau's online directory, Fill Your Plate, contains farmers and ranchers that sell products direct, lots of

recipes for all meals and occasions, and tells you the closest farmers markets in your area.

Served cold, these Frosty Strawberry Squares are perfect any time of the year in Arizona with your family.

### Frosty Strawberry Squares

#### Ingredients

- 1 Cup Flour, sifted
- 1/4 Cup Brown sugar
- 1/2 Cup Butter
- 1/2 Cup Chopped nuts
- 2 Eggs
- 1 Cup Sugar
- 2 Cups Fresh strawberries

- 2 Tbsp. Lemon juice
- 1 Cup Whipped cream

#### Directions

- Mix together the flour, brown sugar, butter, and chopped nuts and spread on cookie sheet
- Bake at 350 degrees, stirring often, for 20 minutes.
- Let cool. Then sprinkle 2/3 of the mixture (about 1 1/3 cup) in the bottom of GLASS 12 x 9 pan.
- Combine 2 egg whites and one cup of sugar. Beat until it thickens.
- Add 2 cups of fresh strawberries, and lemon juice, then beat until it's very stiff.
- Fold the cup of whipped cream into the strawberry mixture. Spoon it into the glass dish, over the nut mixture.
- Top with the remaining nuts, freeze for at least six hours.
- Serve!

Provided by: Nancy Brierley

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# There Is A New Type of Classroom



Have you heard of a bitmoji? Maybe you have even created your own? For those of you who are new to this language, a bitmoji is your own personal emoji (you know, those funny little images you fill your text messages with). It is a creative expressive cartoon avatar and it is taking over the online learning world. So, AITC has joined the party and created several bitmoji classrooms that allow students and teachers to learn about a variety of agricultural commodities through an online game-like platform. Students and teachers can enter a bitmoji classroom and immerse themselves in books, educational videos, and online lessons on commodities such as apples, pumpkins, cattle, cotton, fruits and veggies, sheep, dairy, equine, and farm to table. Be sure to check-out Arizona Farm Bureau Ag in the Classroom's Bitmoji Classrooms on [www.azfb.org/aitc](http://www.azfb.org/aitc) 🇺🇸

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For more information, go to [www.ford.com](http://www.ford.com) and search vehicles. 🇺🇸





# Arizona Agriculture's CHOICES

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- WR points expiration has been moved to Sept 2020 (for those who are currently expiring)

## WYNDHAM HOTELS & RESORTS

Go to [azfb.org](http://azfb.org) under News & Resources and search Wyndham for our full in depth statement regarding COVID-19.

As a member of the Arizona Farm Bureau **save up to 20% off** the "Best Available Rate" at over 8,000 locations worldwide. Book online or call and give agent your special discount ID number (found when logged into [www.azfb.org](http://www.azfb.org) under benefits) at time of booking to receive discount.

See **Wyndham** page 7



I don't want to leave my family to cover:

- Mortgage debt
- Monthly expenses
- Funeral costs
- Kids' college tuition

### I know you say I need life insurance, but do I really?

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Use Member Customer code at checkout.

Log onto [www.azfb.org](http://www.azfb.org) and search Dungarees under benefits for more information. Contact our membership benefit coordinator at any time at [taylorrogers@azfb.org](mailto:taylorrogers@azfb.org) or 480-635-3609.

**Editor's note:** For more information on all member benefits go to Arizona Farm Bureau's member benefits page. Download the Member Benefits app to your smart phone for easy, everyday access to your benefits. 📱

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# Fall Pumpkin and Corn Maze Festivals

Despite the fact it may still be in the triple digits in the desert, fall 2020 is just around the corner. Arizona Farm Bureau's Fill Your Plate hopes you plan socially distanced outdoor family outings with Arizona farms in mind. You may already notice Fill Your Plate's new "Visit A Farm" section, but we also updated the information below so you can find the nearest farm fall festival near you.

Arizona farms you can visit vary, full of family-oriented fun and give you a chance to teach your children about agriculture in a hands-on, interactive way. Whether the farm is up north or down south, you will find a variety of activities for the family during one of our famous pumpkin festivals. Enjoy the fall fun and the cooler weather, at least when it gets here!

## Cochise County

### Apple Annie's

Fall Pumpkin Celebration, family fun picking your own pumpkins, fall vegetables and apples.

Apple Annie's Produce & Pumpkins  
6405 West Williams Rd  
Willcox, AZ 85643

Daily Hours: September: 7am to 5pm, October: 9am to 5:30pm

Corn Maze

September 19th Open DAILY through October 31 9 AM - 4 PM (last entry)

For more information, call 520.384.4685 or visit [AppleAnnies.com](http://AppleAnnies.com)



### Rocker 7 Farm Patch (cont.)

Opening day 2020: Friday Oct 9th 11am-6pm

Oct 10th 9am-8pm

Oct 11th 10am-6pm

Oct 16th 11am-6pm

Oct 17th 9am-8pm

Oct 18th 10am-6pm

Oct 23rd 11am-6pm

Oct 24th 9am-8pm

Oct 25th 10am-6pm

Oct 30th 11am-6pm

Oct 31st 9am-2pm

For more information, visit [rocker7farmpatch.com](http://rocker7farmpatch.com) or call 623.208.8676

### Schnepf Farms

Pumpkin & Chili Party starts October 1st

Schnepf Farms

24610 S Rittenhouse Rd

Queen Creek, AZ 85142

Every Tuesday - Sunday Oct 1st - Nov 1st

Must buy tickets ahead of time online.

For more information, call 480.987.3100 or visit [schnepffarms.com](http://schnepffarms.com)

### Tolmachoff Farms

Pumpkin Days & Fall Maze. Visit one of the last family farms in the city!

Tolmachoff Farms

5726 N 75th Ave

Glendale, AZ 85303

For more information, call 602.999.3276 or visit [tolmachoff-farms.com](http://tolmachoff-farms.com)

## Maricopa County

### MacDonald Ranch

Annual Pumpkin Patch

Family fun includes: A Petting Zoo; Run through the Hay Maze; Learn to pan for gold; Hayride and Train ride to the Pumpkin Patch; Play Western Games; "New" Pedal carts for kids!

Oct 1st- Oct 31st Closed on Tuesday

9am-6pm each day - last tickets sold at 5pm

Halloween 9am-12pm

MacDonald Ranch

26540 N Scottsdale Rd

Scottsdale, AZ 85255

For more information, visit [macdonaldranch.com/pumpkin-patch.htm](http://macdonaldranch.com/pumpkin-patch.htm) or call 480.585.0239.

### Mother Nature's Farm

Come to the Pumpkin Patch. Enjoy a fall gourd show, U-pick pumpkins, squash, and much more.

Mother's Nature's Farm

1663 E Baseline Rd

Gilbert AZ 85233

Pumpkin patch:

September 26th - October 31st

Monday - Sunday

9am-9pm

For more information, call 480.892.5874 or visit [news@mothernaturesfarm.com](mailto:news@mothernaturesfarm.com)

### Vertuccio Farms

5-acre Corn Maze; Giant tube roll; Giant Jump Pad; Extreme air pillow; Mini zip line; Hayrides and lots more.

4011 S. Power Rd.

Mesa, AZ 85212

Corn Maze & Fall Festival - 2020

October 1st - November 3rd

Monday-Thursday 9am - 9pm

Friday-Saturday 9am - 10pm

Sunday 10am - 6pm

For more information, call 480.882.1482 or visit [vertucciofarms.com/fall-festival](http://vertucciofarms.com/fall-festival)



### Rocker 7 Farm Patch

Enjoy a fun, family farm experience as you explore the pumpkin patch, corn maze, sunflower field and many farm-related activity areas for children.

Rocker 7 Farm Patch

19601 W Broadway Rd

Buckeye, AZ 85326

## Pima County

### Marana Pumpkin Patch

Visit their 50-acre pumpkin patch with tons of surprises in store! Wagon ride to the pumpkin patch; free access to corn mazes; and much more!

See **Fall Festivals** page 7





## Fall Festivals

*Continued from page 6*

Marana Pumpkin Patch  
14901 N Wentz Road,  
Marana, AZ  
Oct 3rd- Oct 31st  
Monday – Wednesday Closed  
Thursday – Friday 12pm-7pm  
Saturday – Sunday 9am-7pm  
For more information 520.305.5481  
or visit maranapumpkinpatch.com

### Pinal County

#### Rooster Cogburn Ostrich Ranch

Family owned and operated. Stop by and feed the ostrich, deer, miniature donkeys, goats, ducks, and Rainbow Lorikeets.

Interstate-10 at the Picacho Peak exit #219

17599 E Peak Ln, Picacho, AZ 85141  
For more information, call 520.466.3658  
or visit roostercogburn.com.



### Yavapai County

#### Mortimer Family Farms

Family Fun Day and Pumpkin Harvest begins September 18th – November 1st

September 18th – October 1st  
Monday – Thursday 7am – 7pm  
Columbus Day  
9am – 6pm

October 2nd – November 1st

Friday: 9am – 9pm

Saturday: 9am – 9pm

Sunday: 9am – 6pm

Mortimer Family Farms

12907 E State Route 169

Dewey, AZ 86327

For more information, call 928.830.1116 or visit [mortimerfarmaz.com](http://mortimerfarmaz.com)



Remember...go to [fillyourplate.org](http://fillyourplate.org) for a complete direct-market list of farmers and ranchers. Also, check out Fill Your Plate's new directory called "Visit a Farm." For more Fall Farm information, go to [azfb.org](http://azfb.org).

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## Wyndham

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Whether you are looking for an upscale hotel, an all-inclusive resort or something more cost-effective, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts have the right hotel for you! So start saving today. Call our special member benefits hotline **1-877-670-7088** and reserve your room at Wyndham hotels & Resorts, accommodations that will meet your travel needs.

Keep in mind the offer is not valid if the hotel is called directly; members must use toll free number **877-670-7088** or book online. Offer is subject to availability at participating locations and some blackout dates may apply.

For help and more information on member benefits, contact the AZFB membership benefit coordinator at [taylorrogers@azfb.org](mailto:taylorrogers@azfb.org) or call 480-635-3609.

**Our Websites are Mobile Friendly!**

Both [azfb.org](http://azfb.org) and [fillyourplate.org](http://fillyourplate.org) are mobile friendly





*Arizona Agriculture's*  
**CHOICES**

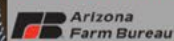
**The Faces of Arizona Agriculture**



**Ashley Jeffers-Sample**

- Her family ranches in northern Arizona.
- 2019 voice of Friday Food Fact for Fill Your Plate.
- Arizona Farm Bureau Young Farmer & Rancher Chair.
- Greenlee County 4-H Cooperative Extension Agent.

Arizona Agriculture is a \$23.3 billion industry.



#WomenInAg