



FMI highlights coronavirus is not foodborne, ensures US food supply

03.16.2020 By Emily Park

ARLINGTON, VA - While the coronavirus (COVID-19) has sparked consumer concern over fresh foods, FMI – The Food Industry Association is stressing that COVID-19 is not a foodborne illness.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), COVID-19 is a respiratory virus spread through respiratory droplets when a person infected with coronavirus coughs or sneezes.

The CDC says there is no evidence to support the virus is transmitted through food. While it is possible that a person may catch COVID-19 by touching a surface or object with the virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes, that is not the main way the virus is spread.

Because of the low survivability rate of other coronaviruses on surfaces, the CDC believes there is a very low risk of COVID-19 spreading from food products or packaging that is shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient, refrigerated, or frozen temperatures.

To prevent the spread of the virus, FMI suggests that food establishments put strong food safety programs in place and ensure employees are following health and hygiene practices—proper handwashing, wearing gloves while handling food, staying home when sick and routinely cleaning and sanitizing the workplace.

The CDC recommends that grocery stores practice routine cleaning and sanitation procedures, especially on “high-touch” areas of the store such as grocery carts, buttons and touch screens.

On March 12, FMI announced its support of President Trump’s decision to declare a national emergency amid the coronavirus outbreak.

“With increasing uncertainty regarding COVID-19 in the U.S., shoppers seek to reestablish control of their environment – and our grocery supply chain is working to support that desire for stability through its adaptability, flexibility and resilience,” said Leslie Sarasin, president and chief executive officer of FMI.

“Our industry has proven itself time after time in periods of emergency, as evidenced by its strength and confidence in the ability to meet the needs of the communities it serves, no matter the circumstance. This fortitude is due to our strong public-private partnerships with government agencies to ensure our supply chain remains both nimble and effective,” she continued.

On March 15, FMI participated in a call with the White House and the nation’s food retailers, wholesalers and suppliers. FMI offered to ensure the viability of the food supply chain in the US and the availability of safe and affordable products for consumers.

“We want to ensure that all Americans know the government is working closely with all stakeholders across the food and consumer products supply chain to ensure that stores can stay open and stocked with the products consumers need through this emergency,” Sarasin said.

“We stand with the President, the Vice President and the Administration, as we work, serve and feed the nation. We are resilient; our industry is working 24-hours-a-day to replenish and restock while ensuring the cleanliness of our stores and facilities. We are seeking to be sensitive to the needs of all our customers and partners, including our WIC and SNAP shoppers and the food banks our stores support.”