

FEEDING NEW YORK

The Plan for Keeping Our City
Fed During the COVID-19 Public
Health Crisis



The City of New York
Mayor Bill de Blasio

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New York City Department
of Sanitation

NYC

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Message from the Mayor



Dear New Yorkers,

As we fight COVID-19 in our hospitals, our economic crisis grows, too. As more and more New Yorkers lose their jobs and are faced with financial uncertainty, we will not let New Yorkers go hungry.

In March, I appointed Commissioner Kathryn Garcia to be our city's Food Czar, a cross-agency effort to ensure we get food into the hands of anyone in need and that our food supply remains strong. We will spare no resource to make sure this is done right.

This is a plan to put food into the hands of every New Yorker who needs it as the economic crisis deepens. The City has never done anything on this scale before, because we've never been in circumstances so dire.

But in the past few weeks alone, we've shown we can do things no one thought possible.

Just in the last month, from our DOE Meal Hubs at over 400 sites across the City, to our home delivery program, we have served over 4.5 million free meals.

We're delivering thousands of meals every day to seniors and homebound New Yorkers.

Working with the City Council, we've also allocated millions in emergency funding to our food pantries and community kitchens to make sure their shelves are stocked when New Yorkers turn to them.

And all over this city, we are seeing the charity of communities of faith, of businesses, and of individuals making a daily difference in the lives of our most vulnerable.

This is just the beginning. We won't let anyone go hungry in the greatest city in the world.

New Yorkers are resilient, and there is no crisis that we cannot overcome. We will get through this together.

Mayor Bill de Blasio

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill de Blasio".

Commissioner's Message



Here's what I know about New Yorkers: we thrive in a challenge, we don't leave each other behind, and we love to eat. During the COVID-19 public health crisis, we are being tested on our ability to keep our city fed while still staying safe behind closed doors.

This is a crisis unlike any other our city has faced. After Hurricane Sandy, after the 2003 blackout, and after 9/11, the directive was always the same: go out and celebrate the city we love, support our local businesses, and stand shoulder to shoulder with our heads held high. Today, our survival depends on doing precisely the opposite - on staying away from one another, sequestered indoors unless absolutely necessary. How do we do that while still ensuring that every New Yorker has enough to eat?

In a city where 1.2 million New Yorkers faced food insecurity even before this crisis, and where hundreds of thousands may have recently lost their jobs, this is a daunting task. With support from the private and civic sectors, we will make sure New Yorkers are fed whether this crisis lasts weeks, months, or more, no matter how dire the situation may become.

This plan covers our efforts to date, as well as preparations to build a safer, more secure and resilient food supply for the long-term. I encourage all New Yorkers in need to visit nyc.gov/GetFood for an evolving list of available services.

We cannot let any New Yorker go hungry during this crisis. I look forward to working with you on this important effort.

Kathryn Garcia

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathryn Garcia". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sanitation Commissioner
New York City COVID-19 Food Czar



We won't let anyone go hungry in the greatest city in the world.

Mayor Bill de Blasio



Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented crisis in New York City. We are at the epicenter of a public health emergency that has frozen economic activity across the country, cast millions of Americans into unemployment, and sickened thousands of our fellow New Yorkers.

The emotional and personal toll of this crisis is immense. It has created economic challenges on a scale not seen in this country since the Great Depression. And our City is responding in kind.

Many New Yorkers, especially older New Yorkers and those with other health conditions, are stuck in their homes. We will feed them.

Hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers are newly unemployed, and their families are struggling to make ends meet. More than one million of our neighbors experienced food insecurity before this crisis. Countless more experience it now. We will feed them.

This is an unprecedented crisis, and we will meet it with an unprecedented response. In the last three weeks alone, the City has provided approximately 4.5 million meals to hungry New Yorkers. Our robust network of soup kitchens, food pantries and other community organizations are feeding hundreds of thousands more on a daily basis. In total, the City is **investing \$170 million over the next several months** in this unprecedented effort to feed New Yorkers.

“Feeding New York” is the City’s plan to feed hungry New Yorkers throughout this crisis and protect the security of our food supply chain. Our approach begins with immediate steps to secure our food supply chain and feed hungry and vulnerable New Yorkers. In the coming weeks, we will transition to the second phase, preparing for evolving and growing needs and building resilience into our food supply.

If any New Yorker needs a meal during this crisis, we will feed them.



Food Insecurity in New York City

Many New Yorkers struggled with hunger and food insecurity before this crisis. Before our first COVID-19 case, 1.4 million New Yorkers relied on food pantries and soup kitchens, and 1.2 million were food-insecure, including 1 in 5 children. As the economic impact spreads, we know these numbers are rising every day.

The City is anticipating heightened need among:

- Youth ages 18-and-under, whose access to food is impacted by school closures
- New Yorkers over age 60, including those who previously relied on congregate meal programs at senior centers or home delivery via the Department for the Aging, as well as those who are now unable or unwilling to leave their homes
- New Yorkers with disabilities, who may have relied on caregivers now impacted by COVID-19 and the need for social distancing
- Non-citizens, who may not be eligible for federal benefits, services, or grants
- Communities of color who are disproportionately affected by food insecurity and underlying health conditions due to structural racism, yet represent a majority of the food service workforce
- Low income populations including NYCHA residents and those served by the Department of Social Services
- Hundreds of thousands of newly food-insecure people impacted by the economic downturn, including many who have never accessed government benefits or support in the past

These populations can be broken down into three groups: COVID-vulnerable, food-insecure, and those who are both. Each of these three categories will require different approaches to meet their specific needs around access to food for the remainder of this crisis.

New Yorkers who are neither COVID-vulnerable nor food-insecure need to be able to continue to access retail and restaurant food purchase and delivery options.

NYC's Food Supply System

New York is perhaps the greatest “food city” in history, with cuisines and ingredients from around the world. The vast majority of all ingredients sold in New York City come by truck from across the United States. On average, 19 billion pounds of food are distributed throughout New York City each year — more than 2,000 pounds per person. The City has a highly-distributed food infrastructure, with approximately 42,000 point-of-sale outlets, from five-star restaurants to dollar slice storefronts, high-cost specialty wholesalers to corner bodegas. Many of these outlets know the needs of their communities and have proven highly adaptable.

Heading into this crisis, New York City had the advantage of a safe and secure food supply. Unlike in some other cities, where the majority or totality of the food supply comes through a single point of entry, New York's supply chain is spread throughout the five boroughs. The largest single point-of-sale location, the Hunts Point Market area, accounts for 13 percent of all incoming food.

New York City also has the benefit of a world-class labor workforce, including food manufacturers, grocery store workers, neighborhood delivery drivers and long-distance truck drivers. Farmers and farmworkers in the broader area near New York City are also an essential foundation for the urban food workforce. Our essential workers are being tested by this crisis, and we must ensure that at every step of the chain from farm to service, they are safe and supported.

Our Approach

The work of feeding New Yorkers during this crisis must be grounded in an equity model, and built upon an awareness of existing structural imbalances in our food system. Access to food is a fundamental human right. All New Yorkers should have equal ability and opportunity to access nutritious, affordable food in their communities.

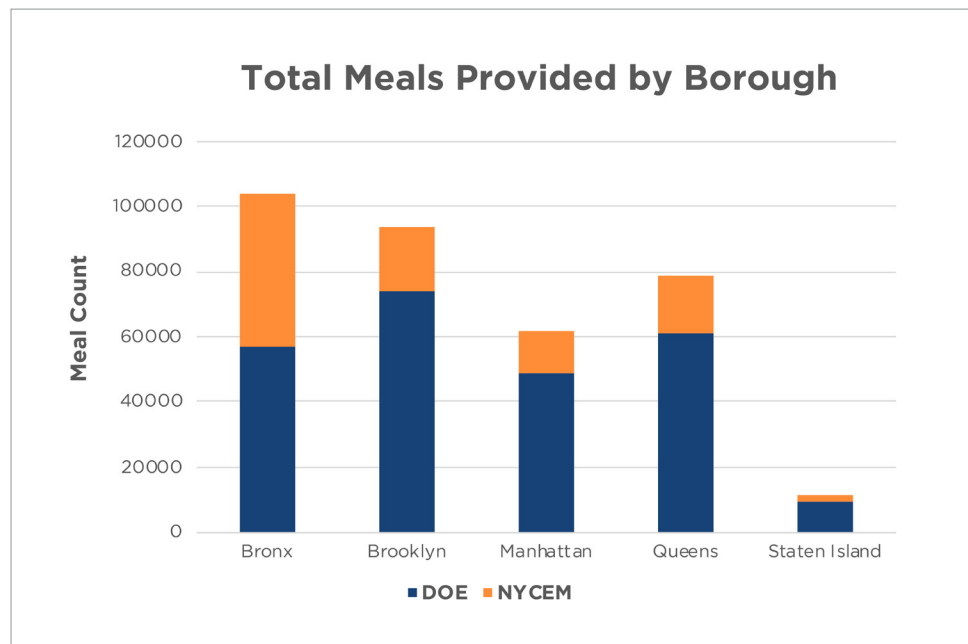
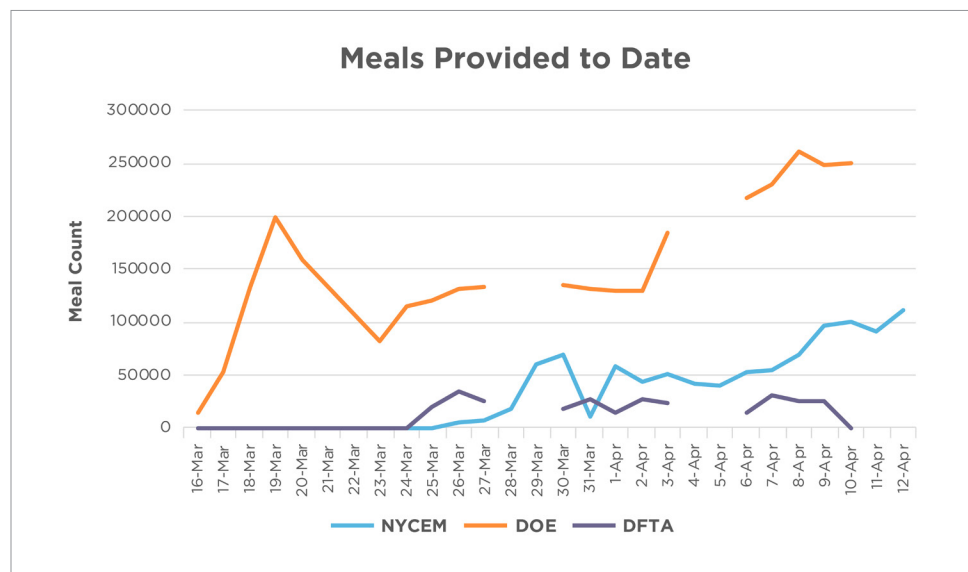
As we execute this plan, we are committed to providing meals that not only are nutritious, but are also culturally and ethnically appropriate. The connection between food and individual health is clear and we are committed to doing everything we can to ensure that what we source is healthful. We will develop distribution models to specifically address areas that already lack access to healthy and fresh food options. Additionally, we hope to utilize as many New York City producers and businesses as possible.

We also are committed to ensuring that all of the workers along our food supply chain, especially those working in grocery stores and food markets across the entire city are supported. Now more than ever, the role of the people that grow, produce, prepare, and sell our food is essential.

Phase 1: Meeting Immediate Needs

Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, the City has provided approximately 4.5 million free meals to hungry New Yorkers, taken key steps to secure the City's supply chain, moved to shore up the food pantries and organized and expanded food availability to our most vulnerable residents.

Feeding New Yorkers



**Grab and Go
Breakfast**

Keeping Food Pantries Strong

New York City has a network of more than 800 food pantries and emergency food providers, ranging from some of the nation's largest food banks to small neighborhood churches and community organizations. The City is supporting our food pantries, many of which relied on volunteers who are themselves COVID-vulnerable. We have coordinated donations to pantries in need, shifted resources to pantries able to operate with social distancing protocols in place, and provided direct staffing support to keep pantries open. On April 10, New York City announced \$25 million in funding to support emergency food providers that have experienced increases in demand as well as increased costs.

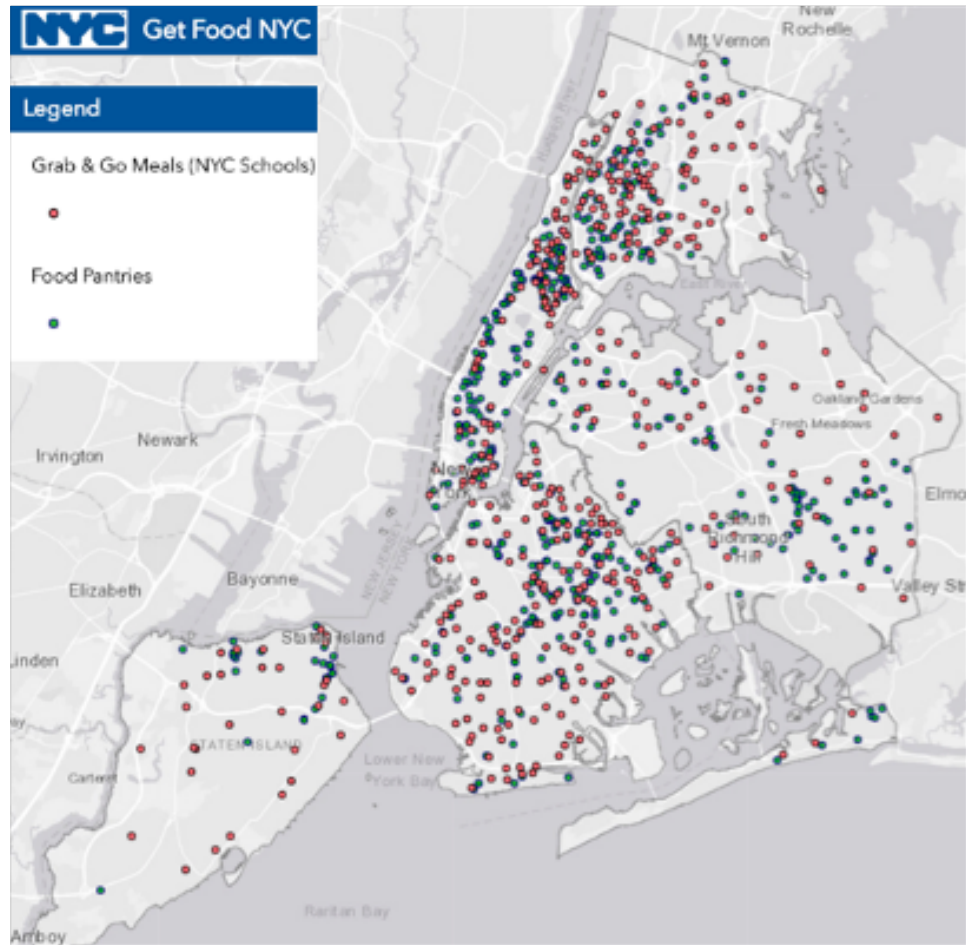
Many neighborhood farmers markets are still operational and serve a vital food access role for both New Yorkers as well as the region's farmers. A list of many NYC Green Markets can be seen at grownyc.org, although neighborhoods may have other farmers markets as well.

Grab & Go Meals at NYC Schools

Every weekday, over a million students receive free breakfast and lunch. The City has expanded the school meals program to serve all children and adults in need. Any New Yorker can get three meals per day on weekdays at 435 locations in all five boroughs.

Since March 16, we have distributed more than 3 million meals to children and adults at our schools. In the coming weeks, DOE will expand to offer Kosher meals (Halal is already available) as well as multi-day pantry boxes for pickup on Fridays, to better serve families for the weekend.

To support food-insecure populations, a map of DOE Grab & Go sites and open food pantries is available at nyc.gov/GetFood.



Map of all sites as of 4.14.20 (note: map changes daily and can be seen at nyc.gov/GetFood)

Emergency Food Home Delivery

For New Yorkers who are both COVID-vulnerable and food-insecure — particularly low-income New Yorkers over age 60 and those with other health risks — the City has implemented an emergency home delivery option. To promote the program, we have reached out to the populations most likely to need the service, including completing robo-calls to over 400,000 seniors and outreach to NYCHA and affordable senior housing residents.

Since March 24, the NYC Emergency Food Home Delivery program has delivered more than 1 million prepared meals to New Yorkers with the greatest need. Deliveries are currently available six days per week, and each delivery includes four meals for up to two residents per household. Currently, over 11,000 TLC-licensed drivers have signed up to make these deliveries, and we continue to expand our capacity to meet the growing demand. Anyone who meets the program criteria can sign up at nyc.gov/GetFood or by calling 311 and saying “Get Food.”

Senior Meal Deliveries

In mid-March, the Department for the Aging (DFTA) began transitioning all congregate meal programs at more than 240 senior centers into delivered meals, to protect this vulnerable population. This delivery program has served approximately 300,000 meals to seniors who previously ate meals in group settings. The City is rapidly expanding senior meal deliveries through the NYC Emergency Home Delivery Assistance program. Seniors can sign up for meal deliveries at nyc.gov/GetFood or by calling 311 and saying “Get Food.”

Protecting our Supply Chain

Supporting Food Retailers and Small Businesses

The supply chain that brings food and other goods into New York City remains strong. As panic buying has slowed and consumer habits are settling into a new norm, our primary focus is supporting food retailers and the food supply workforce. At the same time, we are monitoring and intervening as necessary at critical points in the supply chain, and preparing strategies to secure the supply chain long-term if needed.

To remind New Yorkers to be safe and respectful while shopping, we are using NotifyNYC alerts and LinkNYC hubs. We have distributed posters on social distancing to grocery stores across the five boroughs, and have encouraged shoppers to wear face coverings. Stores can mandate that all customers must wear face coverings. We have also encouraged grocery stores to implement senior-only hours.





We are helping to connect large food businesses with PPE manufacturers and working to donate PPE to smaller grocery stores in highly-impacted communities. Grocery store workers and other essential employees are eligible to receive free childcare at our [Regional Enrichment Centers](#). As restaurants have transitioned to takeout and delivery only, the City has suspended enforcement on usage of electric delivery bikes, and has worked with the food service sector to ensure that restaurants offering takeout food are practicing proper social distancing protocols.

To support small businesses, the Department of Small Business Services has compiled a number of financial resources, available [here](#). We are expanding our workforce program to promote these resources to local grocery stores in need, particularly in hard-hit communities including Sunset Park, Flushing, Elmhurst, and much of the Bronx. In many of these communities, there may be food in the stockroom, but workforce challenges have kept it off the shelves. The City will support businesses in finding workers and is developing a new case management system for this express purpose.

Maintaining Critical Transportation Networks

Ninety percent of our food supply comes into the City via long-haul trucking. In order to support the hard-working drivers delivering our food, we have created two new truck rest areas, where drivers can safely take federally-mandated rest breaks. These sites are located adjacent to critical parts of the food distribution system: at Hunts Point Food Distribution Center in the Bronx, the largest food distribution hub in New York state, and Global Container Terminal in Staten Island, the largest container port in New York state.

Phase 2: Medium and Long-Term Response and Building Food System Resilience

As in all aspects of the City's response to the COVID-19 crisis, we are hoping for the best, and preparing for the worst. It is possible this crisis will continue well beyond the current season, particularly for older New Yorkers, and we must be prepared to provide food to those in need for months to come. It is likely that some programs may need to wind down or shift in shape, while others will need to expand.

Feeding New Yorkers in the Long Term

Emergency Home Delivery Assistance 2.0

To meet the growing demand, the Emergency Food Home Delivery program will continue to build capacity to better serve our communities. We are working with NYCHA, HPD, and nonprofit agencies to identify buildings where the entire or significant majority of residents need assisted home meal delivery, so that we can meet the needs of the entire group, without requiring every resident to enroll in the program.

In the coming weeks, case managers, community-based organizations, and City agencies will be able to directly enroll clients in meal deliveries, troubleshoot issues, and submit re-order requests as needed. This will ensure that all New Yorkers, including those without regular internet access, can be connected with meals.

As the program continues to grow, we will monitor food demand trends, driver availability and areas of increased need. Future phases of this initiative will build upon lessons learned in the initial phase, providing an opportunity to consider new models for large-scale feeding operations.

Food Access Programs

Federal funding is essential to addressing the needs of the food-insecure in the City in the short, medium, and long term. The City fully supports expanding access to federal food assistance programs to reach more New Yorkers, including through Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT),

a program that would cover all public-school children in New York City. In addition, we are seeking to increase benefits for recipients of federal food assistance programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), pursuing waivers to give Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) recipients more flexibility in stores and at farmers markets, seeking added funding for the Child Nutrition Program and the Senior Nutrition Program, and requesting additional support for food banks from the state and federal governments. Emergency food providers play a critical role in supporting food benefit access and enrollment. In order to meet the growing need, we will expand outreach and support organizations to provide enrollment support.

The City is also advocating for a substantial increase in funding for the Emergency Food Assistance Program for food banks, and we support federal funding for grocery stores to meet projected staffing challenges. The City of New York fully supports a federal stimulus package that provides hazard pay for essential workers, including food supply chain workers, and increased support for essential businesses.

As this crisis continues, we will partner with other cities, states, and food advocates across the country to form a national campaign to promote more federal support for vital food access programs, such as SNAP and WIC, and rebuild the nation's food safety net. The pandemic demonstrates the need for reforms to federal agricultural policy to support small farmers as part of a resilient, equitable, and sustainable food supply for New York City.



Reinforce and Strengthen our Food Supply System

Helping Businesses and Customers Adapt to Uncertainty

Restaurant closures and shifting consumer preferences have created disruptions, including excess supply in certain product categories. We will develop partnerships and tools to connect suppliers directly with unmet demand, aggregating supply and demand via existing and new platforms, including through collaboration with upstream regional suppliers and farm organizations. However, consumers may see significant changes in what food items are on the shelf at their local grocery store. The City will conduct education campaigns around how to adapt recipes and eating habits to this new reality while maintaining a healthy, hearty and affordable diet, and assist local businesses in supporting consumer needs.

A Changing Food Industry

The restaurant sector is a critical part of our food system. While temporary closures have had many consequences, private sector groups such as World Central Kitchen and Rethink Food NYC are actively leveraging restaurant assets to serve and deliver meals via a community kitchen model. We will integrate the restaurant industry into our efforts, building capacity for culturally-competent meal preparation in neighborhoods across the city for the duration of this crisis.

In the intermediate to long term, New York City will pursue additional opportunities to support increased wages, benefits, and protections for employees across the food supply chain, as well as innovative and cooperative business models for food businesses to ensure long term economic resiliency.

Regional Infrastructure and Manufacturing

This crisis has shown us the need to protect and expand our manufacturing zones to ensure capacity for food processing and refrigerated food storage, and the ability to process wholesale products to be supermarket-ready for retail. We are seeking to strengthen our existing industrial assets and retrofit industrial spaces for new food manufacturing uses quickly. In support of this effort, we will develop training resources for our local workforce to take on food processing work typically done outside of the City and expedite certification for this training at the state and federal level. In the long term, we will work to allow for a wider range of food-related uses in our Industrial Business Zones (IBZs) to allow for co-development of cold storage, processing, and packing facilities.

We will also seek to develop regional food sector programs to support the City's ambitious sustainability goals in this challenging time. To build resilience of supply and distribution in market and emergency channels, we will support the food processing, reuse and manufacturing sectors to scale up our regional food production. This may include working with partners outside New York City to provide technical and financial support for

regional agriculture, with a focus on the farms, processing infrastructure and distribution hubs.

Distributed Transportation Infrastructure

Flexible and multi-modal freight distribution makes us more resilient. New York City will continue to advance initiatives like [FreightNYC](#) in partnership with other local, state and regional entities, to build a safer, more efficient, and more sustainable local transportation and delivery infrastructure. For long-haul transportation, we will work to secure the supply chain links between food production areas and New York City, and explore modal options for truck, rail, and maritime transport. Building out rail and barge capacity helps ensure multiple options for food flow while reducing climate emissions from the transportation sector. For our last-mile infrastructure, we will seek to pilot cargo bike delivery services and allow for more mixed-use industrial activity to support more localized, dispersed and sustainable distribution centers.

Planning for Supply Chain Disruption

While we remain confident that our food supply chain remains strong, it is possible that temporary disruptions in production, transportation, storage, distribution or sale could create short-term supply shocks in the New York City region. While this remains unlikely, we are taking steps to proactively prepare for the worst-case scenario. The City is allocating funds in the budget to ensure we have a sufficient runway to ramp up additional food supply and delivery for food-insecure New Yorkers. These funds ensure there is additional support for the activities of the food team over the coming months, including close monitoring of the food supply and an increase in food delivery to New Yorkers in need. The \$50 million investment can fund 18 million shelf-stable meals in reserve if needed in the future to adjust to any temporary disruptions in local food supply or distribution infrastructure, and it will add to the 300,000 meals ready-to-eat currently stored by New York City Emergency Management at warehouses in New York and New Jersey.

Beyond “Feeding New York”

To respond to this crisis, we have moved quickly and built an unprecedented food delivery system to serve New Yorkers. We thank our non-profit food access groups and local elected officials for their support. One of the most immediate lessons of the COVID-19 food response has been the clear opportunity for better integration and partnerships between the public, private and civic sectors. Our collaboration will lay the foundation for a more equitable City even beyond this crisis, as we build local and regional partnerships throughout the food supply chain and make structural improvements to the City’s food access network.

Nonetheless, this crisis has revealed underlying food system challenges, including inequitable access to healthy and nutritious food. This crisis presents an opportunity to rethink inequitable or outdated systems across our food supply. We are connecting New Yorkers to services who have never sought public assistance before--and building a stronger, more resilient community as we go.

Any New Yorker in need should reach out for help at nyc.gov/GetFood. This is success: feeding New Yorkers, regardless of how long this crisis persists or how deep it gets.

