

Changing Conversations: Global and Domestic Concerns Create Conflict



Top Ten Topics: 2019 in Review



As the leading voices in food production discussed the U.S. food system, a common thread of the industry’s global impacts united the leading topics of 2019. This high volume of conversation grew in response to the Trump administration’s efforts to reduce the United States’ central role on the global stage.

Prolonged negotiations punctuated by threats of tariffs moved **international trade** to the top of our Top Ten Topics. The Trump administration spent the year negotiating deals with Canada, Mexico, China and Japan that included heavy emphasis on food and agriculture. This year also marked the first time that **climate change** cracked into our Top Ten — climbing to second place — as conversations developed around food production and the environment. These conversations often merged with on-farm **stewardship** practices, as food manufacturers engaged with supply chains to produce more food with less resources. Meanwhile, mainstream media outlets and new players in the market posed **meatless** foods and alternative **proteins** as environmentally friendly solutions.

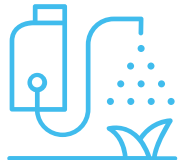
Highlights from this report:



INTERNATIONAL TRADE: Trade negotiations with Mexico, Canada, China and Japan came to a head. Following a year of tariffs, President Trump sought commitments from China to purchase food and farm goods. Additionally, negotiators settled on a final version of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement that appealed to a wide variety of interest groups.



CLIMATE CHANGE: Conversations about food's impact on the environment heated up. Activists and academics debated findings of a United Nations report on land use. Food manufacturers reinforced commitments to reduce carbon emissions as required by the Paris Climate Agreement.



PESTICIDES: Pesticides seeped into conversations about food and food production. Bayer defended the safety of its glyphosate-based Roundup weedkiller in courts. The EPA backed Bayer's claims. Meanwhile, activist groups associated the herbicide with oat-based food products.

“IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR BUSINESSES TO PLAN FOR THE FUTURE IN THIS TYPE OF ENVIRONMENT. THE ADMINISTRATION'S APPROACH CLEARLY ISN'T WORKING, AND THE ANSWER ISN'T MORE TAXES ON AMERICAN BUSINESSES AND CONSUMERS. WHERE DOES THIS END?”

— DAVID FRENCH, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, NATIONAL RETAIL FEDERATION

Timeline: Important Events This Quarter

While the Top Ten Topics highlight the biggest concerns in food production, the most salient events do not always fall neatly into a category and often bridge several topics. Here we highlight the events that sparked the most conversations.

Jan. 16	EAT-Lancet published report on “healthy diets from sustainable food systems”
Feb. 7	Members of Congress introduced the Green New Deal resolution
March 7	USDA and FDA agreed to share oversight of cell-cultured proteins
March 21	Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue offered aid to flood victims in the Midwest
April 1	Burger King tested plant-based Impossible Whopper
April 18	USDA launched pilot program for online use of food stamps
May 2	Beyond Meat issued initial public offering
May 15	Study linked ultra-processed foods to increased mortality
June 7	WHO celebrated inaugural World Food Safety Day
Aug. 8	U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released its Climate Change and Land report
Oct. 8	United States and Japan signed trade deal
Nov. 21	Romaine lettuce recalled due to an outbreak of <i>E. coli</i>
Dec. 4	Trump administration added work requirements for some food stamp recipients
Dec. 13	President Trump announced “Phase One” trade agreement with China

About this report: The Intel Distillery systematically captures, analyzes and reviews important food and beverage news, trends and policy issues, filtered through 1,500 of the most influential voices in the industry. Our quarterly reports serve as a bird's-eye view of food production, capturing insights from every step in the food chain: from seed to feed, farm to fork, and regulations to media publications. The Top Ten Topics report is a snapshot of the topics most frequently discussed by industry leaders and provides insight into these leaders' priorities.

The full report, which includes recaps of influential conversations about each topic, is available upon request.

The Intel Distillery also provides reporting and analysis on individual topics, such as labeling policies and the rising tide of alternative proteins, and can create customized reports for your needs. For more information about how The Intel Distillery can help you be more knowledgeable about the food and beverage business, visit TheIntelDistillery.com or contact [Nick Praznowski \(npraznowski@bader-rutter.com\)](mailto:npraznowski@bader-rutter.com).