

How Big Food Will End Hunger and Can Save the Planet

Sample Interview Questions and Answers

What inspired you to write the book?

I was inspired to write this book as the pandemic was first unfolding, and three key statistics kept playing in my mind. First, in the wealthiest nation in the world, 38 million Americans are food insecure, more Americans are sick than well, and more than 60 million Americans are turning to food banks and community programs. Add to this, the daily reminder of empty grocery shelves led me to want to explore how the current food system was letting us down and what could be done to fix it.

Why do you think Big Food can end hunger and save the planet?

To create a more affordable, accessible, nutritious, and sustainable food system, all the agri-food players have a role to play – no matter how big or small. However, the pandemic has shown us that BIG systemic change is needed and that can't happen without a strong food industry providing purpose-led change. Change requires the entire agri-food system to move towards regenerative agriculture as a priority. The private sector has the advantage of investing in future innovation with both speed and scale.

Do you think Big Food will step up to the challenge?

The short answer is that Big Food is already starting to move in this direction. The World Benchmarking Alliance took an in-depth look at the top 350 global food companies and ranked them against 45 sustainable development indicators. Two-thirds of companies have incorporated sustainability into their strategic planning. However, only three companies – Unilever, Nestlé, and Danone earned top marks. So a lot more needs to be done.

How big is the U.S. food industry?

During the pandemic, the U.S. food and beverage industry saw sales growth up 12 percent, with the sector valued at \$999.36 billion with a projected compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.1 percent from 2021 to 2028. The trend is expected to be driven by employees continuing to work from home, resulting in increased purchases, increased plant-based product consumption, new product introduction, and consumer demand for healthier ingredients.

Why are the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) so important?

In 2015, all UN member nations signed on to its 17 SDGs, which serve as an urgent call for action by all countries to end poverty, improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spark economic growth. The goal is to address climate change and preserve the world's oceans and forests. 2020 to 2030 is designated as the UN Decade of Action to make a healthier world.

How does this tie into the White House Conference (WHC) on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health?

The first-ever (WHC) on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health took place in 1969 to address consumers' requests for more information on packaged food products. The second ever will be in September of this year.

This is an opportunity for the food industry to rise as leaders in the nation's health. The 2022 WHC brings the public and private sectors together to drive transformative change in the U.S. to end hunger, improve nutrition and physical activity, and close the disparities surrounding them.

What do you think the food industry should be requesting of the government? What do you think is the role of government, academia, health professionals, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and others is to end hunger?

The most crucial role for all players is to work collectively to tackle these pressing hunger issues and improve the health of the food supply and Americans.

A key aspect missing from a policy perspective is the lack of a national food policy in the United States. In 2021, I published, [*Why Food For Health Matters Now*](#), which outlines a four-point plan for the Biden-Harris Administration. The plan calls for the Administration to create the first-ever national food policy. A national policy pulls together the USDA, FDA, EPA, and NIH to co-establish this policy. The umbrella policy would address food insecurity, access to healthy food, food safety, nutrition, and sustainability.

Do you think the food industry is currently doing a good job?

The conversation is shifting from WHY to HOW companies can incorporate purpose into their strategic plans and invest in the future. Companies need to connect profit through purpose. There is an urgency for sure. Thankfully, the pandemic has taught the industry to pivot and rethink some of the systemic issues.

What improvements are needed to the food system?

The food industry needs to come together as a fully integrated supply chain to develop a more equitable agri-food system that is accessible, nutritious, sustainable, and regenerative. All players have a role.

How many Americans are going hungry?

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the depths of hunger here in the United States. Feeding America estimates that more than 60 million Americans turned to food banks and community programs in 2020 for help putting food on the table. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates that 38 million people, including 12 million children, are food insecure.

How are hunger and obesity linked?

Malnutrition is the common underlying factor between hunger and obesity. Hunger and obesity are linked to diet-sensitive diseases like diabetes, cancer, and heart disease. More Americans are sick than well, with 60 percent having one chronic illness and 40 percent having two or more chronic conditions.

What is food insecurity and nutrition insecurity?

At the roots of it – food insecurity is a lack of food availability and access to food for all people. Nutrition security requires the intake of a wide variety of foods that provide essential nutrients.

Why have you chosen to donate all proceeds to charity?

I chose charities that work tirelessly to provide food to people in need daily and one organization dedicated to teaching children to plant gardens.