



INNOVATION INSIGHT IMPACT

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

LETTER FROM THE CEO

I am pleased to share with you our 2020 Annual Report, which highlights what we've accomplished at IFIC to further our mission of promoting science-based information on nutrition, food safety and agriculture.

This has been a most challenging year for all of us. The global pandemic has taken lives and disrupted families and institutions. But it has also created opportunities for people and organizations to shine. Nowhere has this been more evident to me than among the IFIC staff, to whom I am grateful for their grace, strength, professionalism and creativity. Like many in our broader community of members and supporters, our ability to move IFIC and our mission forward was tested in 2020. At IFIC, we believe deeply in the fundamental role science and evidence must play not only in our food decisions but also in our wider society. What we witnessed in 2020 was the marginalization of science and expertise at the very moment it was needed most. If there is one takeaway about the work of this organization that I'll bring with me into 2021, it is that IFIC's mission of science-based, evidence-backed communication is more relevant today than it has ever been.

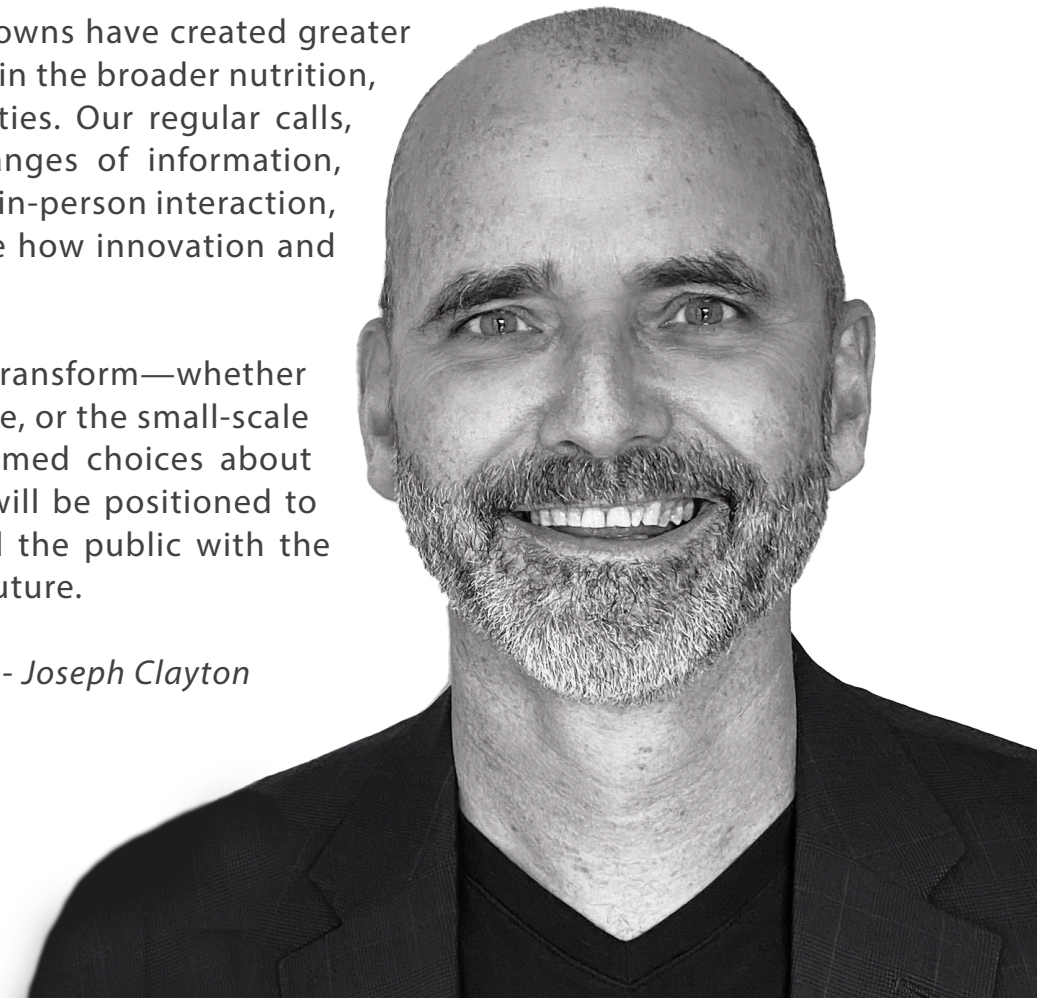
Despite the obstacles of 2020, we undertook an effort to refocus and rebrand IFIC to sharpen our ability to share evidence-based information about food in an environment crowded with misinformation and junk science. This annual report, our first since the rebrand, celebrates our new visual identity—designed to express our unique role in consumer research and communication. Our transformation could not have happened at a better time: Global citizens continue to seek out reliable sources

of information as they deal with the unprecedented uncertainty about their food and health that has been brought on by the coronavirus pandemic. As you will see in the following pages, much of IFIC's communications work and consumer research this year was geared toward sharing and promoting evidence-based information about food safety, nutrition and health in the context of COVID-19.

In some ways, I believe the ongoing lockdowns have created greater opportunities for us to connect with many in the broader nutrition, food-safety, health and science communities. Our regular calls, virtual consultations and frequent exchanges of information, while perhaps a poor substitute overall for in-person interaction, brought us together in ways that illustrate how innovation and flexibility are so key to our work.

All aspects of our food system continue to transform—whether via the large-scale effects of climate change, or the small-scale effects of individuals making better-informed choices about their diets. At every step of the way, we will be positioned to provide our supporters, collaborators and the public with the information they need to prepare for the future.

- Joseph Clayton



INNOVATION

IFIC, TODAY AND TOMORROW

The International Food Information Council (IFIC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission to effectively communicate science-based information about health, nutrition, food safety and agriculture. For over three decades, IFIC has been informing global audiences about the evidence behind our food system. We serve as a gathering place for academic, government, and private-industry experts to exchange information on shared and emerging public education and consumer-research priorities.

IFIC is committed to promoting scientific integrity, and the resources we create are derived from peer-reviewed science. Our work reaches millions of people every year, dispelling food myths and elevating credible science. In addition, IFIC's consumer research is relied upon by journalists, health and nutrition professionals, and government officials for insights into consumer beliefs and behaviors.

IFIC is staffed primarily by nutrition, food-safety and communications experts and is governed by a Board of Trustees, a majority of whom are independent, academic researchers. Our work is supported by grants and contributions from the private sector. IFIC does not represent any company, industry or product. IFIC does not lobby, and the only thing we advocate for is the best available evidence.

**We envision a global environment
where credible science
drives food policy and
consumer choice.**





A NEW LOOK & FEEL

In September 2020, we launched a new organizational website at IFIC.org that illustrates our unique role and mission at a time when science communication and the elevation of evidence in our food decisions are more important than ever. The site describes what we do, how others can work with us, our in-house expertise, and how we engage and collaborate with academic, government and thought leaders.

We also unveiled a new logo that quickly and succinctly conveys our mission. The clean, modern font better emphasizes what we do as an organization, while the green text represents the life and vitality of agriculture and the entire food system. The blue logomark depicts eating utensils and a dinner plate that doubles as a dialogue bubble, representing our active role in food conversations.



APPLYING OUR EXPERTISE

IFIC's in-house communications experts translate and share the science behind issues related to nutrition, agriculture, food safety and health. Our diverse team applies its knowledge and experience to highlight the gaps in awareness across a range of food and health topics, then fills them with creative and timely science-based resources that engage and inform a range of audiences, including consumers, health professionals, and the broader nutrition and food-safety communities.

Our experts work every day with stakeholders from government, academia, the nonprofit sector and industry to communicate answers to the big questions facing food producers and consumers. With established expertise in the fields of communications, consumer research, nutrition science, immunology, microbiology, virology, and food safety, IFIC staff share evidence on a broad range of topics. Throughout 2020, our resources and research advanced the public's understanding of the

safety of food ingredients and technology, sustainability and modern food production, nutrition science, dietary trends, and the science of sweeteners.

IFIC is an accredited provider of Continuing Professional Education for nutrition professionals through the Commission on Dietetic Registration, the credentialing body of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

In 2020, IFIC staff participated in conferences and speaking engagements with organizations including the American College of Toxicology, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, the Institute of Food Technologists, the World Health Care Congress, the International Association for Food Protection, the Global Food Safety Initiative, the Center for Mindful Eating, FoodFluence 2020, and the Global Midwest Alliance's Food Is Life Forum, along with several federal agencies and stakeholder organizations.



RISING TO THE COVID-19 CHALLENGE

Few areas of our daily lives were as disrupted by the novel coronavirus as those involving food and nutrition. In the early weeks of the pandemic, misinformation and a lack of understanding about COVID-19 transmission illustrated an immediate need for evidence-based information about the safety of our food, effective ways of shopping for food, and the role of diet and nutrition in maintaining healthy lifestyles during a pandemic.

IFIC experts identified the key messages in food safety and nutrition that we could communicate to the general public and immediately began developing carefully vetted resources about the availability of food as COVID-19 continued to spread, the importance of nutrition during the pandemic, and evidence showing that the coronavirus was not a food-safety issue.

Throughout the spring, IFIC brought together experts from public institutions, NGOs, government and the food and beverage industry to exchange information and to create scientifically accurate resources about the intersection between COVID-19 and food. Our website was an important online destination for many millions searching for food safety and nutrition guidance. Media outlets recognized IFIC's experts as a go-to source for accurate information.

At the onset of the pandemic, we quickly leveraged our consumer research expertise to assess how the pandemic was affecting the ways Americans ate, shopped and thought about our food priorities. IFIC released consumer surveys in [April](#) and [May](#) that took a close look at COVID-19's impact on food purchasing, eating behaviors and perceptions of food safety. We released another survey in [September](#) focused on how snacking patterns and factors influencing food purchases had shifted over the first six months of the pandemic. We continue to [collect insights](#) on how the pandemic has shifted our viewpoints and actions related to food through a select set of survey questions administered monthly.

We are proud of our part in responding to the difficult events of 2020. In unprecedented circumstances, IFIC rapidly reached a large segment of the public and increased their understanding of the pandemic with sound science and evidence-based information. As we look ahead, we continue to monitor progress in the battle against this virus, and we stand ready to offer expert guidance whenever the topic turns to nutrition, food production and food safety.

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INSIGHT

THE BROADER RESEARCH AGENDA

While COVID-19 dominated our work in 2020, IFIC continued to conduct consumer research across a full spectrum of issues related to the food system. First and foremost was the annual [Food and Health Survey](#), our signature initiative that attracts attention from all facets of the food sector. This survey, which has been conducted for 15 consecutive years, provides information about how Americans connect food and food-purchasing decisions to our physical health and overall well-being. It also offers current perspectives on how American consumers are navigating the complicated food landscape.

In 2020, the survey continued an examination of issues related to health and diet, including diet and eating pattern trends, perceptions of food production methods and food labeling, and viewpoints on food safety. It also explored new topics, such as how food and health behaviors have changed in the past decade (2010–2020), changes people have made to their consumption of plant-based foods, and how COVID-19 has impacted eating behaviors and perceptions of food safety.

IFIC's consumer research program was more active than ever in 2020, with 15 surveys conducted.





2020 RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

**Consumer Research on Plant Alternatives
to Animal Meat**

**Trends, Habits and Attitudes Related
to Food Safety**

Climate Change and Food Production

Nutrient Density and Health

**Purchasing Behaviors, Eating Decisions and
Health Perceptions of Dietary Fats and Oils**

Our work also helped inform the federal regulatory process. For instance, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's [final rule](#) on revisions to the Nutrition Facts label cited IFIC materials and research five times, and followed more than a decade of our input and insights. Similarly, our research was cited in the FDA's [final guidance](#) for the industry in the use of an alternate name for KCl (potassium chloride) in food labeling.

IMPACT

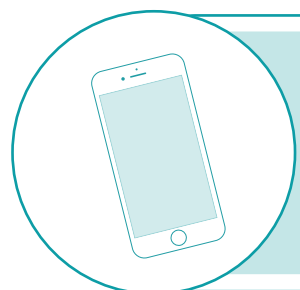
2020 BY THE NUMBERS



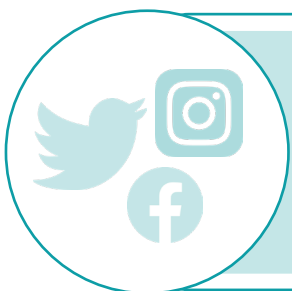
35 years of IFIC



405,000
video views



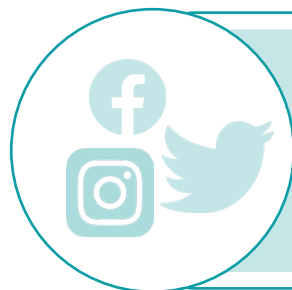
3 million
web visits



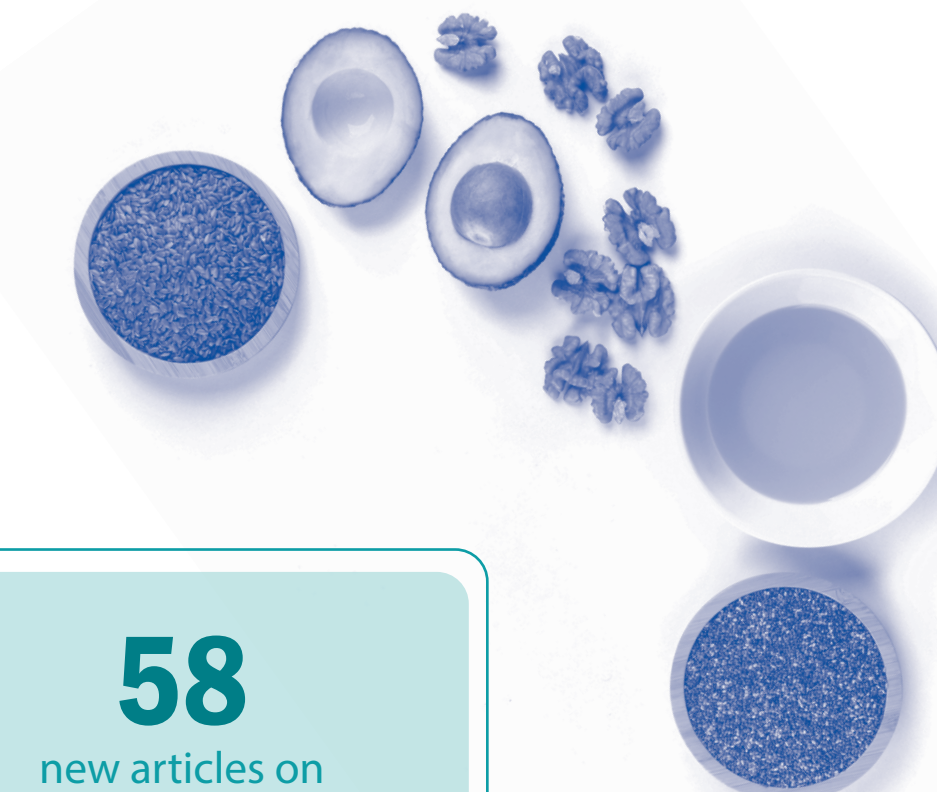
500,000
social media followers



15 research studies
conducted



800,000
social media interactions



58
new articles on
foodinsight.org

48
articles translated
into Spanish

44
articles translated into
Brazilian Portuguese



PROMOTING THE SCIENCE OF FOOD

Each year, IFIC serves as a resource to millions of consumers directly online, both domestically and internationally. We use various communications channels to disseminate our original content and to elevate the science underlying the food system.

Our content hub (FoodInsight.org), which received over three million visits in 2020, hosts science communications resources and research data. Our resources are derived from peer-reviewed science and the work of authoritative bodies at the national and international levels.

Social media is a key platform on which misinformation and junk science spread quickly. Now more than ever, science needs a voice. We have built a community of nearly half a million social followers across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube and LinkedIn.

Specialty websites we have developed in recent years reached new consumers in 2020, focusing on important topics and international audiences.

Caffeine—IFIC's [caffeine website](#) is designed to be a “one-stop shop” for consumers to learn about healthy caffeine consumption and food-safety facts. Complete with a “caffeine calculator,” the site provides updated articles

and resources about caffeinated beverages and foods to guide visitors along a healthful path.

International—Providing science-based information to broad audiences is part of IFIC's mission. As such, we translate our FoodInsight.org resources into [Spanish](#) and [Brazilian Portuguese](#), uploading content weekly onto two international microsites that attracted over 750,000 visitors in 2020.

“Process This”— For the past four years, IFIC has utilized its expertise to raise awareness about modern food production and the [benefits of food processing](#), both of which are often misunderstood. Many myths persist in people's minds regarding certain food ingredients and various types of processed and packaged foods. The need for clear, unbiased, science-based messages to support, clarify and balance the conversation is ever-present.



@FOODINSIGHT

PUBLIC EDUCATION

As a science communications organization staffed by credentialed experts, we work to educate consumers, opinion leaders, and health professionals about the scientific evidence behind our food system. We apply our communications expertise and the knowledge of our network of experts to create impactful messaging that engages and informs the public. This year, we produced new content on the 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and partnered with online influencers to generate resources on how to lead a healthier life. We also produced videos explaining the safety of various food ingredients and the health benefits of mindful eating practices. Our experts launched a new series of Continuing Professional Education [learning opportunities](#) for registered dietitians and other health professionals. And throughout the year, we seized on every opportunity to combat public misconceptions about food safety, production practices, diets and health.

We invite you to sign up for our newsletter and visit our content hub (Foodinsight.org) often for information on IFIC’s work to elevate evidence-based conversations on eating and dietary patterns, macronutrients and micronutrients, caloric and non-caloric sweeteners, agricultural production technologies, food-borne illness and food-ingredient safety.



In 2020 IFIC staff collaborated on topics related to food, nutrition, food science and food production with many media outlets, including:

 **CNBC**

THE HUFFPOST

**BUSINESS
INSIDER**

Forbes

CNN

healthline



In addition, we participated in food-safety and nutrition-related social conversations by collaborating with like-minded partner organizations including:

 **HEADSPACE**

eat right. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

 **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

CDC
CENTERS FOR DISEASE
CONTROL AND PREVENTION

EVERYDAY HEALTH

BUILDING THE FUTURE OF SCIENCE COMMUNICATION

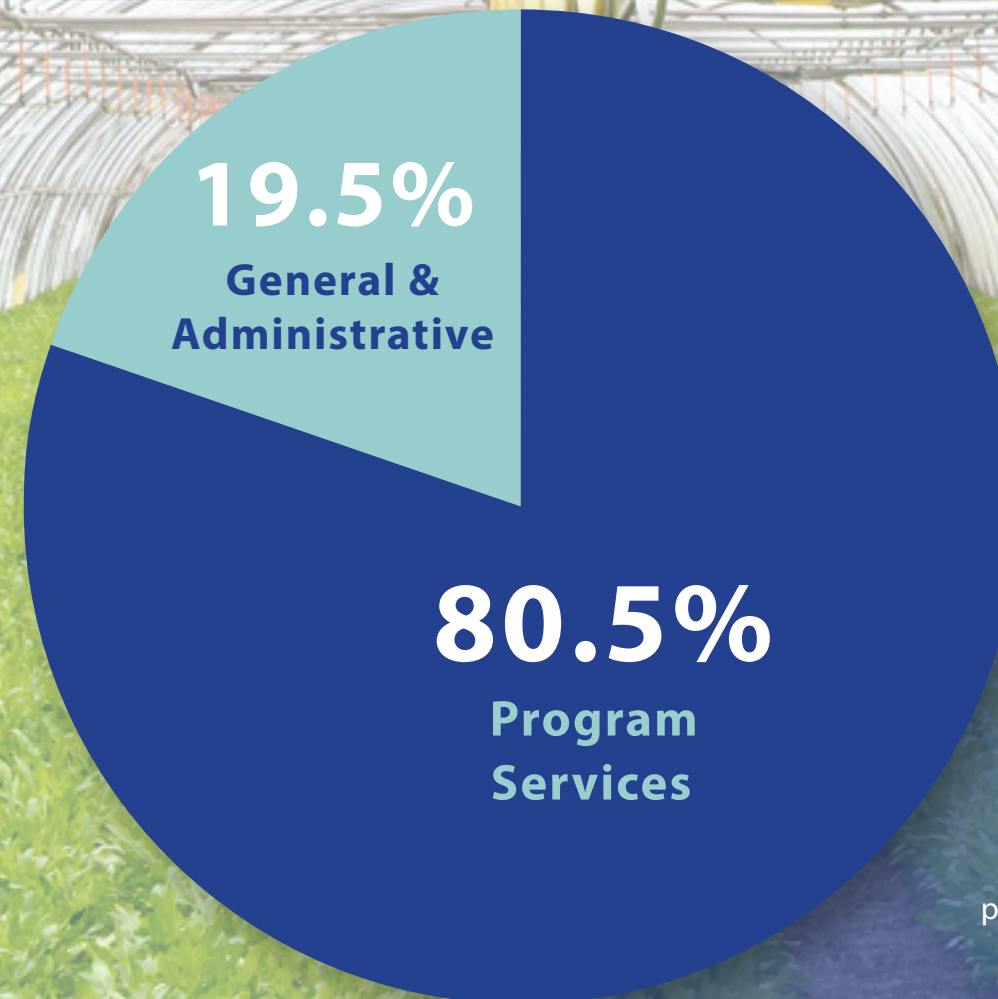
IFIC's [Sylvia Rowe Fellowship](#) was created over a decade ago to help deserving students further enhance their skills in the areas of nutrition and food-safety communication. Sylvia Rowe Fellows have come from a wide range of backgrounds and areas of expertise, but the thread connecting them is their passion for science communication. The highly competitive program aims to enhance the recipient's communications skill set, which he or she will then apply to convey nutrition, food-production and food-safety information to the public in an academic setting, professional situation (in both the for-profit and nonprofit sectors) or other public venues.

“As a registered dietitian, the skills I learned from my twelve weeks will be invaluable for my future career. One of my greatest takeaways is that communication is much more nuanced than I expected. While I had prior experience communicating basic nutrition guidelines one-on-one with clients, communicating to the general public was a completely different world. I've learned how to gently approach commonly contested subject matter as well as use science and evidence to explain these topics.”

- Courtney Schupp, MPH, RD
Former Sylvia Rowe Fellow



FINANCIALS



Numbers derived from the audit of IFIC's consolidated financial statements comprising of activities, functional expenses and cash flows for the year ended December 31, 2019. Additional information on IFIC's financials are publicly available at IFIC.org.

2020 IFIC BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Dan Azzara	The Pennsylvania State University
Regan Bailey (Co-Vice Chair)	Purdue University
Giorgio Beltrami	Barilla
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Anna Maria Siega-Riz	University of Massachusetts
Maha Tahiri	Tufts Friedman School of Nutrition
Bob Thompson	Center for Strategic & International Studies
Jeffrey Zachwieja	PepsiCo, Inc.

“ IFIC is the very best at communicating credible science so that the citizens of the world have reliable information on which to make their food decisions. In a world of unprecedented challenges and uncertainties, their mission is more important today than ever before. ”

- Fergus Clydesdale
University of Massachusetts
(Co-Chair)

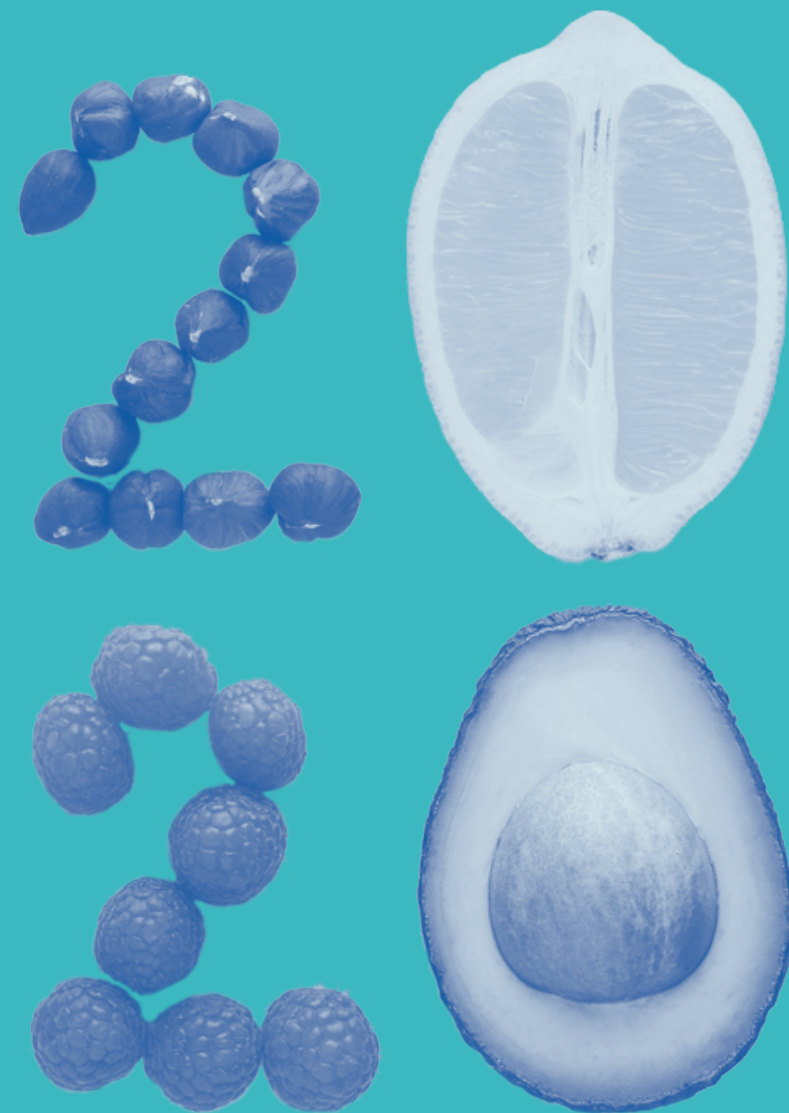
“ IFIC uniquely brings together critical consumer insights with timely food and nutrition information, shedding light on the entire breadth of our modern food system. ”

- Philippe Caradec
Danone North America PBC
(Co-Chair)

2020 PUBLIC LIASONS

Jackie Haven	U.S. Department of Agriculture
William Hoffman	U.S. Department of Agriculture
David Klurfeld	U.S. Department of Agriculture

IFIC STAFF



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Silvia Dumitrescu
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