

# 44<sup>th</sup> Annual National Food Policy Conference

## Speaker and Panelist Biographies



**Chuck Abbott** (he/his/him) has covered food and agriculture issues in Washington since the mid-1980s; currently as editor of the daily Ag Insider newsletter published by the Food and Environment Reporting Network. The son of an Illinois farm family, Abbott is part of the agricultural diaspora that is a result of farm consolidation. During his career, he has written about issues as varied as green payments, school lunch reform, food inflation and the tax code. Abbott has a master's degree in public affairs reporting and lives with his wife and son in Arlington, Va. By an aggie count of DC longevity, he is seven farm bills old.



**Representative Alma S. Adams** was elected to her fourth full term representing the 12th Congressional District of North Carolina on November 3, 2020. After winning a special election in November 2014, Congresswoman Adams was sworn in immediately as the 100th woman elected to the 113th Congress. Representative Adams serves on the Committee on Financial Services; Committee on Education & Labor and the Committee on Agriculture. She holds several leadership roles; as Assistant Whip for the Democratic Caucus, Chairwoman of the Committee on Education & Labor's Subcommittee on Workforce Protections and Vice Chairwoman of the Committee on Agriculture. Representative Adams's subcommittee assignments, in addition to Workforce Protections, include Civil Rights and Human Services Committee on Education and Labor; Nutrition, Oversight, and Department Operations on Agriculture, and the Oversight and Investigations on Financial Services. Her signature legislative accomplishment in Congress is the enactment of H.R. 5363, the Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education (FUTURE) Act that permanently provides funding totaling \$255 million a year for all Minority-Serving Institutions, including \$85 million for HBCUs ([see more](#)).



**Allison Aubrey** is a correspondent for NPR News, where her stories can be heard on Morning Edition and All Things Considered. She's also a contributor to the PBS NewsHour and is one of the hosts of NPR's Life Kit. Along with her NPR science desk colleagues, Aubrey is the winner of a 2019 Gracie Award. She is the recipient of a 2018 James Beard broadcast award for her coverage of 'Food As Medicine.' Aubrey is also a 2016 winner of a James Beard Award in the category of "Best TV Segment" for a PBS/NPR collaboration. The series of stories included an investigation of the link between pesticides and the decline of bees and other pollinators, and a two-part series on food waste. In 2013, Aubrey won a Gracie Award with her colleagues on The Salt, NPR's food vertical. They also won a 2012 James Beard Award for best food blog. In 2009, Aubrey was awarded the American Society for Nutrition's Media Award for her reporting on food and nutrition. She was honored with the 2006 National Press Club Award for Consumer Journalism in radio and earned a 2005 Medical Evidence Fellowship by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Knight Foundation. In 2009-2010, she was a Kaiser Media Fellow. Joining NPR in 2003 as a general assignment reporter, Aubrey spent five years covering environmental policy, as well as contributing to coverage of Washington, D.C., for NPR's National Desk ([see more](#)).



**Mariana Chilton**, PhD, MPH, is a Professor in the Dornsife School of Public Health at Drexel University. She is the Director of Dornsife's Center for Hunger-Free Communities and is Co-Principal investigator of Children's HealthWatch, a national research network that investigates the impact of public assistance programs on the health and well-being of young children and their caregivers. Dr. Chilton founded Witnesses to Hunger, a movement to increase women's participation in the national dialogue on hunger and poverty. She is Principal Investigator of the Building Wealth and Health Network, which is designed to incentivize entrepreneurship and self-sufficiency in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. Her research publications address trauma, food insecurity and the advancement of the human rights framework to advise the right to food in the US. Most recently she served as the Co-Chair of the Bi-partisan National Commission on Hunger, where she was appointed to advise Congress and the United States Department of Agriculture on how to end hunger in America. She has testified before the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives on the importance of child nutrition programs and other anti-poverty policies. She has served as an advisor to Sesame Street and to the Institute of Medicine. Her awards include the "Nourish Award" from MANNA, the "Unsung Hero Award" for Improving the Lives of Women and Girls from Women's Way and the Young Professional Award in Maternal and Child Health from the American Public Health Association ([see more](#)).



**Joseph Clayton** has served as CEO of the International Food Information Council, a nonprofit educational organization, since 2016. IFIC promotes science-based information on nutrition, food safety and agriculture, and its consumer research focuses on attitudes and behaviors at the intersection of food, diet, and health. IFIC is funded primarily through support from the business community and governed by a Board of Trustees, a majority of whom are independent academic researchers. IFIC does not represent any company, industry or product and does not advocate on behalf of its funders. IFIC's research findings are available to the public at [www.foodinsight.org](http://www.foodinsight.org). Under Joe's leadership, IFIC has expanded its consumer research to include topics in food production, environmental sustainability, food safety, and nutrition, exploring attitudes and behaviors among diverse US populations including older Americans and the Medicaid-eligible population. IFIC's "Process This" food science communications initiative has gained over 25M impressions while reaching consumers and health influencers with evidence-based information about nutrients, food production and ingredients. Prior to IFIC, Joe held leadership positions at the American Frozen Food Institute and several global communications agencies. He began his career as a legislative assistant in the U.S. Senate.



**Charles F. (Chuck) Conner** became president & CEO of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives (NCFC) on January 22, 2009. As president of NCFC, Conner will oversee the organization's work to promote and protect the business and public policy interests of America's farmer-owned cooperatives. He will also provide the strategic vision for the trade association as it continues to seek new ways in which to

add value for its membership. Prior to joining NCFC, Conner had served as the Deputy Secretary at the U.S. Department of Agriculture since mid-2005. In this capacity, he was the Chief Operating Officer (COO) overseeing day-to-day operations of the department. Conner interacted directly with President George W. Bush and his senior staff to formulate domestic and international food, trade, security and energy policy. He led development of the Bush Administration's \$300 billion Farm Bill proposal and the strategy to educate and inform industry, constituents and Congress. From August 2007 to January 2008, Conner served as both USDA Secretary and Deputy Secretary. He played a key role in developing the Administration's immigration policy including important changes to the H2A program ([see more](#)).



**Daniel Costa** is an attorney who first joined the Economic Policy Institute in 2010 and was EPI's director of immigration law and policy research from 2013 to early 2018; he returned to this role in 2019 after serving as the California Attorney General's senior advisor on immigration and labor. Costa's areas of research include a wide range of labor migration issues, including governance of temporary labor migration programs, migration for both professional occupations and lower-wage jobs, worksite enforcement, and immigrant workers' rights, as well as farm labor, global multilateral processes related to migration, and refugee and asylum issues. Costa has testified on immigration before the U.S. Congress and state governments, been quoted and cited by many major news outlets, and appeared on radio and television news. His commentaries have appeared in publications like The New York Times, Roll Call, Fortune, La Opinión, and others, and he was named one of "20 Immigration Experts to Follow on Twitter" by ABC News. Costa is currently a visiting scholar at the Global Migration Center at the University of California-Davis, and was previously a visiting scholar at U.C. Davis, School of Law (2019-2020) and an affiliated scholar with the University of California-Merced (2015-2017) ([see more](#)).



**Patricia I. Escárcega** is a Reporting Fellow at The Counter. Her work has appeared in Bon Appetit, Playboy and Roads & Kingdoms. She was previously a restaurant critic at the Los Angeles Times and Phoenix New Times and is based in Los Angeles.



**Sandra Eskin** was appointed Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety on March 16, 2021. In this role, Mrs. Eskin leads the Office of Food Safety at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, overseeing the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), which has regulatory oversight for ensuring that meat, poultry and egg products are safe, wholesome and accurately labeled. Prior to joining USDA, Mrs. Eskin was the Project Director for Food Safety at The Pew Charitable Trusts in Washington, D.C., a position she held since November 2009. She also served as the Deputy Director of the Produce Safety Project (PSP), a Pew-funded initiative at Georgetown University from 2008-2009. While at PSP, she was a senior scholar with the O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law at Georgetown University. Mrs. Eskin spent nearly 20 years as a public-policy consultant to numerous consumer advocacy and public-interest organizations, providing strategic and policy advice on a broad range of consumer-protection issues, in particular food and drug safety, labeling, and advertising. She has served as a member of multiple federal advisory committees related to consumer information on prescription drugs, meat and poultry safety, and foodborne illness surveillance. During her career, she has written numerous reports and articles on food-safety

topics. Mrs. Eskin received her J.D. from UC Hastings College of the Law, and her B.A. from Brown University.



**Helena Bottemiller Evich** is a senior food and agriculture reporter at POLITICO, where she writes about the policy and politics that shape our food system, from the farm bill to school lunch. She has received numerous awards for her work, including a George Polk Award for a series on climate change and two James Beard Awards for features on nutrition and science. Before joining POLITICO in 2013, she was a reporter at Food Safety News where she covered deadly foodborne illness outbreaks and the run-up to Congress passing the most significant update to food safety law in a century. Her work is widely cited in the media and has also appeared in the Columbia Journalism Review and on NBC News. Born and raised in Washington state, Helena attended Claremont McKenna College, where she studied government.



**Sheila Fleischhacker, PhD, JD, RDN** is a National Science Liaison for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) focusing on nutrition and food safety. Prior to returning to federal service, as founder and president of Fly Health, LLC, she provided public health law research consulting services; one example of her work is a report on the rationale and options to strengthen national nutrition research, which has secured support of 70+ organizations. She also co-founded and co-chaired a Healthy Eating Research (HER) and CDC-supported Nutrition and Obesity Policy Research and Evaluation Network (NOPREN) ad hoc COVID-19 working group that has grown to 600+ members, collaborates with more than 40 organizations, and has published more than 40 peer-reviewed articles. Previously, she was the senior advisor of nutrition and food safety at USDA Office of the Chief Scientist (2017-2018), on detail from the National Institutes of Health. During her federal service, she helped put forth the first-of-its kind National Nutrition Research Roadmap and chaired a USDA Inter-Departmental Nutrition Workshop Series. Dr. Fleischhacker received her bachelor's degree in 2000 and J.D. in 2007, with a Certificate in Health Law from Loyola University Chicago and Ph.D. in Integrative Biosciences/Nutritional Sciences from The Pennsylvania State University in 2004. Her post-doctoral training focused on urban and regional planning and public health nutrition at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She completed her Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) internship through a distance program at Iowa State University in 2018. She was admitted into the Illinois Bar in November 2007. Dr. Fleischhacker has been an adjunct professor of law at Georgetown University since 2015, where she teaches a first-of-its-kind nutrition law and policy course and co-taught a unique course for two terms on the first 1,000 days of life.



**Geoff Freeman** is president and CEO of the Consumer Brands Association, the trade association for America's \$2.1 trillion food, beverage and consumer products industry. Since taking the helm, Freeman has launched a strategic campaign to transform the association into a powerful, modern advocacy organization aimed at driving growth across the industry. Freeman joined the Consumer Brands Association in August 2018 after serving for five years as president and CEO of the American Gaming Association (AGA). While leading AGA, Freeman drove a 200 percent increase in membership and doubled association revenue. Previously, Freeman served as COO of the U.S. Travel Association, where he helped conceive and drive a campaign that resulted in the passage of the bipartisan Travel Promotion Act, which was hailed as "the industry's biggest legislative victory in a decade." In the aftermath of

9/11, Freeman created a blue-ribbon panel headed by former Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge to analyze how to improve travel security without compromising travel efficiency. This effort led directly to the creation of TSA PreCheck. Both the Travel Promotion Act and TSA PreCheck demonstrate Freeman's ability to identify industry opportunities, craft a winning policy response and drive campaigns that succeed in gaining broad support among diverse stakeholders. Freeman's previous experience includes roles at APCO Worldwide, American's Health Insurance Plans and Freddie Mac.



**Jack Gillis** is Executive Director of the Consumer Federation of America where he previously served as Director of Public Affairs since 1983. In addition to being CFA's CEO, Gillis serves as an advocate on issues relating to auto safety, auto buying, fuel efficiency and consumer protection. In the early 1980's Jack was cited by the New York Times as a leader in the next generation of consumer advocates. He is the author, co-author or editor of 75 books including *The Car Book*, *The Used Car Book*, *The Truck, Van and 4x4 Book*, and *The Car Repair Book*, *How to Make Your Car Last Almost Forever*, *The Social Security Book for Women (AARP)*; *The Childwise Catalog: A Complete Guide to Buying the Safest and Best Products for Your Children*, *The Armchair Mechanic*, *How to Fly: Consumer Federation of America's Airline Survival Guide*, *The Bank Book (ed.)*, *The Product Safety Book (ed.)* and *Money in the Bank* ([see more](#)).



**Thomas Gremillion** is the Director of Food Policy at the Consumer Federation of America. He oversees the research, analysis, advocacy and media outreach for the group's food policy activities, and monitors food safety activities at USDA, FDA and in Congress, where he advocates for strong food safety protections for consumers. He also coordinates the Safe Food Coalition, a group of consumer, trade union, and foodborne illness victim organizations dedicated to reducing foodborne illness by improving government food inspection programs. Prior to joining CFA in 2015, Gremillion practiced environmental law at Georgetown University Law Center's Institute for Public Representation, where he represented community groups and advocacy organizations in litigation against polluters and government regulators. He also served as an associate attorney at the Southern Environmental Law Center in Chapel Hill, NC, where he specialized in transportation and land use issues ([see more](#)).



**Trey Hill** The Hill family has been farming in Rock Hall, MD since the early 1900's. In the 1940's, Herman E. Hill, Sr. started farming on his own in the area. Soon enough, the farm was growing and Herman's son, Herman E. Hill, Jr. started working with his father on the farm in the 50's. In the 1960's, Herman Hill & Son, Inc. was experiencing even more growth and a large portion of the existing grain system was constructed. In the 1970's and 80's, Herman Hill, Jr.'s son, Trey Hill became involved in the family business. As the farm grew immensely over the years, Herman Hill & Son, Inc. changed its name to Harborview Farms. Today, Harborview Farms is owned and managed by Trey Hill and his father Herman Hill, and they are both committed to producing grain in a responsible and environmentally friendly manner. And their commitment to agriculture goes beyond Harborview Farms. Together, the team is pioneering new techniques to influence the ag industry as a whole, instilling a mix of traditional practice with innovation and creativity to uncover novel solutions that move the industry forward. Each new season brings opportunity for growth, and Harborview Farms is testing all boundaries.



**Brad Lander** is a member of the New York City Council, representing the 39th District in Brooklyn. Brad serves as the Council's Deputy Leader for Policy. He co-founded the Council's Progressive Caucus, helped bring participatory budgeting to NYC, and has led the way toward a more just, equitable, and sustainable city. Brad's track record shows that we can strengthen our democracy, make government work better, and build a city that reflects our values. Brad has fought successfully to protect freelancers from wage theft, give fast-food workers a fair work week, and make sure Uber/Lyft drivers earn a living wage. To win safer streets and new transit infrastructure. To reform discriminatory practices in the NYPD, and to combat segregation in our schools and neighborhoods. His hard-hitting policy reports have led to better bus service, air-conditioning for all NYC school classrooms, and more effective affordable housing policy ([see more](#)).



**Dr. Susan T. Mayne**, Ph.D., is the Director of the Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN) at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). In this position, Dr. Mayne leads the Center's development and implementation of programs and policies related to the composition, quality, safety, and labeling of foods, food and color additives, and cosmetics. CFSAN also oversees diet and health initiatives, which include fostering the development of healthier foods and ensuring that consumers have access to accurate and useful information to make healthy food choices. The FDA foods program is responsible for approximately 80% of the U.S. food supply, which includes approximately \$400 billion in domestic food and \$50 billion in imported food. The Center is comprised of 1000 staff with a budget of over \$300 million. An internationally recognized public health leader and scientist, Dr. Mayne received a B.A. in chemistry from the University of Colorado. She earned a Ph.D. in nutritional sciences, with minors in biochemistry and toxicology, from Cornell University. She came to the FDA from Yale University, where she was the C.-E.A. Winslow Professor of Epidemiology and the Associate Director of the Yale Comprehensive Cancer Center.



**Representative Grace Meng** is serving her fifth term in the United States House of Representatives. Grace represents the Sixth Congressional District of New York encompassing the New York City borough of Queens, including west, central and northeast Queens. Grace is the first and only Asian American Member of Congress from New York State and the first female Congressmember from Queens since former Vice Presidential nominee Geraldine Ferraro. Grace is a member of the powerful House Appropriations Committee and is Vice Chair of its Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations. She also sits on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, and the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies. The Appropriations Committee is responsible for funding every federal agency, program, and project within the United States government. Grace is also a Senior Whip and Regional Whip for New York, and a founder and Co-Chair of the Kids' Safety Caucus, the first bipartisan coalition in the House that promotes child-safety issues. She helped create and serves as a founding member and former Co-Chair of the Quiet Skies Caucus which works to mitigate excessive aircraft noise that adversely affects communities. Grace has passed several pieces of legislation into law. These include laws about religious freedom, making Queens historic sites part of the National Park Service, striking "Oriental" from federal law and protecting public housing residents from insufficient heat. Also signed into law were her measures to assist veterans and members of the military, and provisions to improve consumer protections and safeguards for children ([see more](#)).





**Colin O'Neil** focuses on a wide array of legislative and policy matters related to food, farm and chemical policy, including agricultural conservation programs, climate change, organic and sustainable farming, pesticides and the “forever chemicals” known as PFAS. Before joining EWG, O'Neil served as director of government affairs at the Center for Food Safety.



**Sandra Sibert**, UFCW Local 304A, is a butcher at Smithfield Foods and was one of the 3,400 workers at the meat plant in South Dakota who rejected the company's initial contract offer, saying they deserved a raise as food and gas prices increased. After workers rejected the initial contract, which would have altered break time and kept pay the same, the company offered a \$1.75 raise, kept breaks the way workers wanted and included a \$520 bonus for them. Workers accepted.



**Darren Seifer** provides insights to food companies and other food-related organizations as the food and beverage industry analyst for The NPD Group, based on NPD's daily tracking of U.S. food and beverage consumption attitudes and behaviors. Seifer continuously monitors all aspects of what U.S. consumers eat and drink away from and in home – plus attitudes, motivations, personal characteristics, preparation, and food sourcing. In addition, he stays up to date on consumers' health aspirations and behaviors, including dieting and food-related health strategies. Seifer, who has been a food and beverage industry analyst at NPD since 2007, is a contributor to NPD's annual “Eating Patterns in America,” which is an annual compilation of NPD's ongoing food and foodservice research, and “Inside America's Kitchens,” which explores the foods, beverages, appliances, and utensils households keep on hand, generational differences, and the future outlook for in-home food and beverage consumption. He is also the co-author of numerous other NPD food and beverage studies and reports. Prior to joining NPD, Seifer was an analyst with IRI, where he spent more than seven years examining consumer packaged goods trends and worked with a variety of industry leaders covering dozens of food and beverage categories.



**Hilary Seligman**, MD MAS is Professor at the University of California San Francisco with appointments in the Departments of Medicine and Epidemiology and Biostatistics. She is an expert in food insecurity and its health implications across the life course. Her policy and advocacy expertise focus on federal nutrition programs, food banking and the charitable food network, food affordability and access, and income-related drivers of food choice. She directs the Food Policy, Health, and Hunger Research Program at UCSF's Center for Vulnerable Populations at Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and the CDC's Nutrition and Obesity Policy, Research and Evaluation Network (known as NOPREN). She also serves as Senior Medical Advisor for Feeding America. Dr. Seligman founded EatSF, a healthy foods voucher program for low-income residents of San Francisco. She co-directs UCSF's National Clinician Scholars Program. Dr. Seligman is a Fellow of the American College of Physicians.



**Dr. Max Teplitski** is a Chief Science Officer at Produce Marketing Association (PMA), where he is responsible for the produce safety, ag. technology, supply chain and sustainability programs, as well as government relations. Prior to joining PMA, Dr. Teplitski was Division Director (Acting) and National Program Leader at the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, where he oversaw federal research investment portfolios in produce safety, microbiology and nutrition. An author of over 100 peer-reviewed publications, Dr. Teplitski was a Professor at the University of Florida, where his research and education program focused on comparative and functional genomics of human pathogens to understand their adaptations to survival in non-host environments. Dr. Teplitski served as a Fulbright Specialist in Agriculture (Escuela Politecnica del Litoral), U.S. Embassy Science Fellow, Biotech Outreach Speaker (U.S. Department of State), and G.E. Burch Fellow in Theoretical Medicine (Smithsonian Institution). He is a recipient of J.E. Feeley Award in Recognition of Significant Contributions in Environmental Microbiology (ASM SE Branch), UF-HHMI Science For Life Distinguished Mentor Award, Animal Conservation Award (Lindberg Foundation), and W.E. Krauss Director's Award for Excellence in Research (Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center).



**Jason Weller** joined Land O'Lakes, Inc., in 2017 where he serves as the Vice President of Truterra, leading the team that is generating conservation solutions for the farmer cooperative's members and owners. He previously served as Chief of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, the nation's largest working lands conservation organization. Prior to serving as Chief, Jason served on the U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, the U.S. House Budget Committee, and in the White House Office of Management and Budget.



**Dr. Janet Woodcock** began her long and distinguished FDA career in 1986 with the agency's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER) as Director of the Division of Biological Investigational New Drugs. She also served as CBER's Acting Deputy Director, and later as Director of the Office of Therapeutics Research and Review. In 1994, Dr. Woodcock was named Director of the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER), overseeing the center's work that is the world's gold standard for drug approval and safety. In that position, she has led many of the FDA's groundbreaking drug initiatives. She has also served in other leadership roles at the FDA, including as Deputy Commissioner and Chief Medical Officer. With the onset of the COVID-19 public health emergency last year, Dr. Woodcock was asked to lend her expertise to “Operation Warp Speed” the initiative to develop therapeutics in response to the pandemic. Dr. Woodcock was named Acting Commissioner of Food and Drugs on January 20, 2021. Dr. Woodcock has received numerous honors during her distinguished public health career, including: a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2015 from the Institute for Safe Medication Practices; the Ellen V. Sigal Advocacy Leadership Award in 2016 from Friends of Cancer Research; the Florence Kelley Consumer Leadership Award in 2017 from the National Consumers League; the 2019 Biotechnology Heritage Award from the Biotechnology Innovation Organization and Science History Institute; and the 2020 Lifetime Achievement Award from NORD.