

Re: Comments for the 2015 DGAC re: Consumer Perceptions of Sustainability in Food Production

The International Food Information Council has gathered consumer insights on awareness, perceptions, and behaviors relating to sustainability in food production as part of its “Consumer Perceptions of Food Technology” Survey since 2007. These insights may be of interest to the Committee as it gathers information on this subject.

The 15th International Food Information Council (IFIC) “Consumer Perceptions of Food Technology” (<http://www.foodinsight.org/Resources/Detail.aspx?topic=2012ConsumerPerceptionsofTechnologySurvey>) Survey was fielded by independent research firm Cogent Research of Cambridge, Massachusetts between March 7 and 19, 2012. The survey polled 750 U.S. adult consumers using an online survey tool. Results were weighted on age, gender, race, education, income, geographic region, and marital status to be nationally representative.

The 2012 Survey finds that awareness of sustainable food production remains at its highest in recent years, and is an important aspect consumers want in food and beverage products they are purchasing and consuming.

The following are data points from the 2012 “Consumer Perceptions of Food Technology” Survey (IFIC, 2012):

- The majority of consumers (69%) say it is important that their food is produced in a sustainable way.
- More than half of consumers (55%) have heard or read at least “a little” about the concept of sustainability in food production, significantly greater than 2008(41%) and 2007 (30%).
- Only eighteen percent of consumers report having increased their purchasing of “sustainable” food and beverage products in the past year.
- However, when asked if they would be willing to pay more for food and beverage products that fit their definition of sustainability, consumers are divided, with only one-third (33%) saying they would be willing to pay more.
- Consumers who said sustainability is important to them (n=516) were asked to rank various aspects of sustainability in order of importance. More than one-third (35%) ranked “Conserving the natural habitat (water, land, rainforests, etc.) ” in their top two, followed by “Ensuring a sufficient food supply for the growing global population” (32%) and “Reducing the amount of pesticides used to produce food” (30%).
- In addition, were asked to rank the groups primarily responsible for meeting the food demands of the world’s growing population. “Farmers and ranchers” ranked first (71%), followed by “Food product manufacturers” (60%) and “Government” (54%).
- Among potential sources for information on sustainability in food production, sixty-four percent of consumers say they trust “Health organization (e.g., American Medical Association, American

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Heart Association, etc.)” most to provide such information, followed by “Government agency (e.g., U.S. Department of Agriculture, FDA, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, etc.)” (56%) and “Agriculture organization (e.g., Farm Bureau, Future Farmers of America, etc.)” (54%). “Health professional (e.g. doctor, nurse, pharmacist, dietitian, etc.)” and “Consumer advocacy group” came in fourth and fifth with 49% and 40%, respectively. Media sources such as TV shows, newspapers, and websites, as well as social media sources, ranked low relative to these other sources.

Previous years of the survey can be viewed on our website at:

http://www.foodinsight.org/Resources/Detail.aspx?topic=Consumer_Insights_Regarding_Food_Biotechnology

In addition to the Survey, we videotaped interviews with consumers in 2011 answering questions about their awareness and perceptions of sustainability in our “Consumer Insights on Sustainability in Food Production” video, located on our website at:

http://www.foodinsight.org/FoodInsightTV/Detail.aspx?topic=Consumer_Insights_on_Sustainability_in_Food_Production

Please feel free to contact Lindsey Loving (loving@ific.org; 202-296-6540) if you have any questions.

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The International Food Information Council Foundation is dedicated to the mission of effectively communicating science-based information on health, nutrition, and food safety for the public good. The IFIC Foundation is supported primarily by the broad-based food, beverage and agricultural industries. Visit <http://www.foodinsight.org>.