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Consumer perceptions on Food production, safety and sustainability

Statement of the Problem: Consumers are evolving more and more into “engaged eaters” that want to know more about how their food is produced, want to understand food ingredients and want their food to be “natural.” As we look to learn more about what impacts consumer choices for food and beverage purchases, we see that sustainability, safety and label attributes are emerging key factors of influence (beyond taste and price).

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: Online survey of 1,012 Americans ages 18 to 80. March 22 to April 9, 2019. The survey took approximately 21 minutes to complete. The results were weighted to ensure that they are reflective of the American population ages 18 to 80, as seen in the 2019 Current Population Survey. Specifically, they were weighted by age, education, gender, race/ethnicity and region.

Findings: The findings from this year’s online survey of 1,012 Americans have significant insights on:

- Consumer confusion around environmental sustainability
- Food and beverage purchase drivers
- Plant-based diets and eating patterns generally
- Beliefs about food production and food technologies
- Views on food safety and sources of information about safety issues

Conclusion & Significance: While consumers have a significant desire to make sustainable purchases, many struggles to know how to recognize environmentally sustainable sources. Akin to this, many have a desire to know more about plant-based eating and note that they eat plant-based foods. However, the definition of a plant-based diet varies. In addition, while taste remains the top driver of food/beverage purchases, trust in a brand and recognizing the ingredients that go into a product are surprisingly impactful. Also, while many are confident in the safety of the food supply, foodborne illness from bacteria, chemicals in food and carcinogens remain the top concerns for consumers.

Biography

Tamika Sims is the Director of Food Technology Communications for the International Food Information Council (IFIC) Foundation in Washington, DC. She is also adjunct faculty at Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta, GA where she assists with the master’s in biotechnology program. She holds a BS in Biology from Spelman College, a MS in Biomedical Sciences from Georgia State University and a PhD in Virology/Immunology from Morehouse School of Medicine. Prior to joining IFIC, she worked for several years at the International Bottled Water Association (IBWA) and CropLife America (CLA).

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