



AgEcon SEARCH
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library

This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.

Help ensure our sustainability.

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search

<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>

aesearch@umn.edu

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

Consumer Understanding of Buying Local, Fresh, and Safe

Forrest Stegelin

Buying local, fresh, and safe is not just about direct marketing to consumers; there is a much broader cultural curiosity for locally produced goods that extends beyond food consumption. Contemporary food scares; awareness and concern about sustainability; desire for less processed and more fresh foods; and the increased demand for unique, distinctive, and handcrafted goods has elevated interest in the buying local movement.

Part of the fascination of buying locally produced foods culminated in best-selling books which heralded a cultural rediscovery of "real food." Local is also linked by consumers as a way to support the local community and local agriculture, as well as a way to return to the values of simplicity and relationships and trust.

So what do consumers understand about buying local, fresh, and safe? Undergraduate students in Food & Fiber Marketing surveyed 716 grocery store shoppers in rural south-central Georgia about their thoughts, perceptions, and actions about buying local. The survey results suggest that:

- Consumers are buying products they perceive to be locally made or produced in large numbers.
- "Made or produced within 100 miles" is a popular definition of "locally produced."

- Fruits, vegetables, meats, eggs, and dairy products are most commonly associated with "local."

- A local producer is more visible, more accountable, and more interested in providing safe food products to their own local community.

- Locally produced food products are becoming more cost competitive.

- Products that are sourced locally may be fresher, having had shorter travel distances.

- "Organic" or "naturally-grown" products make up a significant portion of local.

- Product narratives are important for making the local connection with suppliers.

- Consumers desire greater selections of locally sourced fruits, vegetables, nuts, meat, dairy, poultry, eggs, and fish.

- "Buy local" is a trend that is extending beyond retail or direct-market food venues and into restaurants and bed & breakfasts.

- Consumers want to trust where their food is coming from and to know it is nutritious, wholesome, and safe.

- Consumers' key attitudes toward "local" were "sustain me (basic needs and quality expectation)," "save me money (price versus value)," and "save me time."