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Consumer Perceptions and Attitudes toward Organic Aquatic Products

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A healthy diet would go a long way in helping to reshape the deteriorating health of many Americans and help to control the escalating costs of health care. One simple way consumers can improve their diet is by consuming seafood. Fish is high in protein and low in fat and calories, which makes it an ideal choice of protein for any health-conscious consumer. It appears that the increased awareness of the benefits of seafood is being recognized by consumers, as Americans consumed a record 16.3 pounds per capita of seafood in 2003, compared to 14.8 pounds in 2001. Most of the studies show that nutritional values and taste are two of the more important reasons why Americans consume seafood.

Since organic aquaculture is in an infant stage compared to other foods, this study documents consumers' perceptions and attitudes toward organic aquatic products. The main objectives of this study will be to understand consumer purchasing behav-

iors and perceptions about aquatic products—both organic and conventional—and to identify characteristics that are most important to seafood-purchasing consumers. The survey was conducted in 2005 among 802 seafood consumers in four different segments: Boston, Chicago, Colorado Springs, and Central New Jersey.

The results show that on average 67 percent of respondents indicated they would select organic fish/shellfish if they were presented with the opportunity. The survey shows that most people are willing to switch their primary seafood-shopping location to be able to purchase organic seafood. Overall, 50 percent of respondents are willing to switch and 42 percent are not. Most of the respondents indicated that they are willing to pay a premium for organic seafood, while 26 percent indicated that they are not willing to pay any premium for organic seafood.

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