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Who Are The Consumers Of Vidalia Onions?

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Two important marketing questions pertain to the effectiveness of the current promotion program to increase demand for Vidalia onions: the impact of quality on consumption and the impact of competition from other U.S. and imported sweet onions. Producers promote their product individually and through the Vidalia Onion Marketing Order. However, no comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of the promotion program has been conducted. Quality problems could occur as a result of varieties marketed, wholesale and retail handling procedures, and the impact of controlled storage on the consumer's perception of quality. A number of other marketing questions face the industry including the degree to which the Vidalia name—a registered trademark for onions grown in 18 counties of South Georgia—differentiates the product, affects the market for competitive onions, generates changes in consumer tastes and preferences, and develops a specific group of Vidalia onion consumers.

The overall objective of this study is to determine efficient advertising and promotion policies for Vidalia onions. More specific objectives of this

research are to develop the consumer profile for Vidalia onions by region of the United States with respect to demographic characteristics and to ascertain the most effective ways to promote and increase consumer demand for Vidalia onions.

The research involves conducting a series of surveys related to marketing and consumption of Vidalia onions throughout the United States. Telephone and mail surveys are used to collect information from Vidalia onion consumers. Mail surveys are also used to collect information from food editors of magazines and newspapers and from produce managers of grocery stores. Survey results from managers will lead to more efficient in-store promotion campaigns. Survey results from food editors of magazines and newspapers will reveal information on promotion campaigns for better advertising of Vidalia onions. In addition to regional and demographic characteristics of the respondents, the questionnaire is used to collect general and specific information related to consumer purchases and consumption of Vidalia onions and awareness of Vidalia onion advertising programs and promotional efforts.

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