Food Distribution Research Society

Journal of Food Distribution Research
Volume 56, Issue 2, pp. 54–84

What Drives U.S. Consumers to Buy Local and Organic Foods? Beliefs, Perceptions, and Motivations

Courtney Bir[a], Lixia H. Lambert[bⓅ], and K. Aleks Schaefer[c]

[a]*Associate Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics, 350 Agricultural Hall, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, USA*

[b]*Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics, 311 Agricultural Hall, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, USA*

[c]*Associate Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics, 308 Agricultural Hall, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, USA*

Abstract

We conducted an online survey in February 2023 to examine U.S. consumers' food expenditures, definitions of local and organic foods, and perceptions of eight belief statements. We identified key drivers of these beliefs using statistical analysis and regression modeling. Consumers indicated that purchasing local or organic foods enhances perceptions of taste, nutrition, health, safety, and environmental benefits. Notably, 60% of respondents believed local foods benefit the environment, compared to 53% for organic foods. Beliefs about taste, price, and nutrition strongly influence purchase decisions. These findings highlight opportunities for targeted advertising strategies that emphasize the environmental advantages of these foods.

Keywords: local foods, organic foods, perception, survey

ⓅCorresponding author: Tel: (405) 744-5395
Email: lixia.lambert@okstate.edu

Introduction

Local and organic foods have become cornerstones of sustainable food systems, yet consumer confusion about their attributes persists, complicating efforts to promote these products effectively. Over the past two decades, U.S. sales of local and organic foods are at record highs (Skorbiansky, 2025; Spalding, 2025). Certified organic farmland has tripled, with sales increasing from $609 million in 2002 to nearly $11 billion by 2019, whereas local food sales reached $9 billion in 2020 (USDA, 2022; Carlson et al., 2023). Despite this rapid growth, many consumers conflate the definitions of "local" and "organic," due in part to some overlap in attributes, creating ambiguity that challenges marketers, policy makers, and producers (Henryks and Pearson, 2010; Ditlevsen et al., 2020).

Governments, community organizations, and researchers have long advocated for local and organic foods, citing benefits like reduced carbon emissions, biodiversity conservation, improved public health, and strengthened local economies (Enthoven and Van den Broeck, 2021). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has played a central role in advancing organic farming and local food distribution networks (Peng, 2019). Consumers' motivations to purchase organic foods often center on health, safety, and environmental benefits, with many willing to pay a premium for these attributes (Roy, Ghosh, and Vashist, 2023). Organic buyers prioritize nutrition, taste, and sustainability over fairness or origin (Magkos, Avaniti, and Zampelas, 2006; Lusk and Briggmen, 2009; Lusk, Schroeder, and Tonsor, 2014; Neuhofer, Lusk, and Villas-Boas, 2023). However, Chang and Lusk (2009) examined the role of fairness in food purchasing decisions for organic foods, suggesting that labels and certification standards for organic foods could be adjusted to reflect these concerns, potentially improving consumer trust and demand. Kim, Lusk, and Brorsen (2018) found the main drivers behind purchasing organic food are health and safety concerns. Consumers who trust organic certification labels are more likely to purchase organic products, but not all consumers prefer organic food, even at comparable prices, to conventional options.

Similarly, local food buyers emphasize freshness, quality, and support for local economies, but definitions of "local" range from proximity-based criteria to broader cultural and economic dimensions (Blake, Mellor, and Crane, 2010; Granvik et al., 2017; Palmer et al., 2017). Ambiguity in these definitions can undermine consumer trust (Jia, 2021). Memery et al. (2015) concurrently used attributes, values, and personal characteristics/situational variables to explain shopping behavior for local food, finding purchases were motivated by local support rather than intrinsic product quality.

A significant overlap exists between consumers of local and organic foods (Ditlevsen et al., 2020). Research reveals that consumers often mix attributes, perceiving local products as organic or assuming farmers' market goods meet organic standards (Henryks and Pearson, 2010). Over time, preferences have shifted. While organic foods were historically favored for health and environmental attributes, local foods valued for freshness, affordability, and community support have gained prominence since the late 1990s (Adams and Salois, 2010).

Due to increased consumer interest, food manufacturers and retailers highlight the environmental and health benefits of their products on labels, including organic and locally sourced. These labeling practices have become an important marketing tool (Wilson and Lusk, 2020). However, the truth of these label claims can be questionable, making exaggerated or unclear claims about the environmental benefits of their products to attract environmentally conscious consumers. Others make standard environmental practices sound like additional benefits. This misconception misleads consumers, causing confusion and skepticism about claims.

This study investigates U.S. consumers' beliefs and perceptions regarding local and organic foods. Using data from a nationally representative online survey conducted in February 2023, we analyze how demographic and behavioral factors influence consumer perceptions. By identifying how consumers distinguish between local and organic products, these findings provide insights to improve consumer trust, guide marketing strategies, and support sustainable food systems. This research contributes to ongoing efforts in local food and organic food marketing and policy development.

Data and Methodology

Survey Design and Administration

We conducted an online survey in February 2023 using the Qualtrics platform (Silver Lake, 2024) to explore U.S. consumers' food expenditures, shopping behavior, and perceptions of local and organic foods. The survey instrument included questions on demographic characteristics, weekly food expenditures, definitions of local and organic foods, and agreement with eight belief statements. The survey instrument is further detailed in the next few sections and is also available in Appendix A. Respondents were required to be at least 18 years old and were recruited through Kantar's opt-in panel (Kantar, 2024). Oklahoma State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) deemed the study exempt.[1]

Demographics

To ensure the sample was representative of the U.S. population, we used quotas within Qualtrics for gender, income, education, and geographical region, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). A total of 1,000 respondents met the quota criteria and completed the survey, and the test of proportions confirmed the sample's demographic representativeness, with minor deviations in education levels.

Shopping Behavior

Respondents were asked questions about their shopping behavior, including how much they spent each week on food and what kind of information they reviewed when purchasing food. Specific questions regarding whether the respondent purchased local and/or organic foods and their definition of local were also included. Definitions of local were adapted from Bir et al. (2019)

[1] The IRB study number is: IRB-23-24.

following previous definition discussions by Blake, Melor, and Crane (2010) and Granvik et al. (2017). Definitions of local were geographical and included, "from my county of residence," "100 miles or less from my home," "from my county and neighboring counties," "from my state of residence," "from the United States," "not sure/don't know," and "other." Respondents were told to indicate the definition that best represented their opinion. Respondents were asked to indicate if they purchased local or organic food. Respondent demographics were compared statistically using the test of proportions.

Belief Statements

Beliefs and motivations for purchasing local and organic foods have been documented throughout the literature but are rarely compared within the same dataset. Consumer preferences are continuously evolving, warranting re-evaluation of similar themes. Early research on U.S. consumers indicated that consumers are motivated to purchase local food in part to support local producers, businesses, and economies (Thilmany, Bond, and Bond, 2008). However, local food does not inherently guarantee ecological sustainability, such as lower emissions, and the nutritional quality of local food can vary (Coelho, Coelho, and Egerer, 2018). Organic is often attributed to health, nutrition, taste, safety characteristics, and environmental benefits (Kim, Lusk, and Brorsen, 2018; Roy, Gosh, and Vashist, 2023). Using the belief statements for local foods outlined in Bir et al. (2019) and other attributes discussed in the literature, the belief statements for organic and local were designed.

Respondents were asked their level of agreement from "1" (agree) to "5" (disagree) for eight statements regarding local food and seven statements regarding organic food. Statements for both local and organic food included, "*Local (organic) food is more expensive than other food,*" "*Local (organic) food tastes better, "Purchasing local (organic) food is better for the environment,*" "*Purchasing local (organic) food is more nutritious,*" "*Local (organic) food is healthier,*" and "*Local (organic) food is safer.*" For local food, additional statements included, "*Local food is organic,*" and "*I like to know who produces the food I eat.*" For organic food, the statement, "*Organic food is local,*" was included.

Analytical Methods

We used statistical and econometric methods to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics summarized respondents' demographic characteristics, weekly expenditures, and shopping behavior. The test of proportions assessed whether the sample was representative of the U.S. population based on gender, income, education, and region. The test of proportions was also used to evaluate demographic differences among those who purchased organic and local foods.

The beliefs regarding local and organic food were evaluated in two ways. First, to characterize the data, a condensed version of the scale was used. Selections of 1 and 2 were condensed to "agree," 3 was considered "neutral," and 4 and 5 were condensed to "disagree." Next, the test of proportions was used to evaluate differences between "agree," "neutral," and "disagree," as well as across statements.

To evaluate the key drivers of consumer beliefs, we estimated a series of probit models. Each model used agreement with the belief statement as the dependent variable (e.g., "Local food is more expensive than other food."). Agreement was defined as above—selection of "1" or "2" in the 5-part scale, with "neutral" and "disagree" serving as zero. Independent variables included demographic characteristics (e.g., age, income, education, region), shopping behaviors (e.g., purchasing local or organic food), and additional factors, such as looking at price, certification labels, nutritional information, or safety information when shopping. Probit models were tailored to specific belief statements. For example, models for statements about environmental benefits included variables capturing whether respondents reviewed certification or product information, whereas models about nutrition and health included variables related to reviewing nutritional information.

Results

Sample Description

The survey sample closely mirrored the U.S. Census in terms of gender, age, income, and regional representation, as shown in Table 1. Notable deviations included a lower percentage of respondents without a high school diploma (6% compared to 11% in the U.S. Census) and a higher percentage with a college degree (33% versus 29%). The average household included two adults and 0.65 children. These demographic characteristics provide a robust foundation for analyzing consumer beliefs and behaviors.

Table 1. Demographic Information (n = 1,000)

Demographic Variable	Percentage of Respondents	U.S. Census
Gender		
Male	49	49
Female	51	51
Age		
18–24	12	12
25–34	18	18
35–44	17	16
45–54	16	16
55–65	17	17
65+	21	21
Income		
$0–$24,999	18	18
$25,000–$49,999	19	20
$50,000–$74,999	18	17
$75,000–$99,999	13	13
$100,000 and higher	31	31

Table 1 (cont.)

Demographic Variable	Percentage of Respondents	U.S. Census
Education		
Did not graduate from high school	6Ψ	11
Graduated from high school, did not attend college	27	27
Attended college, no degree earned	21	21
Attended college, associate's or bachelor's degree earned	33Ψ	29
Attended college, graduate or professional degree earned	14	13
Region of residence		
Northeast	18	17
South	39	38
Midwest	21	21
West	23	24
Household number	Mean	
Adults (n = 999)[1]	2	
Children (n = 998)[1]	0.65	

Notes: ΨIndicates the percentage of respondents is statistically different than the U.S. Census at the 0.05 level.
[1]Due to the write in nature of this question, not all respondents participated.

Shopping Behavior

Figure 1 and Table 2 illustrate the distribution of weekly food expenditures across respondents. Respondents reported varied weekly food expenditures, with the largest proportion (23%) spending $100–$149 per week, followed by 20% spending $150–$199, as detailed in Table 2. Only 5% of respondents reported spending more than $300 weekly on food.

In terms of purchasing behavior, 74% of respondents indicated they purchase local foods, while 64% purchase organic foods (see Table 2). Definitions of local food varied, with 23% defining it as coming from within 100 miles of their county and neighboring counties, 22% defining it as coming from their state, and only 6% defining it as coming from the United States (see Table 2). These variations underscore the ambiguity surrounding "local" as a concept, which may influence consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions.

Consumers also reported the types of information they reviewed when shopping. Price was the most frequently reviewed attribute (80%), followed by sell-by dates (68%) and nutritional information (57%), whereas certifications were reviewed by only 11% of respondents. These results highlight an opportunity for producers and marketers to emphasize certifications and labeling to build trust and differentiate products.

Figure 1. Weekly Food Expenditures of Respondents

Table 2. Shopping Behavior (n = 1,000)

	Percentage of Respondents
Amount household spends each week on total food consumption including at home, groceries, restaurants, take-outs	
Less than $50	8
$50–$99	16
$100–$149	23
$150–$199	20
$200–$249	14
$250–$299	11
$300 or more	5
Don't know	3
Information that respondents assess in reviewing food product packaging (multiple selections allowed)	
Nutritional information	57
Price	80
Food safety information	33
Production information	40
Certifications	11
Product expiration "sell-by" date	68

Table 2 (cont.)

	Percentage of Respondents
None	5
Other	1
Purchases local foods	
Yes	74
No	11
Don't know	15
Respondents' definition of "local food"	
From my county of residence	18
100 miles or less from my home	23
From my county and neighboring counties	23
From my state of residence	22
From the United States	6
Not sure/don't know	8
Other (please describe)	1
Purchases organic foods	
Yes	64
No	30
Don't know	6

Demographic Comparisons on Local and Organic Purchasers

Demographic differences between purchasers of local and organic foods are presented in Table 3. Purchasing patterns were consistent across genders and regions of residence, with no statistically significant differences. However, age showed notable variation. For organic foods, a higher percentage of respondents aged 35–44 (75%) or 25–34 (72%) purchased organic when compared to those aged 55–65 (59%) and those aged over 65 (48%). Similarly, for local foods, a higher percentage of respondents aged 35–44 (82%) purchased organic when compared to those aged 18–24 (71%), aged 55–65 (69%) and those aged over 65 (67%). A lower percentage of respondents aged 65 and older purchased organic food (48%) when compared to all other age groups. A lower percentage of respondents aged 65 and older purchased local food (67%) when compared to those aged 25–34 (77%), 35–44 (82%), and 45–54 (80%). In general, higher percentages of all age groups purchased local food, which may indicate more opportunity for cross-age marketing for local foods.

Income also influences purchasing behavior. Respondents with higher incomes ($100,000 or more) were more likely to purchase local (83%) and organic (75%) foods than those with lower incomes. Similarly, education followed a clear trend: college graduates were significantly more likely to purchase these products than respondents with lower education levels. These findings suggest that higher income and education levels may be associated with greater awareness and ability to pay for local and organic foods. Those with lower income levels may have a preference for local and

organic foods but may be unable to afford them. Although there is a lower percentage of those respondents, when compared to respondents with higher incomes (for example, nearly half [45%] of those with an income of $0–$24,999 purchased organic, and more than half [59%] purchased local foods), there is still a high percentage of lower income respondents who would choose local and organic, given potential financial constraints. This result may be related to the incorporation of food stamp programs into farmers' markets, sometimes with discount schemes (USDA, 2024). Many nonprofit organizations have information and programs to help consumers with low incomes access local and organic foods.

Table 3. Demographic Information by Purchasing Behavior—Percentage of Respondents (N = 1,000)

Demographic Variable	*n*	Purchases Organic Food	Purchases Local Food
Gender			
Male	492	65a[1]	73a
Female	508	64a	75a
Age			
18–24	119	70ab	71ab
25–34	176	72a	77acd
35–44	165	75a	82d
45–54	161	68ab	80ad
55–65	167	59b	69bc
65+	212	48c[1]	67b
Income			
$0–$24,999	181	45d	59c
$25,000–$49,999 (n = 194)	194	59a	71a
$50,000–$74,999 (n = 181)	181	63ab	70a
$75,000–$99,999 (n = 130)	130	73bc	84b
$100,000 and higher	314	75c	83b
Education			
Did not graduate from high school	57	47d	65ab
Graduated from high school, did not attend college	270	57a	66a
Attended college, no degree earned	211	62ab	73ab
Attended college, associate's or bachelor's degree earned	326	72c	82c
Attended college, graduate or professional degree earned	136	71bc	77bc
Region of residence			
Northeast	175	60a	79a
South	392	65a	72a
Midwest	208	64a	75a
West	225	67a	73a

[1]Matching letters indicate the percentage of respondents is not statistically different at the 0.05 level. Mismatched letters indicate the percentages are statistically different. For example, the percentage of males and females who buy organic is not statistically different. Conversely, the percentage of respondents aged 65+ is statistically different from all other organic shopping age categories.

Beliefs about Local and Organic Foods

Respondents' beliefs about local and organic foods are summarized in Figure 2 and Table 4. Regarding specific local statements, "*I like to know who produces the food I eat*" (62% agree) and "*Purchasing local food is better for the environment*" (60% agree), the percentage of respondents who agreed was not statistically different and was higher than all other local statements. Only 31% of respondents agreed with the statement, "*Local food is organic*," which was lower than all other local statements.

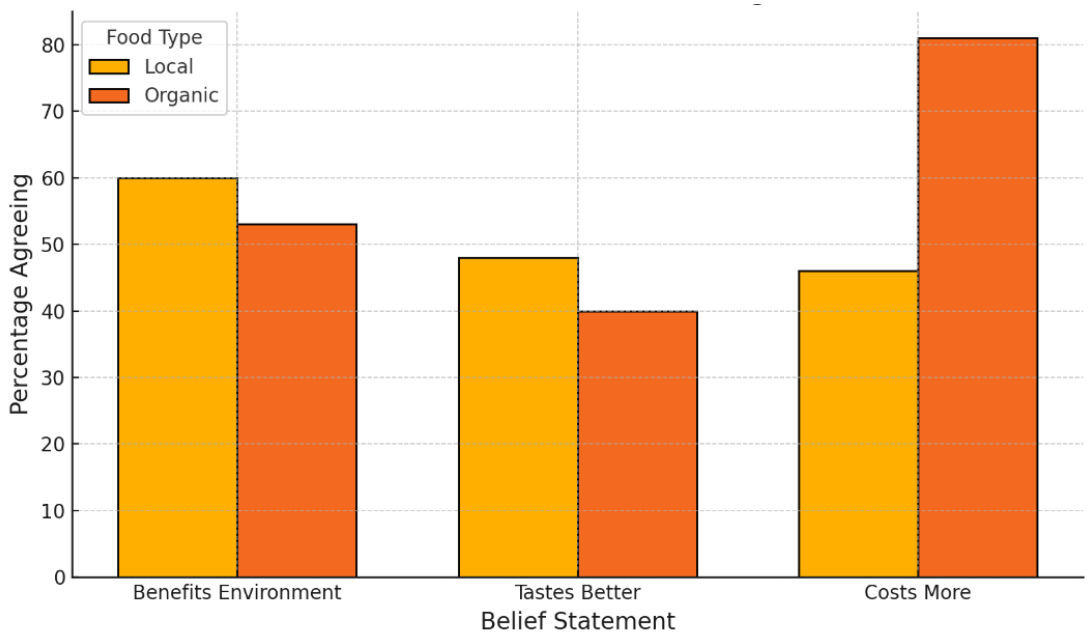

Figure 2. Comparison of Agreements Regarding Beliefs about Local and Organic Foods as Compared to Other Food

Table 4. Beliefs Regarding Local and Organic Food (N = 1,000), Percentage of Respondents

	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree
Statements about local food			
Local food is more expensive than other food.	46ab[1]Ψ	39d Ψ	16a Ψ
Local food is organic.	31e	52a	17a Ψ
Local food tastes better.	48a Ψ	45b	8bc Ψ
I like to know who produces the food I eat.	62c	30e	8bd
Purchasing local food is better for the environment.	60c Ψ	34f	6c Ψ
Purchasing local food is more nutritious.	43bd Ψ	47bc Ψ	11d Ψ
Local food is healthier.	43bd Ψ	48abc Ψ	9bd Ψ
Local food is safer.	41d Ψ	51ac Ψ	9bd Ψ

Table 4 (cont.)

	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree
Statements about organic food			
Organic food is more expensive than other food.	81c Ψ	16c Ψ	3c Ψ
Organic food is local.	26d	52d	22d Ψ
Organic food tastes better.	40e Ψ	42a	18e Ψ
Purchasing organic food is better for the environment.	53a Ψ	37b	11a Ψ
Purchasing organic food is more nutritious.	48b Ψ	38b Ψ	14b Ψ
Organic food is healthier.	56a Ψ	32e Ψ	13ab Ψ
Organic food is safer.	49ab Ψ	39ab Ψ	13ab Ψ

[1]Matching letters indicates the percentage of respondents is not statistically different at the 0.05 level. Mismatched letters indicate the percentages are statistically different. Comparison is made within the column (for example, "Agree") within either the local or organics foods statements.
Ψ Indicates, for corresponding questions, that the percentage of respondents for the local food statement and the matching organic food statement are statistically different.

Within the organic food statements, a higher percentage agreed (81%) with the statement, "*Organic food is more expensive than other food,*" compared to all other statements. A lower percentage (26%) of respondents agreed with the statement, "*Organic food is local,*" when compared to all other statements. Just over half (53%) of respondents agreed that "*Purchasing organic food is better for the environment*."

Results of a comparison of the organic and local statements showed that there were no statistical differences in the percentage of respondents who agreed with the statements, "*Local food is organic*" (31%), and "*Organic food is local*" (26%). A higher percentage of respondents agreed with the statements, "*Organic food is more expensive than other food*" (81%), "*Purchasing organic food is more nutritious*" (48%), "*Organic food is healthier*" (56%), and "*Organic food is safer*" (49%), when compared to the local food statements (46%, 43%, 43%, and 41%, respectively). Conversely, a lower percentage of respondents agreed with the statements, "*Organic food tastes better*" (40%), and that purchasing organic food is better for the environment (53%) when compared to the local statements (48% and 60%, respectively). These findings highlight the need for targeted messaging. For example, marketing campaigns for local foods could emphasize taste and environmental benefits, whereas those for organic foods may benefit from addressing affordability concerns.

Probit Model Results

Probit model results for agreement with beliefs about local foods are presented in Tables 5 and 6, and results for organic foods are shown in Tables 7 and 8. The models examine the effects of demographic characteristics, purchasing behaviors, and information-seeking practices on consumer beliefs. Comparing these tables yields various insights.

Table 5. Probit Models of Beliefs Regarding Local Food, Marginal Effects (standard error) (N = 998)

	Local Food Is More Expensive Than Other Food	**Local Food Is Organic**	**Local Food Tastes Better**	**I Like to Know Who Produces the Food I Eat**
Female	0.010	-0.059**	-0.029	-0.004
	(0.032)	(0.029)	(0.031)	(0.031)
Age				
18–24	0.148**	0.298***	0.080	0.068
	(0.058)	(0.050)	(0.056)	(0.056)
25–34	0.078	0.202***	0.111**	0.075
	(0.054)	(0.048)	(0.052)	(0.052)
35–44	0.100*	0.115**	0.074	0.120**
	(0.058)	(0.052)	(0.056)	(0.055)
45–54	0.076	0.127**	0.061	0.078
	(0.054)	(0.049)	(0.052)	(0.051)
55–65	-0.009	0.016	-0.013	-0.005
	(0.051)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.047)
65-plus	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted
Income				
$0–$24,999	-0.000	0.002	0.013	-0.022
	(0.052)	(0.046)	(0.050)	(0.049)
$25,000–$49,999	-0.078	0.034	-0.004	-0.016
	(0.047)	(0.042)	(0.046)	(0.045)
$50,000–$74,999	0.070	-0.010	-0.040	-0.006
	(0.046)	(0.042)	(0.045)	(0.044)
$75,000–$99,999	0.023	0.066	0.039	0.020
	(0.051)	(0.044)	(0.049)	(0.050)
$100,000 and higher	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted
Education				
Did not graduate from high school	0.003	-0.018	-0.009	0.006
	(0.083)	(0.075)	(0.081)	(0.078)
Graduated from high school, did not attend college	-0.025	0.015	0.055	0.082
	(0.055)	(0.049)	(0.053)	(0.051)
Attended college, no degree earned	-0.010	-0.014	0.060	0.106*
	(0.056)	(0.051)	(0.054)	(0.053)
Attended college, associate's or bachelor's degree earned	0.001	-0.007	-0.007	0.069
	(0.050)	(0.045)	(0.048)	(0.047)
Attended college, graduate or professional degree earned	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted

Table 5 (cont.)

	Local Food Is More Expensive Than Other Food	Local Food Is Organic	Local Food Tastes Better	I Like to Know Who Produces the Food I Eat
Region of residence				
Northeast	-0.042	-0.017	-0.023	-0.033
	(0.050)	(0.045)	(0.048)	(0.047)
South	-0.038	-0.010	-0.019	0.005
	(0.042)	(0.037)	(0.041)	(0.040)
Midwest	0.032	-0.025	0.017	0.026
	(0.047)	(0.042)	(0.046)	(0.045)
West	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted
Has a kid	0.069*	0.084**	0.087**	0.050
	(0.038)	(0.033)	(0.036)	(0.037)
Purchases local	0.069*	0.146***	0.298***	0.265***
	(0.038)	(0.035)	(0.034)	(0.032)
Definition of Local				
County of residence	0.372***	0.230***	0.238***	0.142**
	(0.071)	(0.065)	(0.068)	(0.063)
100 miles or less	0.275***	0.061	0.151**	0.109*
	(0.071)	(0.066)	(0.068)	(0.062)
From county or neighboring county	0.266***	0.084	0.113*	0.102*
	(0.071)	(0.065)	(0.068)	(0.061)
From state of residence	0.259***	0.050	0.146**	0.081
	(0.072)	(0.066)	(0.068)	(0.062)
From the US	0.361***	0.166**	0.322***	0.175*
	(0.088)	(0.079)	(0.084)	(0.081)
Not sure/don't know	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted
Looks at price	-0.007			
	(0.032)			
Looks at certificates		0.051		
		(0.045)		
Looks at product information		0.037		
		(0.029)		
R^2	0.593	0.126	0.109	0.091

Note: Single, double, and triple asterisks (*, **, ***) indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels.

Table 6. Probit Models of Beliefs Regarding Local Food, Marginal Effects (standard error) (N = 998)

	Purchasing Local Food Is Better for the Environment	**Purchasing Local Food Is More Nutritious**	**Local Food Is Healthier**	**Local Food Is Safer**
Female	0.055*	0.005	0.008	-0.011
	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.030)
Age				
18–24	0.248***	0.186**	0.136**	0.183**
	(0.055)	(0.055)	(0.055)	(0.054)
25–34	0.146**	0.207***	0.218***	0.255***
	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.050)
35–44	0.185**	0.125**	0.074	0.128**
	(0.054)	(0.055)	(0.054)	(0.054)
45–54	0.107**	0.049	0.028	0.089*
	(0.050)	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.051)
55–65	0.056	0.013	0.003	0.085*
	(0.047)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.049)
65-plus	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted
Income				
$0–$24,999	0.023	0.005	-0.002	0.024
	(0.049)	(0.049)	(0.049)	(0.048)
$25,000–$49,999	0.015	-0.053	0.035	0.061
	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.044)
$50,000–$74,999	0.013	0.027	-0.001	-0.066
	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.044)
$75,000–$99,999	0.064	0.107**	0.023	0.052
	(0.049)	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.047)
$100,000 and higher	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted
Education				
Did not graduate from high school	-0.126	-0.038	0.094	0.048
	(0.077)	(0.080)	(0.080)	(0.078)
Graduated from high school, did not attend college	-0.064	0.071	0.164**	0.083
	(0.051)	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.052)
Attended college, no degree earned	-0.025	0.043	0.137**	0.062
	(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.053)
Attended college, associate's or bachelor's degree earned	-0.002	-0.009	0.122**	0.041
	(0.047)	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.048)

Table 6 (cont.)

	Purchasing Local Food Is Better for the Environment	Purchasing Local Food Is More Nutritious	Local Food Is Healthier	Local Food Is Safer
Attended college, graduate or professional degree earned	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted
Region of residence				
Northeast	-0.041	0.023	0.053	-0.005
	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.047)
South	-0.044	0.039	0.017	0.027
	(0.039)	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.039)
Midwest	-0.036	0.012	0.006	0.025
	(0.044)	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.044)
West	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted
Has a kid	-0.019	0.046	0.060*	0.097**
	(0.036)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.034)
Purchases local	0.229***	0.218***	0.241***	0.209***
	(0.032)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.036)
Definition of local				
County of residence	0.309***	0.202*	0.222**	0.204**
	(0.064)	(0.068)	(0.068)	(0.068)
100 miles or less	0.304***	0.049	0.082	0.139**
	(0.063)	(0.068)	(0.068)	(0.068)
From county or neighboring county	0.317***	0.114*	0.103	0.121*
	(0.062)	(0.067)	(0.068)	(0.068)
From state of residence	0.188**	0.068	0.050	0.110
	(0.064)	(0.068)	(0.068)	(0.068)
From the U.S.	0.235**	0.190**	0.212**	0.276**
	(0.080)	(0.083)	(0.083)	(0.082)
Not sure/don't know	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted
Looks at price				
Looks at certificates				
Looks at product information		0.043	0.089**	
		(0.031)	(0.030)	
Looks at nutrition information		0.084**	0.050	
		(0.031)	(0.031)	
Looks at safety information				0.097**
				(0.031)
R^2	0.115	0.118	0.123	0.130

Note: Single, double, and triple asterisks (*, **, ***) indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels.

Demographic Insights

Gender was statistically significant in only a few models (see Tables 5–8). Being female decreased the likelihood of agreeing with the statements, "*Local food is organic*," and "*Organic food is more expensive than other food*." Conversely, being female increased the likelihood of agreement that purchasing local food is better for the environment.

Table 7. Probit Models of Beliefs Regarding Organic Food, Marginal Effects (standard error) (N = 998)

	Organic Food Is More Expensive Than Other Food[1]	**Organic Food Is Local**	**Organic Food Tastes Better**	**Purchasing Organic Food Is Better for the Environment**
Female	0.062**	-0.039	-0.020	-0.020
	(0.025)	(0.027)	(0.029)	(0.030)
Age				
18–24	-0.086*	0.225***	0.218***	0.254***
	(0.047)	(0.050)	(0.053)	(0.055)
25–34	-0.096**	0.215***	0.255***	0.231***
	(0.043)	(0.047)	(0.049)	(0.051)
35–44	-0.020	0.160**	0.169**	0.218***
	(0.048)	(0.050)	(0.053)	(0.054)
45–54	-0.051	0.067	0.130**	0.150**
	(0.043)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.050)
55–65	-0.048	0.082*	0.107**	0.148**
	(0.040)	(0.048)	(0.049)	(0.047)
65-plus	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted
Income				
$0–$24,999	-0.052	0.116**	0.140**	0.023
	(0.039)	(0.044)	(0.047)	(0.048)
$25,000–$49,999	0.023	0.110**	0.086**	0.019
	(0.038)	(0.041)	(0.043)	(0.045)
$50,000–$74,999	0.010	0.098**	0.031	0.014
	(0.038)	(0.040)	(0.042)	(0.043)
$75,000–$99,999	0.005	0.142**	0.071	0.080
	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.046)	(0.048)
$100,000 and higher	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted
Education				
Did not graduate from high school	0.008	0.039	-0.053	-0.071
	(0.065)	(0.068)	(0.076)	(0.079)
Graduated from high school, did not attend college	-0.030	-0.017	-0.001	0.020
	(0.044)	(0.047)	(0.050)	(0.051)

Table 7 (cont.)

	Organic Food Is More Expensive Than Other Food[1]	Organic Food Is Local	Organic Food Tastes Better	Purchasing Organic Food Is Better for the Environment
Attended college, no degree earned	-0.010	-0.061	-0.032	-0.008
	(0.045)	(0.048)	(0.051)	(0.052)
Attended college, associate's or bachelor's degree earned	0.012	-0.032	-0.001	0.042
	(0.040)	(0.043)	(0.045)	(0.047)
Attended college, graduate or professional degree earned	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted
Region of residence				
Northeast	0.017	-0.038	-0.028	0.026
	(0.040)	(0.042)	(0.045)	(0.047)
South	-0.032	-0.017	-0.035	-0.048
	(0.033)	(0.035)	(0.038)	(0.039)
Midwest	0.019	-0.072*	-0.037	-0.055
	(0.038)	(0.041)	(0.043)	(0.044)
West	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted
Has a kid	-0.007	0.082**	0.094**	0.003
	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.033)	(0.035)
Purchases organic	0.116***	0.145***	0.348***	0.318***
	(0.025)	(0.030)	(0.027)	(0.026)
Looks at price	0.096***			
	(0.025)			
Looks at certificates		0.121**		
		(0.041)		
Looks at product information		-0.002		
		(0.028)		
R^2	0.075	0.119	0.160	0.135

Note: Single, double, and triple asterisks (*, **, ***) indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels.

Table 8. Probit Models of Beliefs Regarding Local Food, Marginal Effects (standard error) (N = 998)

	Purchasing Organic Food Is More Nutritious	**Organic Food Is Healthier**	**Organic Food Is Safer**
Female	-0.017	0.042	0.028
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Age			
18–24	0.327***	0.152**	0.227***
	(0.052)	(0.053)	(0.053)
25–34	0.279***	0.174***	0.251***
	(0.048)	(0.049)	(0.049)
35–44	0.177**	0.082	0.195***
	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.052)
45–54	0.142**	0.086*	0.199***
	(0.049)	(0.049)	(0.048)
55–65	0.095**	0.021	0.106**
	(0.047)	(0.046)	(0.047)
65-plus	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted
Income			
$0–$24,999	0.120**	0.080*	0.066
	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.047)
$25,000–$49,999	0.097**	0.081*	0.086**
	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.042)
$50,000–$74,999	0.042	0.030	0.090**
	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.042)
$75,000–$99,999	0.121**	0.049	0.119**
	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.046)
$100,000 and higher	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted
Education			
Did not graduate from high school	0.151**	0.095	0.050
	(0.076)	(0.077)	(0.075)
Graduated from high school, did not attend college	0.057	0.005	0.007
	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.049)
Attended college, no degree earned	0.034	-0.003	0.022
	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.050)
Attended college, associate's or bachelor's degree earned	0.016	-0.029	0.055
	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.044)
Attended college, graduate or professional degree earned	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted

Table 8 (cont.)

	Purchasing Organic Food Is More Nutritious	Organic Food Is Healthier	Organic Food Is Safer
Region of residence			
Northeast	0.001	0.020	-0.013
	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.045)
South	-0.051	0.001	0.029
	(0.037)	(0.038)	(0.037)
Midwest	-0.105**	-0.030	0.021
	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.042)
West	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted
Has a kid	0.094**	0.049	0.035
	(0.034)	(0.035)	(0.034)
Purchases organic	0.291***	0.338***	0.344***
	(0.028)	(0.025)	(0.025)
Looks at price			
Looks at certificates			
Looks at product information	0.070**	0.114***	
	(0.030)	(0.029)	
Looks at nutrition information	0.082**	0.063**	
	(0.030)	(0.030)	
Looks at safety information			0.111***
			(0.029)
R^2	0.181	0.174	0.193

Note: Single, double, and triple asterisks (*, **, ***) indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels.

Age was a significant predictor of beliefs about both local and organic foods (see Tables 5–8). Younger respondents (aged 18–54) were more likely to agree with the statement, "*Local food is organic,*" and "*Purchasing local food is better for the environment,*" when compared to older respondents (65+). Age groups 18–44 and 55–65 were more likely to agree that organic food was local, when compared to those 65 and older. Those aged 18–44 were more likely to agree that purchasing local food is more nutritious. Those aged 18–34 were more likely to agree that local foods are healthier than other foods and were less likely to agree that organic food is more expensive when compared to the 65+ group. Age groups 18–34 and 45–54 were more likely to agree that organic food was healthier than those 65 and older. All younger age groups were more likely to agree that local and organic food is safer, organic food tastes better, purchasing organic food is better for the environment, and organic is more nutritious compared to those 65 and older.

Income had little statistical significance in the local food models (see Tables 5–8). Having an income of $75,000–$99,999 increased the likelihood of agreement that purchasing local food is

more nutritious when compared to an income of $100,000 and higher (see Table 6). Being in any of the lower income groups increased the likelihood of agreement with the statement that organic food is local, compared to incomes of $100,000 and higher. An income between $0–$49,999 increased the likelihood of agreeing with the belief that organic food tastes better, and organic food is healthier. Trends were mixed for the statements, "*Purchasing organic food is more nutritious*," and "*Organic food is safer*."

Attending college with no degree earned increased the likelihood of agreeing with the statement "*I like to know who produces the food I eat,*" when compared to those with a graduate or professional degree. Graduating from high school, attending college without a degree earned, and attending college with a degree earned all increased the likelihood of agreeing with the statement local food is healthier compared to having a graduate or professional degree. Not graduating from high school increased the likelihood of agreeing with the statement purchasing organic food is more nutritious.

Residence in the Midwest decreased the likelihood of agreeing with the statement that organic food is local and that purchasing organic food is more nutritious. Having a child increased the likelihood of agreement with the statements that local food is more expensive and healthier, local food is organic (and the reverse), and local and organic food tastes better and is healthier.

Purchasing Behavior Insights

Purchasing local or organic foods strongly influenced consumer beliefs. Purchasing either organic or local foods increased the likelihood of belief in every one of their respective models, likely reflecting confirmation bias. Klayman (1995, p. 387) gives several sources of confirmation bias including, "Your interpretation of the information you receive might be biased in favor of your hypothesis. For example, you may regard hypothesis confirming data as trustworthy and disconfirming data as dubious." Careful interpretation of belief systems for those who do and do not purchase is important when making projections regarding potential increases in purchases of organic or local foods.

Definition of Local

The impact of the respondent's definition of local is mixed (see Table 6). Having any definition increased the likelihood of agreeing with the statements, "*Local food is more expensive than other food,*" "*Local food tastes better,*" and "*Purchasing local food is better for the environment,*" when compared to not sure/don't know. Having a definition of county of residence and from the U.S. increased the likelihood of agreeing with the statements that "*Local food is healthier,*" and "*Local food is organic.*" Any definition other than from state of residence increased the likelihood of agreeing with the statements, "*Local food is safer,*" and "*I like to know who produces the food I eat.*" A definition of county of residence, from county or neighboring county, and from the U.S. all increased the likelihood of agreeing that purchasing local food is more nutritious when compared to not sure/don't know.

Information-Seeking Behavior

Interestingly, looking at price was not statistically significant for the belief that local food is more expensive, but increased the likelihood of agreeing with the statement that organic food is more expensive. Looking at certificates increased the likelihood of agreeing with the belief that organic food is local, but was insignificant for the belief that local food is organic. This finding may be in part due to a lack of labeling at farmers' markets where many local foods are purchased. Looking at product information increased the likelihood of agreeing with the statements local food is healthier, purchasing organic food is more nutritious, and organic food is healthier. Looking at nutrition information increased the likelihood of agreeing with the beliefs that purchasing local and organic food is more nutritious and organic food is healthier. Looking at safety information increased the likelihood of believing that organic and local food is safer.

Discussion and Implications

This study provides valuable insights into U.S. consumers' beliefs and perceptions about local and organic foods, addressing critical gaps in the literature on sustainable food systems (Enthoven and Van den Broeck, 2021; Adams and Salois, 2010). By analyzing how demographic characteristics, purchasing behaviors, and information-seeking practices influence these perceptions, the findings highlight opportunities for targeted strategies in marketing, policy, and production.

Summary of Findings

Consumers consistently perceived local foods as more environmentally beneficial and better tasting than organic foods. Sixty percent of respondents agreed that local foods benefit the environment, compared to 53% for organic foods. However, organic foods were strongly associated with higher costs, a perception held by 81% of respondents. These findings reinforce the importance of addressing affordability concerns for organic foods and leveraging positive associations for local foods, such as taste and environmental benefits.

Demographic patterns revealed key opportunities for segmentation. Younger consumers were more likely to hold positive beliefs about local and organic foods, particularly regarding health and environmental benefits. Previously, Zepeda and Li (2006) found that gender, age, education, race, and religion had no significant impact on buying local food. Gundala and Singh (2021) found that gender did not impact the purchase of organic food; however, income, age, and education did affect consumers' actual purchases. Higher income and college-educated individuals were also more likely to purchase these products in this study, similar to the findings of Dimitri and Dettman (2012), suggesting that awareness and financial resources play a significant role in adoption. Previous studies showed similar results. They found that lower income households are less likely to purchase local foods, with gender and education having varied effects (Qi, Rabinowitz, and Cambell, 2017; Fernández-Ferrín et al., 2016; Brown, 2003; Jekanowski, Williams, and Schiek, 2000). In contrast, older adults and lower income consumers were less likely to purchase local or organic foods, highlighting the need for tailored interventions, such as subsidies or outreach efforts to address accessibility and cost concerns.

Implications for Marketing and Policy

Purchasing behaviors strongly influenced consumer beliefs, suggesting potential confirmation bias. Respondents who purchased both local and organic foods held stronger positive beliefs about organic food's environmental benefits. Cross-promotional strategies that emphasize the shared benefits of these categories could expand consumer engagement. Although in the past attributes for local and organic foods were often blurred, as standards became clearer, distinct differences in preference have occurred (Adams and Salois, 2010). The growing differentiation between organic and local food is reflected in the survey participants' ability to correctly identify the inaccuracies in the statements, "*Organic food is local*," and "*Local food is organic*."

Additionally, respondents who reviewed certifications, nutritional information, or product labels expressed stronger positive beliefs, particularly for organic foods. Marketers and producers should prioritize transparency and certification labeling to enhance trust and differentiate products in competitive markets (Wilson and Lusk, 2020).

The persistent ambiguity in the definition of "local" continues to challenge consumer understanding (Granvik et al., 2017; Jia, 2021). The majority of respondents selected the option, "*My state of residence or closer*," which was similar to the findings of Bir et al. (2019). Very few people selected "*From the United States*," indicating that for most people, local is more than just domestic (within the United States) production. Standardized definitions or clearer labeling could mitigate this issue and improve consumer confidence. Zepeda and Leviten-Reid (2004) conducted a focus group to evaluate definitions of local foods and found that most respondents use driving time to measure distance. Respondents who reported using this method typically suggested local was less than seven hours. Other respondents indicated similarly to this study choosing within a state, neighboring counties, or within neighboring states (Zepeda and Leviten-Reid, 2004).

Similarly, the low engagement with certification labels (reviewed by only 11% of respondents) represents a missed opportunity for building trust in organic products. Policy makers and producers should explore ways to make certification information more accessible and relevant to consumers.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is not without limitations. The use of an online survey introduces potential sample biases, particularly regarding education levels, which may skew results toward more environmentally conscious attitudes. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data may limit the generalizability of findings. Future research could explore longitudinal changes in consumer perceptions, investigate regional variations in greater depth, or examine the role of social norms in shaping beliefs about local and organic foods.

Conclusion

By identifying the key drivers of consumer beliefs about local and organic foods, this study offers actionable insights for marketers, policy makers, and producers. Addressing cost perceptions,

enhancing labeling transparency, and tailoring strategies to demographic segments can help stakeholders better align with consumer preferences. These efforts have the potential to support the growth of local and organic food markets while fostering sustainable food systems.

References

Adams, D.C., and M.J. Salois. 2010. "Local Versus Organic: A Turn in Consumer Preferences and Willingness-to-Pay." *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems* 25(4): 331–341.

Bir, C., J. Lai, N.O. Widmar, N. Thompson, J. Ellett, and C. Crosslin. 2019. "'There's No Place Like Home': Inquiry into Preferences for Local Foods." *Journal of Food Distribution Research* 50(1): 29–45.

Blake, M.K., J. Mellor, and L. Crane. 2010. "Buying Local Food: Shopping Practices, Place, and Consumption Networks in Defining Food as 'Local'." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 100(2): 409–426.

Brown, C. 2003. "Consumers' Preferences for Locally Produced Food: A Study in Southeast Missouri." *American Journal of Alternative Agriculture* 18(4): 213–224.

Carlson, A., C. Greene, S.R. Skorbiansky, C. Hitaj, K. Ha, M. Cavigelli, P. Ferrier, and W. McBride. 2023. *U.S. Organic Production, Markets, Consumers, and Policy*, *2000-21*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

Chang, J.B., and J.L. Lusk. 2009. "Fairness and Food Choice." *Food Policy* 34(6): 483–491.

Coelho, F.C., E.M. Coelho, and M. Egerer. 2018. "Local Food: Benefits and Failings due to Modern Agriculture." *Scientia Agricola* 75: 84–94.

Ditlevsen, K., S. Denver, T. Christensen, and J. Lassen. 2020. "A Taste for Locally Produced Food-Values, Opinions and Sociodemographic Differences Among 'Organic' and 'Conventional' Consumers." *Appetite* 147: 104544.

Enthoven, L., and G. Van den Broeck. 2021. "Local Food Systems: Reviewing Two Decades of Research." *Agricultural Systems* 193:103226.

Fernández-Ferrín, P., B. Bande, A. Calvo-Turrientes, and M.M. Galán-Ladero. 2016. "The Choice of Local Food Products by Young Consumers: The Importance of Public and Private Attributes." *Agribusiness: An International Journal* 33(1): 70–84.

Granvik, M., S. Joosse, A. Hunt, and I. Hallberg. 2017. "Confusion and Misunderstanding—Interpretations and Definitions of Local Food." *Sustainability* 9(11).

Gundala, R.R., and A. Singh. 2021. "What Motivates Consumers to Buy Organic Foods? Results of an Empirical Study in the United States." *Plos one* 16(9).

Henryks, J., and D. Pearson. 2010. "Marketing Communications Create Confusion: Perception versus Reality for Australian Organic Food Consumers." In *Proceedings of the Media Democracy and Change: Australian and New Zealand Communications Association (ANZCA) Annual Conference* (pp. 1-12). Canberra, Australia: Australian and New Zealand Communication Association.

Jekanowski, M.D., D.R. Williams, and W.A. Schiek. 2000. "Consumers' Willingness to Purchase Locally Produced Agricultural Products: An Analysis of an Indiana Survey." *Agricultural and Resource Economics Review* 29(1): 43–53.

Jia, S. 2021. "Local Food Campaign in a Globalization Context: A Systematic Review." *Sustainability* 13(13): 7487.

Kantar Group and Affiliates. 2024. *Kantar*. London, United Kingdom: Kantar Group and Affiliates.

Kim, S.W., J.L Lusk, and B.W. Brorsen. 2018. "Look at Me, I'm Buying Organic." *Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics* 43(3): 364–387.

Klayman, J. 1995. "Varieties of Confirmation Bias." *Psychology of Learning and Motivation* 32: 385–418.

Lusk, J.L., and B.C. Briggeman. 2009. "Food Values." *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 91(1): 184–196.

Lusk, J.L., T.C. Schroeder, and G.T. Tonsor. 2014. "Distinguishing Beliefs from Preferences in Food Choice." *European Review of Agricultural Economics* 41(4): 627–655.

Magkos, F., F. Arvaniti, and A. Zampelas. 2006. "Organic Food: Buying More Safety or Just Peace of Mind? A Critical Review of the Literature." *Critical Reviews in Food Science and Nutrition* 46(1): 23–56.

Memery, J., R. Angell, P. Megicks, and A. Lindgreen. 2015. "Unpicking Motives to Purchase Locally-Produced Food: Analysis of Direct and Moderation Effects." *European Journal of Marketing* 49(7/8): 1207–1233.

Neuhofer, Z.T., J.L Lusk, and S. Villas-Boas. 2023. "Can a Sustainability Facts Label Reduce the Halo Surrounding Organic Labels?" *Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy* 45(4): 2204–2234.

Palmer, A., R. Santo, L. Berlin, A. Bonanno, K. Clancy, C. Giesecke, C. Hinrichs, R. Lee, P. McNab, and S. Rocker. 2017. "Between Global and Local: Exploring Regional Food Systems from the Perspectives of Four Communities in the U.S. Northeast." *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development* 7(4): 187–205.

Peng, M. 2019. "The Growing Market of Organic Foods: Impact on the U.S. and Global Economy." In D. Biswas and S. Micallef, eds. *Safety and Practice for Organic Food.* Amsterdam, Netherlands: Elsevier, pp. 3–22.

Qi, L., A.N. Rabinowitz, Y. Liu, and B. Campbell. 2017. "Buyer and Nonbuyer Barriers to Purchasing Local Food." *Agricultural and Resource Economics Review* 46(3): 443–463.

Roy, A., A. Ghosh, and D. Vashisht. 2023. "The Consumer Perception and Purchasing Attitude towards Organic Food: A Critical Review." *Nutrition & Food Science* 53(3): 578–599.

Silver Lake. 2024. *Qualtrics*. Provo, UT: Silver Lake.

Skorbiansky, S. 2025. *Organic Agriculture*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Available online: https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/natural-resources-environment/organic-agriculture.

Spalding, A. 2024. *2022 Census of Agriculture: Agricultural Census Shows Strong Growth in Direct Sales from Farms and Ranches*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Available online: https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/charts-of-note/chart-detail?chartId=108821.

Thilmany, D., C.A. Bond, and J.K. Bond. 2008. "Going Local: Exploring Consumer Behavior and Motivations for Direct Food Purchases." *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 90(5): 1303–1309.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. 2019. "U.S. Regions." Washington, DC: Author. Available online: https://www.census.gov/popclock/data_tables.php?component=growth [Accessed January 1, 2021].

U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2022. "Direct Farm Sales of Food: Results from the 2020 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey." Washington, DC: USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service. Available online: http://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2024. *Farmers' Markets Accepting SNAP Benefits*. Washington, DC: USDA, Food and Nutrition Service. Available online: https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/farmers-markets-accepting-benefits.

Wilson, L., and J.L. Lusk. 2020. "Consumer Willingness to Pay for Redundant Food Labels." *Food Policy* 97: 101938.

Zepeda, L., and C. Leviten-Reid. 2004. "Consumers' Views on Local Food." *Journal of Food Distribution Research* 35(3): 1–6.

Zepeda, L., and J. Li. 2006. "Who Buys Local Food?" *Journal of Food Distribution Research* 37(3): 1–11.

Appendix A. Survey Instrument

I am:

- ○ Male
- ○ Female

I am _____ years old.

- ○ Under 18
- ○ 18 - 24
- ○ 25 - 34
- ○ 35 - 44
- ○ 45 - 54
- ○ 55 - 64
- ○ 65 +

My household (including all other adults and children living in my household) has the following number of members (include yourself), please place a zero if you do not have children in your household:

- ○ Adults (18 years and older) _____
- ○ Children (Under 18 years old) _____

My annual pre-tax, household income is:

- ○ $0-$24,999
- ○ $25,000-$49,999
- ○ $50,000-$74,999
- ○ $75,000-$99,999
- ○ $100,000 and higher

The best description of my educational background is:

- ○ Did not graduate from high school
- ○ Graduated from high school, Did not attend college
- ○ Attended College, No Degree earned
- ○ Attended College, Associate's or Bachelor's Degree earned
- ○ Attended College, Graduate or Professional Degree earned

My region of residence is: _____. Select one option from the drop down menu.

- ○ Northeast (CT, ME, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)
- ○ South (AL, AR, DE, DC, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, WV)
- ○ Midwest (IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, SD, WI) (
- ○ West (AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, UT, WA, WY)

How much would you **estimate your household spends each week on total food consumption** including at home, in groceries, in restaurants, take-outs, etc.? Please provide your best estimate.

- ○ Less than $50
- ○ $50 to $99
- ○ $100 to $149
- ○ $150 to $199
- ○ $200 to $249
- ○ $250 to $299
- ○ $300 or more (please specify):

_____

- ○ Don't know.

Please indicate all of the following pieces of information that you assess in **reviewing food product packaging?**

- Nutritional information
- Price
- Food safety information
- Production information
- Certifications
- Product expiration "sell-by" date
- None
- Other _____

Do you ever purchase food in grocery stores that is labeled as **"local"** or **"locally produced"?**

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Don't know

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement about local foods.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Local food is more expensive than other food.	○	○	○	○	○
Local food is organic.	○	○	○	○	○
Local food tastes better.	○	○	○	○	○
I like to know who produces the food I eat.	○	○	○	○	○
Purchasing local food is better for the environment.	○	○	○	○	○
Purchasing local food is more nutritious.	○	○	○	○	○
Local food is healthier.	○	○	○	○	○
Local food is safer	○	○	○	○	○

Local food can be defined several ways. Indicate your **definition of "local food"** by checking the response that best represents your opinion, or use the "other" space to describe your thoughts:

- ○ From my county of residence
- ○ 100 miles or less from my home
- ○ From my county and neighboring counties
- ○ From my state of residence
- ○ From the United States

- ○ Not sure/Don't know
- ○ Other (please describe) _____

Do you ever purchase food in grocery stores that is labeled as **"organic"** or **"organically produced"?**

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Don't know

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement about organic foods.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Organic food is more expensive than other food.					
Organic food is local.					
Organic food tastes better.					
Purchasing organic food is better for the environment.					
Purchasing organic food is more nutritious.					
Organic food is healthier.					
Organic food is safer					