Providing Context on Inherent Contaminants to Consumers

International Food Information Council
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About IFIC

Our Mission
To effectively communicate science-based information about health, nutrition, food safety and agriculture.

Our Vision
We envision a global environment where credible science drives food policy and consumer choice.

Our Philosophy
We work to better the health and well-being of communities and to provide evidence-based information on health, nutrition and food safety for the public good.
For Today:
- Research on purchase decisions
- Risk communication efficacy study
- Communication strategies for different audiences
Trends in Consumer Perceptions and Purchase Drivers
Taste, price and healthfulness remain key drivers

Purchase Drivers Over Time
(\% 4-5 Impact out of 5)

Taste
Price
Healthfulness
Convenience
Environmental Sustainability*

[TREND] Q6 How much of an impact do the following have on your decision to buy foods and beverages? SUMMARY: TOP 2 (Great Impact/Somewhat of an Impact): (n=1,005)
*Prior to 2019, Environmental Sustainability was addressed as "Sustainability"
Nearly 7 in 10 consider familiarity important when purchasing a product

Impact of Familiarity on Purchases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>5 - A great impact</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1 - No impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How much of an impact does the following have on your decision to buy foods and beverages (n=1,005)
“Natural” and “Clean” labels are most impactful when grocery shopping in-store or online

**Regularly Buy Products Labeled As...**

- Natural: 39%
- Clean ingredients: 27%
- Raised without antibiotics: 25%
- No added hormones or steroids: 25%
- Locally-sourced: 25%
- Organic: 25%
- Non-GMO: 23%
- Plant-based: 15%
- Fair wage or fair trade: 14%
- Small carbon footprint/Carbon neutral: 13%
- Bioengineered/containing BE ingredients*: 7%

**Regularly Buy Products Online Labeled As...**

(Of Those Who Shop Online at Least Monthly)

- Natural: 38%
- Clean ingredients: 29%
- Organic: 29%
- No added hormones or steroids: 24%
- Locally-sourced: 23%
- Small carbon footprint/Carbon neutral: 22%
- Raised without antibiotics: 22%
- Non-GMO: 22%
- Plant-based: 18%
- Fair wage or fair trade: 15%
- Bioengineered/containing BE ingredients*: 11%

*TREND 054 Which of the following, if any, do you do on a regular basis (that is, most times when you shop for foods and beverages)? Buy foods and beverages because they are label as...? (Select all that apply) (n=1,005) / TREND 055 You mentioned that you buy groceries online at least occasionally. Which of the following, if any, do you do on a regular basis (that is, most times when you shop for foods and beverages online)? Buy foods and beverages online because they are labeled as...? (Select all that apply) Filter: Shop for groceries online at least once a month: (n=505); Note: “other” and “none of the above” are not shown; *Response text abridged
Although overall confidence in the food supply is stable, more are very confident

Confidence in Safety of US Food Supply

- Very/ Somewhat Confident: 68%
- Somewhat confident: 24%
- Not too confident: 22%
- Not at all confident: 6%
- Not sure: 3%

Most Important Food Safety Issues

1. Foodborne illness from bacteria (E.coli, Salmonella, Listeria, etc.) - 22%
2. Carcinogens or cancer-causing chemicals in food - 15%
3. Pesticides/pesticide residues - 13%
4. Heavy metals in food (arsenic, mercury, lead, cadmium) - 9%
5. Food additives and ingredients (caffeine, MSG, flavors, colors, preservatives, etc.) - 11%
6. The presence of allergens in food (peanuts, tree nuts, soy, wheat, fish, shellfish, milk, eggs) - 9%
7. Antibiotics - 8%
8. Bioengineered food/Food that contains bioengineered ingredients - 6%
9. GMOs - 6%

Trends:
- Foodborne illness: 50% decrease
- Carcinogens: 45% decrease
- Pesticides: 42% decrease
- Heavy metals: 38% decrease
- Food additives: 34% decrease
- Allergens: 25% increase
- Antibiotics: 23% increase
- Bioengineered: 21% increase
- GMOs: 20% increase

Note: REV=Revised text vs. 2021

Q60 Overall, how confident are you in the safety of the U.S. food supply? (n=1,005)

Q61 What in your opinion are the three most important food safety issues today? (Please rank from 1 to 3, with 1=Most Important.) (n=1,005) / Q61AA(ALL) You indicated that your most important food safety issue today is [Q61 #1 Issue]. How satisfied are you with what is currently being done to protect consumers on this issue? (n=1,005); Note: "other" is not shown
Consumer Chemical Safety Concerns and Communication Insights
IFIC Study: Perceptions of Mothers on BPA and Acrylamide*

**Expert Roundtable**
Scientific information about BPA and acrylamide related to consumers and food safety

**Focus Groups**
Qualitative data gathering from mothers across the US

**Survey Analysis**
Quantitative analysis of food safety perceptions and risk messages

* 2015 Study Analysis
IFIC Study: Perceptions of Mothers on BPA and Acrylamide

**Negative Attitudes**
Attitudes toward chemicals are strongly negative among those who care about chemicals.

**Distrust**
Distrust of chemicals stems from uncertainty linked to potential consequences of dietary exposure, or a lack of understanding.

**Taking Action**
Very few actions with regard to specific chemicals in response to food safety concerns.

**Biggest Concerns**
Greatest safety concerns are food safety involving microbes and potential allergens.
“Stop and Go” Lessons Learned in Communicating Risk

STOP using lengthy articles

STOP using heavily scientific or technical statements

STOP using statements that fail to offer certainty

START using fact-based evidence in a Q&A format

START using relatable context to relay risk

START using instructive and prescriptive information as a guide
BPA Message Testing Outcomes

- “It is used to prevent the corrosion of cans”
- “Consensus science demonstrates the safety of BPA as a food packaging compound”
- “The majority of effects observed in animal studies are probably not relevant to humans”
- “There is currently no reason for consumers to change eating habits or purchasing behavior”
- “Past and present studies confirm that BPA is rapidly absorbed, detoxified and eliminated”
- “Check labels on bottles/food containers to ensure they are microwave and dishwasher safe”

“Consensus science demonstrates the safety of BPA as a food packaging compound”

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Top Takeaways For Tactics

Quality and affordability are prioritized over chemical anxiety.

Desire to know more about chemical benefits while keeping their values.

Persuasion using the willingness of consumers to overlook risk.
Given what we’ve learned about chemical safety communication, how can we communicate better in the future?
Where to Begin…

Know Your Audience and Craft Messages Accordingly

Research Fueling Engagement
Packaged Foods Messaging to Consumers

**fig. 1** Canned Fruit

**fig. 2** “Fresh” Fruit

Processing can be the difference between the pantry and the trashcan.
Messages for Medical Professionals, Influencers and Industry

Whole Grains Fact Sheet
September 23, 2019
Download the Whole Grains Fact Sheet. Grains have been known as the “staff of life” for thousands of years, a source for humans. Today, foods...

Facts & Figures on Pesticide Safety & Use in Food Production [UPDATED]
May 12, 2013
Updated November 12, 2013. Recent publications, such as the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), government and Consumer Reports editorial articles, question the safety...

Fact Sheet: Benefits of Food Biotechnology
May 13, 2013
With an ever-growing global population and rising food prices, the task of feeding the world is going to become even more challenging in the years to come. The use of biotechnology in food production is a crucial step in ensuring that we can feed the planet in the future. In this fact sheet, we will explore the benefits of using biotechnology in food production, focusing on the development of genetically modified (GM) crops. The use of GM crops has...