New Markets and Distribution Opportunities in Florida’s Food System
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For more information on Small Farms, visit our website at: http://smallfarms.ifas.ufl.edu/ or contact your local County Extension Agent.

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Changing consumer opinions: A case study of consumer opinions about local food

Joy Rumble and Tracy Irani
Overview

• Introduction to research
• Research results
• Research-based recommendations
• Questions
Local is the new craze
But is it worth investing in?
Some important questions

• What do consumers consider to be local?
• How important is buying local to consumers?
• What other food attributes compete with “local?”
• How can (and should) producers market local food?
Our research

• Consumers perceptions of local food
  – 10 focus groups, 5 locations
  – 93 adult consumers (Florida)
What is local?

“I try not to buy out of the country, for whatever reason. I don’t know, I feel like buying out of the country, some farmer in Idaho is going broke because I’m buying my grapes from [sentence trails off].”

“I would say even any, if you bought fruits and vegetables and meats anywhere in the state of Florida would be really be considered locally, or even a little bit into Georgia and Alabama, I would consider local. Or at least local enough where I wouldn’t mind supporting it.”
What is local?

- Definition of local varies by product
- Definitions broaden for foods not locally available
- Local processing of a product adds value
How important is local?

- Convenience is more important
- Price is more important
- Quality is more important
- Food preference and needs are more important
How important is local?

“I like the idea that by buying local we would encourage changes in the food chain or the way the food industry is organized to reduce carbon footprint, but you know it doesn’t make sense to drive an extra ten miles, which is a big carbon footprint impact, to buy something local, necessarily, if it’s not available pretty readily.”
How important is local?

“For me, if I have to choose between two places, I would probably pick the local.”

“I would like to say buying [local], I would like to make it more of a priority, but I don’t. So I think my actions dictate the fact that it probably is not as important to me as I would like to think it is. [agreement heard]”
Other food attributes?
How to market local?

• Advertise

• For small producers
  – Focus on quality
  – Focus on relationship building

• For large producers
  – Label with production location
  – Focus on relationship building
Recommendations

• Further research
• Improved advertising
• Improved availability of information
• Increase exposure and promotion of local
• Don’t define local
Recommendations

• Make local more apparent in grocery store
• Focus on quality
• Label foods with production location
• Disclose production practices
• Focus on trust and relationship building
Results for: local choice

SPECIAL REPORT: LOCAL FOOD

What does local food mean to Floridians?
No one has a clear answer for what consumers define as locally grown produce. That's why the PIE Center, in partnership with the Florida Specialty Crop Advisory Council, conducted a survey of farmers and consumers to better understand the geography of local food.
Questions?

Thank You!

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