

October 12, 2009

## Reported Weekly Food Purchases by Mid-Atlantic Consumers

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. – Produce industry members who attended Day One of the Mid-Atlantic Specialty Crop Research Initiative (MASCRI) Workshop, held on March 3 and 4, were provided a brief overview of the survey research conducted on the food preferences and purchasing behaviors of the mid-Atlantic consumer. This newsletter serves to provide produce industry members who attended the MASCRI workshop with further insight of the results from this survey.

1,565 total participants from the metropolitan areas of New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and Richmond were surveyed on what types of food products they purchased, where they purchased these products, and what variables may have affected their purchasing behaviors. Two questions specifically asked participants to provide an approximate percentage of how much (quantity) of their average weekly food purchases consisted of “fresh” products versus “processed” products, and what percentage of these weekly food purchases could be categorized as “meat,” “vegetables,” “grains,” “fruit,” “dairy,” “snacks,” and “sweets.”

Exemplified in the figures below are the overall reported percentages of weekly food purchases. Survey participants reported that approximately half of their food purchases could be categorized as “fresh” (Figure 1). Pertaining to their weekly food purchases (Figure 2.), approximately 36% of their purchases could also be categorized as “fruit” and “vegetable” products, while “meat” products were reported as the majority of food purchases (20.2%).

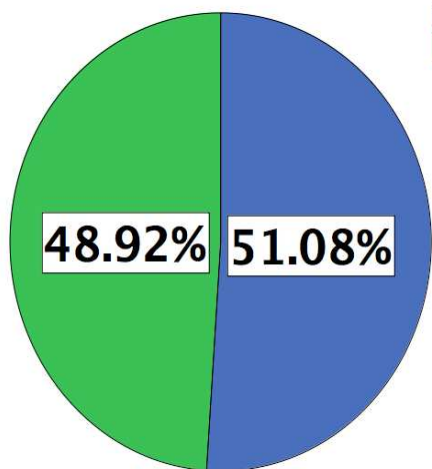


Figure 1.

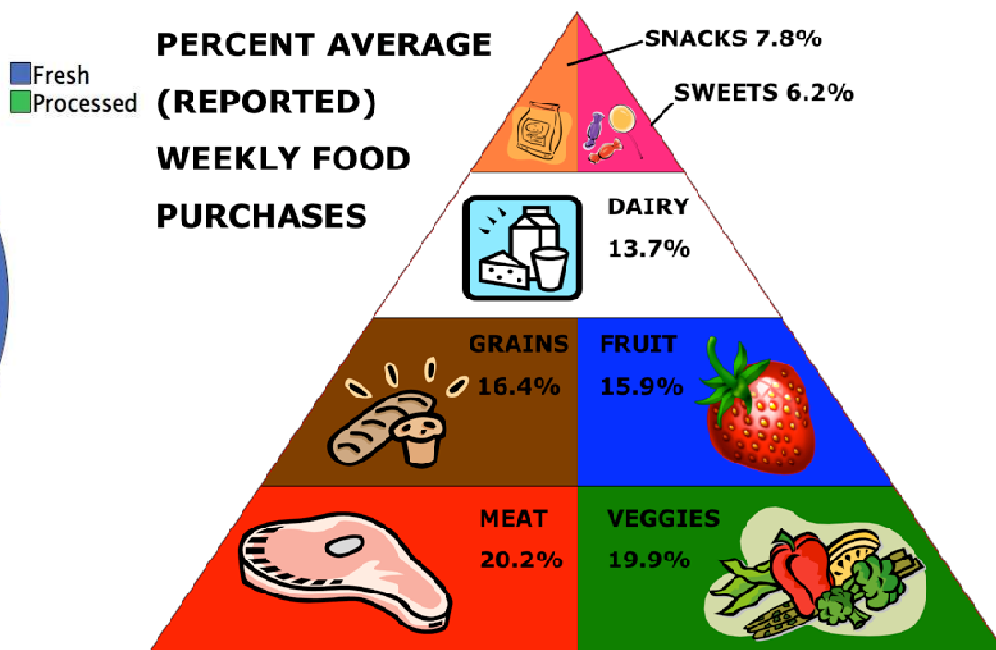


Figure 2.

Further analyses were also conducted to find any differences reported in these categories of weekly food purchases between demographic groups. Notable trends include differences between:  
1) age groups – A greater percentage of the older age groups purchased meat and vegetables than younger age groups;

- 2) education level – A greater percentage of the more educated groups purchased vegetables and fruits and a smaller percentage of the same groups purchased snacks than less educated groups;
- 3) metropolitan areas – A greater percentage of metropolitan Richmond participants purchased processed foods, meat, and snacks but fewer purchased fruits and vegetables than participants residing in other targeted metro areas ;
- 4) gender - A greater percentage of males purchased meat but fewer purchased vegetables and fruit than females; and lastly,
- 5) race - A greater percentage of Asian- and African-Americans purchased fresh products, compared to processed foods, than other race groups. A greater percentage of European-Americans purchased dairy compared with other race groups. Also, a greater percentage of Asian-Americans purchased fruit and vegetables but fewer purchased meat compared with other race groups.

To be added to the Mid-Atlantic Specialty Crops Research Initiative list serve and receive bi-monthly updates about the workshop and subsequent efforts, contact [specialtycrops@psu.edu](mailto:specialtycrops@psu.edu) or 814-863-5567. For more information about the USDA Specialty Crop Research Initiative program, visit <http://www.csrees.usda.gov>.

###

Amy Chamberlain  
Graduate Student  
The Pennsylvania State University  
[specialtycrops@psu.edu](mailto:specialtycrops@psu.edu)