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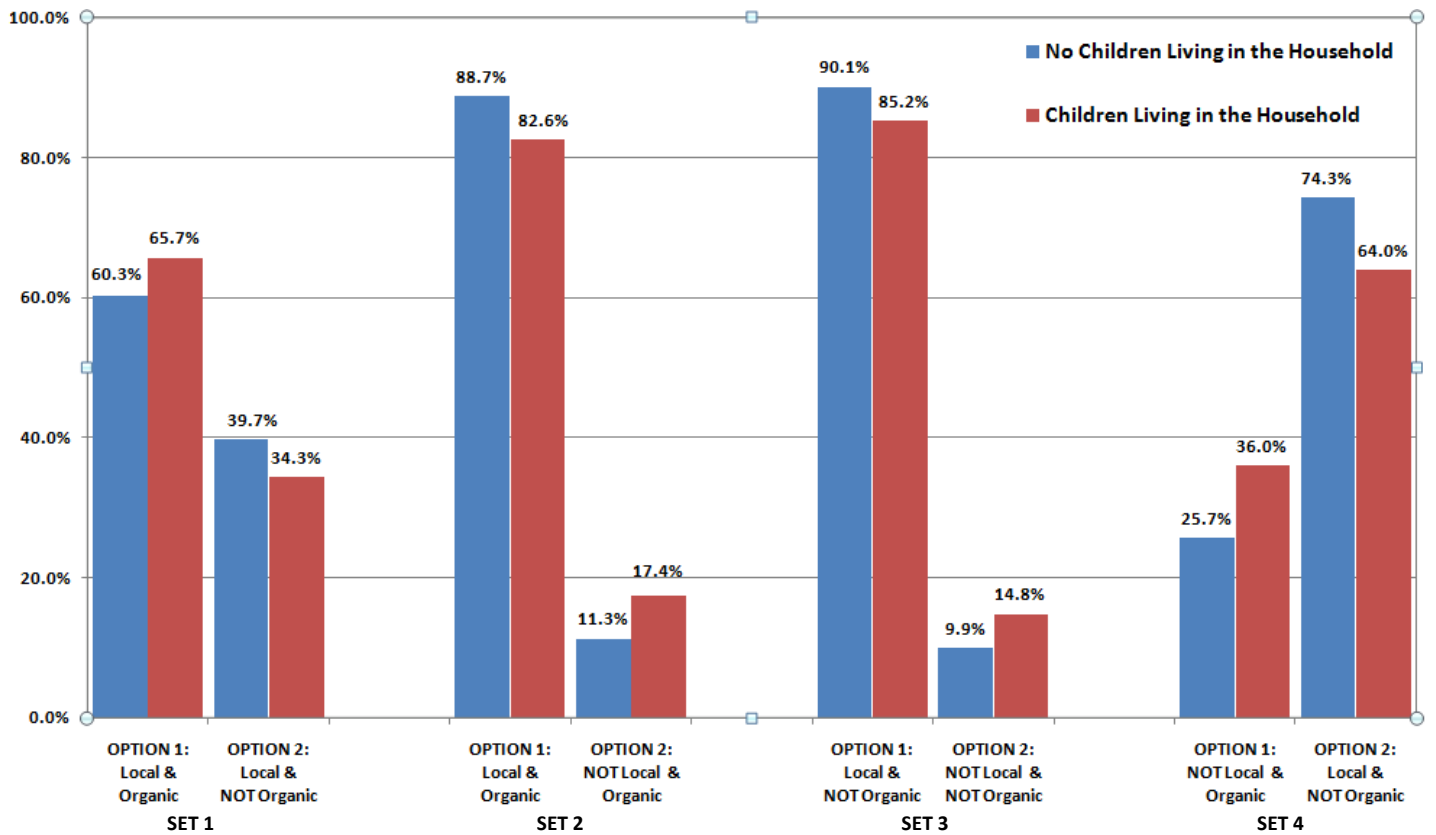
The effect of children on household preferences for “locally grown” and “certified organic” fruits and vegetables

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. –This newsletter serves to provide fruit and vegetable industry members with additional results from the consumer research studies conducted to better understand the food preferences and purchasing behaviors of the mid-Atlantic consumer. [The information provided in this newsletter reflects only a sample of a wide array of data collected from one of four surveys that will be conducted through early 2010.]

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 factors may have affected their purchasing behaviors. One particular set of questions asked consumers to indicate preferences for purchasing locally-grown and/or certified-organic specialty crops. Participants were able to select from two options across six sets of questions; for each question presented, participants were asked to select the option that best appealed to them.

The graph on page 2 represents responses to the four sets of questions where options selected by individuals with children in the household differed from options chosen by individuals with no children in the household. The responses suggest that a greater percentage of individuals who had children in the household selected options that emphasized “Certified Organic,” while individuals without children were more likely to select options that included “Locally Grown.” For example, the first set of options (where both were “Locally Grown”) shows a greater percentage of consumers with children (65.7%) compared to those without children (60.3%) selected the option that included “Certified Organic.” In Set 2 (both “Certified Organic”) and Set 3 (neither “Certified Organic”), those with no children in the household preferred the “Locally Grown” option by 5 to 6 percentage points.

Set 4 is slightly more difficult to compare as the conditions in both options are different. The first option is “Certified Organic” but not “Locally Grown”, while the second option is “Locally-Grown” but not “Certified Organic”. The majority of participants (with and without children) did select the “Locally Grown and Not Certified Organic” option (64.0% and 74.3%, respectively). However, 36% of those with children would prefer the item that was organic but not local. This compares to less than 26% of those without children in the household.



One explanation of the stated preferences is that individuals with children may have the tendency to purchase organic for their children to eat, which may be supported by reports that indicate some parents are choosing to buy organic for their children but they are not necessarily purchasing it for themselves to consume (<http://content.health.msn.com/content/article/1756.50394>). This information can be used to position food products for these various demographic 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 or 814-863-5567. For more information about the USDA Specialty Crop Research Initiative program, visit <http://www.csrees.usda.gov>.

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