



SEGMENTrak

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SegmenTrak™ Benchmarks “Indicator Consumer” Trends in National Study

Demeter Communications Launches Proprietary Market Research Tool for Agriculture

Terms from “grass-fed” and “local” to “sustainably grown” are popping up ever-more-frequently in restaurants and grocery stores. Consumers form opinions literally by the hour, filtering the ongoing influence of information from news reports, packaging, neighbors and interest groups. Demeter Communications has set out to track opinions about food production practices among “indicator consumers.”

“We want to shift from a defensive position to one of proactively talking to consumers about how their food is produced,” said Claudine Wargel, M.S., senior partner with Demeter Communications, and the market researcher who heads up the project.

These data are part of Demeter’s targeted market research tool, SegmenTrak™, a nationally-representative consumer opinion tracking survey fielded for the first time earlier this year. The online study focused on those likely to adapt perceptions and practices ahead of the general public – what Demeter calls “indicator consumers.”

“Successfully explaining in consumer terms how food is produced has really become a requirement for product acceptance,” said Claudine Wargel, senior partner with Demeter Communications. The firm specializes in helping agricultural companies

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SegmenTrak Study 2-2-2-2

and associations connect with consumers and their influencers. Demeter's first SegmenTrak™ study was conducted in February 2010. The data show that while indicator consumers think favorably of farmers, they have a number of questions about their on-farm practices and how they impact food. SegmenTrak™ explores what consumers want to know from farmers and what they would change about modern food production, as well as where they currently get their information about how food is produced.

More than three-fourths want to know more about “measures used to produce safe food” (76 percent “agree/strongly agree”). The next response was “ways they ensure animal care” (68 percent “agree/strongly agree”). Also ranked highly were “measures they take to protect the water” (64 percent) and “how they make farming sustainable” (61 percent). Wargel said that while this was an aided response question, it reveals a significant point.

“Indicator consumers are connecting on-farm practices with how safe the food is on their table. And, consumers want information on how farm animals are cared for – put in terms that are meaningful to them. That may differ from how those within a particular agricultural sector are used to talking about the topic,” she said.

In unaided format, indicator consumers signified that “the single most important piece of information you would like to have from farmers about how your food is produced” is how chemicals and/or pesticides are used during production, and how these might be affecting human health. A distant second was “how medications and/or antibiotics are used in farm animals.”

“We also put some terms in front of our survey group to see how these indicator consumers responded. It is no surprise that words such as ‘industry’ are not well perceived. And the term ‘traditional farming’ is perceived more favorably than ‘contemporary farming’,” explained Wargel.

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SegmenTrak Study 3-3-3-3

Demeter Communication's SegmenTrak™ study screened respondents for household consumer product decision-makers with at least one child living at home, and respondents met specified criteria for information-seeking and shopping habits. Respondents were aged 23-55 and represent a cross-section of ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses, as well as both males and females.

The executive summary is available free of charge at www.demetercommunications.com. The full report is available for purchase, with information on how to order at this same website. The full report includes detailed data on current and preferred sources of information, terminology testing and even findings on how parents think their children should learn about food production. Wargel said that future studies are planned, with an opportunity for agricultural firms and associations to participate. For additional information, contact claudinewargel@demetercommunications.com.

Demeter is a marketing communications firm serving clients in the food, fiber and agriculture fields. Demeter cultivates success for its clients through distinctive, innovative and practical communications programs, specializing in reputation management.

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