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Local Choice Focus Groups

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Background

The rising transportation and input costs to produce food, coupled with consumers' changing preferences for locally grown and healthier food, have created a need to further develop localized consumer markets. In order to explore the potential of localized markets, the industry must first understand consumers' current food purchasing behaviors, as well as their opinions and perceptions of local food. Therefore, the UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (PIE Center) conducted research with Florida consumers to understand their food purchasing behaviors and perceptions of local food. A Specialty Crop Block Grant provided by the USDA and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services funded this research.

Methods

To conduct this study, researchers conducted five sets of two (10 total) focus groups. Researchers held the focus groups in Gainesville, Orlando, Sarasota, Tallahassee, and West Palm Beach. A total of 93 adults participated in the focus groups. The participants consisted of 37 males and 56 females; they ranged in age from 21 to 58. The participants represented Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, and other races and ethnicities. Additionally, participants' education ranged from high school to graduate or professional degrees.

PIE Center researchers asked participants about their food purchasing habits, as well as their opinion about local food and the Fresh From Florida campaign. To analyze the data, researchers recorded and transcribed the results and analyzed the content using the constant comparative technique to identify emergent themes. Researchers analyzed themes across all ten focus groups and based findings on themes that emerged across the groups. The results are presented below with themes that emerged for each question asked to the participants, as well as themes that emerged throughout the focus groups as a whole. Each theme is supported by participant quotations.¹

Results

Occupations of Participants

The participants held occupations in healthcare, education, finance, business, public service, legal, government, construction, students, administrative, homemaker, food service, lobbyist, IT, writer/editor, and retired.

Average Grocery Shopping Trip

Participants described their average grocery-shopping trip, including places they liked to shop and types of the foods they liked to buy. In this discussion, the participants talked about what they liked and did not like about certain stores, the types of food they commonly bought, and how often they went grocery shopping

Stores at which Participants Shop

Participants said they shopped at chain retail grocery stores, bulk retail stores, chain retail specialty stores, local specialty stores, and markets or stands. It is important to note that participants often referenced shopping at more than one type of store (e.g. "Mainly Publix. I used to do Walmart more, but we always got our produce and our meat from Publix, and then also a lot of Sam's. I have three kids so we gotta have to buy in bulk.")

¹ Grammar and punctuation within the quotations appear as transcribed and may therefore not be grammatically correct. This is common practice for focus group methodology to maintain the credibility of the statements.

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Chain Retail

This theme included chain retail stores that carry grocery products. These stores included Publix, Walmart, and Target. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant said, “I buy from Publix, Walmart, and Winn-Dixie from time to time. Publix probably is number one, and then Walmart. It’s usually a good experience at Publix.”
- A participant said, “I usually shop at Publix, Winn-Dixie, Walmart, or the produce stand at the end of the road.”

Bulk Retail Stores

Retail chains that specialize in providing bulk products were included in this theme. For example, Sam’s Club, Costco, and BJ’s Wholesale Club are stores included in this theme. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant said, “I do a lot of Sam’s.”
- A participant said, “I pretty much shop at Publix and Costco. I try to eat as healthy as I can, so I try not to buy too many of the manufactured type foods, so [sentence trails off].... They say to eat on the outside [outside aisles] of the supermarket, where the fresh stuff is.”

Chain Retail Specialty Stores

This theme included chain retail stores that carry and focus on specialty products such as organic, local, gluten-free et cetera. These stores included Whole Foods, Trader Joe’s, and Earth Fare. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant seeking a retail specialty store for gluten-free products said, “I split most of my shopping between Publix, which is where we go for dairy products, and Costco for produce and bulk groceries, and then Whole Foods. I am gluten free now for several weeks and I use Whole Foods to get gluten-free items.”
- A participant looking for organic foods for children said, “Because we have a two-year-old, we try and shop organic quite a bit. We find that some places have certain organic foods, so we end up actually going to three different places to do weekly grocery shopping. We end up going to Publix, to Earth Fare, and to New Leaf [Local Market] at least probably once a week...just to find what we want, because none of the stores have everything. So, kind of where we are.”

Local Specialty Stores

This theme included local retail stores that carry specialty products like local, organics, herbal, et cetera. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant looking for organic food and grass-fed beef discussed a preference for shopping at local, non-chain specialty stores. This participant said, “I shop at usually Hoover’s [Market], Essential Health [Market], and Sustain Natural Market. Those are the places I mostly go, because I get a lot of the organic produce and the grass-fed beef.”
- A participant wanting specialty products and fresh meat discussed buying these items at a local specialty store. This participant said, “We have been getting a little bit into the almond milk, and she is really into all the soy

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products and all that. We try to avoid the supermarket meat. We actually try to get all of our meat from Geir's Market [Geir's Sausage Kitchen]. It's fresh."

Markets or Stands

This theme included local markets or stands that carry mostly seasonal products. Farmers markets and flea markets were included in this theme. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- In addition to shopping at grocery stores, a participant also discussed shopping at farmers' markets during peak seasons. This participant said, "Publix, maybe once or twice a week, just depending on what's going on. Ward's [Supermarket] a couple times a month and the farmers' market just seasonally, when I know the peak of the season for fruits and vegetables are out, and I'll visit those."
- A participant's grocery shopping was accompanied by buying produce regularly from a produce stand. This participant said, "My answers are pretty much the same. We mostly shop at BJ's or produce markets. BJ's for the meats, produce markets for the produce, or Whole Foods. Half of our family is vegetarian and half eats meat, so that is kind of how we do it, just bulk meat once a month for the people that eat the meat."

Why Participants Like Certain Stores

During this section, the participants discussed several reasons they shopped at certain stores. The participants indicated that they liked certain stores because they could save money at the store, the store was convenient, the store carried specialty items or quality products, or the store carried bulk products.

Money Saving

Participants who indicated that they had incentives to shop at certain stores because they could save money formed this theme. These incentives were discussed as being a result of sales, good prices, or gas perks. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed preference for shopping at Publix because of its buy-one-get-one-free deals. This participant said, "But mostly Publix, can't beat the buy-one-get-one-free."
- A participant discussed switching his/her primary grocery store to take advantage of gas perks. This participant said, "Well, we used to be an almost exclusively Publix-based family just because it's the closest grocery store to our house, but ever since Winn-Dixie started with their gas savings program, we now do most of our shopping there."

Convenient

For this theme, participants discussed shopping at a certain store because it had convenient characteristics, whether being a one-stop shop, nearby, or open 24 hours. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant who favored the convenience of a one-stop shop said, "I usually do Super Walmart, because it's a one-stop-shop. When you have children, that's what you really need. Usually, I shop within once every two weeks."

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- The convenience of being able to shop 24 hours a day appealed to a participant who said, “I primarily shop at Publix, and I do shop at a local vegetable and fruit stand. I do, on occasion, shop at Sweetbay. But, primarily Publix or Walmart because of the convenience of being open 24 hours.”

Specialty

This theme included participants discussing that they shopped at certain store because the store carried specialty products like local, organic, or gluten-free. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed going to a specific store for organic products and said, “I pretty much get all my vegetables in Ward’s [Supermarket], and then I also like that they have the dispensers over there, so I get like wheat flour, and grains and oats and all kinds of stuff. They have a lot of organic stuff.”
- After discussing shopping for common items, a participant discussed going to a specific store for special items. This participant said, “I’m going to Publix. Major shop once every couple of weeks and maybe a couple of incidentals when we are just talking about food. Occasionally, if I’m eating in bulk, then I’ll go to Walmart. For special stuff, then I go to Fresh Market.”

Quality

Participants discussed shopping at certain stores because they perceived the quality of food to be better. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed shopping at Publix for quality. This participant said, “I tend to do Publix as well for produce and meat, because the quality is better at Publix. But everything else usually comes from Walmart just because the prices are better.”
- A participant who favored shopping at a local store for meat said, “Generally, the meat we get, when we get meat, would be from a local store as well. There’s Geirs [Sausage Kitchen] down on the South Trail. They have really good-quality meat with good prices.”

Bulk

Participants discussed shopping at a certain store because the store carried items that could be bought in bulk, therefore meeting a need of some of the participants. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Meeting the meat demand of a household, a participant discussed shopping at Costco to buy meat in bulk. This participant said, “We are primarily meat-a-tarians in my house, too. Mainly Costco for the meats and the bulk items.”
- A participant discussed feeding teenage kids as a requirement to buying bulk quantities of food. This participant said, “I guess I shop a lot at Costco. I have two step-kids that we have pretty often and a seventeen-year-old boy and a fifteen-year-old girl, so we go through a lot of groceries, so it’s easier to shop at Costco for a lot of the bulk things and then for umm...produce and stuff like that we will go to Publix or Walmart.”

Why Participants Do Not Like Certain Stores

The participants said the main reason that they did not like certain stores is because the participants thought the stores were expensive.

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Expensive

Participants said they did not like to buy all of their groceries at stores they perceived to be unaffordable. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed wanting to shop at Publix, but felt that it was too expensive to buy all of his/her groceries at Publix. This participant said, “I shop mostly at Walmart and buy my meat and produce at Publix, just because Publix is very expensive. I prefer to shop at Publix, but...[sentence trails off]”
- A participant who would like to shop at Whole Foods said that the prices were too high. This participant said, “We would go to Whole Foods if it was convenient, but it’s too far away and the prices are sky high.”

Types of Foods Participants Bought

The participants said they commonly bought perishables, dry goods, convenience foods, drinks, and specialty foods.

Perishables

This theme described foods that spoil quickly and are bought on a regular basis. These foods included meats, produce, dairy, and seafood. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed buying perishables and said, “I usually get all of my perishables at Publix just because I find they tend to be a lot fresher than what they are at the other stores.”
- A participant discussed several different perishables and said, “I tend to shop Publix for produce, fruit, vegetables. We usually get our meat at Sam’s in bulk and freeze it. We have a chest freezer. And I tend to bake all the baked goods myself at home.”

Dry Goods

This theme described foods that could be stored for an extended period of time without refrigeration. The dry goods discussed included chips, desserts, and boxed macaroni and cheese. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed buying dry goods such as boxed foods and chips for children. This participant said, “My husband does a lot of the shopping. He has a more flexible schedule, so he can go when it’s not Saturday. We have sort of a dichotomy of foods. He and I are trying to eat more healthy and lower fat and trying to lose weight. The kids, we end up buying them stuff that we wouldn’t eat, so like convenience foods and macaroni and cheese and chips. [laughter from other participants]”
- A participant discussed buying desserts in addition to buying perishable items. This participant said, “Meats, vegetables, and fruits, and desserts. [laughter from other participants]”

Convenience Foods

This theme included foods that participants could grab and go. Fast food and restaurants were included in this theme. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed the common occurrence of buying fast food or meals at restaurants and said, “It’s just me at my house, so I don’t buy a lot of groceries, but when I do grocery shop most of the time, it’s Publix for

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produce and meat and then Walmart for everything else. Costco sometimes, but most of the time I eat out like four times a week.”

- A participant discussed buying meals that were convenient to meet a family’s lifestyle. This participant said, “We do, I’m ashamed to admit that we do a lot of processed foods, a lot of frozen things, just because I work in Tampa and don’t get home until seven o’clock or thereabouts and my wife is disabled, so we do a lot of stuff that’s just convenient.”

Drinks

This theme included commonly bought drinks. Juices were primarily discussed in this theme. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant indicated that Gatorade was a frequent item on the shopping list. This participant said, “I buy the majority...a lot of Gatorade and stuff like that, because my son is an athlete.”
- A participant discussed the drinks required to hydrate a large family and said, “I have three children, live with my mom, married...our average bill is about two hundred dollars. We shop at least once a week. With your average every two or three days, off day shopping, you know? We forgot this. We go through probably five gallons of milk, two gallons of juice. [laughter from other participants] The list goes on and on. We hit it pretty hard.”

Specialty

This theme included foods that are labeled for special attributes like gluten free, or were outside of the common selection of food products. Some of these included natural, organic, kosher, soy, and non-genetically modified organisms (GMOs). The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant who could not eat gluten because of health reasons discussed buying gluten-free products. This participant said, “I usually shop at Publix for the most part. My food is a little bit different. I have a gluten allergy. I don’t know if anyone is aware of celiac disease, so my grocery bills are a little bit larger than most common people. I don’t buy as many processed foods. I’m more natural, so I buy things at Whole Foods as well. Anything that can’t have wheat in it, pretty much.”
- A participant favored vegetarian and organic products and discussed that it was important to buy good food for a family. This participant said, “We pretty much eat vegetarian and organic. And my husband is a meat manager at Publix, so that is a little bit of a problem. [laughter from other participants] I used to run an organic produce co-op. So, it is really important for our family to eat good food.”

Frequency of Grocery Shopping

The participants indicated that they either went shopping multiple times a week or shopped less frequently.

Multiple Times a Week

Several participants indicated that they shopped for groceries multiple times a week. Some participants indicated that they shopped twice a week, while others indicated that they visited the grocery store daily. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

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- A participant discussed shopping a few times a week and said, “Yeah, I shop at Whole Foods and Publix, Sweetbay, just whatever is convenient depending on what I am looking for. I buy whatever I need. It depends on what my son or I want for dinner that night. And I go at least three times a week.”
- One participant kept a habit of daily grocery shopping. This participant said, “I go to Publix almost every day. [laughter from other participants] I’m not a weekly shopper, I’m a, pretty much, daily shopper. And I’m usually buying what I am making for dinner, so it’s a protein, a veggie, that type [of] thing. And I probably spend more money doing it that way, but that’s just the way I do it.”

Less-Frequent Shoppers

Some participants indicated that they shopped for groceries on an infrequent basis. This included those who shopped once every two weeks or once monthly. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that they were opposite of other participants in the shopping frequency. This participant said, “I’m probably the opposite of you. I’m about once every ten or twelve days.”
- Another participant discussed grocery shopping once every two weeks and said, “I usually do Super Walmart, because it’s a one stop shop. And when you have children, that’s what you really need. Usually I shop within once every two weeks.”

Food Attributes and Purchasing Decisions

Participants were asked to discuss food attributes they prefer and that led them to make food-purchasing decisions.

Attributes

The common food attributes discussed included price, quality, health benefits, specialty, and ingredients.

Price

Participants discussed that they looked for foods that are on sale, have coupons, are a good value, or are priced reasonably. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that while price was most important, it was not the most important. This participant said, “I was going to say, for me, it’s price. For the rest of the family, it’s ingredients and how healthy it is.”
- Shopping on certain days was important to a participant who valued buying food that was on sale. This participant said, “We did definitely, actually try to get to Publix more like on a Tuesday or a Wednesday because there are more BOGO’s on those days, and there are certain things we just automatically stock up on if they’re on BOGO.”
- In addition to other attributes, a participant discussed the importance of price and value when making food-purchasing decisions. This participant said, “I just look for cost. If it is a value, if it tastes good and if it is easy to make. I don’t make meals for families. I just make meals for myself, so, those things are important to me.”
- A participant discussed using coupons and buying food that is on sale. This participant said, “I stick to fresh stuff, but I also have a list and I am fairly meticulous about it, and a stack of coupons so...everything...if it’s not on sale, I

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will wait until the next week just like the ‘buy one get one free.’ You stack those with some coupons, you get some free stuff.”

Quality

Participants discussed that they looked for foods that have quality attributes such as ripeness, taste, freshness, color, and leanness. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed buying certain food proven previously to have good taste. This participant said, “Something in particular I look for in certain fruits like blueberries and strawberries, I’ll only buy ones that are from Florida now because I’ve noticed a huge taste difference. Blueberries from Florida are just, they seem to be so much tastier.”
- A participant discussed several quality indicators and said that these attributes were especially important when buying produce. This participant said, “For produce and things, I look for freshness. I look for crispness. Like with broccoli sometimes, like the organic broccoli will be rubbery because it is not that fresh. So, sometimes I will even choose conventional over it, depending on how fresh it is. I also look for it being...if it’s local, if you can find it local...I mean, here in Florida you get a lot of local produce, so that is great if you can find it because then you know it was picked at the peak of ripeness. That is always the best.”
- Quality of meats and produce was important to a participant who said, “I am looking for it to be fresh, for it to not be almost expired. Like sometimes you’ll see meats and things that expire the next day. So, we are looking to avoid things like that. Umm...we are looking for the right cuts of meat, the leaner cuts of meat, things like that. Just fresh vegetables.”
- Several quality attributes, including the look and color of a product, were important to a participant who discussed the importance of quality, especially in tomatoes. This participant said, “See, that is what I look for. I am looking for something that is very fresh, but is also ripe. A lot of the grocery stores gas their tomatoes to move the process along. So, I often buy my tomatoes at Kobosko’s, which is in Wellington, because they have big, fresh, red beefsteak tomatoes. And you want a tomato that smells like a tomato, looks like a tomato and tastes like a tomato. So, it has got to smell right, it has got to have the right smell, and texture and brightness of color for me to pick it up.”

Health Benefits

Participants discussed that they looked for foods that provide health benefits. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- With a job in the health care field and a husband with health problems, a participant discussed that it was important for food to have health benefits. This participant said, “Well, I look at it because of health reasons, you know? I look at...I count the carbs and calories and health issues, because of being a health care worker and seeing, you know? I’m always reading labels for sodium intake and all of that. Even though they may have sales, but I’m looking at the sodium and the carbs because of the health care reason...being a health care provider and then having a husband that’s a diabetic, so I look at things like that.”
- The health benefits of food were important to a participant who stayed up to date on nutrition news and research. This participant said, “Something that really influences my decisions is that I have a few trusted sources of information that I really trust about nutrition. For instance, Nutrition Action Newsletter takes a good look at what

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kind of cereals are calling themselves organic or have all the essential nutrients or whatever. It is like the Consumer Reports for food. It really takes a look at...if they say that, you know, I am buying Kashi cereal and I think I am getting this, well, I am really not getting it and they are the ones to point it out. And so they will point me in a new direction, and I also read the New York Times food section and I feel like I try to stay on top of current research although I think the research is whoever has the biggest lobby. I mean, do you remember when eggs weren't good for you? Now eggs are okay. I can remember when avocado fat wasn't good for you, now it is okay."

- When buying food a participant indicated that they often took into account how healthy the food was. This participant said, "How healthy it is for me."
- A participant discussed that cravings often influenced his/her food buying, but health was an attribute of food that he/she thought was important to consider. This participant said, "Cravings, I was going to say that. Cravings is really good. Health is another one."

Specialty

Participants discussed that they looked for foods that meet special requirements such as organic, gluten free, and dairy free. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed several specialty attributes that he/she looked for in food. This participant said, "Good produce, organic produce. Grass fed beef. Free range chicken."
- Gluten-free was a specialty attribute that a participant discussed as being favorable. This participant said, "Me and my wife have been jumping on the bandwagon of gluten free stuff lately. We don't have any problems or nothing, we just don't feel as full. We don't feel, like, stuffed."
- A participant favoring organic foods, discussed the importance of the organic attribute and said, "We try to buy organic produce when we can and Publix has some, and some of it's kind of okay, and a lot of it is overpriced and lousy in quality. That's a good reason to go to like a farmer's market, to a natural foods store, to a Whole Foods...because you're probably gonna get something that's much better quality and again that's what Trader Joe's has, too, is a lot of organic grown. When I think about some of the things I eat now, I wonder, they say eat all those vegetables and eat all those fruits, but then I see other reports about how poisoned they are and I'm a little, you know, how much poison am I getting trying to stay healthy? But some things that I won't compromise on like carrots, I think about...they grow in the ground, so you're gonna grow them in the ground with all the pesticides and poisons and rotten soil and everything else, that's why only organic in carrots. Anything that's in the ground, just that has to be organic."
- Several specialty attributes were discussed by a participant who said, "I buy organic, local wherever possible. I am gluten sensitive, so I buy gluten free products. I am lactose intolerant, so (laughs)...but, I have two boys so, and they don't really drink milk. So, I buy for the family that not is gluten free or milk free, dairy free, but, everything organic and also really like to see that they say no GMO's on them. If they are labeled organic then they are supposed to have no GMO's, but I just like the extra labeling because that just confirms that they are following the rules of organic foods."

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Ingredients

Participants discussed that they looked for foods that had or did not have certain ingredients. For example, participants discussed looking for products that had healthy ingredients, while others discussed looking for product with low or no sugar or cholesterol. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed looking for foods without salt and sugar. This participant said, “I buy what the state allows me to buy. [laughter from other participants] I do, it’s all healthy, they can have no sugar and no salt. So, it’s all...that’s what we eat.”
- Aspartame was an ingredient that a participant did not want in food. This participant said, “No aspartame. And it is really hard these days because it is in everything. And they don’t make it kind of clear anymore as to...[sentence trails off].”
- Two participants discussed looking at the ingredients in food. The first participant said, “I read the nutritional ingredients; sugar, sodium and carbohydrates and fat.”

The second participant commented and said, “I try to stay away from anything that has too much sugar in it.”

- A participant discussed favoring soy with whole ingredients, but not processed soy because of the added ingredients. This participant said, “I also don’t buy soy products unless it is whole soy, meaning tempeh or soybeans, edamame, because everything else is processed in a way that changes the nutrient content, it adds chemicals to the product.”

Purchasing Decisions

The participants indicated that their food buying decisions were influenced by sources of information, as well as their own needs, and the production location of the food.

Influenced by Sources of Information

This theme included participants’ food buying being influenced by different sources of information. This included influence from health information, marketing, packaging, and meal demonstrations. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that health magazines sometimes influenced his/her food buying decisions. The participant said, “What you read. It seems like every day, you pick up Men’s Health and they have come up with some new product that is like sprouts for your body. And you are like, “Yeah, you know what, let’s try it out.” And sometimes you like it and sometimes you don’t.”
- Marketing influence on food buying decisions was discussed by a participant who said, “Marketing works on me, I’m not even gonna lie about it. [laughter] I buy...I know it for a fact. Because I’ll...somebody will throw a good commercial out there, I’ll see it, it’ll stick in my head, and then I’ll be sitting there looking at the screen...and the worst one in the world right now, I don’t even like it that much, but I have twice now bought Dos Equis beer at the grocery store [laughter] because of the “most interesting man in the world” commercial. It cracks me up. [laughter] So I know, and I admit marketing works on me.”

Another participant commented and said, “They are so happy to hear that about you.”

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The first participant responded and said, “I know they are, but, it, you know, as they point out, yes it works. You know, if something gets in there it sticks in my head. Publix has been advertising organic pizzas and that. I bought two this week, so I could try them out and that was purely...I would not have looked for them, I wouldn't, I don't know if I've bought a frozen pizza in, I can't even tell you how long, 'cause I will go home and make my own. I bought two on, well what is it, Thursday, yeah it was Thursday.”

- Two participants discussed the influence of samples on their food buying decisions. The first participant said, “Sometimes it is what is available at Sam's or Costco or BJ's.

The second participant responded and said, “That is close to whatever you are looking for, yeah.”

The first participant continued the conversation and said, “I am more willing to try stuff there, mainly because they have the little old people...”

The second participant interrupted and said, “I was going to say, try it before you buy it. [laughter]”

The first participant responded and said, “Try it before you buy it, that is the nice thing.”

“Yeah” agreed the second participant.

Influenced by Own Needs

The participants indicated that their food purchasing decisions were often influenced by their own needs or the needs of their family. Some of these needs included the need to eat a variety of food, satisfy a hunger level, and the need to select a food that is easy to prepare. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed the influence that his/her family has on food buying. This participant said, “Getting back to your question which was things that influence my decision. And a lot of it is my family. I know that there are certain things that my husband likes, my son is home from college this summer. There is going to be different things, so I would say just my family influences what I buy [general agreement heard].”
- Boredom with food caused a participant's food buying decisions to be influenced by variety. This participant said, “I was gonna say that I circle the different flyers that comes out every week for good sales, but I like variety when it comes to food and I get very bored with eating the same things so I, that's why I go to different stores and try to cook different things.”
- Two participants discussed how their hunger level when shopping could affect their food buying decisions. The first participant said, “It also depends on how hungry I am when I walk in. [laughter] I could go and eat spinach and salmon and this, and when I'm starving...it's gonna be cookies and doughnuts will also get thrown on there.”

A second participant responded and said, “I've made that mistake before, not a good thing.”

- A participant's food buying decisions were influenced by his/her need for quick and simple meals. This participant said, “The length of time for preparation. A fast meal that you can make, that kind of lures me to purchase it. We have a hurried lifestyle.”

Local Choice Focus Groups

Production Location

Some participants indicated that they make food-purchasing decisions based on the production location of the food. Some of the participants preferred a local location, while others would not buy food if it was grown in a certain location. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that he/she would decide not to buy certain foods if the foods were from certain countries. This participant said, “I haven’t bought grapes in like forever because I refuse to buy from Chile. They’ve been from Chile for like the last six months.”

Another participant commented and said, “A lot of things are from Chile.”

The first participant responded and said, “I know. I would rather have my fruits and vegetables grown in the United States. And I would prefer them to be grown local. So that’s why when I say where I look for it.”

- The location that fish was caught impacted a participant’s buying decisions. This participant said, “I would say it is what you are looking for, because I will go to Whole Foods and buy fish because I know most of it is locally caught.”
- A participant discussed taking into account where foods are produced when making food buying decisions. This participant said, “I look at where things are produced.”

Food Preferences

The participants were asked to describe their food preferences, including why they prefer some foods over others. The participants discussed that their food preferences included preference related to convenience, preparation, their childhood, health, and types of food.

Convenience

The participants indicated that they preferred convenient foods over non-convenient foods. Convenience foods included those that were grab and go or those that were versatile and could be used for many meals/dishes. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Convenient and easy to prepare food was important to a participant whose son had to occasionally cook his own meals. This participant said, “I guess, for me, being a single mom, if I know my son is going to be home alone, then I want stuff that is real easy for him to make. So, we will go down the freezer aisle and buy some Bertolli pasta and he can make that and I don’t have to worry.”
- The value of a versatile product was explained by one participant who said, “My preference is also like the versatility of the food, I mean...if I can use it in more, ‘cause I’m a single person, so when I buy something it tends...I can use it more than once, so if I can use it in something like three different recipes, it’s nicer to buy that than to be buy one thing that I’ll eat one time. That’s it, saves money, too.”
- A participant favored foods that could be re-heated throughout the week. This participant said, “I like to make things that I could make at the beginning of the week and can heat up throughout the rest of the week. Because I have such a busy schedule, I’m never home.”

Local Choice Focus Groups

- Easy to prepare foods were the preference of a participant who said, “I’m also looking for ease. I’m getting home after working a full day with two hundred patients every day and I’m just exhausted, I can’t take the time to stop and do everything fresh and from scratch. So, I’m also looking besides just this narrow little list that I’m allowed to cook from, I’m also looking for what’s easiest for me to get out there. So, we end up doing a lot of pastas, a lot of casseroles.”

Preparation

Some participants indicated that they preferred foods that were made from scratch or homemade. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant who preferred cooking from scratch said, “I like to cook using whole ingredients, like starting from milk and vegetables, nothing processed or packaged.”
- Shopping based on recipe ingredients was discussed by a participant who said, “Well, most of the time I sit down, I look at recipes, not every time, but I make lists of what I need for each recipe.”
- A participant who cooked several meals from scratch once a week said, “Right, so I prepare enough to go at least about three days and four, I’m really pushing it. So, it’s not like I gotta run home everyday and do something fresh because you can’t...and when it’s fresh and from scratch, the longer it sits, the better it tastes. You know, being protective as far as the temperature, it tastes better ‘cause it soaks in it’s juices and things like that. So, you do that on Saturday, you know you gotta cook for at least three days, you know?”
- A participant who preferred to cook from scratch to get desired flavors said, “I cook up...because I’m really like into tasting the things, so I cook with a lot of spices and sauces. I like to have full flavor and a lot of the things that I buy, I find are very bland.”

Shaped by Childhood and Family

The participants discussed that many of their food preferences were shaped by how they were raised or by the preferences of their family members who they lived with. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that his/her food preferences were shaped by what his/her children would eat. This participant said, “Ours won’t eat red meat. One of our three will eat red, the other ones won’t. They won’t eat hamburgers, they won’t eat steak, they won’t...I mean...chicken nuggets and pizza. [laughter] I’m going to get arrested as we walk out of here for parenting abuse. [laughter]”
- A participant discussed that his/her food preferences were shaped by how he/she was raised. This participant said, “I think some of it is just what you’re used to having, just habit. You know, what you grew up eating and fortunately I grew up eating very healthy, you know, in a household where food was...I was exposed to really good food choices and I didn’t eat much of it then...[laughter]...so everything I didn’t eat then I eat it now. Right, I didn’t eat it, but at least I had the exposure to it and I knew what it was you know, so a lot of...I eat pretty much what I ate when I was younger except for beef and pork and I don’t, I haven’t eaten that in probably over fifteen years. So, I eat a lot of poultry, my kids get sick of it, but when I cook it for them...cook beef and poultry for them, they don’t eat it because I didn’t eat it, I mean pork and beef for them, they don’t eat it because I don’t eat it. So...but I eat a lot of what I grew up accustomed to.”

Local Choice Focus Groups

- Family routines were responsible for shaping participants' food preferences. This participant said, "I was going to say routine. Especially like making breakfast, and lunch, the kids just eat the same thing every...you know, maybe not every week but every day of the week that we shop, you know? We buy peanut butter and jelly, and umm...and you know, it's just easier, it's less thought to have to put into it and it's just, when you are buying the same things every week, sometimes, you know, it simplifies things."
- When asked what influenced the participants' food preferences a participant simply said, "upbringing."

Health

The participants discussed that they had a preference for foods that are healthy or made from healthy ingredients. This theme included a preference for foods that were not processed. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant indicated that health impacted his/her preference for food. This participant said, "Oh, I was gonna say for us in the past couple of months, it's been health."
- Trying to stay healthy was a participant's motivation to prefer healthy food choices. This participant said, "I am trying to get into the fruits and vegetables more. Trying to stay healthy...keep the whole body going, working out, tuna fish, salad, chicken. Trying to lay off the fried stuff. Trying."
- Health guided a participant's food preferences. This participant said, "We try to make sure that we have a diet that is dominated by vegetables and fruit. And then put a little bit of lean meat and mostly whole grains. Dairy is an indulgence for us; cheese for after dinner, cream in coffee."
- A participant preferred food that had not been processed. This participant said, "No processing...I mean the processed stuff, I don't even go down those aisles."

Types of Food

Some participants indicated that they had a preference for certain categories of food, such as meat and potatoes, breads, seafood, and fried food. In addition, the participants indicated that they preferred certain foods over others because of flavor. For example, some participants indicated that they preferred salty foods, while others preferred sweet or spicy foods. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed a preference for a meat and potato based diet. This participant said, "Now I'm lumped into that chicken nuggets and pizza group. I don't eat anything. I'll eat fruits and I'll eat some vegetables, but red meat and potatoes is mainly it. My husband will eat anything, my daughter...cookies and chips is what [laughter]...that's all she seems to eat."
- A participant discussed his/her food preferences and said, "I love fried. [laughter] Anything fried. I mean it is just the truth. But I like going to the produce stands, they have got some stuff. I will try anything once, obviously I ain't afraid of food. [laughter] I'll eat anything that won't outrun me. I like trying different stuff. You would be amazed, some of it, you don't imagine eating. You are looking at it and...you are not supposed to eat this, you know? Like fruits that have spines on them and looks like something alien, but you would be amazed, just trying stuff."
- Salty foods were the preference of a participant who said, "I tend to be a salt person, instead of a sweet. Some people like chocolate, I like chips."

Local Choice Focus Groups

- A participant who enjoyed eating bread, preferred bread over dessert. This participant said, “See, like I would have bread over dessert.”

Local Food

The participants were asked several questions about local food. The local food discussion included the meaning of local food, the meaning of buying local food, what is and is not local food, decision making about buying local food, places where local food is bought, the importance of local food, the advantages and disadvantages of local food, as well as other questions about local food.

Meaning of Local Food

When the participants discussed the meaning of local food, they indicated that local food referred to food grown in a certain location, helping the local community, and quality.

Grown in a Certain Location

The participants discussed several different location(s) that should be considered local. Some participants discussed that local referred to being grown in a certain area, while others referenced grown in Florida and the Southeastern United States. The broadest discussion of local included grown in the United States. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that local food was “Grown in the area.”
- Local food meant buying food grown in the country to a participant who said, “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].”
- A participant discussed that local food was food grown within the state. This participant said, “I usually think local is State of Florida because I want to get my strawberries from Plant City.”
- A participant discussed that local food could come from Florida and the surrounding states. This participant said, “I took the question a little differently. Umm...buying locally to mean...means you know...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.”

Helping the Local Community

The participants discussed that local food meant supporting the local economy. This included discussion of supporting local businesses, restaurants, and farmers. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Local meant supporting those close by to a participant who said, “It is something, that if you are buying it, you feel like you are supporting the community more. And even not just the health reasons or being more fresh, but it is also that you kind of feel like, oh, I am helping people around me as opposed to some corporation or someone far off that you don’t have any relation to.”

Local Choice Focus Groups

- Local meant buying from non-chain stores to a participant who said, “I would certainly shop, if there was, if there was a locally owned grocery store that had some of the things that we look for, I would certainly shop there over a Publix, or somewhere like that. I would certainly rather support a local owned place than a chain.”
- Local meant locally grown, local businesses, and local creation to a participant who said, “Locally grown, but also from businesses that are formed by people who are local to the area, who live in the area and have maybe used ingredients that are locally grown, but not necessarily. But, create, they actually create a product, if it’s not say, a cucumber grown in the ground, but something that’s created locally.”
- Local meant local restaurants to a participant who said, “I’ll be the odd person out. You say local food and I think of local restaurants. Not chain restaurants.”

Quality

The participants discussed that local food meant having access to quality food. They discussed the quality of local food primarily from a freshness standpoint. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Local meant higher quality food to a participant who said, “I think it’s generally higher quality because the farmers, you know, are from the community and they’ve more of a reputation to uphold in the community.”
- Local meant fresh, never frozen, food at a local restaurant to a participant who said, “Like if I do eat out at a restaurant and it is local food, sometimes I think it is, but it is actually prepared there, not just something that they have shipped in that is frozen, but it is fresh.”
- Local meant buying food that tasted like it was supposed to taste. A participant discussed the lack of quality in grocery store foods. This participant said, “I mean some of the vegetables you get in the grocery store, I am old enough to remember what a tomato does taste like [laughter].”
- Local meant buying food fresh from a farmer’s market to a participant who said, “Yeah, I said fresh, like, if I can go into a farmer’s market on Saturday morning, and buy something, that, to me, is local.”

Meaning of Buying Local

The participants in the focus groups indicated that buying local meant supporting local communities and buying in your community.

Supporting Local Communities

The participants discussed that supporting local communities, through the purchase of local food, included supporting local businesses and the local economy. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Buying local meant encouraging local farmers to a participant who said, “Encouraging local farmers. That sort of buying local.”
- Buying local meant supporting those who have businesses in the area to a participant who said, “See, I guess for me, buying local is just supporting all the people I know that have businesses here.”
- Buying local meant supporting the local economy to a participant who said, “Supporting the local economy. That’s kind of my opinion.”

Local Choice Focus Groups

- A participant indicated that buying local simply meant “Supporting your community.”

Buying in Your Community

The participants discussed that buying local meant buying from their surroundings or local areas. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Buying local meant buying in your surroundings to a participant who said, “Within your surroundings, like neighborhoods.”
- Buying local meant buying foods from “here” to a participant who said, “If you are buying products that have been created, raised or harvested here.”
- Buying local meant buying foods from “here” to a participant who said, “Well, for me, local is here. ‘Cause I lived in Miami and to me local down there is avocados, mangoes, that type of stuff which isn’t as prevalent up here, I’ve noticed.”
- A participant indicated that buying local meant buying food that was “close.”

Local Food Products

When the participants discussed food products that they considered to be local, they identified produce, dairy, seafood, and meats as being available locally. The participants also discussed local businesses carrying local food products. Other local products that were discussed less frequently included honey, eggs, cotton, and products with the Fresh From Florida logo on them.

Non-Local Food Products

When discussing non-local food products, the participants indicated that these included packaged, processed, and foods produced elsewhere. The participants also specified certain foods that they believed were not local and indicated that non-local food included foods from chain stores and restaurants.

Packaged

The participants indicated that foods that were packaged were not local. This included packaging in cans, boxes, and bags. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that products with fancy packages were not local. This participant said, “Usually if it has a really fancy package and a long expiration date, I know it’s not local.”
- A participant indicated that non-local foods were “Canned, frozen, processed, boxed, bagged.”
- A participant identified pre-packaged foods as not local. This participant said, “Well, I think...anything that’s pre-packaged, like cereals, or rice, or pasta. Any of that wouldn’t be local because we don’t have plants around here. I mean, you know, manufacturing plants to produce that...that wouldn’t be local foods.”
- Boxed food was non-local to a participant who said, “Anything that is boxed.”

Local Choice Focus Groups

Processed

The participants indicated that they did not consider processed foods to be local. Specific processing that was discussed included freezing, the addition of preservatives, and all-in-one meals. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Processed and preserved foods were not local to a participant who said, “Processed foods and preserved foods.”
- Frozen food was not local to a participant who said, “All the frozen food.”
- Shelf-stable all-in-one meals were not local to a participant who said, “I would say lots of ingredients, like in pre-packaged food, that to sort of make sure that it stays well on the shelf, or the sort of all-in-one meals, too.”
- Processed food that was shipped in was not local to a participant who said, “Packaged food that is shipped in. Processed food.”

Foods Produced Elsewhere

The participants indicated that food produced elsewhere was not local. For some participants, not local was anything produced outside of Florida. However, for others not local was anything produced outside of the United States. This theme also included a discussion that foods shipped to the participants’ local area were not local. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Two participants discussed that food from other states was not local. The first participant said, “From anywhere, I mean it could be Idaho potatoes...aren’t technically local because they’re not from around us.”

A second participant interrupted and said, “Washington apples.”

The first participant replied and said, “Yeah, that’s true, I mean they are still in the United States, but they aren’t local.”

The second participant responded and said, “Our oranges are not local to them.”

- A participant indicated that seafood was not local if it came from non-US waters. This participant said, “Probably the same thing, I would consider it the same thing with seafood...anything that is not caught in the US waters.”
- Food that had to be shipped or trucked was considered not local to a participant who said, “If it has to be shipped or trucked long distances.”
- Non-local food to one participant was “imported food.”

Specific Non-Local Food Products

Several of the participants named specific foods as not being local. The foods mentioned included strawberries, seafood, oranges, grapes, apples, and meat. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant identified strawberries as an imported product. This participant said, “Same with strawberries, they all come from Mexico now.”

Local Choice Focus Groups

- Salmon was identified as not local by a participant who said, “Food like salmon, I don’t think there are salmon farms in Florida, so I think almost something like that...I mean, I get it because it is very healthy and I really enjoy it, but I know that is not local, so that is truly not anything that is local.”
- Two participants discussed that meat was not local and that they did not know where meat was produced. The first participant said, “I don’t know about the meats yet, I would...[sentence trails off]”

A second participant interrupted and said, “I don’t consider it local, hardly any meat.”

The first participant responded and said, “I have no idea where it is coming from...I doubt I know where it’s coming from.”

- Two participants discussed that oranges at the store were commonly not local. The first participant said, “And the oranges, that one is funny to me.”

A second participant responded and said, “Yeah, we live where we grow them and we buy them from California.”

Chain Stores and Restaurants

The participants discussed that they did not perceive chain stores and restaurants to carry local food. They also specified that national brand foods would not be local. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Food bought from grocery stores was not considered local to a participant who said, “I would say the majority of food in grocery stores, to me, I would not consider local food.”
- A participant who said, “Like the national brands, cereals and things like that...like Kellogg’s, Post” identified national brands as not local.
- Three participants discussed that chain restaurants were not local. The first participant said, “I think the chain...the major chain restaurants, Applebee’s, Chili’s, any of those major...close your eyes and wake up in an Applebee’s and you don’t know where you are. [laughter] You could be anywhere, any city in the country and not know where you are, so...[sentence trails off].”

A second participant commented and said, “Yeah, pretty much any fast food place as well.”

A third participant added to the conversation and said, “I was going to say, any ethnic food, I love it, but it’s just not from the area.”

- Fast food was identified as not local by a participant who said, “And not local probably would be any fast food, you know...that’s not going to be local.”

Decision Making about Buying Local Food

The participants discussed how they made decisions about buying local food. Availability, price, convenience, exposure, attributes of the food, and personal preference were all discussed as impacting the participants’ buying decisions.

Local Choice Focus Groups

Availability

The participants discussed that local foods had to be available in order for them to buy local food. They discussed that seasonality also impacted the availability of local food. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant indicated that availability limited her/his decision to buy local food. This participant said, “A lot of times we don’t really have much say in buying local because we only have what’s out there for us. Like for instance, we are a big cattle state as well, yet there is no cattle processing in this state, whatsoever, from what I understand. If you want to have a cow chopped up, then you gotta go through great lengths to do this. Pretty much, they ship them all out to Texas, and then they come back to us you know after they package them up. So, there is very little option for us when we do go to our grocery stores to buy locally.”
- A participant discussed that “Access and availability” impacted his/her decision to buy local food.
- Decisions about buying local food were impacted by “What’s in season” for one participant.
- Two participants discussed that local food was not as available as it once was. The first participant said, “There is, but it is very hard to, It is hard to find, you don’t have the...like I was saying, you don’t have the small mom and pop shops that we used to have. Now everything is Publix, Sweetbay. It is not...[sentence trails off]”

A second participant responded and said, “We have to seek it out.”

Price

The participants discussed that price does impact their decisions to buy local food. If the food is competitively priced (in the participant’s opinion) then they will buy. If the food is expensive (in the participant’s opinion) then they will not buy it. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed the expense of buying local food. This participant said, “I would say availability and price, pretty much. I mean, it’s really expensive to get...I mean thirty-five dollars is a great deal, but to pay a ton of money, so that I bought a Florida cucumber would be kind of ridiculous to me. And it’s just...I’m not gonna go all over the state to find the local food either, because it’s gonna spend more money in gas nowadays to get to these local places.”
- Price impacted a participants’ decision to buy local food. This participant said, “Like everything else, price can enter into it.”
- A participant’s decision to buy local food was impacted by price. This participant said, “For me, its price.”
- A participant discussed that price, as well as other things impacted his/her decision to buy local. This participant said, “If it’s good quality and the price is right, and it comes from, you know, somewhere I’m not familiar with, versus locally, it will impact my buying decision.”

Convenience

Participants discussed that they will buy local food if it is convenient to buy. If a participant had to go out of their way to buy local food, they indicated they were less likely to go and buy it. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

Local Choice Focus Groups

- A participant discussed that the locations where local food was available was often inconvenient and impacted his/her decision to buy local. This participant said, “I feel like, at least for me, location has a lot to do with it. Because I’ve like...granted my parents live in Gainesville, and not very far from campus, so I leave my car there, but during the week it’s still...I don’t have a car on campus, so if something is far away, and I know every...occasionally they’ll have farmer’s markets in the Reitz Union, like north lawn, but a lot of time it’s kind of a hassle to have to try and go to the Bo Diddley Plaza to go to that farmer’s market...and so, like at least for me, location also has a lot to do with it, because I have other things I have to do, and you kind of gotta prioritize where the local food, buying local food is on that list.”
- A participant indicated that convenience impacted his/her decision to buy local. This participant said, “But, convenience because of the time that I am here, I want to take advantage of being here and doing things. I guess maybe that is my excuse for not seeking out more of the local stuff. It is really about convenience for me.”
- A participant indicated that it was inconvenient to buy local food. This participant said, “You have to go around to different...like I go to the store every Monday, ‘cause that’s just...and I have to wait until the man in the neighborhood opens up on Wednesday with the tomatoes, and then I have to wait until so-and-so gets to the farmer’s market on Saturday, and then do I really want to go to farmer’s market on Saturday when it’s so busy, if I can just go on Monday and get it at Publix? It’s just harder.”
- “Convenience” responded a participant when asked what impacted his/her decision to buy local food.

Exposure

The participants indicated that their decisions to buy local food were limited by their exposure to local food. For example the participants indicated that if they were aware of how to access local food then they would pursue it. However, many indicated that they did not know where they could access local food or had never sought local food out. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant indicated that he/she stumbled upon local food outlets on occasion. This participant said, “With us, I mean, I think just along the same lines that it ends up being...if we stumble upon it [local food], we will be like...oh, yeah...but we don’t...it’s [local food] not part of our normal consciousness.”
- A lack of exposure frustrated a participant who said, “I think one of the main things is, do...you know? Basically, do they tell you that? And if somebody says, “Oh...this bread was baked at Tulipan Bakery, local right here.” Then I may say, “Oh, you know great, I am going to get it there.” So it’s a matter of just it being exposed, the fact that it is done here. Would I spend a nickel more because it was done here and not in Georgia? Yeah, I would, I probably would. If it tastes good, just as good, yes.”
- A participant indicated that he/she did not seek out local food outlets. This participant said, “No, no, it’s all right. I mean, like, you know, I don’t really go out and search for local places.”
- A participant indicated that he/she did not often look to see if food was local. This participant said, “You know, so it’s, yeah if it’s...I think it boils down to...like [name omitted] was saying, you don’t think to look you just, you know, if they are advertising local stuff, sure, I’ll buy it, but it’s not first and foremost on my mind to look for it.”

Local Choice Focus Groups

Attributes of the Food

The participants indicated that their decisions to buy local food were impacted by whether or not the food had favorable attributes. The favorable attributes discussed included freshness, nutritional value, and appearance. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- The decision to buy local food for one participant was impacted by freshness. This participant said, “Any time it looks really fresh to me I’ll buy it.”
- A participant took several attributes into account when making local food buying decisions. This participant said, “For vegetables, I always look for color and smell. I make sure that it smells like the actual vegetable that it’s supposed to be. And then I know a lot of them are not like perfect looking, they don’t always have like straight carrots and things like that, but color is very important because it tells you all the nutrients are still in there and it’s not broken down.”
- Nutritional value impacted a participant’s local food buying decisions. This participant said, “I think its nutritional reputation, you know, how nutritional is it, how nutritious is it.”
- Two participants discussed that their decisions to buy local food were impacted by look and taste. The first participant said, “How good it looks.”

The second participant responded and said, “How good it tastes.”

Personal Preference

The participants indicated that they would buy local food if it met their needs. If it was a food that the participant needed, a food that the participant liked, a food produced in a method favorable to the participant, or was a product with good usability, then the participant was more likely to buy it. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant indicated that his/her decision to buy local food was impacted by what he/she needed. This participant said, “I guess it depends on what you need. Like I said earlier, you know, I consider the bulk of what I consider local food is like perishable stuff. So, if normally when I’m wanting vegetables, like I like greens, but I don’t like to do them every week like some people. And I like fall greens, so I know I’m really picky. And it just depends on what time of year it is, what’s in season.”
- A participant discussed that his/her decision to buy local food was impacted by the question “Is it something that I really like?”
- Organic also impacted a participant’s decision to buy local food. This participant said, “I think if the greens are organic versus conventional.”
- Food preferences impacted a participant’s decision to buy local food. This participant said, “I buy a lot of that frozen stuff that is shipped, because they don’t have it here and it is food that I like. Because I am from Columbia, so I like Columbian coffee, I like...you know, yucca and the Goya products and could care less that they are not from here. They are good and it is what I like to eat and cook.”

Local Choice Focus Groups

Places to Buy Local Food

The participants indicated that they buy local food from chain retail grocery stores, chain retail specialty stores, local specialty stores, roadside stands/markets, farmers market, directly from farms, and CSAs. In addition, some participants indicated that they got local food from their own garden or from a friend or family member,

Importance of Local Food

The participants were asked to discuss how important local food was to them. Some of the participants indicated that local food was not important; others indicated that it was important. However, of those who thought it was important several indicated that they do not put forth a major effort to buy local food.

Not Important

Some participants discussed that local food was not very important to them because it was not liked by their family, local food did not provide a huge benefit once time and gas was factored in, local could be bought at Publix, and they did not believe a local product lasted very long. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant was discouraged with the shelf life of local food and said, “But the downside about sometimes buying local produce, well, now fruits and veggies, ‘cause they don’t have preservatives in them, so they don’t last very long. Their shelf life on your counter, your apples and oranges aren’t going to be as fresh as long.”
- Because of a family who did not like vegetables, local food was not important to a participant who said, “It’s not that important to me because my son and my husband, it doesn’t matter to them and they’re not very much, I’ll say vegetable eaters. They like more meat, so if I give them meat, they’re good. [laughter]”
- The lack of substantial benefits caused a participant to conclude that local food was not important. This participant said, “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.”
- A group of participants discussed why local food was not important. The first participant said in reference to the importance of local food, “Apparently not as much as we think. [crosstalk and laughter]”

A second participant responded and said, “I mean I think we all...don’t make a big deal out of it [local food].”

A participant commented and said, “Not available. Not convenient.”

Another participant said, “It is not as available as it should be.”

“It definitely isn’t.” agreed a participant.

A participant added to the conversation and said, “Not important enough to go out of your way.”

“Exactly” agreed another participant.

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Important

Some participants discussed that local food was important to them because they liked keeping their money local and supporting local businesses, they liked knowing where their food came from, and they perceived a local product to be better quality than a non-local product. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- For one participant it was important to buy local from a financial and health standpoint. In addition, the participant discussed the personal relationships that had been developed with local food vendors. This participant said, “I’ve tried to make it a priority, but it takes...like, I’m a stay at home mom. So, I consider myself like our financial planner and our meal planner and kind of everything. So, I really try to get my stuff locally first, but within our budget. Like, I went to the market and I had forty dollars, and I came home with so much fruits and vegetables. And I know which farmers that I like, and I’ve tasted things before, and I know their names and I know, like Erica’s my orange lady, I’m like...which I buy their Hamlin’s, their navels this week. So, I know who I’m getting it from and what I’m getting, so I can come home spending forty dollars, and I come home with like six big bags of fruits and vegetables and that way like I’m supporting local farmers, I’m eating locally, my kids are eating healthier, and for forty dollars I have tons of food and I just have to get a little bit extra. I should really be shopping more local for meat, it’s like you’re saying, that’s probably hard, but I am trying to do it first.”
- A participant discussed that it was important to buy local because non-local food was often associated with food outbreaks. This participant said, “The other thought about not buying local is that most of the food outbreaks that we have had, both peanut butter and spinach and what not, they have all been traced back to giant food processing plants. Like, giant...where these plants have had violations after violations after violations and nothing was done, because there is no enforcement, virtually.”
- Two participants discussed the importance of local food. The first participant said, “It’s very important.”
The second participant responded and said, “Yeah, very important. It helps the local farmers and smaller local stores. It’s gonna be fresher.”
- A participant who once had a local business said, “For me, if I have to choose between two places, I would probably pick the local. Only just because I had a business at one time and I know how important it is.”

Important but...

Several participants indicated that local food was important to them, but they admitted that they do not do enough to make buying local a priority. Others also said local food was important, but that it was not always available due to convenience and availability. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that buying local food was not a priority. This participant said, “I would like to say buying, 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] If it’s an option for me and it happens to be there, like I do like to go the farmer’s market and I do know they are, for the most, part local outside of the fish that I’m getting from Maine, occasionally. But, you know, I know that those are local, I like doing what I can, but outside of that I probably don’t make the time to do it, it’s not a...as you pointed out, it’s not a choice that I do.”
- A participant discussed that he/she should be eating better by buying local food, but he/she did not make an effort to do so. This participant said, “I think we are conscientious enough to know that we should be eating better. [laughter] But, we just don’t do it.”

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- A participant admitted that he/she did not seek out local food, even though it was important. This participant said, “Well, it’s important because it benefits the community, but as far as going out and seeking out to buy local food, I do not. If it’s local, it’s local and if it’s not, it’s not.”
- A participant discussed that money and time hindered the importance of local food. This participant said, “To me, I think, personally it should be more important to me. But unfortunately, time is money. And convenience is gonna to trump that extra time and money that it’s gonna cost me at this point in my life for it to be more important.”

Advantages of Local Food

When asked about the advantages or incentives of local food, the participants provided many ideas. The common themes included supporting the local economy, quality, social interactions, lower prices, and environmental benefits.

Supporting the Local Economy

The participants discussed that supporting the local economy was a benefit to buying local food because they felt that if they bought food locally the money would stay local. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant said, “I would say it supports local businesses.”
- Supporting local people instead of corporations was identified as an advantage of local food by a participant who said, “The desire to support local people rather than corporations that could be halfway across the country or...there is more of a personal face on a local.”
- A participant discussed “Supporting the local economy” as an advantage of buying local food.
- Two participants discussed the advantages of keeping their money local by buying local food. The first participant said, “There’s a perception that you’re keeping your money locally, the person who is receiving the money is getting it directly rather than a bunch of middle men or corporations.”

A second participant added to the conversation and said, “I would think that you are keeping someone in a job locally.”

Quality

The participants discussed that quality of the food products was another advantage or incentive to buying local food. Health benefits, freshness, and taste were specific quality indicators that were discussed. Some participants indicated that local food would also last longer. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Several participants discussed quality advantages to buying local food. The first participant said, “You know that things have been picked more recently.”

A second participant commented and said, “Fresher.”

A third participant agreed and said, “Yes, exactly.”

“Not frozen” added a fourth participant.

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A fifth participant said, “Or ripened along the way.”

The fourth participant responded and said, “Or frozen or preservatives.”

“No pink slime [laughter]”

- A participant discussed that local food had the advantage of less preservatives. This participant said, “And less preservatives than what you are getting at the grocery store.”
- A participant discussed that local food tastes better because it is not picked until naturally ripened. This participant said, “Nothing is...nothing tastes right because it’s not picked ripe, like local can be. So it’s got to be quote, unquote “ripened.” It just changes colors, you know? There is a difference between ripe and changing color, I mean a ripe tomato, grown right and waited on...you can’t find one in the store.”
- A participant said, “Quality. Quality is, I mean if they have what you are looking for, it’s better than what you are going to find at the grocery store. It’s much, much better.”

Social Interactions

The participants discussed that the social interactions that come along with local food were advantageous. The participants indicated that they could get to know the local producers well, ask the farmers questions, and learn from them. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Listening to farmers was an advantage identified by a participant who said, “Well, I find one other advantage and this is me, personally...I actually like the social interaction of speaking to the person I’m buying it from. You get a lot of really neat stories if you just stop and listen to people.”
- Asking questions about growing practices was identified as an advantage by a participant who said, “It takes seven years to establish an organic license, so...a lot of these farms, but they will tell you what their growing practices are...whether they use pesticides or whether they use organic pesticides. They will tell you how they grow it, so it’s...you can at least find out...are you growing these strawberries with toxic pesticides or are you growing them hydroponic? You can ask them questions. I go to King Farms all the time. I know they are not certified organic, but their growing methods are...they will tell you...Shelby will tell you all about it.”
- The customer service interactions with those selling local food was identified as an advantage by a participant who said, “That is the truth, we have a little meat market here off Orange Avenue, and if you have any problems, he’s just like, “Get an extra pack just because I’m sorry that it wasn’t as right as I make it to be.” He is a little mom and pop, he doesn’t sell anything organic, but you go there and get what you need, and the customer service with...with the local, local people is amazing. You don’t get it from anywhere else. They’re great.”
- Getting to know farmers at U-pick farms was identified as an advantage by a participant who said, “Especially if you are going right here to pick those peas, or to gather them by the bushel or to get a five gallon bucket of tomatoes, I mean...or blueberries or whatever it may be. If you’re picking it yourself or gathering it close by the crop over there, you have a tendency to get to know your local farmer, plus know where it is coming from.”

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Prices

Some participants discussed that low prices were an advantage or incentive to buying local food. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- “Better pricing” said a participant when discussing the benefits of local food.
- Price and quality were identified as advantages of local by a participant who said, “When it comes down to it taste and price, local is usually a lot less expensive and it’s not packaged, so it’s you can smell it and see it.”
- Cheap prices were an advantage identified by a participant who said, “Sometimes it is dirt cheap to go out to those farm stands and they will have a product on sale and I will end up going home with, like, 50 cabbages or something that I don’t know what to do with. [laughter] But a lot of it is cheap, you know. I give it out to my parents, everybody. [laughter] I couldn’t resist.
- A participant discussed buying local food that was in season. This participant said, “I personally think if you buy within season, the price is better.”

Environmental Benefits

The participants discussed that environmental benefits were also an advantage of buying local food. The environmental benefits discussed included reduced environmental impact, lower carbon footprints, and less landfill contributions. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant identified a lower carbon footprint associated with local food and said, “Lower carbon footprint.”
- Another participant also identified a smaller carbon footprint as an advantage of buying local food. This participant said, “It’s nice to move to a smaller carbon footprint in the delivery chain, the distribution chain.”
- A participant discussed that less waste was produced with local food. This participant said, “Yes, if you choose to [buy local] [laughter]. You aren’t contributing to the landfill with the plastic containers and the binders and everything that some food comes in.”

Disadvantages of Local Food

When asked about the disadvantages or barriers of local food, the participants provided many ideas. The common themes included that the participants could not always get what they wanted, the price of local products, and lack of convenience. Other participants indicated that a disadvantage or barrier of local food was that they had to trust the farmer or producer.

Cannot Always Get What They Want

The participants discussed that a disadvantage or barrier to local food was that they could not always get what they wanted. This theme included discussion of availability and seasonality. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant who discussed not being able to get everything needed or wanted was a disadvantage to buying local food. This participant said, “I don’t think you can always like get what you want. Or it doesn’t cover everything. That there is, it’s not a one-stop shopping trip. Usually it’s, you have to go to more than one place. I would say that can add up.”

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- A lack of variety was identified as a disadvantage to buying local food by a participant who said, “Variety. There’s probably less variety if you constrain yourself to local.”
- Lack of availability was identified as a disadvantage by a participant who said, Lack of availability, like I was saying, it is far for me to be able to go to get.”
- A participant who identified seasonal and climate limitations said, “I think limitations are definitely the biggest thing, because Florida’s a harsh environment for a lot of things to grow. And so, you do have your seasonal things because it can only grow in this window of time, because it’s not that hot or this window of time window, because it’s so rainy. And so for a lot of things, if you want a certain thing that’s kind of not in season, or can’t really grow, they do have to add a lot of stuff to it that’s not naturally in the land. So, that’s definitely a limitation I think, too, about buying local food.”

Price

The participants also discussed that a disadvantage or barrier to local food was that it was often more expensive and there were no coupons available for local food products. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Two participants discussed the cost of local food as being a disadvantage. The first participant said, “I mean, sometimes the price. I mean, I know we like to think it would be cheaper, but sometimes at the farmer’s markets and stuff...sometimes the price isn’t as competitive on some things, I have found.”

A second participant said, “A little more expensive just because it’s been grown locally.”
- A participant discussed the added expense associated with local food. This participant said, “If you were only buying for one or two people and both people are professionals, it tends to be more expensive because...I mean, the hours...the hours that my girlfriend and I work, by the time we get home we don’t have the time to go and do the research, and the digging, and the chasing, and so almost invariably it becomes; what can we get? And if the option is there at usually a Fresh Market, because if we are going to get local, that is where we are going to get it from...but even then that’s going to be our treat because Fresh Market, because of their sourcing and their model, they have to raise their price point.”
- A lack of coupons for local food was identified as a disadvantage by a participant who said, “I think that going back to the coupons, there’s no coupons on local food, a lot of people like to feel they are getting their money’s worth.”
- A participant discussed that there were no coupons for local food. This participant said, “Wish they did a coupon thing. There’s usually no locally grown coupon book. [laughter]”

Lack of Convenience

The participants discussed that a disadvantage or barrier of local food was the lack of convenience that came along with buying local food. The participants discussed that local food was never included in a one-stop shop, often took a longer travel distance to access, was difficult to find, and was time consuming to purchase. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

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- A participant discussed that buying local food was inconvenient. This participant said, “I agree with the inconvenience thing, just cause it’s easier to you know if you’re in a store, it’s just easier to get everything you need to get than to continue traveling to try to find the local stuff.”
- Three participants discussed the inconvenience associated with local food. The first participant said, “It is just hard sometimes to get it. It just takes so much more time to get it.”

“It is inconvenient” commented a second participant.

A third participant added, “It takes so much more time.”

- The distance and availability of local food was inconvenient to a participant who said, “Lack of availability, like I was saying, it is far for me to be able to go to get.”
- Having to make multiple stops to buy local food was inconvenient to a participant who said, “It’s economics. I mean, you know, you just don’t know. You don’t know how much gas you’re gonna have to spend if you’re gonna go...you know, if you want to patronize all the local people you’re gonna have to go three or four different places where if you go to a Publix, you go one time, one-stop shopping.”

Trust of the Local Farmer

The participants said that a disadvantage or barrier to buying local food was finding trust in the local farmers. The participants indicated that you have to put a lot of trust in the local farmers because they are not inspected the same as larger producers, they have not proven themselves, and consumers have to take their word on their production practices. The participants discussed that this barrier was removed when you bought food at someplace like Publix because they have proven themselves, and have standards that must be met. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed the unknowns associated with buying local food. This participant said, “If you’re not used to frequenting farmer’s markets or, you know, fruit stands and stuff like that you know, you’re kind of leery of...what am I gonna get? You know? If you go to a grocery store, you kind of know, yeah there’s some preservatives and stuff on top of it, but I know I’m gonna get a product that I can eat, whereas if you buy just from somebody, and you’re like, is this gonna be good for me? It looks good, but am I gonna get sick from this?”
- A participant discussed that local food could be not local and could have preservatives and pesticides on it. This participant said, “You know there’s a perceived freshness, if you’re buying from the local guy five miles down the road. In reality I...I guess with markets the way they work, the guy down the road could have got his stuff in Atlanta, nine hours or ten hours, I don’t know if it makes that much difference. But perception wise, if you think it’s being grown fresh, you think it’s maybe not going to have preservatives in it, but in all reality it probably does, or not preservatives, but pesticides and things like that.”
- A participant expressed concern regarding the lack of quality control that accompanies local food. This participant said, “Buying through a place like Publix or Costco gives you, at least, the illusion of some quality control. Other local purchases without quality control raise a concern.”
- Two participants discussed the trust that you have to have in local producers. The first participant said, “I also think sometimes with local, you don’t...like you said, the consistency, like you can go to a farmer’s market and you

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have to choose your watermelon, but you have to trust that farmer or that person and there is not, like the Publix that is regulating and choosing who they are doing...there is not that middle man. You are responsible for what you choose.”

A second respondent said, “Publix has buyers that check, that will check the crop and make sure that it adheres to a specific standard.”

Scenario When Non-Local Food is Preferred over Local Food

The participants were asked to discuss a situation when they would prefer non-local food over local food. The participants indicated that they would prefer non-local food when they wanted to meet a certain preference, when local food was not available, and on special occasions. In addition, the some participants discussed that the attributes of non-local food were more favorable.

Preference for Certain Foods

This theme included the participants discussing that they had a preference for certain foods that were grown or produced in other states or countries. For example, the participants discussed wanting Georgia Peaches, Northern Beef, ethnic foods, and cheeses from Italy. This theme also included non-local foods that were needed for recipes. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Special meats and chesses not available locally were preferred by a participant who said, “There are certain specific, very specific foods that occasionally I have a taste for, like...there is a specific grass fed beef that comes from a guy’s farm in Pennsylvania and then I will specifically go look for that and I will want that or there is Maytag blue cheese and I know that is not made locally. [laughter]”
- A participant discussed preferences for foods that were not available locally. This participant said, “Salmon, you can’t get that here. Processed foods, there are types of processed foods that I have favorite brands of, because I like the way it tastes when it comes out of the can or bottle. And, I am going to try and get that wherever I am living, I will try and get that.”
- A participant discussed preferring non-local food when a recipe called for an ingredient that was out of season or not available locally. This participant said, “I think it goes to recipes also, if you’re making something that calls for something that’s not in season, locally, you have to get it.”
- A preference for plantains grown in another country was discussed by a participant who said, “Mine would be plantains, ‘cause my family is from South America and stuff like that, so you know the plantains you see that are from here, like they’re usually smaller, they turn ripe quicker and stuff like that. I’m like, I’m very picky about the way, you know, we eat them and stuff like that. Well, you can eat them a million different ways, but you know, I’m very picky about if they’re really green and stuff like that, so I always want to get them from, you know, from somewhere else. Like, I’ll look to see, okay, if it says it comes from Ecuador, it comes from Colombia, I’m okay with that because I know it’s gonna be what I want.”

Local Food not Available

When local food was not available, the participants indicated they wanted non-local food. The participants discussed that food may not be available because it may be out of season or it may not be available because of a natural disaster, such as

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the Gulf Oil Spill and the Tsunami that caused a nuclear power plant leak in Japan. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that when limited to local food, some foods were not available when out of season. This participant said, “I think, you know, just when stuff is out of season, so you have a limited selection of local food compared to...if you don’t restrict yourself to local.”
- A participant indicated that he/she preferred non-local food “When things are out of season here.”
- In the event of a natural disaster a participant indicated that he/she would not want local food. This participant said, “If you lived in an area that had a natural disaster, you’d want, wouldn’t...for instance, if you were living in northern Japan, you probably are skeptical about their vegetables, or if you are living on the coast of Orleans during the oil spill you probably wouldn’t be buying local oysters. So those are times when you’re probably not buying local, or I wouldn’t buy local food.”
- When local strawberries were not available locally a participant still wanted to be able to get them from elsewhere. This participant said, “I would think that for me, when things are out of season here, like strawberries, I have to have my strawberries at breakfast and they aren’t in season for very long.”

Special Occasions

Another situation when participants would prefer non-local food to local food in the case of special occasions. The participants indicated that these special occasions included when they were making a special recipe, eating at a restaurant, or treating themselves. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Special occasions were when a participant preferred non-local food. This participant said, “I’ll say when you are doing like special dishes for events or a party, seafood dishes.”
- When wanting a special treat non-local foods were preferred by a participant who said, “One of the things that over the years, just as a treat to try something new and different without breaking the bank...umm...I love to shop at Trader Joe’s. It can be done, previously it could be done when traveling up the coast somewhere, we have family in New York and they are all over there, now you can drive over to Naples. And to give yourself a little treat, something that is a little bit out of the ordinary. They have a lot of things that they bring in from all over the world, you know? It tends to be processed and packaged, of course, but it’s usually pretty good quality and just adds some variety and some interest.”
- Non-local restaurants were a treat to a participant who said, “I think going out to eat...for us is like a once in a six month treat. So, like we probably don’t choose local with our restaurants. We may choose more of a chain because of the price.”
- Two participants discussed the craving for fast food or the need to buy cheap food as being reasons to prefer non-local food. The first participant said, “Or if you just want a McDonald’s cheeseburger or something. Just have to have those fries.”

A second participant added, “Along those lines, fast...fast and cheap is hard to beat. You know, sometimes I just want a hamburger.”

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Non-Local More Favorable

Some participants discussed that overall non-local food had more favorable attributes than local food. The favorable attributes of non-local food that were discussed included that non-local food had good prices, was ready to eat, included a variety of food, and was always available at a grocery store. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Variety and choice were reasons to prefer non-local food to a participant who said, “I think you just have more choices overall if you, you know, include non-local as opposed to just including local, so more choice.”
- A participant discussed that non-local food had more ready-to-eat options. This participant said, “I sometimes like that single-serve vegetables, frozen vegetables, because I don’t need to microwave the whole bag or you know, I just need that one little portion just for me, just one. So, and they’re in the freezer, and they don’t go bad, and it’s always there for me and quick and easy.”
- The price of local food caused a participant to prefer non-local food. This participant said, “Yeah, but they [local foods] are really insanely expensive. I’m just saying, like, I think we end up choosing non-local mostly based on price and availability, like for a general rule.”
- Two participants discussed the barriers to local food and indicated that the preference for food becomes places like Publix. The first participant said, “Well, and think about it. We are supposed to think globally, but shop and spend our money locally. But, it’s all based upon availability, it’s based on farming practices, and in a perfect economy, we would be self-sufficient, we would be able to support our communities but when you’ve got a dead zone, which is West Palm Beach...[sentence trails off].”

A second participant responded and said, “In more ways than one.”

The first participant continued and said, “Yeah, it’s a hindrance, you can’t...you can talk the talk, but you can’t walk the walk, because there are too many barriers to it.

“And Publix is a block away” commented the second participant.

Words to Describe the Local Food Movement

When asked what word described the local food movement, five themes emerged. These themes included expanding, trendy, area specific, and almost non-existent.

Expanding

Several participants discussed that they believed the local food movement was gaining in popularity and prevalence. However, some participants discussed that it may be expanding at a slow pace. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that he/she had noticed an expanding effort for restaurants to include local food on their menus. This participant said, “Seeing more restaurants, even national chains that are trying or at least making a...what I consider a strong attempt to use local when possible and I think it’s a lot different than it has been in the years past. They are at least making an effort. [agreement heard]”

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- A growing local food movement was discussed by a participant who said, “I would say, growing. Because I think it is, it was like you were describing earlier, but now it has come around with the CSA’s and the dairy trying to go, you know? I think it is all coming around.”
- A participant discussed new local food establishments in a local neighborhood. This participant said, “I think the biggest thing would be growing. I mean, I’ve seen an increase in growth over the last couple of years. I’ve seen more little places pop up whether it be Jackson County or I know there’s one that just popped up over in Velda Dairy, Killearn Estates area. And I start to see more growth there, in the popping up, in just little areas of town.”
- A participant discussed that the movement was slow, but that it had expanded in recent years. This participant said, “I would agree with slow, but ten years ago it was non-existent.”

Trendy

The word trendy was used to describe the local food movement, as the participants thought it was cool, the hipster thing to do, and was characteristic of a fad. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Popularity was used to describe the local food movement by a participant who said, “I would say, increasing in popularity.”
- Two participants discussed the trend of buying local food. The first participant said, “I think it’s funny that you have...for the people who’ve like been going to farmer’s markets all along, it’s becoming the cool thing, it’s sort of like...wait a minute I’ve been doing this...”

A second participant interrupted and said, “I’ve been doing this forever, yeah.”

The first participant continued and said, “...my entire life, but yet now it’s, yes, it’s definitely a trend. It has been for years.”

- One participant used “hipster” to describe the local food movement.
- Two participants discussed that they feared the local food movement was a fad. The first participant said, “I am hoping that it is not a fad.”

A second participant added to the conversation and said, “Like [name omitted] said, I am hoping it is not a fad, that it’s, you know...a ten or twenty year cycle and now it is gone again.”

Area Specific

Some of the participants discussed that the local food movement could be described as area specific. The participants discussed that the locations where local food was available was sporadic and only where a lot of local food was grown. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A participant discussed that the prevalence of local food varied by location. This participant said, “I would say there is some [local food], I think it has to do with where you live, too.”
- A participant described the local food movement as fragmented and said, “I find it a bit fragmented...in terms of, you’ve got various things going on to promote eating locally, buying locally, but they’re not, there is not a real cohesive push. There’s like a little bit here, a little bit there, and if you could just bring it more together and have a

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better, I want to say, a better marketing push, more of a cohesive campaign, I think that could make things really grow. Make them hop. Get people more aware and involved.”

- The local food movement was identified by a participant as being more prevalent in other locations. This participant said, “I think in other cities it’s more widely known than it is here. Like in Seattle.”
- A participant described the local food movement as “sporadic.”

Almost Non-Existent

Several participants discussed that the local food movement was not very prevalent. Some participants indicated that it was not existent at all. The foundation for this discussion included the idea that society has abandoned local food by shopping at big box stores and not growing their own food. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Three participants discussed that they do not hear a lot about local food. The first participant said, “Lacking” in reference to the local food movement.

A second participant agreed and said, “Yeah, not a lot of information.”

A third participant added, “Just every once in a while you’ll hear something, like, we’re gonna have a local, push for local food. I don’t hear much about it.”

- A participant discussed that the local food movement had slowed down in recent years. This participant said, “So, I mean it’s [local food movement] been...not, not terrible, it’s just kind of, I feel like it’s [local food movement] kind of slowed in the past two or three years. It hasn’t been quite as big of a deal.”
- A participant indicated that the local food movement was “Non-Existent [laughter].”
- When asked how they would describe the local food movement a participant responded and said, “I didn’t know there was one. [laughter].”

Words to Describe Those Taking Part of the Local Food Movement

The participants were asked to describe those people taking part in the local food movement. The common responses included naturalists/hippies, hard workers, and educated/health conscious.

Naturalists/Hippies

Participants who described those participating in the local food movement as naturalists indicated that these people often liked to grow their own food, participated in activities like composting, were green, and on the crunchy spectrum. Some participants described those participating in the local food movement as either young and old hippies or free spirits. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Three participants discussed that those taking part in the local food movement were naturalists. The first participant said, “You see a lot of naturalists.”

“Yes” agreed a second participant.

“Definitely” commented a third participant.

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- Two participants discussed that those participating in the local food movement were hippies. The first participant said, “Hippies. [laughter] You want honest, I mean this is a focus group. I mean, I’m not saying everybody is, but I think that’s the perception.”

A second participant commented and said, “The trendy thing.”

The first participant continued and said, “Yeah, I mean it’s the new age hippies these days. Right, so it’s the same people who are composting and doing all those other things, you know?”

- A participant referred to those participating in the local food movement as “Green.”
- A participant who had previously discussed his/her own participation in the local food movement said, “My friends definitely consider us on the crunchy spectrum. [laughter]”

Hard Workers

Those participating in the local food movement were also described as hard workers who work to grow their own food or prepare local food. These people were described as those who never take a day off, take pride in their work, and are devoted. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant described the hard work involved for those who grow local food. This participant said, “I’d probably have to describe them as like, no matter how they are, if they’re free spirits, they’re hard working. Like my grandfather was a farmer and like had, even just over the summers helping him move hay or something like...you’re not...unless you’ve done it for like a long period of time or do it for awhile, you don’t understand exactly how much work it actually is. Like there’s never any like, “Oh, it’s the weekend, I can take a day off,” it’s every day, all day, like sunup to sundown, maybe like an afternoon nap so then you can get your energy back, but other than that it was just all the time.”
- A participant discussed those who participate in the local food movement as “Hard working.”
- A participant described those participating in the local food movement as devoted. This participant said, “Maybe, devoted would be a good word.”
- Those who grow local food were identified by a participant as hardworking. This participant said, “Hard workers and they take pride in their work.”

Educated/Health Conscious

Educated and knowledgeable were also words used to describe those taking part in the local food movement. The participants indicated that these people were intelligent and particularly knowledgeable about their health. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Two participants described those participating in the local food movement as health conscious. The first participant said, “Health conscious.”

A second participant agreed and said, “Yeah, health conscious.”

- A participant described those participating in the local food movement as “Young, educated families committed to healthy eating, healthy lifestyle.”

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- “Educated” was a word used by a participant to describe those participating in the local food movement.
- Two participants discussed these individuals as being health conscious. The first participant said, “I’d write health conscious in there. I’m not saying they’re the only ones that are health conscious, but...[sentence trails off].”

A second participant added, “Yeah, they’re probably a little more health conscious.”

Impact of Local Food on the Economy

The participants discussed that local food impacted the economy by keeping resources local.

Keeps Resources Local

The resources discussed by the participants as remaining local, and thus impacting the economy, included food, jobs, businesses, and money. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Two participants discussed that local food keeps money in the local economy. The first participant said, “I would think that, you know, you are going to put more money into the local economy, people are...we are buying and selling from ourselves, um...depending on one another a little more than somebody else sending the money out.”
The second participant agreed and said, “Right, not paying the middle-man so much.”
- Keeping money and jobs local, as a result of local food, was discussed by a participant who said, “It helps keeping money here in town. Jobs.”
- A participant discussed that local food kept farmers in business. This participant said, “It keeps the farmers in business.”
- A participant discussed that local food kept money local. This participant said, “I think that, you know, the more money you can get into the hands of the person who pulled it out of the ground locally, and whoever transports it, prepares it...if it was local, the money kind of stays local instead of getting shipped out to where the processing happens in another state or another country. So that the value...the money that comes out of the value added at each of the steps of the process, the more of it stays local, the more a multiplier that has.”

Food Grown in Florida

The participants were asked to identify foods grown in Florida. The common responses fell into the themes of fruits, vegetables, animal products, and other.

Fruit

The fruits mentioned as being grown in Florida included pomegranates, carambola, cantaloupes, bananas, pineapples, mangos, blueberries, watermelon, strawberries, and citrus.

Vegetables

The vegetables mentioned as being grown in Florida included tomatoes, beets, potatoes, green beans, lettuce, bell peppers, radishes, squash, mushrooms, greens, cabbage, celery, avocados, and corn.

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Animal Products

The animal products discussed included meat from cows, pigs, and chickens. In addition, seafood, dairy products, and eggs were discussed.

Other

Products discussed as being grown in Florida in the “other” theme included crops, wheat, coconuts, herbs, pecans, honey, and peanuts.

Food Grown in Florida vs. Food Grown Locally

After discussing the food that was grown in Florida, the participants were asked to discuss how the food grown in Florida differed from the food grown in their local area. The common responses included a discussion of fruits, vegetables, and other products grown in the area. Animal products were not discussed as being produced in any of the participants’ local areas.

Fruits and Vegetables Grown Locally

The participants discussed several vegetables and fruits that grew in their local area. Several of the vegetables that were mentioned were also mentioned as being grown in Florida. However, cucumbers and cauliflower were discussed as being grown in a local area, but not in Florida. Several of the fruits that were mentioned were also mentioned as being grown in Florida. However, muscadines, peaches, figs, and kumquats were discussed as being grown in a local area, but not in Florida.

Other Products Grown Locally

The participants discussed several “other” food items that grew in their local area. The only “other” item that was discussed as being produced in Florida and also discussed as being produced in a local area was honey. Products that were discussed as being grown in a local area, but not discussed as being grown in Florida were tobacco, sugar, and cotton.

Local Choice Scenarios

After discussing local choice in general, the participants were then asked to participate in local choice scenarios. For the first scenario, each participant was given 20 flash cards (See Appendix A). Each flash card had a fruit or vegetable on it that was grown in Florida. Also included on each card were the locations in the state where the fruit or vegetable was primarily grown, as well as the months of availability. All cards were taken from <http://www.florida-agriculture.com/fresh2u/>. The participants were asked to pretend that when they left the focus group they were going to the grocery store and select five of the 20 fruit or vegetables to buy, take home, and eat that week. They were then asked to discuss their decisions. After the first scenario, the participants were asked to repeat the same steps, but pretend that they were going shopping in the middle of October. They were again asked to discuss their decisions.

Selection of Five Fruits or Vegetables

After making their selections of five fruits or vegetables to buy the night of the focus groups, the participants discussed that they made certain selections based on whether they liked the food, if it was versatile, had health benefits, and was eaten frequently by themselves and their family. Some participants also discussed the growing location and months of availability; however they indicated that this was secondary in their decision making process.

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Preference for the Food

Most of the participants indicated that they selected foods that were liked by themselves and their families. Some of the participants indicated that their preference for certain foods was shaped by their childhood and what they grew up eating. In addition, the participants also indicated that they picked certain foods because the foods were eaten frequently by themselves or their families. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that he/she made decisions based on the foods he/she liked. This participant said, “I would say I’m a really picky eater so going through this I was like...don’t like that, don’t like that, don’t like that, so I definitely chose items that I liked. And then I was happy to see if they were grown in Alachua County and yay, it was the time you can buy them. But definitely, what I preferred was a first consideration. So, I did the snap beans, I recently ate at a restaurant and the snap beans were phenomenal. And I just couldn’t get over it and my mom was like, “What about the fish?” and I was like, no... The beans, those were awesome. So, I like tangerines and oranges and cantaloupe and strawberries and it’s again, just what I like.”
- A participant discussed that he/she made decisions based on the foods he/she liked and had grown up with. This participant said, “I picked what I eat. [laughter] These are foods that I’m gonna want to eat. Oh, and by the way, cabbage, I just discovered cabbage, what a great, great thing to do with that. I eat that with a little bacon. [crosstalk and agreement] But, really traditionally greens and, you know, what I grew up with, green salad, these are the kinds of things that we eat. I didn’t look at all at when they were grown or where they were grown. I’m just cooking.”
- A participant discussed that his/her selection were based on what his/her family members liked. This participant said, “I did blueberries, strawberries, and oranges as my kids eat them like crazy, and then watermelon and sweet corn, ‘cause I know we are going to be cooking out this weekend, so....[sentence trails off].
- A participant selected foods that he/she liked and ate frequently. This participant said, “I’ll start. I will start with greens, I eat spinach every single day, so I always get at least a bag of spinach and sometimes I buy a head of Romaine lettuce. I make super salads. I make my own dressing, so I don’t have to buy the nasty bottled stuff. I like grapefruit. I try to eat one avocado every week. I really like avocado. I eat blueberries and strawberries every week, I put them on my yogurt and sometimes I will just nibble on strawberries. So there you have it.”

Versatile

The participants indicated that they chose several foods because the foods were versatile. This included foods that could be used for many dishes or meals. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- The versatility of certain foods influenced a participant’s decision. This participant said, “Okay, I chose watermelon and cantaloupe and strawberry, because we eat a lot of fruit and you can eat them by themselves or you can cut ‘em up and have ‘em as a salad. You can have them for breakfast, lunch, or dinner; it really doesn’t matter. They’re all good. And then avocado and tomato because again, you can have them by themselves, you can have them as a sandwich, you can have them in Mexican food, you can have them in Spanish food, so very versatile food.”
- The variety of meals possible with certain foods influenced a participant’s decision. This participant said, “The variation with which I can use everything I chose. You can use blueberries to put in oatmeal, you can use blueberries in a great salad; tomatoes you can cook tomatoes, you can eat them fresh, they are delicious. They look

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nice on a plate, add a little color and once again, the variation you can use all of these in whole different settings, with other foods, meats or whatever.”

- Use in a lot of recipes attracted a participant to the five cards he/she chose. This participant said, “I picked tomatoes, because I can do a lot with them. I can use them in a lot of recipes. Snap beans, I want to say we usually eat them once a week, you know so we eat them a lot. Strawberries are just my favorite. That’s like a treat for me. Oranges cause vitamin C. And mangoes because I make a mean mojito. So, that’s why I picked that.”
- Versatility of foods led a participant to make decisions. This participant said, “I picked squash because I really love this vegetable and it’s very diverse, you can make soups with it, you can make stews, or you can just have it as a side, so it’s always good to have when you’re just making like, “Oh my God I don’t have a side.” And you can just throw it in there. I also picked cucumbers and tomatoes, because I eat those every day, every single day. I try to eat some sort of a salad with whatever meal it is and it always involves these two. Snap beans, again, favorite side ever, I can eat these things all day. And strawberries are my favorite fruit, I usually eat them for breakfast fairly every day, so...[sentence trails off]”

Health Benefits

Health benefits were another reason participants made certain food selections. The participants indicated that they picked fruits and vegetables that were rich in vitamins and nutrients. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- The vitamins and nutrients in the foods played a large role in one participant’s selections. This participant said, “I chose the greens because of the vitamins, the iron that you can get. Because you need that I found out, (laughter) your body will let you know. The tangerines because of the vitamins. The vitamin C and then it helps keep your immune system up. I love tangerine juice over the orange juice because it’s richer, it’s darker, and it doesn’t look watered down. And I like the blueberries because of the ‘anti-oxygen’ in that, trying to get more of the right vitamins inside of my body. And I love the sweet corn, like she said, it’s just a Floridian thing and you see it growing just plentiful this time of the year and tomatoes because of the ‘anti-oxygen,’ it can help, you know, decrease a lot of things in your body. I’m trying to eat more fruits and vegetables and things that will help you know, the body.”
- Nutrition was the primary factor in decision making for a participant who said, “I chose carrots, peppers, tomato, greens, and strawberries. The first thing I was looking at was whether they fit our nutritional requirements for nutritional standards, and the second thing I was looking at was whether they were available now, and the third was whether the kids would go along with it, [laughter] and another one was flexibility...some of these are flexible and they can be crossed with different meals.”
- A participant indicated that he/she selected certain foods because “They were the healthiest of the bunch.”
- Special benefits led one participant to selecting watermelon. This participant said, “You know watermelon has got extra benefits. It’s an aphrodisiac.”

Growing Location and Months of Availability

Some of the participants indicated that they looked at the growing location and months of availability of the fruits and vegetables that they chose. However, several of these participants indicated that the growing location and months of availability were secondary to their preferences. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

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- A participant explained that seasonality was not of primary concern when making selections. This participant said, “I had sweet corn and celery, tangerines, strawberries, and blueberries...kind of the same reasons...this is stuff that I like. I noticed that they are all available now and I like things that are available here, but that wasn’t my primary concern.”
- A participant discussed that the food was most important. This participant said, “I guess for me, I prioritize the food item first, then probably would have looked at the months. Even though the grid was there, obviously taking up a big portion of the card, the food stood out first for me, before the map or the months of availability.”
- A participant indicated that he/she made decisions and then went back and looked at the months of availability and growing location. This participant said, “I picked all of mine and then looked at everything else, when they were available, how they were grown.”
- A participant discussed the reasons he/she selected certain foods and then mentioned that those foods were also available currently. This participant said, “Well, I did sweet corn, squash, cabbage, those are the vegetables. Those pretty much are sides, they can go in anything and as I’m looking on the map it looks like they’re available pretty much throughout the year. Then the two fruits was the strawberry and mango and it’s because I love strawberry and I love mango.”

Why Other Fruits and Vegetables Were Not Selected

After indicating why they selected certain fruits and vegetables, the participants were asked to discuss why they did not select other fruits and vegetables. The reasons participants did not select other fruits and vegetables were because they did not like or eat those foods and the foods were currently not available in their local area. In addition, other participants indicated that they did not select other fruits and vegetables because they were only allowed to pick five.

Dislike or Do Not Eat the Food

Most of the participants indicated that they did not select certain foods because they or their family members did not like the foods. Some of the participants indicated that they did not like certain foods because they were allergic to them or the foods were hard to digest. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed his/her dislike toward celery. This participant said, “I can’t stand celery. [laughter] Like I know it is seasoned in a ton of soups and meals and stuff, that is okay with me. But actually celery itself, I don’t like it.”
- Some foods were not picked because a participant’s children would not eat them. This participant said, “My children don’t eat them [foods not picked] as happily as the five that I picked. [laughter].”
- A participant did not pick food that was not eaten frequently. This participant said, “Something like the carambola, like that would be something that I would maybe eat once a year, so why buy it for the next five days?”
- An interference of some foods with a health condition caused a participant to not select certain foods. This participant said, “Yeah, well, I didn’t pick these others because I suffer with irritable bowel syndrome, so ‘acidics’ don’t work well with people who have that.”

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Not Currently Local

Some participants indicated that they did not select certain food because those foods were currently not in season in their local area. Several of these participants indicated that foods were more expensive when not in season. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed his/her preference to buy what is in season. A participant said, “I don’t buy a watermelon in January even though they have it in the store because it is just not in season then. I usually buy what is in season.”
- A participant indicated that some foods were not selected because they were currently not in season. This participant said, “Whether it’s in season or not, so some of the ones I didn’t choose are not in season right now.”
- The cost of foods that were out of season impacted a participant’s decision. This participant said, “Whether it’s in season or not, so some of the ones I didn’t choose are not in season right now.”
- Although a participant wanted to pick certain foods he/she did not pick them because they were out of season and expensive. This participant said, “It was hard for me not to pick the strawberries and blueberries in addition to the veggies, but those really depend on if they were on sale or not. Because they...out of season they are always really expensive.”

Impact of Months of Availability on Decision Making

The participants were asked how the months of availability impacted their decisions of the foods they selected. They indicated that the months of availability did not impact their decision, that they looked at the months of availability, and that the foods would still be available in the grocery store even if the card indicated that the foods were not available.

No Impact on Decision

Several participants indicated that the months of availability did not impact their decision to select certain foods at all. Many of these participants responded by saying “No” or “Not at all.”

Looked at Months of Availability

Some participants discussed that they did look at the months of availability. Some of these participants indicated that although they looked at it, the months of availability did not impact their decision. However, others indicated that they did look at it and it did impact their decisions. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Two participants discussed that they looked at the months of availability. The first participant said, “I looked at them.”

The second participant responded and said, “I noticed them, but it did not affect my choice.”
- A participant indicated that they did look at the months of availability and did take them into consideration. This participant said, “I mean, I definitely looked to see that they are available now.”
- A participant discussed that he/she looked at it, but only because it was on the cards. This participant said, “I did look at the months only because it was on the cards, so I figured it might be important. [laughter]”

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- Two participants discussed that they looked at the months of availability. The first participant said, “I checked to make sure they were available, that’s all.”

Another participant agreed and said, “Yeah, I did the same thing.”

Foods Still Available

Some of the participants discussed that months of availability did not impact their decisions because the foods could always be bought at the grocery store. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Store availability of the foods year round caused a participant to not consider the months of availability in his/her decision. This participant said, “I didn’t really find that the availability, because you can find watermelon in January if you want to. [agreement heard] You know, you go to a Publix and you can find all this stuff. To me, the availability didn’t really weigh in on it.”
- A participant did not pay attention to the months of availability because food was available year round. This participant said, “I didn’t even look at the time they are available, because I always have them all year long so...[sentence trails off]”
- A participant discussed that food was always available from somewhere. This participant said, “Because someone somewhere is growing it and you can get it year around. It might not be quite as good, I mean it’s true, you get the Zellwood corn and you can’t beat that. But, somebody in Georgia is gonna be growing corn, somebody...you know it’s always, it’s always available.”
- Year round availability caused a participant to not pay attention to the months of availability. This participant said, “Especially because I mean, in this day and age and availability, honestly you can get any kind of fruit or vegetable at any point of the year, depending on how much you want to pay for it.”

Impact of Growing Location on Decision Making

The participants were asked how the growing locations of the foods impacted their decision of what foods to select. They discussed that the growing locations were interesting and that they looked at them. However, some of the participants indicated that the growing location did not impact their decisions. The discussion of growing location was impacted by where the participants were from.

No Impact on Decision

Several participants indicated that growing locations did not impact their decision to select certain foods at all. Many of these participants responded by saying “No” or “Not at all.”

Interesting

Several of the participants indicated that they found the information about growing locations to be interesting and informative. Many indicated that they learned something about where a certain fruit or vegetable was grown. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant indicated that it was interesting to see where foods were grown. This participant said, “I don’t know, it was kind of interesting to see what was where, but it didn’t determine whether or not I buy it.”

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- A participant was surprised where some foods were grown said, “It is very surprising to see where some of the stuff is grown. Like I already said, I had no idea.”
- Enjoying learning about where the food comes from a participant said, “This is very informational though, I like to see which counties.”
- “I thought it was very interesting,” said a participant in reference to the growing locations.

Looked at Growing Locations

Some participants discussed that they did look at the growing locations. However, all of these participants indicated that although they looked at it, the growing locations did not impact their decision. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed looking at them because he/she thought it was a test. This participant said, “I looked, because I thought this was a test, maybe we’re supposed to be picking locally grown so I thought...oh, should I change something? Should it be from Orange County? But still I thought, I’m gonna pick my favorites because you said...what would you buy on your way home when you left here? What would you get at the grocery store?”
- A participant indicated that he/she looked at the growing locations because the focus group had been talking about it. This participant said, “I looked at it because we have been talking about it all day. But, otherwise I probably wouldn’t have looked as hard.”
- A participant said that he/she looked at the growing location, but that it did not impact his/her decisions. This participant said, “I did, but it didn’t factor into my decision.”
- A participant discussed that the location listed on the card did not necessarily affect his/her decision, but that he/she would take the location into account when at the grocery store. This participant said, “I didn’t think about it on the card, but if I am in the store...like, mentioned on it, I see the price...it is lower, it is on sale, so, that would catch my eye. I would look at it and see it was local, and that would help me to buy it.”

Location-Dependent Responses

It was observed that several of the responses given by the participants were dependent on where the participants were from. For example, some participants justified their decisions because a lot was grown in their area or a lot was not grown in their area. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that only one card indicated that a food was grown in his/her county. This participant said, “Only thing that affected me, there ain’t much stuff grown in Orange County, except tangerines.”
- A participant indicated that none of the cards had his/her county on them. This participant said, “They don’t grow anything in Sarasota County. There’s not a single thing in the twenty cards that is grown in Sarasota County.”
- A participant discussed that the majority of the foods on the cards were grown in his/her county. This participant said, “I noticed that all but one, they were all local.”
- A participant discussed that all of the foods were grown in his/her county. This participant said, “Well, like I said, I actually know that these are all grown in our counties, depending on the time of year, so...and I know that if I buy them in our counties, they are exceptional.”

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Impact of Preparation Required on Decision Making

Some of the participants indicated that they took the preparation of the food into consideration when making their selections while others did not. Of those who considered preparation, some did not pick foods that required complex preparation, and some picked foods that were easy to prepare.

No Impact on Decision

Several participants indicated that food preparation did not impact their decision to select certain foods at all. Many of these participants responded by saying “No” or “Not at all.”

Impact, Selected Easy and Not Complex

This theme included participants who indicated that they did not select foods that were hard to prepare, time consuming, messy, they did not know how to prepare, and foods that were too much for a couple of people to eat. In addition, this theme included participants who indicated that they only selected foods that were easy to prepare, or could easily be used for more than one meal. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that he/she picked foods that were easy to prepare. This participant said, “Yeah, everything that I bought, I mean, everything I chose is something that takes minutes to prepare.”
- A participant who said, “I mean, the more time it takes to prepare something usually the less likely somebody is going to eat it”, favored easy preparation.
- A participant discussed not selecting a food that he/she did not know how to eat. This participant said, “I was just asking...was it the starfruit or whatever....how do you eat this stuff? I don't know how to eat that so I'm not gonna buy it.”
- To prevent food from spoiling a participant only selected easy-to-prepare foods. This participant said, “I find that if I buy something that takes a lot time and effort to prepare, it may sit there in the kitchen and go bad so, yeah, if it is something that I can simply put together, and I'm likely to eat and not throw out; that is a big factor in my decision making.”

Selection of Five Fruits or Vegetables in October

After thinking about the five fruits or vegetables they would go and buy at the grocery store after the focus groups, the participants were asked to make five new selections for the month of October. Overall availability was taken more into account by participants for this second scenario. In addition, some participants indicated that the question made them think about the availability and assume that their selections had to be available in October.

The participants indicated that they made changes in their selections because they would want heartier foods in October. In addition, they discussed that some foods that they had previously selected were no longer season or not as good in October. Some participants only selected foods available in October and some made no changes in their selections.

Heartier or Seasonal Cooking

Several participants indicated that they changed their selections because they cook different and sometimes heartier foods in the fall. Some of these foods included more vegetables, soups, and casseroles. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

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- A participant discussed changing some of his/her selections because of seasonal cooking. This participant said, “I switched up some things, I added citrus because I buy it normally in the fall because of it being in season. Normally in...when the fall starts to come around, I am moving from cabbage to greens and I normally start doing greens then in preparation for holiday meals. I don’t do them all year round.”
- A selection of vegetables for soups was made by a participant who said, “I pretty much picked all vegetables, corn, carrots, tomato, pepper, greens because I was thinking about making soups and stuff like that cause it’s getting closer to winter...you want more comfort food and that’s right to me. The fruit is different around that time and I was thinking about things that are more available. Like these are always available in the winter, so... [sentence trails off]”
- Three participants discussed how their cooking habits change with the season. The first participant said, “I think what you are making that time of year, too, for me it makes a difference. It’s starting to get a little cooler. A little cooler and it’s football season, so you are going to make dips and stuff.”

A second participant added, “And what we may change is...I think like this time of year, in the summer, we tend to grill out a lot more. I think in the fall and winter we tend to cook inside.”

A third participant agreed and said, “Yeah, more carrots, and stews, greens.”

- Changes to a participant’s selection were made to satisfy seasonal cooking. This participant said, “I exchanged all of mine because in the fall of the year I like to do a lot of soups and stews, so... I would buy things that would go into...you know, like cabbage, carrots, celery, corn that would go into the soup or stew.”

Food Not Available or High Quality

This theme included participants who indicated that they made changes in their selections because something they had previously picked was not available or as good of a product in October. They switched these products out for foods that were available and good during that time. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed making some changes because foods were no longer available locally. This participant said, “I switched my cantaloupe to sweet corn because cantaloupe is not a month of availability in October. And yes, you can get things year round, but it is usually shipped from someplace else and I definitely experienced that thing where you buy it and you are like, “Oh, this does not taste like it should taste.” Or it just tastes differently. So, I think sometimes whether or not it will taste different, if you have had a bad experience, it is sort of going to temper what you do again.”
- A participant indicated that tropical fruits did not taste as good in the winter months as they did in the summer. This participant said, “I notice I tend to not buy this much tropical fruit in the fall or winter, because the taste is just not as...they’re not as succulent, they’re not as sweet, so I tend not to buy as many tropical fruit.”
- A participant discussed looking at the months of availability and making decisions according to the months of availability for the second card selection. This participant said, “This time around it was a little different because I literally looked at the months to see what was available. I put my cantaloupe back. [laughter].
- A participant discussed making changes according to what was good that time of the year. This participant said, “I swapped out strawberries because even though it says that it is grown in October in Florida, they are not very

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good. They are not good in October. And I put in grapefruit which actually can be decent in the fall growing season and some better even later.”

No Change

Some participants indicated that they did not make any changes in their selections. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed not making many changes to his/her selections. This participant said, “I pretty much picked all the same things, but excepting the greens, ‘cause I like the stuff I like to eat, it don’t matter when. And I don’t pay attention to months.”
- “Mine didn’t change” said a participant.
- Habit caused a participant to keep the same selections. This participant said, “I think that as creatures of habit, you know, I mean salad that you make has some of the main components that are the same every time, so I kept greens in, I mean if I’m gonna have a salad at dinner it’s gonna have lettuce and tomato basically, so.”
- A participant discussed that his/her selections did not change because Publix would have them even if they were not available locally. This participant said, “Mine was the same, because like I said, if it’s not fresh, Publix has it in the little bags you throw in the microwave.”

Food Preference Scenarios

For the next part of the focus groups the participants were read three different scenarios (See Appendix B). For each scenario they were asked to discuss how they would define local for the product in the scenario. The focus groups included a scenario for tomatoes, apples, and coffee.

Tomato Scenario

The participants were read the following scenario about tomatoes.

Florida is the nation’s largest producer of fresh tomatoes. In fact, Florida produces about ½ of the domestic supply. From October – June, south Florida produces almost all of fresh tomatoes available in the US. Aside from Florida, Mexico & Canada also make up large portions of the US tomato market.

After the scenario was read, the participants were asked what they would consider to be a local tomato. During this discussion, the participants discussed local tomatoes in terms of geographic location, but also in terms of brand attributes.

Geographic Location

After hearing the scenario, the participants discussed that a local tomato included tomatoes grown in their back yard, in their county, within 50 miles, or in a certain region of Florida. Some participants considered tomatoes grown throughout the state to be local, while others considered those in other states such as Georgia or grown in the United States to be local. The participants also discussed that local tomatoes came from local vendors, farmers markets, and Publix. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that Florida tomatoes would be most local to him/her. This participant said, “I think I consider local more like a fifty mile radius, I guess, is my thing. But then, in comparison to another country,

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Florida is more local than another country, so I think I'd kind of layer my ideas on what local is. [agreement heard]"

- A participant discussed that he/she would consider tomatoes from neighboring counties as local. This participant said, "I would say neighboring counties."
- A participant indicated that the tomato in his/her backyard was local. This participant said, "The one in my backyard."
- A participant favored tomatoes grown in Florida. This participant said, "I would take a Florida tomato as local before I would, you know, buy a Mexican tomato."

Brand Attributes

After hearing the scenario, the participants discussed that a local tomato included certain brands or types of tomatoes. These included Ruskin, Beefsteak, UglyRipe, Heirloom, and other brands of tomatoes. Cherry tomatoes were also discussed as local. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant indicated that "Ruskin" tomatoes were local.
- Several participants discussed different varieties of tomatoes. "Beefsteak." "Cherry." "Heirloom." "Uglyripe."
- Vine tomatoes were discussed as local by a participant who said, "The vine, yeah. The vine tomatoes."
- A participant discussed a preference for a certain kind of tomatoes. This participant said, "I really have just recently been trying to get a hold of Gargiula tomatoes. I don't know where they are from but they are so good."

Local Tomato in Off-Season

After discussing what the participants would consider to be a local tomato, the participants were asked what they would consider to be a local tomato in the off-season months of July, August, and September. The participants indicated that in these off months, local tomatoes would still be available, local tomatoes would come from other locations, and that tomatoes would not be local in the off-season.

Local Tomatoes Still Available

The participants discussed that in the off-season, local tomatoes would still be available. They discussed that local tomatoes would still be available at Publix. In addition, they discussed that local tomatoes that had been stored or those grown in a greenhouse would still be available in the off-season. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that tomatoes were grown in the off-season in a controlled environment. This participant said, "No, during the middle of summer, from October to June, we produce them. So it means that from June to September is when we don't because of the heat here, although they do grow them, but I am sure they are probably inside in a controlled, temperature control, whatever."
- A participant discussed that tomatoes stored in Florida would be local in the off-months. This participant said, "No, during the middle of summer, from October to June, we produce them. So it means that from June to

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September is when we don't because of the heat here, although they do grow them, but I am sure they are probably inside in a controlled, temperature control, whatever."

- A participant discussed that anything at the grocery store was local to him/her. This participant said, "Whatever is at the grocery store is local to me."
- Preserved tomatoes were local to a participant in the off-season. This participant said, "Out of the freezer."

Local Tomatoes from Other Locations

The participants discussed that although tomatoes from Florida may not be available in the off months they would still consider tomatoes grown in other locations as local. Some of the locations considered as local included tomatoes from other states, the southeastern United States, the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The participants indicated that their definition of local broadened during the off-season. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- In the off-season tomatoes grown in the United States were considered local to a participant who said, "Something grown in the United States as opposed to overseas."
- Tomatoes from other countries were preferred in the off-season to a participant who said, "I think a lot of our tomatoes at that time of year probably come from Mexico and Canada. Personally, I have had the Canadian hothouse tomatoes in Canada and they taste extremely good. And even after they are shipped, they are not bad. You know?"
- In the off-months a participant discussed that most of the southeastern United States would be local. This participant said, "Florida, Georgia, and the Southeast. For me, that's still local."
- A broadened definition of local in the off-season was discussed by a participant who said, "I said, I guess we would have to define...make local bigger, we say Mexico because it is closer to us, because that is not something that we have during that time of year."

Not Local

Some participants discussed that in the off-season a local tomato was not available. Some of these participants discussed that in the off-season the tomatoes might be able to be considered as regional or national, but not local. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Two participants discussed that tomatoes would not be local in the off-season. The first participant said, "To me, it is not local if we are not growing it."
"Yeah" agreed a second participant.
- "I would say that there just aren't local tomatoes during that time. Unless you've got something locally grown" said a participant.
- A participant discussed not considering anything outside of Florida local, even in the off-season. This participant said, "National, yeah. But, local, if it is not...I mean, it is stretching a little being like Florida, but if it is from outside of Florida, even though it is within the U.S., I don't consider it local."

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- Not grown here, meant not local to a participant who said, “It is not grown here. It is not grown in the locale.”

Local Tomato Preference

After hearing the tomato scenario and discussing local tomatoes, the participants were asked if the scenario and discussion of local tomatoes affected their preference for local tomatoes. Some participants indicated that their preference was not affected while others indicated that their preference was affected.

Preference for Local Tomatoes not Affected

Some of the participants indicated that the tomato scenario and discussion of local tomatoes did not affect their preference for local tomatoes. These participants indicated that their preference was not affected because they do not worry about where their tomatoes come from or do not like tomatoes. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant indicated that his/her preference was not affected because he/she would buy tomatoes year-round no matter what. This participant said, “It really doesn’t change mine, because we buy them constantly. So, obviously it is in the off-months, I am buying them from somewhere else.”
- A participant indicated that his/her preference was not affected because he/she did not like tomatoes. This participant said, “I don’t like tomatoes. [laughter] So, that is going to affect what I buy.”
- “I don’t like tomatoes, I don’t know the difference” said a participant.
- A participant who did not buy tomatoes said, “No, because I don’t buy tomatoes.”

Preference for Local Tomatoes Affected

Some of the participants indicated that the tomato scenario and discussion of local tomatoes did affect their preference for local tomatoes because they valued tomatoes that were fresh and local. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant indicated that his/her preference for local tomatoes was affected because he/she wanted a good tasting tomato. This participant said, “Again, it goes back to freshness, if you get something that is really, really local. They can wait longer to pick it, it is going to be riper; which especially with a tomato, it makes a world of difference. Tomatoes do not crunch. [laughter] They are not supposed to. You know? It makes a difference that way.”
- A participant’s preference for local tomatoes was affected because he/she thought local tomatoes tasted better. This participant said, “A lot of times, the tomatoes in the grocery store don’t have a lot of flavor. We always get the ones on the vine because they seem to have more flavor. But, I mean, farmer’s market tomatoes, or Yoder’s, some of those are full of flavor.”

Apple Scenario

The participants were read the following scenario about apples.

In the United States, most apples are produced in the Northeast and on the West Coast. The top five apple producing states are Washington, New York, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and California. However, apple production is limited in the

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southeastern United States. Aside from the United States, China, the European Union, Turkey and India produce most of the world's apple supply.

After the scenario was read, the participants were asked what they would consider to be a local apple. During this discussion the participants indicated that apples grown in the United States were local, while other participants discussed that apples were not a local food product.

United States Apples are Local

After hearing the apple scenario, several of the participants indicated that they felt apples grown in the United States were local. Some of these participants specified that apples grown in the Northeastern United States or the in Georgia would be considered local, while others considered apples grown anywhere in the United States to be local. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- United States grown apples were considered local to a participant who said, "It is too humid for Florida to grow apples, so if you want to define local, then you can only define it as supporting our country's apple producers."
- Local apples were United States grown apples to two participants. The first participant said, "I think for an apple, it'd be local for the United States."
"I agree with that" said a second participant.
- "Well, in this case I guess any apple grown in the U.S. [agreement heard]" said a participant.
- Apples were discussed as being an American trademark by a participant who said, "You know there's something funny about apples because they fit so much into U.S. identify that you can't really get away from them in terms of you now, 'an apple a day keeps the doctor away,' 'as American as apple pie,' yada, yada, yada...so I think that that is something that emphasizes the fact that apples are something I buy all the time, my kids all like them, and it's funny 'cause I think of local apples as being New York apples because I could pick them if I were there. And that's wacky, but that is how I think of them."

Apples are Not Local

After hearing the apple scenario, other participants indicated that apples were not a local food product. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant indicated that apples were not local. This participant said, "I would say there is no local apple."
- A participant discussed that Florida did not grow apples. This participant said, "Does Florida even have an apple? I've heard that they have an apple, but it's terrible as far as shipping, so they don't really try and market it outside of it's area. So, I don't worry about local and that, with apples, just based on the fact that we don't have any here."
- Two participants discussed that they would not consider apples to be local. The first participant said, "I don't think I would consider them to be local."
"No; No; Me, neither" said a second participant.

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- A participant indicated that people buy apples in Florida, but that the apples were not local. This participant said, “Well, it is not really local, it is just what we buy. I mean, just because we buy it doesn’t mean it is local. You know?”

Local Apple Preference

After hearing the apple scenario and discussing local apples, the participants were asked if the scenario and discussion of local apples affected their preference for local apples. Some participants indicated that their preference was not affected while others indicated that their preference was affected.

Preference for Local Apples Not Affected

Some of the participants indicated that the apple scenario and discussion of local apples did not affect their preference for local apples. These participants indicated that their preference was not affected because when buying apples they focus on other things such as variety, price, or other apple attributes. In addition, some participants indicated that their preference was not affected because they buy apples wherever they come from or they do not buy apples. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed preferring certain varieties of apples, rather than local apples. This participant said, “Right, and as for the apple...it’s gonna, I know I’m gonna buy it depending on what I want to use it for. If I just want to eat it straight then I might go for...say, like a Fuji type apple, I’m not really keen on Macintosh apples. I mean, the species...like the different type of apple is gonna make a difference and of course some types of apples are grown in one state as opposed to another, so not everyone is growing the same type of apple.”
- A participant discussed his/her preference not being affected because he/she did not buy apples. This participant said, “We don’t do apples, neither one of us.”
- A participant discussed that he/she just wanted an apple and it did not matter where it came from. This participant said, “Well, I don’t think there was a local apple, so if I want an apple, I am going to go buy an apple. Doesn’t matter where it is from.”
- A participant indicated that he/she had never paid attention to where apples came from. This participant said, “It’s interesting because I never paid attention to where the apples came from because I buy Granny Smith and Macintosh apples for pies and Fuji and Gala to just eat, and he likes the Macintosh.”

Preference for Local Apples Affected

Some of the participants indicated that the apple scenario and discussion of local apples did affect their preference for local apples because they did not want apples from other countries. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant preferred United States apples over apples from China. This participant said, “Then I would say yes. I would rather have an apple from the U.S., obviously, than I would from China.”
- United States apples were preferred by a participant who said, “But, I am definitely going to prefer them to apples from another country. I would prefer U.S.”

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- Two participants discussed that they would prefer United States apples. The first participant said, “I’d rather buy something domestic than imported, international.”

A second participant added, “I tilt towards something from the U.S.”

- A participant discussed a preference for wanting United States labels on apples. This participant said, “I just think I would, yeah, I wouldn’t want to look down and see the label saying, “Apple from China,” or anything.”

Coffee Scenario

The participants were read the following scenario about coffee.

Coffee trees grow best in tropical climates with high altitudes. In the United States, Hawaii and Puerto Rico have the only climates which support the growth of coffee trees. Other places that produce coffee include Central America, South America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

After the scenario was read, the participants were asked what they would consider to be local coffee. During this discussion, the participants specified locations that they would consider to produce local coffee, attributes of coffee that they look for, and local coffee shops. In addition, some participants discussed that coffee was not a local product. Several participants discussed that they did not drink coffee or like coffee. Therefore, the scenario was not as important to those who did not drink coffee as it was to other participants.

Locations Considered as Local

The participants discussed that coffee beans grown in Puerto Rico and Hawaii would be the most local coffee. Some participants indicated that they would consider coffee grown in the same hemisphere as the United States as local. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant considered local coffee as coffee grown in this hemisphere. This participant said, “Maybe this hemisphere. Maybe this side of the globe. [laughter]”
- Hawaii and Puerto Rico were considered local to a participant who said, “Only if it’s grown in Hawaii or Puerto Rico, given that is here, I would say that is local.”
- United States coffee was considered as local to a participant who said, “I mean I would have to say that, you know, if I was talking about buying coffee from Hawaii or Mexico when there was a choice or one of the other countries, I would buy it from the U.S., but I really don’t know that I’ve ever put that much thought into where my coffee comes from.”
- A participant who considered coffee from different locations as local said, “I said Sweetwater Coffee which is kind of local. And then Bongo Java Coffee which is from Tennessee is not imported in Florida yet, but you can still get it online and that is pretty local coffee for me. But, Columbian and Brazilian coffee are definitely like close to my heart, so I consider them local.”

Attributes of Coffee

Several participants discussed that they do not look for local coffee, but rather pay attention to other attributes of coffee. These attributes included specific markers such as “fair trade” or “rainforest coalition,” as well as coffee brand, and coffee

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grown in certain countries such as Columbian coffee. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed looking for fair trade markers on coffee. This participant said, “I always like it when you can see part of like the Rainforest Coalition or something where they are supporting...or if it is for sustainable farmers and helping the local population rather than just taking all the money for themselves. I mean, whether or not they really are fair trade, it looks...if it says it on the package, I am like, “Oh, that is great.” Do I know if they are? No, I don’t. But, it makes me feel better, I think.”
- A participant discussed a preference for coffee from Costa Rico. This participant said, “I like Costa Rican coffee better than any coffee. I just like the taste of Costa Rican coffee.”
- A participant discussed liking certain types of coffee. This participant said, “I drink Dunkin’ Donuts [laughter] but, when I make it at home, I have friends who send me Costa Rican coffee because it is smoother. I hate Starbucks, so...I don’t know what kind they use, but I don’t like them, so...[sentence trails off]”
- A participant discussed the preference for exotic coffee. This participant said, “I think they hit it on the head. I think coffee sells better when you think it’s not from the United States. It’s like there’s some kind of exotic factor, I mean if Starbucks...if Starbucks advertises something that’s from, straight from, you know Yemen, it sounds like “Ooh, I got to try that.” Because people are like, “Oh, I’m never gonna go to Yemen I’m so I’ll never get to try Yemen coffee.” But they, for whatever reason...they don’t do the same thing with, you know, “I don’t want a China apple.” [laughter] I mean it’s not like the same thing. That’s for you all to explain...I have no idea what the explanation behind that is, but.”

Local Coffee Shops

Many participants discussed that they did not value a local coffee product, but rather a local coffee shop. Some participants mentioned chain coffee shops that were local to their area like Starbucks and Dunkin Donuts. However, several participants discussed local non-chain coffee shops. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant considered local coffee to come from local coffee shops. This participant said, “Exactly. If someone caught me off guard and said, “Where can you get the best local coffee?” I would think of the best local coffee shop. [agreement]”
- Local coffee was discussed as coming from a local coffee shop by a participant who said, “I figure if I buy it from the local Dunkin’ Donuts, then it’s local.”
- A participant indicated that a local coffee shop was local. This participant said, “Maude’s, Maude’s, Maude’s. [laughter and loud crosstalk] That is local coffee.”
- “Starbucks” said a participant to describe local coffee.

Coffee is Not Local

After hearing the coffee scenario, some participants indicated that coffee was not a local product. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

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- A participant discussed that coffee was just not a local product. This participant said, “I don’t consider any coffee local. [laughter] Because it is all imported in, and I like Columbian and I like Brazilian and I also I had some Kona coffee from Hawaii, and it is really, really, really good. I didn’t buy a lot of it while I was there. So, I don’t consider coffee local. I just think that some things are not going to be able to get local.”
- “I wouldn’t consider there to be local coffee” said a participant.
- Two participants discussed that coffee was not local. The first participant said, “Coffee is not a local thing, you know?”
“I agree,” said a second participant.
- “I don’t consider any coffee local” said a participant.

Local Coffee Preference

After hearing the coffee scenario and discussing local coffee, the participants were asked if the scenario and discussion of local coffee affected their preference for local coffee. Some participants indicated that their preference was not affected.

Preference for Local Coffee Not Affected

Some of the participants indicated that the coffee scenario and discussion of local coffee did not affect their preference for local coffee. These participants indicated that their preference was not affected because they valued having access to a variety of coffee and they still wanted their coffee even if it was not local. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that he/she still wanted his/her coffee regardless of if it was local or not. This participant said, “I don’t care, give me my coffee [laughter]. Florida can’t grow coffee. I know, I tried, I had a coffee tree. I divorced the woman who killed it.”
- Two participants discussed the need to have coffee. The first participant said, “I don’t care where my coffee comes from. But when I want it.... [participant is interrupted]”
A second participant interrupted and said, “As long as you got it right?”
The first participant responded and said, “As long as I got it in the morning.”
- A participant indicated the roast of the coffee was more important than where the coffee came from. This participant said, “How it is roasted, I think you think of the roast more than you think of where the bean comes from.”
- A participant discussed that he/she did not care where coffee came from. This participant said, “All bets are off when it comes to coffee. [laughter] Wherever it’s from, I don’t care.”

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Local Processing of Coffee Beans

After hearing the coffee scenario and discussing local coffee, the participants were asked if the local processing of a product, such as roasting coffee beans, added any value to coffee as a local product. Some participants indicated that local processing did add value, while other participants indicated that no value was added.

Local Processing Adds Value

Some of the participants indicated that local processing of coffee beans did add value to them as a local product. These participants indicated that value was added because the product would be more local, jobs and the local economy would be supported, and the quality of the coffee could be improved because the coffee would be freshly roasted and full of flavor. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that local processing would be good for the economy. This participant said, “Well, I didn’t shake my head no, I just agreed with him. If it will help jobs here locally, even if they weren’t grown here, it would be good for the economy and people, labor.”
- A participant discussed that local processing would add an element of freshness to the coffee. This participant said, “In regards to locally prepared, I would think obviously it’s going to be, as far as something like coffee, it’s going to be fresher, even though it’s imported, you know, because it was roasted more recently as opposed to roasted then shipped. That is a contributing factor.”
- A participant discussed that local roasting would be subject to local regulations which was favored. This participant said, “I would say processing would be important if it is done here, because you know what is going on. More or less the laws and everything, the restrictions.”
- A participant indicated that local roasting made the coffee seem more local. This participant said, “Yeah, it’s sort of like when a car might be a foreign manufacturer, but like they make the engines in America, it makes a difference to me. It does, yeah it feels either more local or at least made in the USA.”

Local Processing Does Not Add Value

Some of the participants indicated that local processing of coffee beans did not add value to them as a local product. These participants indicated that value was not added because the shipping of the coffee beans to a local area for processing would still have an environmental impact. In addition, some participants indicated that value would not be added because local processing would create a more expensive product. Other participants indicated that value would not be added because they would not know if the coffee beans had been processed locally. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that some jobs might be created, but the carbon footprint was not going to be reduced. This participant said, “If somebody was doing a nice, a good job of it, if they were doing something that was different than other people’s, then that would be great. Umm, but, whether or not it’s roasted locally, it creates a few jobs, it doesn’t reduce the carbon footprint of getting the beans here, necessarily.”
- A participant indicated that they would not know if coffee was locally processed so it would not add value. This participant said, “Right, but I’m probably not going to do the research to find out one way or the other.”
- A participant discussed the price of locally processed coffee was discouraging. This participant said, “I’ve never...I’ve seen the coffees that are roasted locally, but I’ve never bought them because they’ve like exceeded my

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price point for coffee [laughter], so I haven't, I haven't purchased them. So, I think it's a good thing, but I just...it hasn't, it hasn't made it to my house yet because of the price."

- A participant discussed not thinking about where something was processed when making purchases. This participant said, "But, honestly I don't think about it. I mean if I'm buying something I'm not asking where it was processed, I mean."

Fresh From Florida

Following the food preference scenarios, the participants were asked how they could identify if food they were buying from the grocery store was local and also from Florida. Following this discussion, the participants were shown the Fresh From Florida Logo (See Appendix C). They were first asked to indicate if they recognized the logo and to discuss their initial reactions to the logo. Then the participants discussed if they felt the logo represented local food and affected their food buying decisions. To conclude the discussion of the Fresh From Florida Logo, the participants discussed how the logo may be improved to better connect it to local food.

Identification of Local Food when Buying

The participants indicated that they knew if they were buying local food if the food had signs or labels indicating so, or if they were buying the food from a local establishment.

Signs/Labels

Several of the participants indicated that their only way to know if the food they were buying was local was if it had signs or labels that indicated that the product was local. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- "Most of the time, I think most of the grocery stores, well, primarily Publix, a lot of them that I've shopped at here and when I lived in Chicago and also Atlanta and elsewhere, they like to advertise local. It's a huge selling point for them to advertise something that's local. So more often than not, I've found that things that are grown locally and that were purchased locally, they like to let you know."
- Two participants discussed signage and stickers. The first participant said, "If there are stickers on it or if there is a sign on it. That's pretty much your only options." Another participant added, "That's the only way that you can tell."
- In another conversation, two participants discussed labeling. The first participant said, "It has got to be labeled, legally." The second participant said, "It should say." The first participant responded and said, "It is supposed to."

Local Markets

Some of the participants also indicated that they knew they were buying local food if they bought it at a local market or a local farm. This discussion also included farmers markets. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant referenced local produce markets in their area and said, "I would assume that at like Bedner's, that it was locally grown. I would assume at Cushman's that they were Florida oranges. I can't imagine the embarrassment they would experience if they hawked California oranges without labeling them clearly."

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- Two participants discussed knowing that food was local by buying the food at a farmers market. The first participant said, “I guess if you were going to a farmer’s market.”

The second participant responded with caution and added, “I was just gonna say if you are buying from a farmer’s market that says they are local, you’re taking their word that they are, just like if they say it’s organic, you’re taking their word.”

- A participant said, “If you go to the farm.”

Identification of Food from Florida When Buying

Similar to the discussion of identifying local food, the participants indicated that they only knew they were buying food from Florida if it was labeled as being from Florida.

Signs/Labels

The participants discussed that the only way to identify if food they were buying was grown in Florida was if it was labeled as being from Florida. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A participant said, “Again, hopefully labeled that way. If it is not labeled, you are not going to know.”
- Two participants discussed labeling of Florida-grown food. The first participants said, “I think they put it on the bin too, you know, “Florida Grown.” I think at Publix they have it.”

The second participant added, “Yeah, at Publix they are really helpful.”

- Several participants in one of the focus groups had a conversation about how they would know if a food product was from Florida. The first participant said, “Only if it says it.”

Two other participants commented and said, “Yeah,” “That’s the only way to know.”

Another participant added, “Yeah, none...nobody, well I won’t say nobody, very few people have chemistry sets back home to check the food to compare it against soil chemical combinations.”

Fresh From Florida Initial Reactions

After being shown the logo, several participants discussed the recognition or lack of recognition of the logo. Other participants discussed citrus, the components of the logo, the perceived attributes of foods with the logo, similar logos or advertisements, state pride, and foods that they had previously seen the logo on.

Logo Recognition

The recognition of the logo varied among participants. Some participants indicated that they had seen the logo, several participants were unsure if they had seen it, and some participants indicated that they had not seen the logo. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed recognizing the logo and said, “It’s more of a general sense of logo identification. Yes, I’ve seen this, I cannot definitively say what I’ve seen it on.”

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- A participant unsure about whether they had seen the logo before said, “It’s more of a general sense of logo identification. Yes, I’ve seen this, I cannot definitively say what I’ve seen it on.”
- A participant unsure of the recognition of the logo said, “I don’t really think of nothing when I see it, because I don’t even remember what I’ve seen it on. I know that sounds bad, but [sentence trails off]...”
- A participant not recognizing the logo said, “I’ve never noticed it.”

Citrus

Several of the participants indicated that the logo reminded them of oranges, citrus, or orange juice. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant said, “I automatically think of citrus.”
- A participant said, “The sun makes me think of an orange.”
- A participant discussed the logo and said, “I see how they are trying to incorporate the blue and the green, like water and green for plants but it doesn’t really work, it’s, it says orange.”
- A participant said, “It definitely has a citrus feel to it. So, I don’t know if that’s all on purpose.”
- A participant commented that the logo reminded them of juice and said, “Orange juice, grapefruit juice, yup.”

Logo Components

The participants discussed the logo components, primarily the sun, and the green and blue under the sun. The sun was discussed as representing sunshine and hot weather, but was also discussed as being related to oranges and citrus, which is represented in the previous theme. The participants discussed that blue reminded them of the sea and the green reminded them of land and crops. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed each major component of the logo and said, “You also think of the three major, among the major resources of Florida; green being the land, blue being the water and of course, the sunshine. All leading to a higher quality of life.”
- A participant discussed the logo components and said, “I see the hot weather, like if I’m looking at it I see like the hot weather and the green is the crops, and the blue is the ocean.”
- A participant said, “The blue and the green makes me think land and sea, maybe.”
- A participant discussed the logo components and said, “It’s very earthy too, you’ve got the water, you know green and orange.”

Food Attributes

The participants discussed that food with the Fresh From Florida logo on it would have several food attributes. Some of the attributes identified included that the food would be healthy, better quality, local, and fresh. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussing the attributes of food with the logo on it said, “If it’s fresh, it should be healthy.”

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- A participant discussed that food with the Fresh From Florida logo on it would be “Local[ly] grown.”
- Discussing the quality of Fresh From Florida product a participant said, “I think when it comes to like the fruit aspect, like if I see that on there...I’m more comfortable, ‘cause that’s what we’re known for like citrus and stuff. So I know if it says, “Fresh from Florida,” it’s gonna be a quality product.”

Similar Logos/Advertisements

Several participants discussed that the Fresh From Florida logo reminded them of similar logos or advertisements for other products. Several people mentioned Florida’s Natural commercials. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed a commercial the logo reminded them of and said, “That commercial where the mom’s like sticking her hand to grab the orange juice in the refrigerator and she reaches in and the guy is handing it to her.”
- A participant said, “Well, the reason that I think of oranges is because it’s been advertised on television with orange juice. It’s been linked to that, but it’s not necessarily limited to that.”
- Two participants had the following discussion about the orange juice commercial. The first participant said, “The little man’s hand reaching through the...”

The second participant interrupted and asked, “The orange juice man?”

The first participant responded and said, “Yes! [laughter from other participants] Actually that’s what comes to mind when I see this. I think of the little man standing in the orange grove with his little hand reaching through and handing the lady the orange juice. That’s what comes to my mind.”

- A group of participants discussed the similarity of the Fresh From Florida logo to other logos. The first participant said, “Well, it’s close to, it’s deceiving, it’s close to the organic, the medallion for organic isn’t it? You know, when somebody’s certified organic, it’s got this image on it. Like if you blur your eyes, and I think that’s the point actually to make you think that fresh means organic and it doesn’t, necessarily.”

Another participant added, “The other thing that comes to mind is it looks like the Obama logo [laughter from other participants].”

State Pride

The participants not only identified that foods with the Fresh From Florida logo on them would be from Florida, they also connected a sense of state pride to the logo. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed a sense of pride in the logo and said, “Well, I was sort of sitting here thinking about that, like we own this product. When she asked why I had to say that because I also think of like it’s in our backyard and our backdoor. But I think there are a lot of industries that we do own and we can toot our own horn about and that you know, we kind of do feel that way about some things you know.”
- A participant said, “I’m proud to be from Florida. I like being here. I travel around a lot, it’s a great state.”
- A participant said, “I’m, a Florida baby, I love anything that’s fresh from here.”

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- In reference to the discussion of the logo a participant said, “What’s weird is I’m not from Florida, you know? Very few people are from Florida, you know? Everyone ends up here, but I do think there is a lot of pride in what we’ve been talking about.”

Food with Logo

Of the participants who had seen the logo, several recalled what types of food products they had seen the logo on. The food products discussed included fruits, vegetables, and seafood. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant tied the logo directly to fruits and said, “I’d say, I’d definitely only associate it with fruits, not with other produce.”
- A participant said, in reference to the logo, “It does seem to imply vegetables and fruit.”
- A participant discussed the logo appearing on seafood and said, “It seemed like this logo started turning up a lot after the BP oil [thought trails off] that, “Florida is ready and we are open for business and our seafood is good and everything is just fine, so come on down.” I think that is when I remember seeing it. “It is safe here, come on down.”
- A discussion between participants also referenced the presence of the logo on seafood. The first participant asked, “Is there, this is just my ignorance, does it go on anything else besides produce? Does it go on like seafood? Does anybody know?”

Another participant responded and said, “Yes, it does. ‘Cause they had that advertisement, didn’t they have that advertisement with umm, I can’t remember if it was in a magazine or something with the seafood, trying to make sure that everybody knows [sentence trails off as several participants comment at once].”

A third participant responded and said, “They sure did, on the Gulf Coast, where they did the, they had it on there.”

Does Fresh From Florida Equate to Local?

After discussing the Fresh From Florida logo initially, the participants were asked if they would consider anything with the logo on it as being local. Several participants indicated that the logo would be recognized as local to them. However, many other participants indicated that they would consider food with the logo as local to the state, but not necessarily local to them.

Fresh From Florida is Local

Several of the participants indicated that they would consider any foods with the Fresh From Florida logo on them as local. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant said, “Well, if they are not lying about the wording, it says Fresh from Florida, and I consider the whole of Florida as local, so.... [sentence trails off].”
- A participant said, “Yeah, I would give them the benefit of the doubt, anything from Florida, I’ll consider local.”

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- A participant said, “I’d consider it to be local. It’s basically two days, maximum, shipping away. So anything from Florida is local. Florida is not that big.”

Fresh From Florida is Local to the State

Many of the participants agreed that they would consider Fresh From Florida products as local to the state, but not necessarily local to themselves. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that local to them was more of their region in Florida and said, “I don’t necessarily think that from Florida is local. I think that it has to be more like south Florida, it doesn’t exclude it, you know? Having that on there doesn’t exclude it, but it doesn’t mean it’s local.”
- A participant discussed preference for foods from local markets than Fresh From Florida and said, “I, well, it depends on whether...I would consider that local in a global sort of a bigger sense, but not local in terms of...right in my counties...or my neighboring counties. If I had a choice between this and something that I knew was from King Farms, it would make a difference. I would buy King Farms.”
- A participant said, “I mean if you are trying to figure out exactly where, you know, if that was on strawberries that wouldn’t tell me that it was from Plant City, Florida, but it tells me at least it’s in Florida. It’s not exact, but it tells me, “Oh, that’s pretty fresh from Florida, around here.”

Fresh From Florida Decision Making

The participants were asked to indicate how the Fresh From Florida Logo has/will impact their decision-making. Some participants indicated that they would pick Fresh From Florida products over non-local products, including products coming from other countries. In addition, some participants said they would decide to buy Fresh From Florida products if they were reasonably priced and good quality. Some participants indicated that the logo would not impact their buying decisions.

Buy Fresh From Florida over Non-Local

Several participants indicated that if they were given the chance they would select Fresh From Florida products over non-local products and products from other countries. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant said, “I mean, if this [Fresh From Florida logo] is on something, I would like to think I would pick that, but still if I needed something else that was not Fresh from Florida, I would still buy that. But, like she said if there were two things that were very similar, then I would like to think that I would, I think I would tend to go with that.”
- A participant said, “Well, I think if I had a choice, and like I was saying domestic versus international, if I had California strawberries versus Fresh from Florida strawberries, I would probably pick the Florida ones.”
- A participant said, “I would also say, that if the idea is for Florida to sell, or people to buy more Florida fresh fruits or vegetables or the things they sell here...a lot of things are frozen these days. And if it came from Florida, if it had a ‘Freshly Frozen from Florida,’ I would buy that over, you know, something else. So it doesn’t have to be fresh fruit, it could be anything that is Florida grown, or Florida produced.”

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- A participant said, “I would be inclined to buy more locally, if I had the choice in the grocery store. But, you know, if I don’t know what it really means, it wouldn’t make as much of a difference to me.”
- A discussion between participants indicated that they would pick Fresh From Florida over food from other countries. The first participant said, “Well, I mean if I’m in the supermarket and I have a choice, and because I do read labels, I do read signs, if I saw ‘Fresh from Florida’ and something over here from Mexico...” Another participant interrupted and said, “Chile.” The first participant continued and said, “or Chile, I would you know, even if it was a little more money, I’m not talking about dollars more but you know, a little bit more money, I would choose Fresh from Florida.”

Buy Fresh From Florida If..

The participants indicated that they would buy Fresh From Florida products if they liked the product, if it was of good quality, and if it was a reasonably priced. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant said, “But it would have to be something I liked, and then like [name] said, the price can make a difference depending on your budget. But again, if the choice was Guatemala or Florida, I’d rather pay a little more for the Florida product.”
- A participant said, in reference to the Fresh From Florida logo, “I would tend to buy that, provided it’s not tremendously more expensive.”
- A participant said, “Quality before price, I mean, not every avocado is the same either, so, if I feel like it’s good quality and from Florida, then yeah, I would pick it.”
- A participant described that other standards would have to be meant if they were going to buy a Fresh From Florida Product. The following example was provided and the participant said, “Well, it could say Fresh from Florida, but say orange juice as an example, if it’s from concentrate, and there’s fresh juice, I’m not gonna choose concentrate, I’m gonna choose the fresh juice. So, just because it says Fresh from Florida, doesn’t necessarily mean that’s the one I’m gonna choose as opposed to something that’s not concentrate. I mean just the logo itself isn’t going to convince me to buy something. It’s gotta be a little more informative.”

Logo Would Not Impact Decision

Some participants indicated that the Fresh From Florida logo would not have an effect on their purchasing decisions. Of these participants, some indicated that they do not pay attention or care whether or not the food they buy is from Florida. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant said, “To be honest, I really don’t think that hard about the food, about it being shipped out and processed somewhere. Really, when I go to the store to shop I usually look at it to see if it is fresh, to make sure the date is not expired, and I look at prices pretty much, regardless of if it’s from Florida, or wherever else, it doesn’t really matter, most of the time.
- A participant said, “I don’t think it would make a difference to me because you are still going to want to know how local.”
- A participant said, “I can say it has never affected my decisions in any way. And I’ve never registered it...it’s existence.”

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- Two participants discussed that the logo would not affect their decision because the logo blends in. The first participant said, “I think I’ve gotten accustomed to seeing that and I don’t pay attention to that anymore, and I just kind of think vitamin C and orange juice and I just go straight past that and look for Plant City, Florida on the strawberries. I don’t even notice that anymore. I think that, I don’t know how old that logo is, but I don’t even pay attention to that anymore. I just look basically to see exactly on the tag of the item where it’s actually coming from. I think my eyes have just gotten too used to...”

The second participant interrupted and said, “Starts blending in. Fades in, yeah.”

The first participant continued and said, “and I go right by. Yeah it just blends now.”

Fresh From Florida Improvements

The participants were asked to discuss changes or improvements they would make to Fresh From Florida to connect it more with local food. The participants indicated that they would rearrange the logo, improve the advertising, revise the wording, and include a list of requirements. Several participants discussed that Fresh From Florida seemed to be developed for those who live outside of Florida. In addition, some participants indicated that they would not make any changes.

Rearrange

The participants had several suggestions about rearranging the Fresh From Florida logo. Some participants suggested that the logo be rearranged to include the actual shape or picture of the state of Florida. In addition, several participants suggested that the logo should be rearranged to include the county of origin, location the product came from, or the name of the farm the product came from. Participants also suggested that the logo be rearranged to be more inclusive of all products, and possibly change according to product. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Participants discussed the possibility of including the shape of the state on the logo. One participant said, “Well, you almost can’t tell if the green, I know they are going for water and growing but, it kind of, if you are a consumer in the grocery store, you, kind of, don’t catch that. If it had a picture of the state, that would more, because it is an unusually shaped state. People would be able to [sentence trails off].”

Another participant added, “They would know it is Florida right away.”

The first participant responded, “Visitors especially would be.”

A third participant commented, “It’s not like Colorado or something. [laughter from other participants] Or Oregon or Washington.”

- Several participants discussed adding the county or location to the logo. A participant said, “Have like the county under it, because I know if you are trying to buy or support Alachua County farmers say, like from, like “Fresh from Florida, Grown in Alachua County,” or “Grown in Broward County,” or “Duval County” or whichever.”

Another participant commented, “I like that.”

And a third added, “That’s a good idea.”

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- A participant said, “Maybe the thing to consider is that this may work well for someone in New York State or something like that, but for those of us here in Florida, you may want to consider changing it for, maybe show the state of Florida and put the region that, in color or something showing where stuff is from.”
- A participant recommended rearrangement to include the farm name and said, “I would like it a lot better if there was sort of like a little field underneath the word “Florida” where the actual producer’s name went. So, you know like “Fresh from Florida” and then right underneath that in small letter’s it said, “Pero Farms, Palm Beach.” That would make it feel to me like it was local farmers working and not somebody trying to achieve some anonymity.”
- A participant recommended making the logo more inclusive of all products and said, “And I don’t know if this a good...I would maybe add small pictures, some sort of design or something around it, tomatoes, whatever is grown in Florida, just to give a clue that, ‘cause I didn’t know all those foods were from Florida. But, that’s just me.”
- A participant suggested making the logo product specific and said, “Maybe produce specific. Like if it was fresh from Alachua and it was blueberries, maybe you would put a picture of a blueberry bush in the middle growing out of it.”

Improve Advertising

The participants indicated that the advertising of Fresh From Florida needed to be improved. They suggested advertising in stores, restaurants, and commercials. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed the need for more advertising and said, “Advertising, that label has to get out there more. I don’t think anybody has seen this really unless you are dealing with the big boxes.”
- A participant said, “If I saw this, like in a commercial or something like that, I would actually go to the supermarket and try to keep an eye out for something like that. I think that is kinda cool.”
- A participant said, “Well, one thing that crossed my mind was, even a fast food restaurant, restaurants, if they incorporated the Fresh from Florida type message, I think that would, even if it’s a fast food restaurant, but they are buying locally, that might influence me a little bit or at least make me feel a little better than not knowing.”
- A participant discussed increasing advertising in stores by creating local sections. This participant said, “I don’t know, something just popped into my head. You know how the markets have the ‘Greenwise’ sections and the organic sections? It would be nice if they had a local section, things that are made local, things that are grown local.”

Two participants responded and both said, “That is a good idea.”

Revise Wording

Several participants recommended improving Fresh From Florida by revising the wording and incorporating other terms like farm fresh and local. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant suggested revisions to the wording and said, “I think I would improve it by putting Fresh ‘in’ Florida not ‘from,’ we’re in Florida, put ‘in.’”
- A participant suggested adding local terms and said, “Add the words locally grown or something on it.”

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- A participant suggested revising the wording and said, “I think, I think of it as a state the way I see it. But if they really want to make me think if it was really local it would say “Fresh Locally from Florida.”
- A participant said, “Maybe “Farm Fresh”...or...something like that?”

Include a List of Requirements

Several participants discussed that they were unsure what the Fresh From Florida logo really meant. They recommended that a list be available to consumers to explain the requirements and qualifications for a product to be labeled Fresh From Florida. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant said, “I guess I would have to know more about what the logo actually means, you know?”
- A participant wanting more information about the logo said, “I would suggest putting on how many counties Fresh from Florida stands for. Is it fifty counties? Is it thirty counties?”
- A participant suggested creating a Fresh From Florida sticker for produce, but then indicated that consumers would need to know what the logo meant. This participant said, “That’s what I was thinking too, just as a sticker, but people would have to know what that meant first.”
- A participant suggested that a list of requirements would help them believe the logo more. This participant said, “Yeah, I think that list of, that whatever list they have after all that is over with, should be available to everybody, so I mean that I’ll believe it more.”

Fresh From Florida is an Out-of-State Brand

Several of the participants discussed that they perceived Fresh From Florida to be created for those who live outside of the state. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A discussion among many participants highlighted the perceived out of state brand. The first participant said, “It’s clear to me when I look at this, this is meant for people outside of Florida.”

A second participant responded and said, “I agree.”

The first participant continued and said, “And, because those of us here within the state now are in a different plane, we look at it from a different perspective than people from outside, this covers the whole state.”

A third participant got involved in the conversation and said, “You have a good point there. [agreement heard from other participants] When people buy oranges or orange juice or whatever else, they live outside the state, that Florida on it that’s what they want. I mean obviously because we’re associated with the orange, but [sentence trails off]...”

A fourth participant commented and said, “Hey, you want a cranberry from Massachusetts.”

The third participant responded and said, “Exactly. You want an apple from Washington, you know, that’s...you know when it says...I mean potatoes from Idaho or whatever else, I mean, you think...that is instilled in everyone.”

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- A participant talked about the use of Fresh From Florida out-of-state and said, “Yeah, ‘cause it could be used also for anything that we send out of state, too. You could always do Fresh in Florida for the in state and Fresh from, but that’s kind of making it kind of a little bit more.”
- A participant inferred that Fresh From Florida would be used out of state and said, “The distinctions on the part of Florida that we are talking about are unique to the people sitting here, you know? Somebody from up north probably would not care or would not know how something grown in south Florida was any better or worse than something from another part of Florida.”

No Change

Some of the participants indicated that they would not change Fresh From Florida. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant said, “I don’t know if I would change it. The simple, the simpleness of it draws my attention and you’re not making it too complex and [sentence trails off]...”
- A participant said, “If it’s going on individual items, there is no reason to change it. If it’s just going in the corner on a stand, at the grocery market, then they could add more to it, but in advertising less, a lot of times less is more.”
- A participant said, “Yeah, exactly. I think, I think it says everything it needs to say.”
- A participant discussed adding to the logo and then thought it would be too busy. This participant said, “I feel like tomato is the only other thing that I might put on there, but if you add something else to it, it is almost going to make the logo look too busy.”

Concluding Questions

To conclude the focus groups the participants were asked to discuss how their definition of local food may have changed or not changed throughout the course of the focus group. In addition, the participants were also asked to make suggestions for a definition for local food to be used by the United States Department of Agriculture or the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

How Has Participants’ Definition of Local Food Changed?

The participants were asked to describe how their personal definition of local food had changed or not changed throughout the focus group. Several participants discussed that their definition of local food broadened, while others discussed that their definition for local was relative to the product. In addition, some participant indicated that Florida was local to them, while others indicated that the discussion made them more aware.

Local Food Definition Broadened

Several participants indicated that their personal definition of local food broadened throughout the course of the focus group as they thought about what local food meant. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Two participants discussed how their definition of local food broadened. The first participant said, “Well, it actually made me think a little bit more of local foods being not just Alachua County or not just Florida, but all of

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the United States. I really hadn't thought of it as local being you know, Michigan or Washington or whatever. And you know just listening to that...I am like, well...yeah, when you don't have a choice of something that's grown right here in Florida, that does broaden your horizons and give you a lot more options.

A second participant commented and said, "The parameters are spread."

- A participant specified that the five-card selection caused his/her definition of local food to broaden. This participant said, "The cards made me realize that some foods that are local to Florida are more, you know, a little further away than I would have really necessarily considered local, but I still now consider them local because that's where they were in Florida."
- Two participants discussed how their definitions of local food were once very small, but after the discussion had been broadened to statewide. The first participant said, "Before, I would associate local to be in the vicinity, say within, like, a ten mile radius, now it's been expanded to, like, the state of Florida."

The second participant added, "Right. I agree, I always thought local was, like my parent's backyard because they had a big garden, or my grandparents. But now, more of a statewide."

- A participant simply reflected on the discussion and said, "I think it might have broadened my horizons to all of Florida."

Definition is Relative

Some participants indicated that following the discussion they did not have a consistent definition of local food. Rather, they indicated that their definition for local food varied according to the product. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed the perspective of the definition of local food changing for each product. This participant said, "Local has different parameters. There's local that's indigenous, to our area, then there's local specific to the area it's got to come from, your apples and what not."
- A participant indicated that the food type dictated the definition of local. This participant said, "I think that it's a little more relevant than probably I thought, also. The sense that, you know, yeah...you think very local, and then you think Florida, then we think maybe the tri-state, and then we think, okay, the U.S. You know? I think it depends on what the circumstance is, for that type of food...I think kind of, sometimes, dictates what local is."
- Discussing both the change in local due to time and product, a participant said, "I do view things as it's more of a we're in a modern day society and economy that's increasingly more global, and what local means is you know, it's different. It's different than it was fifty years ago. And that, to me, now local is, again it's relative, but it's also to me it's the Southeast. It's, you know, Alabama, Georgia, or Florida...to me, that feels local. And that if it's coming to coffee? Yes, probably something you know, you know, to your point, in the northern hemisphere over here. You know, I mean that's gonna feel more in a sense, local, if I'm going to stop and think about it."
- A participant discussed the need to define local in several different situations. This participant said, "My definition was it was local as in, you know, in our general area of Tallahassee, or surrounding counties, or, you know, even across the state line. But really, local food could even mean neighboring states, the whole United States. I mean, that's really local, because we couldn't sustain without having that being our local foods, because there wouldn't be

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apples with not. You know? So, that's actually...I mean, after this very informative focus group, that's actually really local. I mean kind of when you say local, you kind of have to define what is local, [crosstalk] what are you talking about local, are you talking about local being your garden, your backyard or local as in just your general vicinity, or local as in the whole United States is local?"

Florida is Local

Some participants discussed that after the discussion, they felt that Florida was local. Of these participants, some did not specify if they felt Florida was local at the beginning of the focus group. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant indicated that Florida has always been local. This participant said, "Mine's pretty much the same, I mean, I considered all of Florida local to begin with."
- Florida as local remained a participant's definition of local, even after having varying thoughts throughout the focus group. This participant said, "I definitely came in with thinking that local food as in Florida. And then throughout the conversations it was like maybe local food is like surrounding counties, you know, from a lot of things I heard. But, now I'm definitely back to like Florida."
- A participant said, "I would think anything in Florida, to me, is local."
- A participant simply said in response to the question, "From Florida."

More Aware of Local Food

Several participants discussed that the focus group discussion had made them more aware of local food. In addition, they indicated that they discussion had made them think more about local food. Some of these participants indicated that they would think about the discussion the next time they went grocery shopping. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed rarely thinking about local food prior to the focus group and said, "It just raised awareness, I hadn't really thought about local food until this focus group."
- A participant discussed increased awareness as a result of the focus group and said, "It has made me more aware."
- Stating that a lot of learning had occurred during the course of the focus group, a participant said, "Yeah, I learned a lot, actually. I think, like he said, the cards are a real eye opener for me, and I'll definitely pay more attention 'cause I have noticed, like I said with a couple of things that I do look for in-state, the fruits I have noticed a difference in taste."
- A participant indicated that he/she would pay more attention to local food in the future. This participant said, "I know I am going to start paying more attention to it. [agreement heard from other participants]"

What Definitions for Local Food did Participants Suggest?

The participants were asked to suggest a definition of local food to be used by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services or the United States Department of Agriculture. Most of the participants' responses indicated that the definition should include a specific location. Others indicated that local food should come from as close as possible and

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some discussed that local was product dependent and suggested that a tiered system be used. Finally, some participants indicated that local should not be defined.

Local should be Location Specific

Several participants discussed that local should be defined as grown in a specific location. Some of these participants indicated that local should be grown in their county, while others suggested that local should be grown in their state, region, or the United States. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant who thought local should be grown within the county said, “Once again, like we said before, labeling it with the county that it came from.”
- A statewide definition was preferred by a participant who said, “The Florida Department of Agriculture should probably consider locally grown to be Florida. I mean, they are serving the state of Florida.”
- A participant suggested that local be defined by regional locations within the United States. This participant said, “They could do regions like southeastern U.S., you know, southwest.”
- Three participants discussed a definition of local that encompassed the whole United States. The first participant said, “Grown within...something in relation to grown within the United States.”

The second participant added, “It would have to be pretty broad, I think.”

A third participant agreed and said, “Yeah, it’s not just the United States, isn’t it Puerto Rico? Didn’t we decide that its territorial too?”

As Close as Possible

Several participants discussed that local food should be defined as food that comes from as close as possible. Some participants offered mileage suggestions. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant described the idea of food from as close as possible as being local and said, “I guess as close to your current location as possible. Like in the sense that like, all of the things you can get in Florida, you can get strawberries in Alachua County. Yeah, you can also get them other places in Florida, but I would prefer to have them in Alachua County since you can find them here. So, I guess local food is the food that you can get as close to you as possible that is fresh.”
- A participant discussed food being grown as close as possible and said, “I think geographically local isn’t where you buy it, it’s where it’s grown, so you know, it’s not that you would drive two hours to buy the fruit or vegetables, but that if it was grown that close that it, that it, still has those attributes that you might look for in a local product.”
- A participant discussed setting a mileage radius for the definition of local. This participant discussed very small mileage as well as larger mileage and said, “Well, if you really want to define it as local, you need to come up with, you know, what would you accept as local, as far as, you know...are you willing to drive twenty miles or fifty miles to go eat at a restaurant? Or, do you want to stay within...I have a friend who says she only has a seven mile radius. If it is outside that seven-mile radius, she doesn’t go there unless somebody takes her. And I’m like, you know...I

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think if you were to say, you know...if it said, “Locally grown within a hundred miles of...” You know? Because it does...then you have less damage to the product in the shipping process and all that.”

- Two participants discussed keeping local defined to a small vicinity, even though they knew some products would not be able to be considered local. The first participant said, “I don’t think I agree that anything in the United States is local. I think I would always think it needs to be, within the state, probably...well, I mean including Georgia ‘cause we’re so close, but within a certain mile radius. It’s okay with me to say there aren’t local apples and I’m buying apples that aren’t grown locally and I know that, because we can’t grow apples here. That’s okay with me. I guess I’d be more inclined to keep local, local.”

The second participant said, “I’m with her, when it comes down to it, I still think local is being grown within your immediate vicinity.”

Local is Product Dependent

Several participants discussed that the definition for local would be different for different foods. In addition, some participants suggested a tiered approach to defining local, so that consumers knew how “local” a product was. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant described how geographic parameters for local might change for different foods. This participant said, “Would probably have to define the geographic region that it would be based on and how far something has to be shipped to get to you depending on what is grown in your geographic region. It would probably be different for different foods.”
- A participant suggested having different levels to indicate where food comes from. This participant said, “You could have local, regional, national. Because you know regionally speaking, you’d have apples from North Carolina, that’s the Southeast, that’s the region. Whereas coffee, obviously, I guess is Hawaii, so that would be national. I think local is more like a hundred mile...hundred or so mile radius of where you are at. People would use the same economy as you when they’re shopping, would be considered local to me.”
- A participant suggested a tiered system to defining local and said, “They’d have to do tiers, like regional, local, local-state, local-U.S.”
- A participant concluded that local should be defined on a case-by-case basis. This participant said, “You know, especially, I would uh, uh, agree with that in a sense, like you take someplace like Sarasota that doesn’t grow anything as we’ve established, that to them, to Sarasota County, local obviously, has to mean more than just Sarasota County because otherwise our shelves would be empty. But, as opposed to say oranges in Orange County for example. I think they grow them there, if I recall, but that if it’s something that’s grown there, then they might say, you know, for oranges in order to be called local here in Orange County, it’s gotta be grown in Orange County. But for, say, watermelon that’s not grown here, then we have a slightly different standard. I think they would have to look at it on a case by case, food by food basis.”

Local Should Not be Defined

Several participants indicated that local should not be defined. Some of these participants indicated that everyone has a different definition of local. Others indicated that the government should not define local and others discussed that products should just be labeled with where they are from and then each shopper can make their own decision on whether the product is local. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

Local Choice Focus Groups

- Two participants discussed that local should not be defined, because it means different things to different people. The first participant said, “Don’t tell people what local is, because local means different things to different people.”

“Exactly” commented the second participant.

The first participant continued and said, “Otherwise it just turns into something else that the government is going to try to regulate and get wrong. [laughter]”

The second participant replied and said, “So people think local means a fifty mile radius, but the government will say local means within a thousand miles. [agreement heard] The purpose gets lost.”

- A participant opposed to defining local said, “I have a real problem with that. I would not support defining local, that’s just silly.”
- A participant reflected on past experiences and also indicated that he/she would not trust a definition or label from the government. This participant said, “I submit the idea, I want to say that I, thinking back to the local food advocates in California, I think they talked about sourced from a farm that’s within two hours. Of course, they don’t favor processing of any variety because they want you to come to the table, pretty much. And I wouldn’t trust, I mean thinking about either Department of Agriculture designating a label like that, I wouldn’t trust that label unless I had reason to understand that I was buying from a reputable...I mean, I would trust that Publix wouldn’t put the label on things that they didn’t belong on, but I wouldn’t go into a Green Market assuming that somebody wasn’t trying to pull the wool, unless it said where it actually came from, unless it was labeled it came from Belle Glade, or Immokalee.”
- A participant discussed being specific by labeling foods with the city they were grown in. This participant said, “Just be specific, if it’s from umm, Lake Worth, let’s say it’s from Lake Worth, why say local, but just say Lake Worth and then you would know if it’s from Lake Worth. If it’s from Belle Glade, say it’s from Belle Glade.”
- A participant discussed the idea of labeling foods with the state they were grown in. This participant said, “I was gonna say that they should put what state it’s from, or something. If it’s from Florida, put Florida on it. New York, put New York on it.”

Overarching Themes

Throughout the course of the focus groups several themes repeatedly surfaced at varying points in the discussion. The overarching themes included media, food safety, concerns with food from other countries, knowledge of agriculture and food production and organic food.

Media

Throughout the focus groups, several participants referenced learning or hearing something about food from a media source. Media discussed included commercials, documentaries, news, books, newsletters, magazines, brochures, and TV shows. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed negative feelings prompted by a news story. This participant said, “I’m afraid I have a bad connotation with this, we were talking during the break and I mentioned I saw an item on the news a couple months ago about how they reconstitute ‘not from concentrate’ orange juice that you buy in the bottle. Where

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they take orange juice out of a tank that's lost its flavor and they re-inject orange juice flavor that they squeezed out of the rinds.”

- When discussing advertising for Fresh From Florida, a participant referenced commercial tactics he/she had seen for other brands and thought they were effective. This participant said, “Or that, you know, like the cranberry commercial, with the picture of the farmer, you know the guy standing in a pond, but of course we don't do cranberries here, but you know, like they are the American gothic, you know the farmer and his wife [laughter] kind of thing. Give a shot that you're supporting a local small farm. Although, you know, Fresh from Florida, really there...there's also huge corporate farms in Florida. I'm sure that, not necessarily that's a bad thing, but it may not be supporting the forty acre farmer, you might be supporting the four hundred acre farmer as well.”
- Three participants discussed city gardening after learning about it on PBS. The first participant said, “Actually, that's a really interesting topic, we were watching on the PBS, how this is catching all around the urban areas of the country, where people, particularly low income people, are given a bare lot in the middle of the city and they're growing fantastic amounts of food. A black lady in Oakland she had...she had nothing, she had absolutely nothing. She started with a one, you know, like a bare lot, now she runs like twenty of them, all over town, she has a company, she's a business woman and she's making money.”

A second participant commented and said, “And the schools make field trips out to teach the children.”

The first participant replied and said, “And the cities are saying...well, the cities are so run down, like Detroit, there's...nobody's going to build anything on them, it's a great way to use the land, and make it productive and give people an opportunity to make some money. They're particularly good, 'cause they grow the crops that the restaurants, like...you want arugula? They're growing arugula because restaurants want it, and where you're not gonna find it in Publix, and so that's a trend.”

A third participant joined in the conversation and added, “Well, that's actually, that's a history lesson, 'cause that goes back to the Victory Gardens.”

The first participant responded and said, “Yeah. Well, it's real interesting if you want you can just probably Google PBS and put in 'food in the city' and read all about it, see some video.”

- A participant discussed moving away from beef because of advertising and coverage on television. This participant said, “Because you read so much and you see so much going on...on the news and people are not sticking with the regulations. They're just producing stuff and trying to push the stuff out and sell the stuff and some people are taking short cuts and one of the things that lured me away from the beef was you hear all the talk about the E. coli and the shortcuts and seeing the horrible ads on the television...how they doing the calves, and you know, just slaughtering the meat so you want to know that the food is...the regulations are right and it's not speed grown, you know? Certain foods, I have got to where I look at where it came from.”

Food Safety

Several participant discussed food safety throughout the focus groups. The participants discussed food borne illnesses, food safety following a natural disaster, pink slime, high processing of foods, and GMOs. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

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- A participant discussed not wanting local food in areas devastated by disasters because of food safety concerns. This participant said, “If you lived in an area that had a natural disaster, you’d want, wouldn’t...for instance, if you were living in northern Japan, you probably are skeptical about their vegetables, or if you are living on the coast of Orleans during the oil spill you probably wouldn’t be buying local oysters. So those are times when you’re probably not buying local, or I wouldn’t buy local food.”

- Two participants discussed food borne illness and the need to buy food elsewhere when there is an outbreak. The first participant said, “When there has been an outbreak of E-coli in the lettuce fields [laughter]. That definitely makes you want to think about it. [crosstalk and agreement] Okay, I’ll buy my lettuce someplace else.”

A second participant commented and said, “Definitely, true.”

- Two participants discussed pink slime, a topic covered frequently in the news in the months prior to the focus groups. The first participant said, “And they do things like pink slime without telling you, which grosses me out.”

A second participant commented and said, “That’s McDonalds. [laughter]”

The first participant responded and said, “But it’s more than McDonalds.”

“Yeah” agreed the second participant.

- A participant discussed doing a lot of cooking from scratch because of concerns that high processed foods were causing illnesses. This participant said, “Well, with all the chemicals and processing, it takes more time to cook from scratch, just, but that’s pretty much where I’m going...is that I do a lot of cooking just kind of whole foods is what I call it, instead of using a lot of processed. So, you know, if I have to buy vegetables instead of getting canned vegetables, I usually get frozen or fresh...if I can’t get fresh, you know? I do a lot of freezing and all when stuff is in season that can be frozen, I will get it and blanch it and put stuff up. But...because I just think there’s such a high prevalence of certain illnesses that are just in society and I think it’s related to all the chemicals and processing in the foods so, I probably cause myself more work than I have to, but I do a lot of whole cooking.”
- A participant discussed wanting meat that is antibiotic and hormone free. Additionally, the participant preferred that the animal was not fed any genetically modified feed. This participant said, “I like to know how the meat was raised. It is very important that it be antibiotic and hormone free. That they not use anything to feed the animals that is genetically modified so...no genetically modified corn, no animal by-products, nothing like that. So, that is really important. That has been something that we have done for probably fifteen years. And it was very difficult.”

Concerns with Food from Other Countries

Throughout the discussion, several participants indicated that they had concerns with or did not trust food from other countries. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant opposed to food coming from China said, “Yeah, there’s a lot to be said for grown in the United States versus like in China, where you can kind of have a little bit more faith in what we’re doing here versus what they’re doing in China.”
- Two participants discussed not buying foods that were grown in another country. The first participant said, “That’s what is so strongly puzzling is that if you really spend the time to go into the grocery store and you pick

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up a cucumber and it's from Honduras, I have gotten to where I've put it right back because of all of the goods that we could have, that could be grown locally, I struggle with a cucumber from Honduras. Or you know, the fruit from Honduras or wherever, because just the fact that we could just support and have more local support. I mean, there's nothing wrong with that, it's just that I would rather buy strawberries from Plant City. So, I've started to really look and pay attention more to kind of keep it at home. But, you can't always do that because sometimes it's such fine print and you're in a hurry."

A second participant commented and said, "And I'll follow that up with [name], if I see grown from another country, I will not buy it."

The first participant responded and said, "I've really gotten big on that."

- A participant discussed that it would be nice to see products at the grocery store grown in Florida, rather than grown in other countries. This participant said, "If it is locally grown. I am kind of attracted to that because you get kind of sick of seeing, when you go there it tells you where that product is from and it is like Guatemala and Mexico, you don't really see too many in Florida."
- Several participants discussed avoiding foods from other countries. The first participant said, "I like seafood; fish, shrimp, things of that nature. But, I have noticed something, we get a lot of Chinese food and I started to pay attention to the package, product of what country...and then I came across something on the internet, MSN, the other day that said they have started to find that food from other countries such as, and they said Asian, they are finding problems with it. I have always told my wife that she just picks us a fish, these people they had a problem with the baby formula. They killed little kids...I try not to buy certain foods from certain countries."

A second participant added, "If it says China, I avoid it. Because nowadays you hear every day every time you turn around, where China has done something, something. In the pet food it was melamine. I think they have had two or three food things. Packaging even from China, I mean, you know? So, don't."

Contributing to the conversation a third participant said, "That reminds me too, like fair trade, you know, it is like child labor...who is growing the food, who is packaging the food?"

A fourth participant said, "And it is a matter of, do they have standards close to ours? We are allowed...with processed foods, you are allowed so much foreign matter. Here, that usually means it could be flies, insects, legs whatever. And, you know, so it is a little extra protein, you can deal with that, but if you are dealing with other countries that have different standards, it can be all sorts of..."

"God only knows." Interrupted a fifth participant.

A sixth participant concluded the discussion on the topic and said, "Right, and the pesticides that are illegal here are legal there, they can use them."

Knowledge of Agriculture and Food Production

Throughout the focus groups the participant identified that they were not knowledgeable about certain aspects of agriculture and food production, they also indicated that there was a need for more education about agriculture and food production. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

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- A participant discussed his/her personal lack of knowledge and said, “I think, definitely, it is not really like a comment about anything, but the little cards with all the fruits and vegetables that we did, I kind of wish that I had that somewhere available that I could know where it is. Because I didn’t know that some of those things were grown in Florida, had no idea.”
- A participant discussed a specific example of a need for more education about agriculture and food production. The participant said, “My neighbor who is in third grade, passed his FCAT...argued with me, I handed him a carrot out of our garden and he says, “I don’t eat carrots that grew in the dirt.” [laughter] I said, “Oh, I will take the dirt off.” He looked at me. I said, “Okay, I will wash it.” So, I washed it for him and handed it to him. He said, “No, I am serious, I don’t eat carrots that grow in the dirt.” I said, “Well, do you eat carrots?” He goes, “Yeah, everybody eats carrots.” I said, “Where were your carrots from?” He said, “Publix.” [laughter and crosstalk]

The participant continued and said, “There is an advantage, your kids know that things do grow in the ground. But this is a kid that our school system has said, because he passed an FCAT with a high enough score, that he is deemed able and intelligent and ready to go on.”

Another participant commented and said, “Well, it is just like kids who only see those little carrots and they think that. [crosstalk, laughter, and agreement]”

The first participant finished his/her story and said, “That’s exactly what he thought. Everyday afterwards he came and picked a carrot until all of my carrots were gone, so...If all you learn is that carrots grow in the ground...”

- A participant discussed the need for education about local food. This participant said, “I’m just going to say I think it’s probably more important that we just educate our youth more on local food growth. Because it starts at, you know, it’s a learned behavior you know, what you eat and how you eat. And so what you learn, you teach your children or you teach the youth. So advertising and educating, I think, is the most important in getting the local market more, you know, attractive.”
- A participant discussed how generations have become further removed from the farm and no longer know about common practices including canning. This participant said, “I think that if you can buy local, you are supporting your community, you are supporting someone who lives in the community and is trying to make a living in the community doing something that a lot of people don’t like to do. I mean, farming is not easy. Being a cattle rancher is not easy. It is a lot of work, and that is why I think that you are going to see more and more of your like, Hunsader Farms, I think you are going to see them go by the wayside to more major corporations buying...and raising your beef and raising the foods. Because it is hard work and the generations, the younger generations don’t want to do it. It is like, “I watched my dad do it and that is just too much work for me.” You know? And that is sad, that really is. I grew up in a time where we did have our own vegetable garden, we raised our own beef and pork and if we couldn’t grow it, we went to local farms and picked and canned. You say to somebody today, you know, about canning and they go, “Huh?” They haven’t got a clue. They don’t know what canning is all about and why you do it or any of that.”
- A participant indicated that they did not know where apples came from and said, “I don’t know, I never knew where apples came from.”

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Organic

Throughout the discussion, the participants repeatedly brought up organic foods. Organic was at times discussed favorably, while it was not discussed favorably at other times. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed preference for organic food over local food. This participant said, “The other issue is that, even though it says this, I would still look to see if it were organic, or what the growing methods were or something like that, because this alone would not motivate me to buy it. It would have to be organic, pretty much most of our foods are.”
- Three participants had a discussion about organic food. The first participant said, “I would say I hear from more of a push towards organic as opposed to local. Cause there’s been movies made and books written about things that actually happen in...scary.”

A second participant commented and said, “Some of that’s happening in organic food, now.”

A third participant added, “Cause foods can label themselves organic, but they’re not fully organic...”

The second participant interrupted and said, “Right.”

The third participant continued and said, “My pediatrician told me that people who buy organic baby food are people who don’t get to go on vacation, ‘cause they’re wasting money on organic baby food. Unless you make it yourself. Because, like she said, they can say they’re organic and they really aren’t. And a lot of baby food was recalled. Spinach, you know, was recalled and whatever.”

- A participant discussed wanting to look more into organic foods. This participant said, “I consider myself to be healthy and to eat clean in avoiding the packaged foods. However, [names omitted] are making me think...[laughter] So, I might be doing a little research into organic food. I did see the movie Food, Inc, and oy, oy, oy. But, I don’t know if I can get my husband and stepson quite on board with not eating meat or eating all organic. I don’t know. They wouldn’t even watch the movie with me. [laughter] I dragged them into the whole grain, clean eating. I would like to do a little more investigating into organic food.”
- A participant discussed the expense associated with organic food. This participant said, “I have an apple problem. Like this is my problem, because my kids like apples...well, and so...they’re on one of the dirty dozen lists, so they are double, like if you buy organic because my kids just eat them, they don’t peel them, so in order to buy an organic bag of apples, they’re running like \$6.50 to \$7.00 dollars a bag of apples.”

Findings

The results of these focus groups provide a detailed look into consumer shopping behaviors and opinions regarding local food. The summary bellows compiles the results.

Participants’ Grocery-Shopping Behavior

- Participants shop at a variety of stores and often shop at multiple stores each week.
- Participants are looking to buy food that is convenient, affordable, of high quality, and available.

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- Information, media, and advertisements influence participants' food-buying decisions and opinions about food.
- Participants do not want to buy food from other countries.

Local Food

- Participants like the idea that local food supports their local economy.
- Participants like the social interaction with producers that comes with the purchase of local food.
- Participants associate non-local foods with packaged, processed, branded, and chain foods.
- Participants like to know where their food comes from.
- Participants feel that local food is inconvenient and often unavailable.
- Participants have limited trust in local producers because they feel there is decreased quality assurance with local products.
- Participants think that local food is important, but they admit that they do not regularly make a conscious effort to buy or support local food.

Food Selections

- Participants tend to select foods that are versatile, healthy, frequently used in their household, easy to prepare, and foods that they like.
- Months of availability and growing location have little impact on food selection.

Food Preference

- The participants' preferences for non-local food products were not affected.
- Some participants considered products not available locally, such as apples and coffee, as not local. However, other participants broadened their definitions of local according to each product.
- Participants are split on whether local processing of a product has local value.

Fresh From Florida

- Participants' recognition of Fresh From Florida varied.
- Participants associated Fresh From Florida with citrus products.
- Participants associated state pride with Fresh From Florida.
- Participants recognize Fresh From Florida as a local product.
- Participants indicated that they would pick a Fresh From Florida product over a non-local product if they were given the choice and the product was of good quality.
- Participants recommended increased and improved advertising for Fresh From Florida.

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- Participants perceived Fresh From Florida was created for use in other states.

Overarching Findings

- Several forms of media influence participants' knowledge of food and food production. Participants commonly referenced media throughout the focus groups.
- Participants are concerned with the safety of their food. They want to know that their food meets regulations and is produced and prepared in an appropriate manner.
- Participants discussed a need for agricultural knowledge throughout the focus groups. This included a need among themselves, as well as a need to educate children about agriculture and where their food comes from.
- Participants commonly discussed organic food in conjunction with local food. Some participants used these terms interchangeably; while others felt organic food was more important than local food.

Recommendations

Based on the results and findings of this research, the following recommendations have been made.

General Recommendations

- Further research should be done to test messages that incorporate local food attributes. We discovered some key terms and attributes of local food that are favorable to the participants. Messages incorporating some of these key terms and attributes should be developed and tested with a larger consumer audience.
- Communicators should improve advertising of local food. Several of the participants indicated that they did not know where to buy local food or if food was local. They identified that the advertising for local food was sparse and should be improved.
- Communicators should work to make information about local food more available to consumers. As observed in the focus groups, with more information, consumers' perception of what they consider to be local food is likely to broaden.
- Programs should be developed to extend local food and agricultural information in general. Many of the participants expressed a need for improved knowledge. In addition, several participants indicated that they enjoyed learning about local food throughout the course of the focus groups.
- USDA or FDACS should not develop a definition of local food. Rather, efforts should be placed on informing consumers about local food so that they are able to make informed decisions. Several of the participants discussed that because of the variation of local food, a definition should not be developed.
- More should be done to strengthen the Fresh From Florida brand and increase Floridians' awareness of this brand. Several participants identified a need for improved Fresh From Florida advertising to improve their own awareness of the brand.

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Recommendations for Large Producers

- Increase exposure and promotion of local products. The participants indicated that they have an increased amount of trust for food coming from larger producers because large producers have quality- control programs and produce a consistent quality product.
- Make local products more apparent in the grocery store. Large producers should work with grocery stores within the state to work on improving the labeling and advertising on locally-grown products. When given the choice, consumers indicate they will select local foods over non-local foods in the grocery store.
- Focus on the quality of your product and pass that message to consumers. Consumers feel like they should not trust large producers because they are large conglomerates, but they trust the product from large producers because the products meet quality standards and controls.
- Increase social interactions with consumers to increase overall trust. Building a strong relationship with your consumer base will improve the overall trust that consumers have in large producers. It is recommended that large producers communicate openly and regularly with consumers. Through improved communication and relationships, consumers will come to trust both the products from large producers as well as the producers themselves.
- Label all products produced in the United States or within a certain state as such. It is important to the participants that their food comes from the United States and not from another country. Wherever possible, large producers should clearly label their products. The participants value buying food grown in the United States and in their own state.
- Disclose your practices for both production and safe-food handling to consumers. This type of disclosure is a form of open communication that will help foster relationships with consumers.

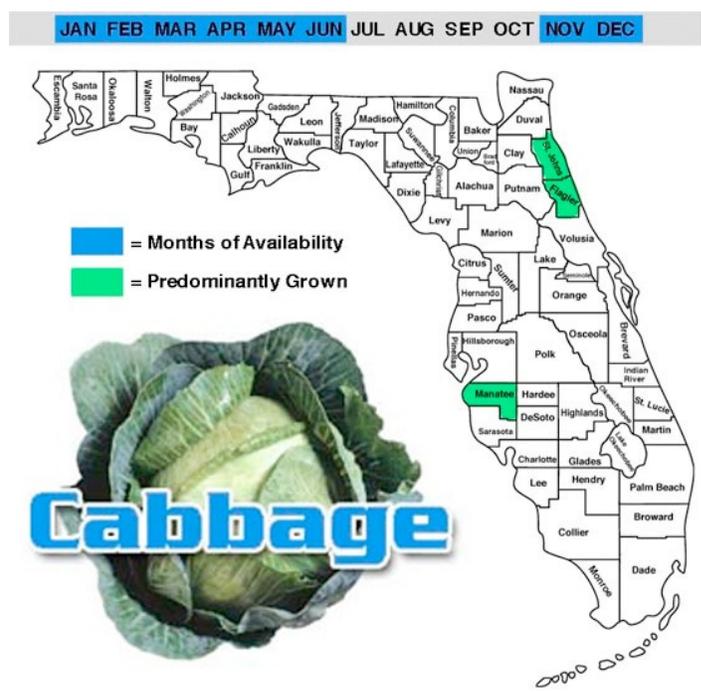
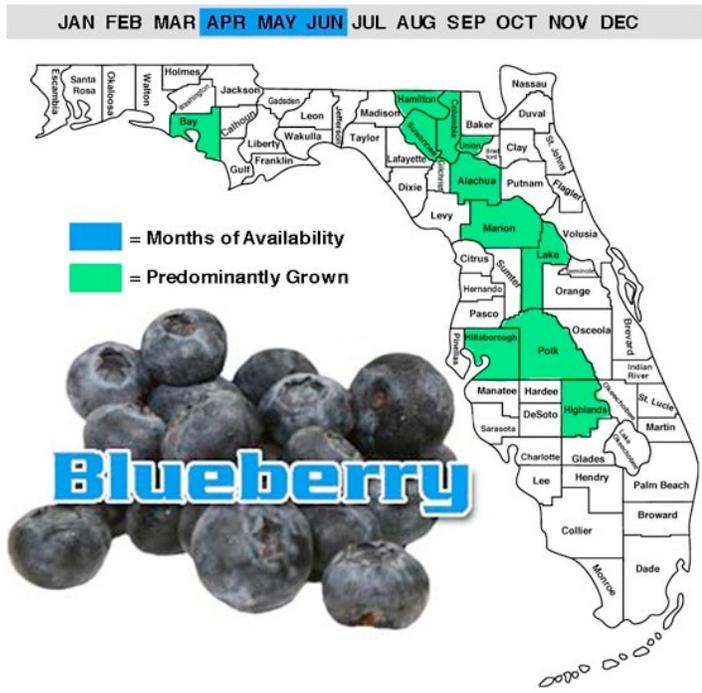
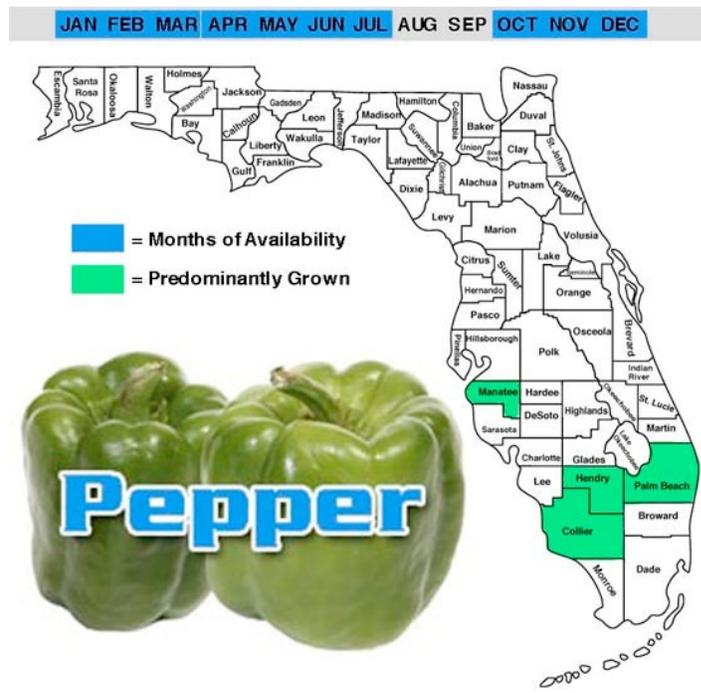
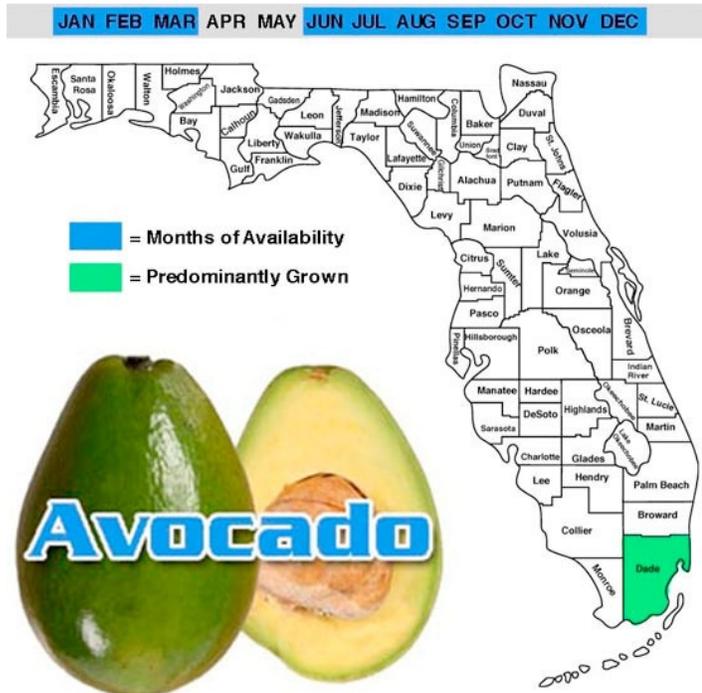
Recommendations for Small Producers

- Increase exposure and promotion of local products. The participants in the focus groups indicated they often did not know when and where to access local food products. Small producers should explore different means of advertising that will reach consumers and increase exposure of their product.
- Position local products so that they are more convenient for consumers to purchase. The participants in the focus groups indicated that it was often inconvenient to go to markets out of their way or to markets that had limited hours of operation. Small producers should identify both locations and times that are convenient to their target consumer.
- Small farm products should not be packaged or processed. The participants in the focus groups indicated that they associated packaged and processed products with non-local food. To keep consumers' associations with local products as local, small producers should avoid over packaging and processing.
- Small producers should focus on building relationships with consumers. The participants indicated that they valued the social interactions with local food producers.

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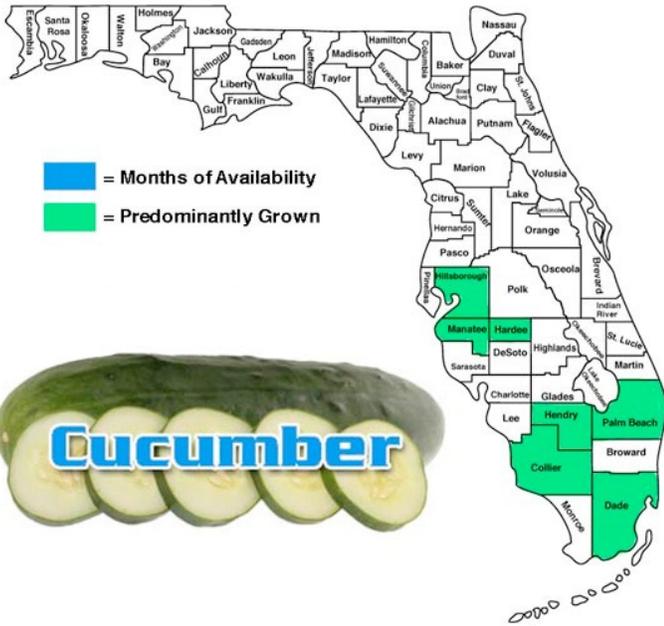
- Small producers should build trust with consumers. The participants want to trust the small farmer, but are hesitant because the small farmer's products are not proven or controlled. Small producers should be open with consumers about their production and food safety practices

Appendix A: Local Choice Scenario Flash Cards

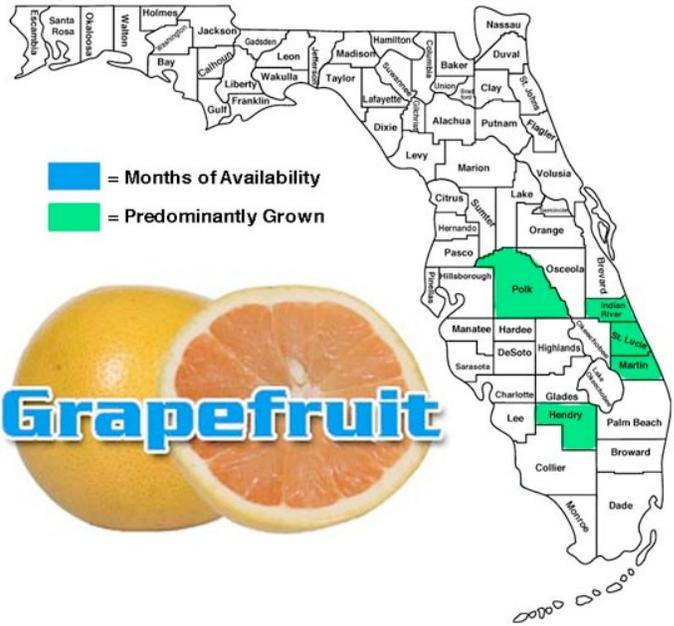


Local Choice Focus Groups

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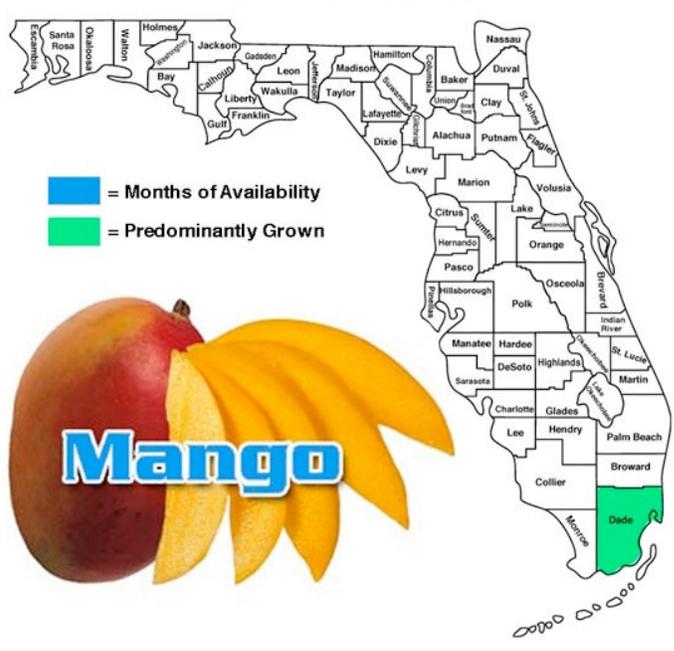
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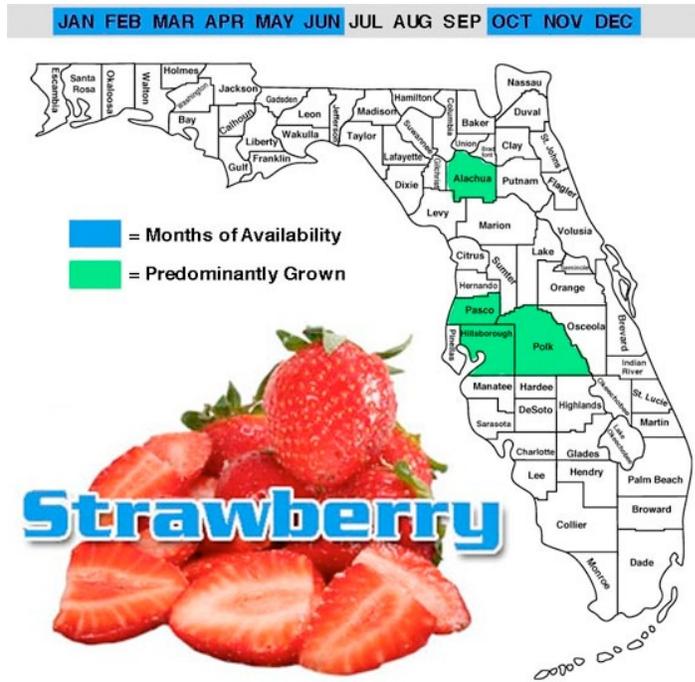
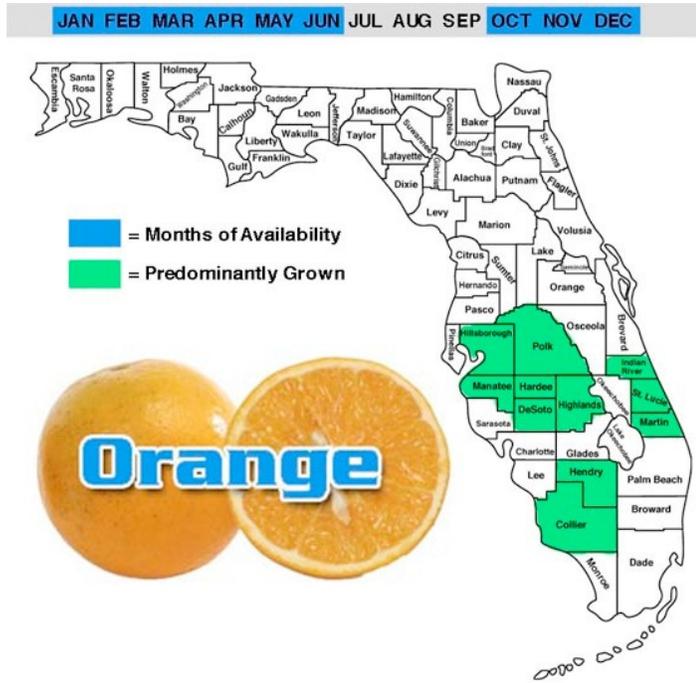
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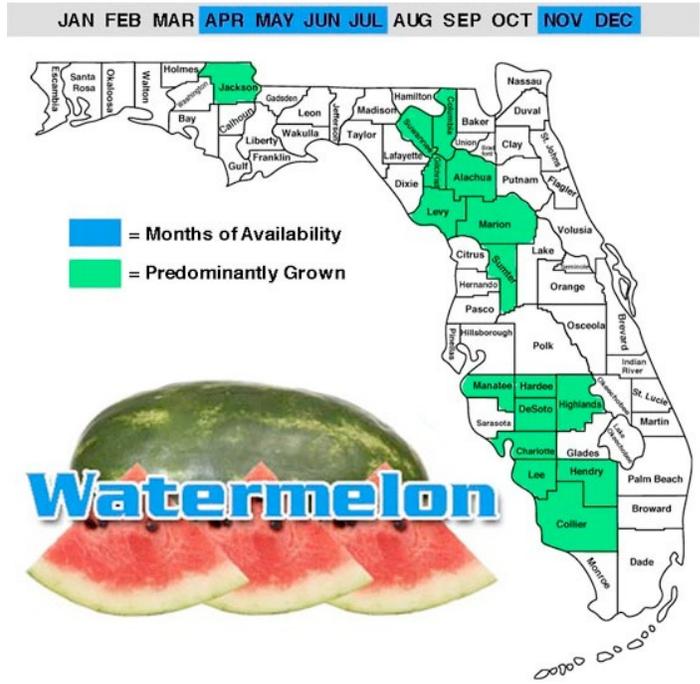
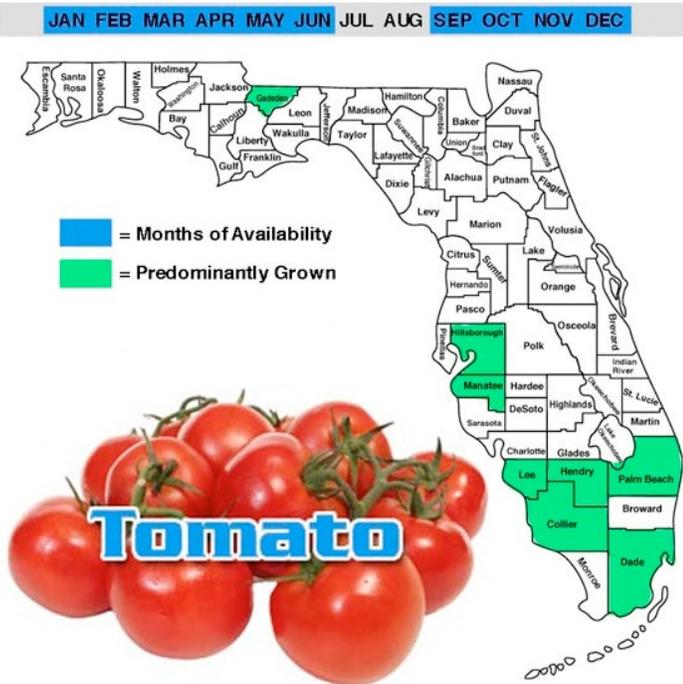
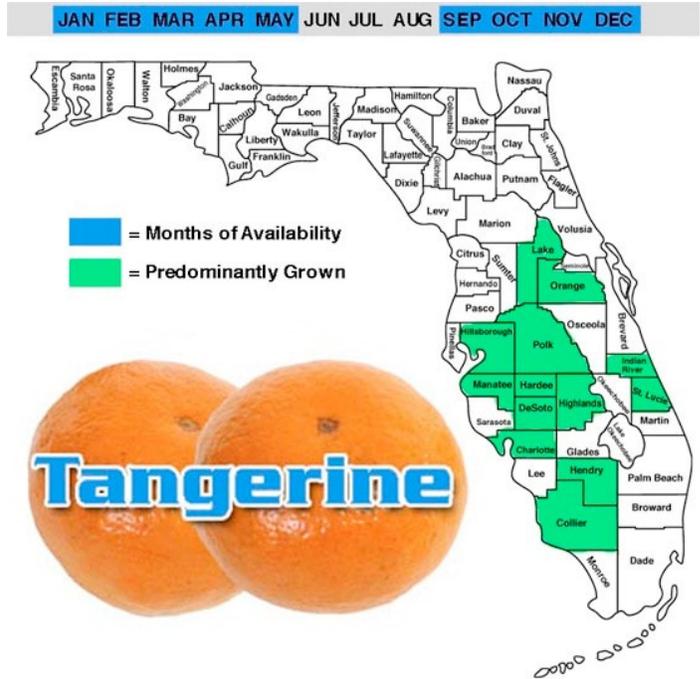
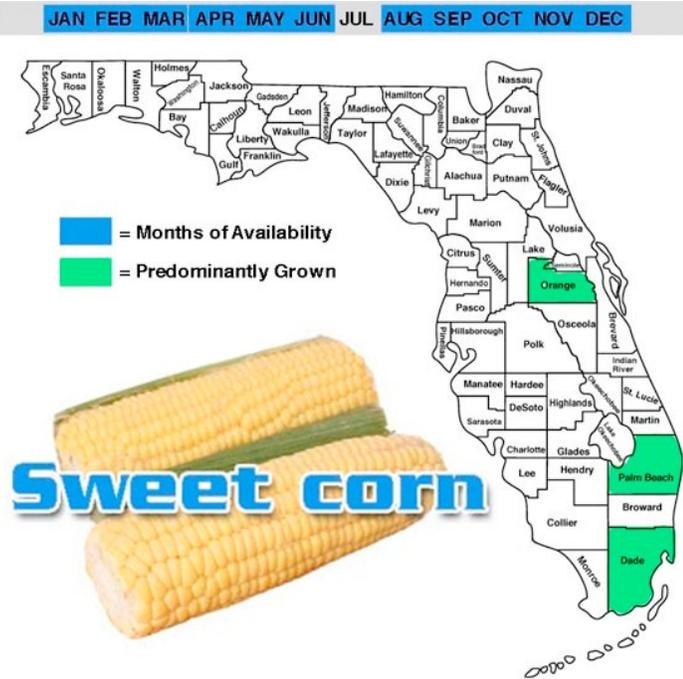
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Local Choice Focus Groups



Local Choice Focus Groups



Taken from <http://www.florida-agriculture.com/fresh2u/>

Appendix B: Food Preference Scenarios

Florida is the nation's largest producer of fresh tomatoes. In fact, Florida produces about $\frac{1}{2}$ of the domestic supply. From October – June, south Florida produces almost all of fresh tomatoes available in the US.

Aside from Florida, Mexico & Canada also make up large portions of the US tomato market.



In the US, most apples are produced in the northeast and west coast. The top five apple producing states are WA, NY, MI, PA & CA. However, apple production is limited in the southeastern US.

Aside from the US; China, the European Union, Turkey & India produce most of the world's apple supply.



Local Choice Focus Groups

Coffee trees grow best in tropical climates with high altitudes. In the US, Hawaii and Puerto Rico have the only climates which support the growth of coffee trees.

Other places that produce coffee include:

Central America: Mexico, Guatemala & Costa Rica

South America: Columbia & Brazil

Africa: Ethiopia, Kenya & Ivory Coast

Middle East: Yemen

Asia: Indonesia & Vietnam



Local Choice Focus Groups

Appendix C: Fresh From Florida Logo

