

foodminds

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Conscious Consumption Index

Exploring global food values and
their impact on your business

Canadian Analysis

The Canadian food landscape is evolving, with consumers increasingly prioritizing health and sustainability in their purchasing decisions. Based on the *Conscious Consumption Index*, this executive summary provides crucial insights into Canadian consumer perceptions of healthy, sustainable foods and their impact on the food industry.

The Conscious Consumption Index is based on an online survey of 1,750 Canadian citizens aged 21-69 who have primary or shared responsibility for household grocery shopping.

Overview

Background

The Conscious Consumption Index is FoodMinds' signature global insights report unearthing how consumers define healthy, sustainable food systems and prioritize actions food companies, NGOs, and governments can take to build trust and support a more sustainable food future. 2024 is the first year this report was fielded in Canada.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to discover and quantify current consumer perceptions of healthy, sustainable foods and understand how they have changed over time. The findings of the survey can help food and beverage companies understand not only how consumers define healthy, sustainable foods, but also gain insights into specific aspects of sustainability – and how those aspects intersect with how consumers define the healthfulness of foods – that matter most to consumers. The results are also expected to help companies prioritize their future sustainability actions and communications by understanding what actions consumers would like to see beyond just the presence of sustainability claims to build trust that they are improving the health and sustainability of their foods.

About FoodMinds

FoodMinds, a division of Padilla—NATIONAL’s sister agency within the AVENIR GLOBAL network—is a leading global food and nutrition agency. It provides innovative science, policy and influencer communications programs that achieve clients’ business goals while also doing good for public health, people and the planet.

FoodMinds experts put passion into practice across key solution areas, including science communications, food and nutrition affairs, stakeholder engagement, food as medicine/precision nutrition and healthy, sustainable food systems, to affect change and impact behaviors. FoodMinds is the only agency with 15 registered dietitians and a Global Expert Bench of nutrition science, policy and communication professionals to help our clients embody a better story.

FoodMinds, a division of Padilla, works with more than 30 leading commodity boards, food companies, brands and associations in the U.S. and around the world, including several Fortune 500 companies. Together, they’re reimagining why, what and how the world eats and drinks – to help build a stronger, flourishing future for all.

Executive Summary

Key Findings

Defining Healthy, Sustainable Foods

Canadian consumers primarily define healthy, sustainable foods as nutritious (59%) and produced using environmentally friendly farming practices (59%). Other important characteristics include minimal environmental impact, minimal processing, and local sourcing. Words like “convenient” and “processed” were least associated with sustainability.

Purchase Behaviors

While most consumers are familiar with the concept of healthy, sustainable food systems, only 48% purchase these options more than half the time. However, more consumers have increased purchases based on perceived sustainability (45%) than have decreased purchases due to perceived lack of sustainability (38%).

Top Purchase Drivers

Price (52%), taste (48%), and healthiness (42%) are the primary factors influencing purchasing decisions. Consumers also seek products that are minimally processed, non-GMO, and labelled “natural” or “all-natural”.

Barriers to Purchase

The high price of healthy, sustainable foods is the biggest obstacle for consumers. Other barriers include skepticism around marketing claims and a lack of transparency in food production.

Actions to Support Healthy, Sustainable Food Systems

When asked about specific actions that food companies should take, consumers prioritize eliminating food waste, decreasing food prices, and improving food access. Third-party certifications and supply chain transparency are also crucial factors that influence consumer trust and purchase intent.

Key Findings

Information and Education

Consumers are interested in learning more about healthy and sustainable foods, but only 34% know where to find information. Consumers currently seek out nutrition information more than sustainability information, but younger generations are seeking out both kinds of information more frequently. The most trusted sources of information are Health Canada and health professional organizations.

Trust and Transparency

Canadian consumers want more transparency from the food industry. They seek transparency and accountability measures like supply chain management and sourcing (27%), third-party certifications (26%), and visible changes in product packaging (24%).

Generational Differences

Millennials and Gen Z are more likely to be familiar with the concept of healthy, sustainable foods, and are more likely to seek information about both nutrition and sustainability. They also trust food, nutrition and environmental NGOs more than older generations. Boomers are more likely to trust Health Canada and health professional organizations.

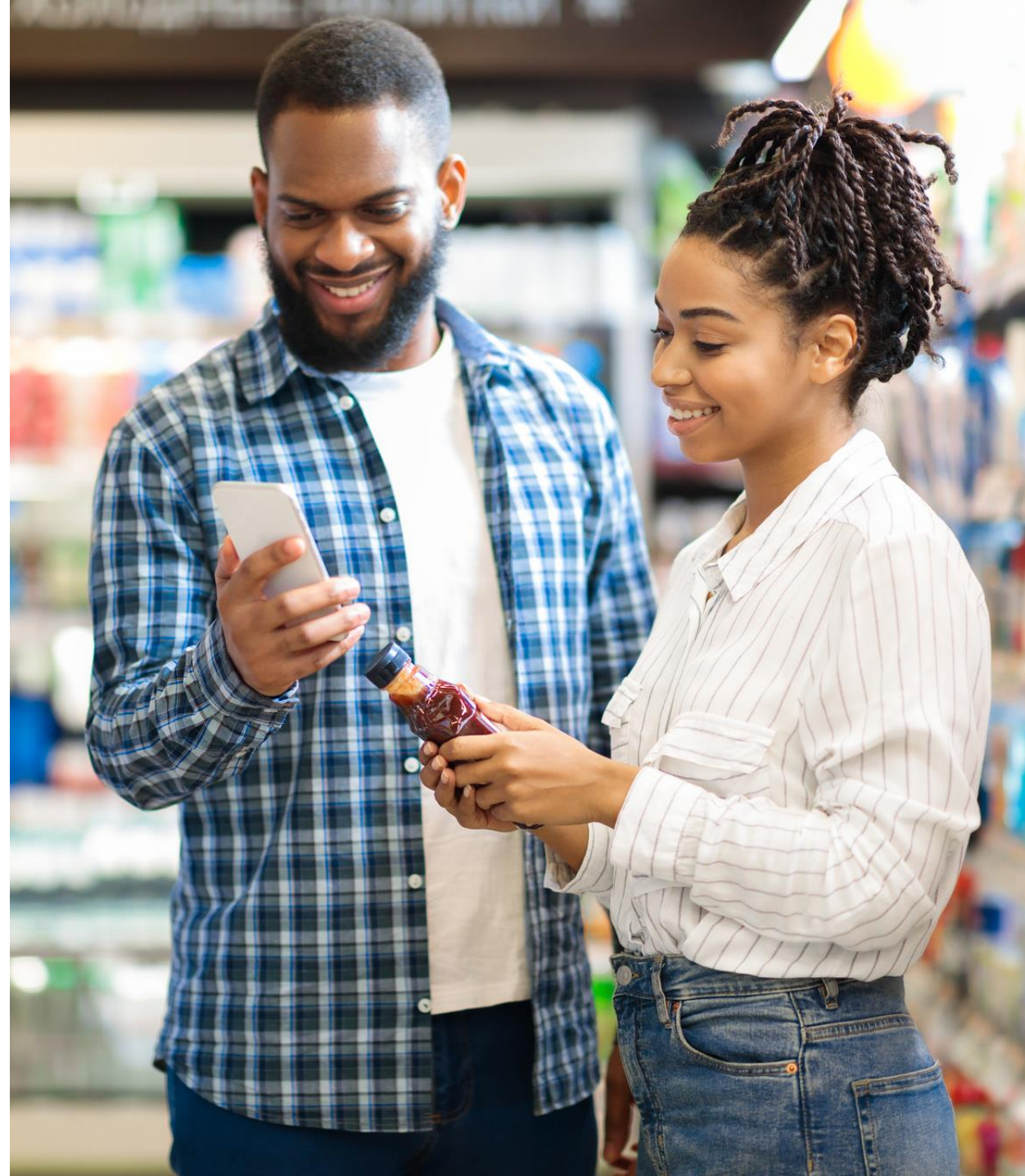
Regional Differences

The top choice used to define healthy, sustainable foods for Alberta, Atlantic Region, British Columbia, and Ontario was “nutritious”, while the top choice for Québec was “minimally processed”.

Opportunities: Education & Awareness

Consumers are actively seeking information on healthy, sustainable foods, and education can significantly impact their purchase decisions.

- Companies and organizations can develop and disseminate educational resources about the impact of food choices on health and sustainability.
- Co-creating campaigns, workshops, and online content with top trusted sources such as government agencies (e.g., Health Canada), professional organizations, farmers/growers, and NGOs can enhance credibility and effectively close the gaps in consumer understanding around healthy and sustainable foods.



Opportunities: Transparency & Trust

Consumers are calling for greater transparency in the food system, including detailed information on how foods are grown and produced, and whether they truly deliver on their claims.

- On-pack seals, symbols, and labels are the top factor consumers use when deciding what foods are healthy and sustainable. Companies and organizations can implement third-party certifications like Fair Trade and organic to build consumer confidence.
- Enhancing transparency is critical to building trust. Provide more detailed sourcing and production information and make visible changes to product packaging or formulation to clearly communicate nutrition and sustainability efforts.



Opportunities: Affordability & Access

Price is the number one barrier to purchasing healthy, sustainable foods, and consumers expect companies to improve affordability and accessibility for all. By addressing these concerns, companies can better meet consumer expectations and enhance their reputation for supporting public health and sustainability.

- Beyond potential price reductions or discounting, strategic partnerships and philanthropic efforts aimed at access and affordability can help companies demonstrate their commitment to making healthy, sustainable foods available to everyone.
- Consumers rank forging partnerships to advance public health and environmental causes among the top five actions they would like to see companies take to influence trust and purchase intent.



Questions?

Please contact us for any questions or to demand the full report of the Conscious Consumption Index.