

Food label fatigue? Iowa farm group survey indicates shoppers growing skepticism of 'natural' and 'organic' food marketing claims

Eight in 10 Iowans find food labels misleading, according to the Iowa Food & Family Project's (Iowa FFP) annual Consumer Pulse Survey conducted among households' primary food purchasers. This, along with 55 percent reporting label attributes like "organic" or "all natural" have little to no influence on their purchasing decisions, shows Iowa grocery shoppers may be growing numb to the product packaging in their cart.

"It appears that shoppers are becoming increasingly indifferent to the flashy claims food marketers are using, especially those rooted in misinformation," says Aaron Putze, Iowa Soybean Association (ISA) director of communications and external relations.

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Overall, nutrition and ingredients were the most influential parts of food labels with 24 percent selecting each as "extremely influential."

In looking at specific label attributes, more than half of more of respondents say the following attributes have no effect on purchase decisions:

- 50 percent report "hormone-free" labels have no effect on purchase
- 53 percent report "antibiotic-free" labels have no effect on purchase
- 53 percent report "organic" labels have no effect on purchase
- 58 percent report "non-GMO" labels have no effect on purchase

"The number of 'organic' or 'non-GMO' labels in grocery stores makes it seem that those are the only products consumers want," says Shannon Latham, vice president of Latham Hi-Tech Seeds...."It's interesting to see many of these labels aren't resonating as strongly with Iowa consumers."

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