

Got Local? Want Local?  
Consumer Marketing  
Analysis of Local Food

BY

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## **Introduction**

### **Are local foods better than long distance foods?**

Local food re-connects an eater to his or her source of food, serving as a reminder that what we eat comes from the land, not a supermarket (Pollan, 2006). Extensive research has attributed local food systems to healthier environments, lower fossil fuel emissions, a reduction in food safety risks, preserved farmland, support of local communities, invigoration of local economies, and promotion of long term food sustainability (Peters et al., 2008) (Martinez, S. et al., 2010). Local food shares many of the positive attributes of organic food because many small-scale, local farmers use organic practices (sometimes even stricter than designated USDA organic practices) (Gogoi, 2010). Local food has the added benefits of cutting down on transportation costs as well as “food miles” and strengthening local and regional economies rather than relying on the global market (DeWeerd, 2013). The local food movement has gained momentum since its inception in the late 1960s (Martinez, 2010). In fact, large food retailers such as Wal-Mart and Safeway have decided to capitalize on this growing trend and recently announced the incorporation of local food initiatives in their stores (Martinez, 2010).

### **How do people define local food?**

The local food movement is considered to be a part of “alternative food initiatives.” The local food initiative stems from a call for decentralization, democratization, and self-sufficiency (Feagan, 2007). The movement was partially a reaction to the distancing of people from their food sources and a dwindling consumer knowledge of the production and processing of food items. Food production is geographically farther from the bulk of the American population than ever before because of demographics and centralization of food conglomerates (Halweil, 2012).

Ideas of place and “the local” have reemerged and become altered as globalization has shifted our perceptions of what “local” actually means (Feagan, 2007).

Definitions vary greatly between scholars and often “local food systems” encompass a variety of other, more specific meanings such as: alternative agro-food networks, community food security, civic and democratic agriculture, post-productivism, alternative or shortened food chains, and higher quality foods (Feagan, 2007). The two most popular definitions of local food are: food grown within a country and food grown within a state (Zepeda and Levitan-Reid, 2004). Farmer’s Markets, CSAs, and direct buying are generally accepted as markets for local food, however, grocery stores are often overlooked as venues for these foods, despite the fact that 90% of the food Americans eat come from grocery stores (Zepeda and Levitan-Reid, 2004) (“Supermarket Secrets...” 2013). Scholar discrepancies on what defines a local food translates into perpetuated misconceptions on the consumer level. Some focus groups have gathered up to fifteen separate qualifications for local food. The most popular understanding of local concerns: transportation type, increasing farm worker salary, seasonality, small scale farm support, and driving distances (Zepeda & Leviten-Reid, 2004). The diversity of definitions reflects the strength of the new food movement and the inability of suppliers to accommodate for shifting consumer demands (Nestle, 2012).

The only attempt at a legal precedent for a local food definition exists in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008. The Farm Act allows grocery stores to market food items as locally or regionally produced if they are sold within 400 miles of their source or within the state in which they were produced (Brain, 2012)(H.R. 2419, 2008). Even though the Farm Act determines what is local by distance, a local product most likely travels many miles to inspection sites and approved packaging facilities (Grover, 2015). Produce in the United States travels an

average 1,800 miles until it reaches grocery store shelves (Grover, 2015). Until 30 years ago, most towns supported local butchers, sites for inspection, processing, and packaging until they closed due to consolidated businesses and with the introduction of the competitive global food market (Halweil, 2002). Grocery stores have varying definitions of how many miles a food product can travel from producer to store for that food to still be considered local. One study tests out a range of definitions to determine which type of labeling consumers are most drawn to. Local definitions range from sub-state regional level to the state level (State Proud certification - indicating locally produced within a specific state) and to the multi-state level (Hu et al., 2011). Results show that consumers are willing to pay more for food products that indicate they are produced in their state or in a well-identified multi-state region (Hu et al., 2011).

### **How do consumers view food labels, specifically local food labeling?**

Empirical studies have indicated that consumers' motivations for purchasing local food are largely related to environmental and health concerns, health practices, and consumer demographic characteristics (Nie and Zepeda, 2011). There is often a gap between behavioral patterns and attitudes towards local food, therefore an individual who is relatively sustainability minded and environmentally conscious may not necessarily purchase local food even if they are aware that local food is better for the environment. According to Attitude Behavior Context (ABC) theory, there are a variety of factors that limit consumers' ability to purchase local food even if they have a favorable attitude towards sustainable behaviors (Nie and Zepeda, 2011). Consumer interest in local food, perceived availability of local food, consumer values, and social norms all affect whether or not an individual will purchase local food (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006). One empirical study that sampled 456 young consumers showed that the factors most important in determining whether or not an individual will buy sustainable foods are: investment

in sustainability initiatives and consumer perception of individual environmental impact (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006). This study also found that the main reason why consumers do not purchase local food even though they show an interest in sustainability initiatives is that they perceive there is an overall lack of available sustainable food (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006). Drawing from this study, it can be ascertained that improved visibility of local food through consistent and effective signage would be beneficial to increasing consumers' perceived availability of local food, thus increasing the likelihood that they will purchase local food.

Food labels can be used to capture consumers interests in and develop a care for the local food initiative. For consumers, the local origin label is an implicit guarantee of product quality. For example, consumers' willingness-to-pay for organic food products increases with information on pesticide useage. Organic characteristics presented on labeling strongly impact consumers' willingness-to-pay for these food products (Barlagne et al., 2015). Education and information on local food is key to increasing its sales in order to evoke the same feelings that consumers have towards organic food and direct them towards local food. Furthermore, a study carried out in the European Union food market found that consumers most value labels that are regulated by law (Gracia and de-Magistris, 2015). If a local food label was developed similar to the USDA Organic label, consumers would likely be able to trust this label and associate it with a higher quality food product compared to conventional counterparts.

**If there is a lack of local food and local food labeling in grocery stores, is it because consumers don't care, grocery stores don't care, or there is a lack of local food producers?**

**GROCERY STORES**

|  |       | Don't Value Local Food | Value Local Food |
|--|-------|------------------------|------------------|
| <b>C<br/>O<br/>N<br/>S<br/>U<br/>M<br/>E<br/>R<br/>S</b> | Don't |                        |                  |
|  | Value |                        |                  |
|  | Local |                        |                  |
|  | Food  |                        |                  |
|  | Value |                        |                  |
|  | Local |                        |                  |
|  | Food  |                        |                  |

A study carried out by the Food Marketing Institute in 2009, found that 82% of Americans buy local food because of its freshness, 75% buy local food to support their local economies, and 58% buy local food so that they know where their food comes from (Brain, 2012). Data from 2014 shows that 25% of Americans look for food and beverages that are locally grown or produced when shopping (“U.S. Grocery...,” 2014). With this in mind, research has found that most consumers who care about purchasing local foods are willing to pay more for a local product because of their belief that this product is superior for a range of reasons (Hu et al., 2011). With increased demand, increased supply follows. Food retailers ranging from local grocery stores to large, national chains are adding more products marketed as “produced locally” (Hu et al., 2011).

**Legal precedent for local food labeling in grocery stores**

Grocery stores are required to label the country of origin of certain agricultural commodities in accordance with amendments to the 2002 Farm Bill (“Mandatory Country of Origin...”, 2009). Covered commodities include: muscle cuts of beef including veal, lamb,

chicken, goat, pork; ground beef, ground lamb, ground chicken, ground goat, and ground pork; wild and farm-raised fish and shellfish; perishable agricultural commodities; macadamia nuts; pecans; ginseng; and peanuts (“Mandatory Country of Origin...,” 2009). Grocery stores are not, however, required to label specifically where in their country of origin these products are produced (“Mandatory Country of Origin...,” 2009).

### **Consumer perceptions on local food**

One study exploring the feasibility of local market expansion in North Carolina found a majority of consumers (60%) purchased locally grown food weekly when in season and that shoppers were most likely to buy local food from both Farmer’s Markets (49%) and grocery stores (49%) (TJH Research and Strategy, 2011). The largest amount of respondents in this study defined local as grown within the state the item is sold. Another study encompassing the whole United States found that the majority of consumers are willing to pay up to 10% more for a “healthier” product and a little less than half (48%) selected they care about the locally sourcing of products (Ringquist et al., 2016). Previous studies have calculated consumer perceptions of local food, but none have focused on New York State or the Albany Capital Region.

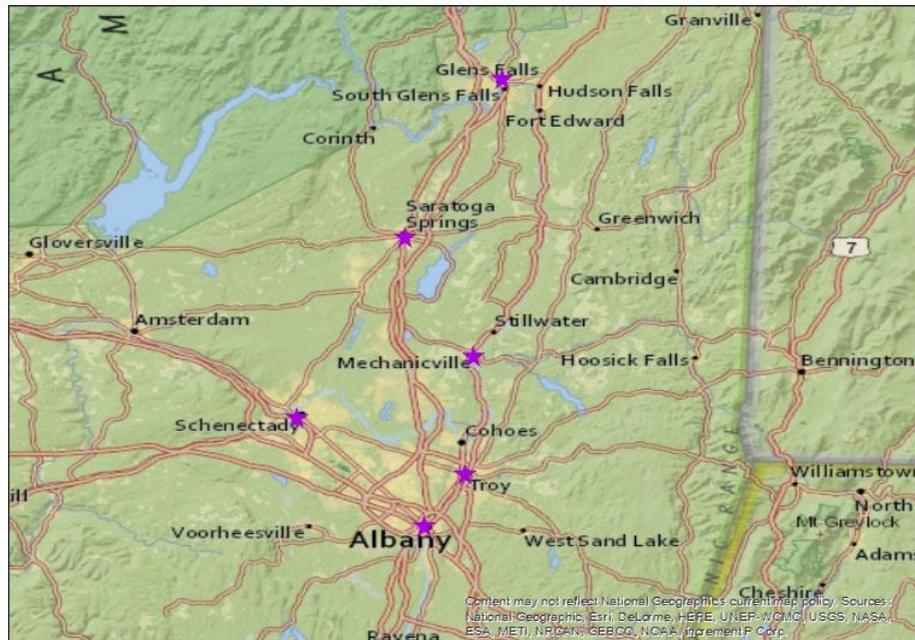
### **Methods**

New York State acts as an accurate representation of the United States as a whole due to its food consumption and production trends mirroring national trends (Peters et. al, 2003). New York State currently produces enough vegetables to provide 38% of its residents’ vegetable consumption in addition to providing a 500 million pound surplus of certain crops such as beets, cabbage, onions, pumpkins, snap beans, and sweet corn (Peters et. al, 2003). We also selected the

Upstate New York capital region as the location of our study because it supports a historically strong farming culture facing pressure from globalized markets and increasing land prices.

The following six cities in the capital region, Albany, Troy, Saratoga Springs, Schenectady, Glens Falls, and Mechanicville provide a diverse array of city types ranging in demographic and economic status as well as level of urbanization (Figure 1). Albany and Troy support the largest urban populations of all of the cities studied with a high percentage of low socioeconomic neighborhoods, many of which are located within urban food deserts lacking access to conventional food sources (US Census, 2014) (Appendix A: Figure 2). We chose Schenectady because it demonstrates average demographic and economic data, neither depressed nor booming (Appendix A: Figure 2). Mechanicville is the least dense urban area supporting the lowest number of conventional food sources; another urban food desert with a vastly different atmosphere than Albany. We chose the city of Saratoga Springs, NY because it is the wealthiest city in the fastest growing county in New York State (Cooper, 2015) (Appendix A: Figure 2). In Saratoga Springs, the high demand for development in the city increased land prices, pushed farming communities farther from the city center, and allowed for commercial big-box stores to offer food items sourced from around the world. However, what makes Saratoga Springs, NY unique is the strong community support for local producers participating in the Saratoga Springs Farmer's Market while the number of globalized products sold in the city also increased (Saratoga Farmer, 2012). Glens Falls is similar to Saratoga Springs in terms of its higher socioeconomic status compared to the other cities surveyed (US Census, 2014) (Appendix A: Figure 2). Glens Falls also has one of the smallest populations out of the cities surveyed in this study (US Census, 2014) (Appendix A: Figure 2).

Figure 1: Cities in Capital Region



We decided to study cities to determine how different urban atmospheres (population per square mile) as well as how economic fluctuations (median household income, per capita income, percent persons in poverty) factor into consumer and grocery store desire to consume and provide local foods (American FactFinder, 2010). We decided to focus our study specifically on grocery stores because about 90% of all food consumed by Americans is purchased directly from grocery stores (Supermarket Secrets, 2013). When most people think of buying local food they think of Farmer's Markets, CSAs, or buying direct from a farm. However, many people around America do not have access to these alternative food supply venues. With this in mind, we wanted to study a wide range of grocery stores so that we were able to fully measure the entirety of local food availability the locations where the majority of people purchasing their food. With all the benefits that surround local food at the slow food movement we feel it is

important for everyone, no matter their socioeconomic status or location of residence, to access to this form of healthy, sustainable sustenance.

We categorized our retailers by how they market themselves and which niche markets they fit into including: ethnic/specialty store, natural/health food store, convenience store, big-box retailer, or locally owned grocery store chain (Appendix B: Figure 3, Figure 4).

In this study, literature on food system theory and market theory was reviewed along with current data on grocery stores in Saratoga County and literature on food labeling. Data collection was both quantitative and qualitative; a mixed methods approach was utilized in order to obtain information on local food labeling in Saratoga County. The mixed methods approach allowed us to gather information from each stakeholder in a way that obtained the most reliable results from each individual. Gathering both quantitative and qualitative data through multiple methods gave us the ability to view our research questions from the perspective of all involved stakeholders.

The goals of this study were: to quantify how much local food is offered in grocery stores in the capital region, discover how it varies by store and city, how well it is advertised and how it is marketed as local, what store managers', employees', and headquarters' perceptions are of the value of local food and how they differ, the attractiveness of local food to consumers, consumers' ability to identify local food, and consumers' willingness to pay a premium for local food.

**Overarching Research Question:** Why is there not more local food in city grocery stores within the New York capital region?

**Research Question #1:** What is the availability of local food in grocery stores?

To measure the availability of local food, we created a checklist dividing all possible local foods into 20 distinct categories: produce, herbs, milk, cheese, yogurt, ice cream, misc. dairy, eggs, meat, chips/crackers, sauces/condiments, beverages, seafood, baked goods, misc. packaged goods, honey, maple syrup, prepared foods, frozen foods, and nut butters. When scanning the aisles of each store, the store would receive a check for a category as long as it carried at least one local item in said category. These foods did not have to be labeled as local or have any local signage, they just had to be made or produced locally and had to fit into the individual grocery store's definition of local. After the entire store was surveyed and categories were checked off, the store would receive a percentage for the amount of local food availability it provides. This percentage would be determined by dividing the number of categories the store carries a local item in by the total possible 20 categories.

**Research Question #2:** How do grocery stores label and advertise local food?

The marketing initiatives of grocery stores were measured using a checklist (Appendix B: Figure 5 & 6). Location where local food is placed throughout the store and the size of signage used to showcase the local food were the two measures we used to scale the local food marketing at each store. Documentation of signage size and text took place with a camera and photographs from close up to farther away to illustrate perspective on signage placement as well as location and displays of local food. Interviews were conducted from multilevel sources within each grocery store from grocery store managers to produce managers to corporate headquarters to better understand marketing strategies for local food. Archival analysis from grocery store websites was conducted to collect data on if and how local food is advertised on these websites, reflecting how these stores value local food.

**Research Question #3:** How do consumers and the grocery stores in the capital region perceive local food?

Grocery store managers, produce managers, and consumers were interviewed on their perceptions of local food and their definitions of local food. A survey on local food perceptions was designed online via Qualtrics and distributed through social media outlets to residents of the capital region. Questions asked ranged from demographic information as well as specific questions asking consumers how far away they think their food comes from if it is labeled as “local,” to if the consumer is willing to pay more for a local food item versus a conventional food item. (Appendix C). We selected survey questions utilized in peer reviewed papers and market research studies conducted by grocery store chains (TJH Research and Strategy, 2011) (“Buying into the Local Food Movement...”, n.d.) (Ringquist et al., 2016 ). The following questions were taken from the 2011 research, “A Survey of Consumer Behavior and Perceptions” by TJH Research and Strategy: Q1, Q3, Q5, Q6, Q8, Q11, Q16, Q17, and Q18 (Appendix C). We found Q9 and Q10 from ATKearney’s study on “Buying into the Local Food Movement” (Appendix C). The following questions, Q14, Q15, and Q19, were pulled from Deloitte’s “Capitalizing on the shifting Consumer Food Value Equation” (Appendix C). The remaining questions were adapted from the above publications to better fit the purpose of our study.

We hypothesized that stronger marketing initiatives will increase consumers’ ability to find local food due to its increased visibility. We hypothesized that a large percentage of consumers desire local food, however are unaware of its availability in grocery stores, therefore if it is made more visible and obvious through a clear marketing initiative, local food sales may increase.

## GROCERY STORE RESULTS

### Grocery Store Definitions of Local Food

To understand how different grocery stores define “local,” we conducted interviews with grocery store managers and employees as well as individuals on the corporate level of the stores along with performing website analysis. All grocery stores surveyed had varying definitions of “local food.” The Hannaford grocery store chain defines local food as food that is grown or produced within the same state of each store’s location. Hannaford has grocery stores in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and New York (“Close to Home,” 2014). Since we surveyed stores in the Upstate New York region, Hannaford defined local food in those stores as being grown or produced in the entirety of New York State.

Price Chopper grocery stores have a different, broader definition of local food. Price Chopper Marketing Coordinator, Tyler Blance stated, “since consumers define ‘local’ as coming from a variety of different geographical distances, we define local corporately as coming from our Northeast trade area: NY, PA, CT, MA, VT, NH. Within that ‘supporting Northeast producers’ definition, individual stores are merchandised with specific products produced within their state or section of state; for example the Adirondack Region or the Capital District of New York. These range from well-known brands at a state level to bread delivered directly from a local bakery in town.”

Grocery stores that fall into the category of natural/health food stores also have varying definitions of local food. Healthy Living, a small, privately-owned grocery store chain consisting of one store in Saratoga Springs, NY and one store in Burlington, VT, does not have an actual definition of local food that their stores adhere to. Healthy Living’s Marketing Assistant, Richie Snyder stated, “we define ‘local’ as produced or grown near our store[s]... In our Vermont store

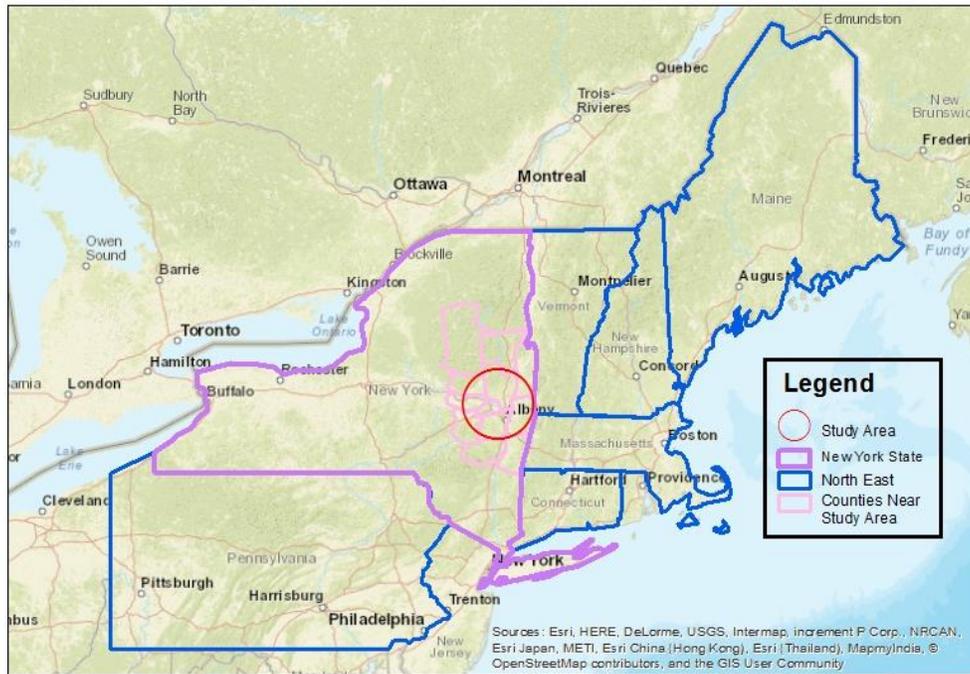
we have more Vermont products from the Burlington area. In our Saratoga store we have more local New York products from the Saratoga area.”

Whole Foods, on the other hand, states on its website, “mostly we like to leave [the definition of local food] up to our stores. Generally though, we try to use state lines. But, when a state is enormous (like California, for example) we might get a bit more specific about it and divide the state into growing areas like ‘The Bay Area’ or ‘Central California Coast’” (“Locally Grown, Raised and Produced,” 2016 ).

Steuben St. Market of Albany NY, a small, independently-owned natural food store, defines local food as food that is grown or produced within New York State (“Local Suppliers,” 2016 ). After surveying the store, it appeared that many of these designated “local,” New York State products happened to be grown or produced in Upstate New York. Similarly, Adirondack Natural Foods of South Glens Falls, NY appeared to label foods as local if they were grown or produced in New York State or close by, such as in Vermont.

Four Seasons Natural Foods of Saratoga Springs, NY labeled produce as “local” if it was grown close by in Upstate New York, whereas for packaged foods, products produced or grown in New York State had a label that stated “Product of New York State.”

Figure 7: Map of Grocery Store Definitions of Local



## Local Food Availability

All but one grocery store failed to supply local items in all 20 food categories. Whole Foods met all 20 categories and provided the widest availability of local food in Albany, which is the most populated city we surveyed. Three of the 28 grocery stores surveyed supplied no local food at all. Two of these grocery stores were in Troy and one was in Schenectady, the two cities with the lowest mean income per capita.

Out of all grocery stores surveyed, miscellaneous packaged goods was the category in which stores most frequently supplied local food. 64% of grocery stores supply local honey and yogurt, 60% supply local produce and miscellaneous dairy, 57% supply local cheese, 53% supply local baked goods, 46% supply local chips or crackers and eggs, 43% supply local beverages and milk, 39% supply local nut butter, prepared foods, and maple syrup, 29% supply

local meat and frozen foods, 11% supply local ice cream and herbs, and 7% supply local seafood (Appendix B: Figure 7).

Saratoga Springs grocery stores provided the most local food coverage of all six cities surveyed. Mechanicville, Glens Falls, and Albany all tied for second place in supplying the most local food, then Troy and Schenectady. Natural/health food category supplied the most local food availability followed by locally owned chains, big box, speciality, and finally convenience stores (Figure 8). A majority of natural/health food stores supplied a high percentage of local food availability, however Hannaford, a locally owned chain, supplied the second highest percent of local food availability (Figure 9).

*Figure 8: Percent Local Food Availability per Grocery Store Category*

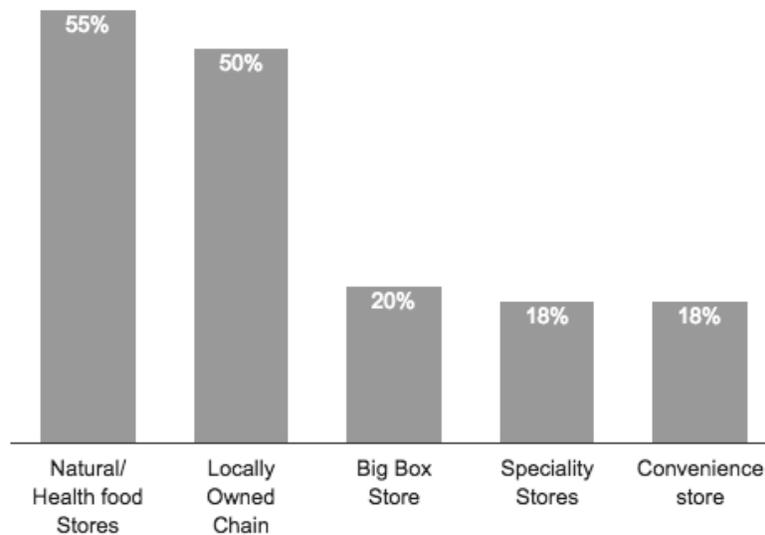
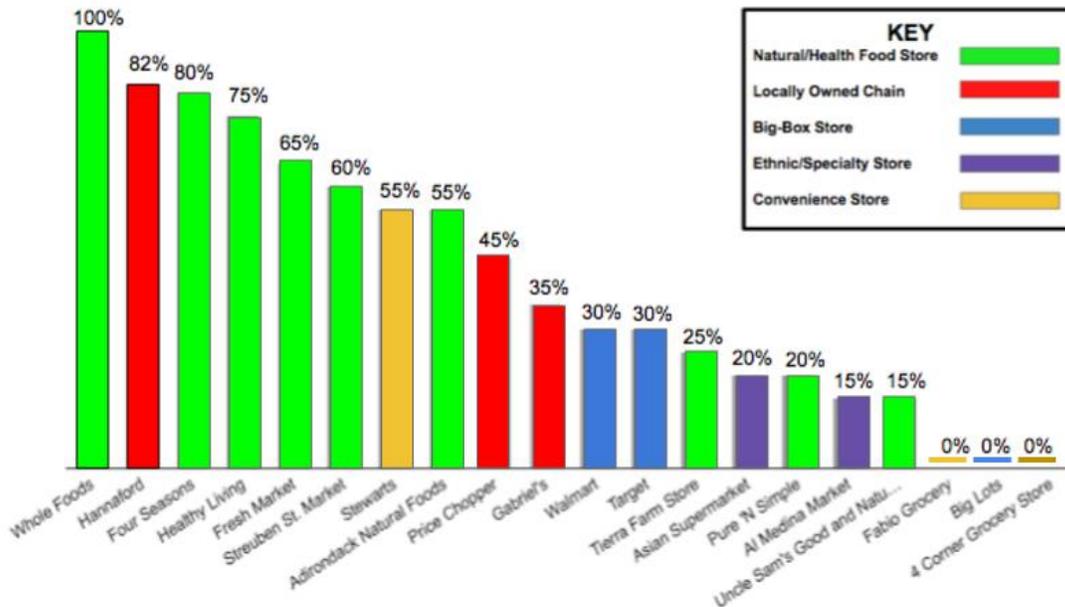


Figure 9: Local Food Coverage vs. Grocery Store Categories



**By city**

**Troy**

Troy stores had an average local food availability of 25%. Two grocery stores in Troy that supplied no local food were 4 Corner Grocery Store and Big Lots. Hannaford supplied the most local food availability out of the stores surveyed in Troy.

**Albany**

The average percent of local food availability in albany was 50%. The store in Albany with the highest local food availability was Whole Foods with 100%.

**Mechanicville**

Mechanicville stores had an average local food availability of 50%. The Price Chopper had the lowest local food availability with 35%.

**Schenectady**

The average percent of local food availability in Schenectady was 18%. One grocery store in Schenectady supplied no local food, Fabio Grocery.

### **Glens Falls**

Glens Falls stores had an average local food availability of 50%. The store with the lowest local food availability was Pure N Simple with 20%.

### **Saratoga Springs**

The average local food availability of Saratoga Springs was 60%. Hannaford supplied the most local food availability with 85% out of the surveyed Saratoga Springs stores.

## **Local Food Marketing**

From the 28 grocery stores surveyed, fifteen stores showed some type of local marketing initiative, with just eight stores implementing storewide local initiatives.

### **By City**

#### **Troy**

Of the five grocery stores in Troy, Hannaford was the only grocery store with any local labeling. However Hannaford provided a strong marketing initiative using small, medium, and large signage as well as placing local items on end shelves and individual sections.

#### **Albany**

Three of the seven grocery stores surveyed in Albany had local food labeling and only two of them, Whole Foods and Hannaford, supplied storewide programs. Hannaford displayed its local food dispersed throughout the store as well as dedicating whole sections and end caps to local marketing. Whole Foods provided local marketing throughout the entire store but did not provide whole sections or end caps solely for the display of local food. Both Hannaford and

Whole Foods utilized signage in all sizes providing a range of visual aid to locally minded shoppers while Steuben St. Market did not have a store wide program and only used small signage to market a few local items.

### **Mechanicville**

Of the three grocery stores in Mechanicville, only Hoosic Valley Shop N Save provided any local labeling. Small signage on the price tag was used to differentiate local products. No medium or large signs were present and the local signage was dispersed with no section or end cap focused solely on the display of local foods.

### **Schenectady**

Only Gabriel's Supermarket, one of the two grocery stores surveyed in Schenectady, provided local labeling but did not have a store wide program. It used one end shelf with medium sized signage.

### **Glens Falls**

Of four grocery stores surveyed within Glens Falls, two (Hannaford and Adirondack Natural Foods) displayed local labeling and only Hannaford provided a store wide program. A majority of the signage fell into the "small" category and was placed primarily on end caps.

### **Saratoga Springs**

From all surveyed cities, our data shows that the Saratoga Springs/Wilton area has the greatest number of grocery stores with local food marketing, six out of a total of seven stores. Three of the seven stores showed expansive store wide local marketing programs. A majority of stores allocated either an end shelf or section to display local food items.

## **By Type of Store**

### **Ethnic/Specialty**

Two ethnic/specialty stores were surveyed in Albany: Asian Supermarket and Al Medina Market. No ethnic/specialty stores were present in the other cities surveyed. Although each of these stores did carry a few locally grown or produced items, none were labeled as such. There was no local signage or marketing throughout either store. The Asian Supermarket sold a wide variety of produce however none was labeled with any sign indicating its growing location.

### **Natural/Health**

The stores falling under the category of natural/health food, on average present more comprehensive local marketing initiatives than stores falling into any other category. Nine of the stores surveyed fell into this category and seven of those nine have local labeling present somewhere throughout the store. Three stores out of those seven are the only stores we surveyed, other than Hannafords, to have store wide, comprehensive local marketing initiatives where every local item sold is labeled as such. These three stores are Healthy Living in Wilton, Four Seasons in Saratoga Springs, and Whole Foods in Albany.

Each of these three stores have small, medium, and large signs and each display their local food labeling on the price tags of each item, in whole shelf sections dedicated solely to local foods, and in separate aisle end caps. Healthy Living markets their local food with a simple “local” or “local legend” on the price tag of the item. Many products also have larger signs with a more detailed description of the farmer or producer. Four Seasons markets their local food with “Product of New York State” or “Locally Grown”. Whole Foods markets their local food as “local” and includes the city within New York where each item is grown or produced. Additionally, for each kind of local meat sold at Whole Foods a larger sign is provided with the name of the farmer, a photo, and a detailed paragraph about the farm where the meat was raised.

### **Convenience Store**

Out of the three convenience stores surveyed (4 Corner Store in Troy, Fabio Grocery in Schenectady, Stewart's in Mechanicville) only Stewart's sells any locally grown or produced food. However, even though Stewart's carries a relatively large variety of local foods for a convenience store, there is no local labeling present for any of these items. The only way to tell if the item is local is to look on the package directly.

### **Big-Box Retailer**

Three Big-Box retailers were surveyed, Target in Wilton, Big-Lots in Troy, and Walmart Supercenter in Troy. Out of those three, only Target showed any local labeling. Target had one large sign for products from Beekman Farm Pantry with the text "Farm to Shelf Goodness". Target carries a variety of other local foods but none were labeled as such. Walmart Supercenter also carries local foods but has no labels. Big-Lots carries no local food and understandably has no local labeling.

### **Locally Owned Chain Supermarket**

Hannaford has one of the most extensive local labeling programs of any store in all cities. Hannaford markets their local food with their signature "Close to Home" label. This label was found throughout the entire store, was displayed on small, medium, and large signs, and was found as a label on the price tag of local food items, marking a whole shelf section dedicated to a local food item, and sectioning off the end cap of an aisle. All Hannaford stores market local food with identical signage that is sent to each store from the Hannaford corporate headquarters. Additionally, unlike any other store surveyed, Hannaford also has signs dispersed throughout the store that tell customers what types of local food they sell in different sections of the store. The most common local signage throughout Hannafords is the small price tag label that can be found

on the shelf in front of every local item they sell. This label includes the price of the item, a small “Close to Home” label, and the specific city and state the food item comes from.

Comparatively, from the five Price Chopper’s surveyed, only the new Market 32 Price Chopper located in Saratoga/Wilton displayed any type of local labeling or signage. Market 32 is presenting itself as a greenwashed version of the normal Price Chopper, wanting to be thought of as more “natural” and environmentally conscious. Because of this, Market 32 sections off a few aisle end caps solely to present food labeled as “Home.Grown”. One medium sized “Home.Grown” sign is the local marketing present on each of these end caps. Additionally, some, not all, produce items have small “USA Grown” or “Product of USA” labels. Other than those items, no other type of local labeling is present throughout the store even though they do carry a variety of other locally grown or produced items. Overall, their local marketing is inconsistent. All of the other Price Chopper stores have no local marketing whatsoever, even though their local food availability is comparable to that of Hannaford.

## **CONSUMER RESULTS**

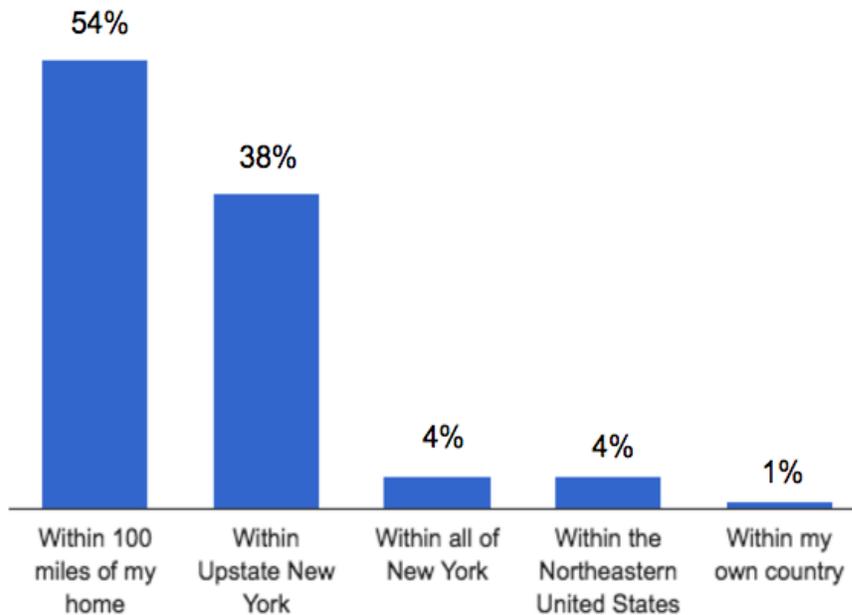
### **Consumer Definitions of Local Food**

54% of the consumers surveyed responded that they define local as 100 miles away from their home or closer. 38% of consumers responded that they define local as the Upstate New York region. 4% of consumers surveyed define local as within all of New York, and 4% define local as within the Northeastern United States. Only two individuals, which equated to 1% of respondents, defined local as within the United States (Figure 10).

The majority of individuals across all education levels, spanning from a high school degree to a professional degree, responded that they define local as 100 miles away from their home or closer. Similarly, 73.08% of the consumers aged 66 and older defined local as 100 miles away from their home or closer. 55.12% of the consumers aged 50-65 defined local as 100 miles away from their home or closer, as well as 59.26% of 34-49 year olds and 38.71% of 18-33 year olds. The majority of individuals aged 18-33 that were surveyed defined local as within Upstate New York, whereas the majority of individuals for every other age group defined local as within 100 miles of their home or closer.

Both the majority of males and the majority of females defined local as within 100 miles of their home or closer; 60% and 51.3% respectively. The majority of individuals across all incomes spanning from \$25,000 to over \$100,000 per year defined local as within 100 miles of their home or closer as well.

*Figure 10: Consumer Definitions of Local Food*



## Consumer Perceptions of Local Food

In order to test consumers' initial perceptions of local food, they were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with a series of statements. The prediction was that if the majority of consumers agree or strongly agree with the positive statements about local food then overall they would be more likely to carry the desire to search for and purchase local items over conventional ones. Consumers were asked to respond to a total of nine statements by choosing to either strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with each. The majority of consumers showed positive perceptions on local food and seem to understand the benefits that come with buying local. The most obvious perceptions consumers seem to have about local food is that it tastes better, is better for the environment, and helps contribute to the local economy. Almost 63% of consumers somewhat or strongly agree that local food tastes better, about 82% say it is better for the economy, and over 94% say they think buying locally grown foods greatly contributes to the local economy (Figure 11).

Comparing these answers to how consumers responded to the negative statements about local food, consumers continue to show a general positive opinion of the benefits that local food has to offer. When asked if they think local food is attractive, rotten, or not fresh, almost 79% percent of consumers said they either somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with this statement. Then, when asked if they would rather buy organic food than local food, a large percentage (about 29%) felt neutral about the subject saying they neither agree nor disagree with the statement. However, the majority of consumers did disagree with this statement. Just about 50% of consumers said they somewhat disagree or strongly disagree that that would rather buy organic than local. (Figure 11) This follows the trend that consumers seems to prefer local foods over alternative sustainable options and conventional items.

Figure 11: Consumer perception of local food

| # | Question   | Strongly agree | Somewhat agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat disagree | Strongly disagree | Total Responses | Mean |
|---|--|----------------|----------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|------|
| 1 | Local food is too expensive  | 4.25%          | 41.08%         | 35.41%                     | 13.31%            | 5.95%             | 353             | 2.76 |
| 2 | There is a lack of selection of local food where I shop            | 11.93%         | 48.01%         | 17.05%                     | 15.63%            | 7.39%             | 352             | 2.59 |
| 3 | I would rather buy organic than local                              | 7.37%          | 15.86%         | 28.05%                     | 29.46%            | 19.26%            | 353             | 3.37 |
| 4 | I can't find local food  | 1.42%          | 18.80%         | 18.80%                     | 35.04%            | 25.93%            | 351             | 3.65 |
| 5 | Local food tastes better   | 23.01%         | 39.49%         | 30.40%                     | 6.25%             | 0.85%             | 352             | 2.22 |
| 6 | Local food is not attractive/rotten/not fresh                      | 0.00%          | 3.13%          | 18.23%                     | 27.92%            | 50.71%            | 351             | 4.26 |
| 7 | Local food is better for the environment                           | 49.29%         | 32.76%         | 13.39%                     | 3.13%             | 1.42%             | 351             | 1.75 |
| 8 | Buying locally grown foods greatly contribute to the local economy | 66.19%         | 28.41%         | 3.69%                      | 0.00%             | 1.70%             | 352             | 1.43 |
| 9 | Local food is healthier than the alternatives                      | 19.60%         | 39.49%         | 30.68%                     | 7.95%             | 2.27%             | 352             | 2.34 |

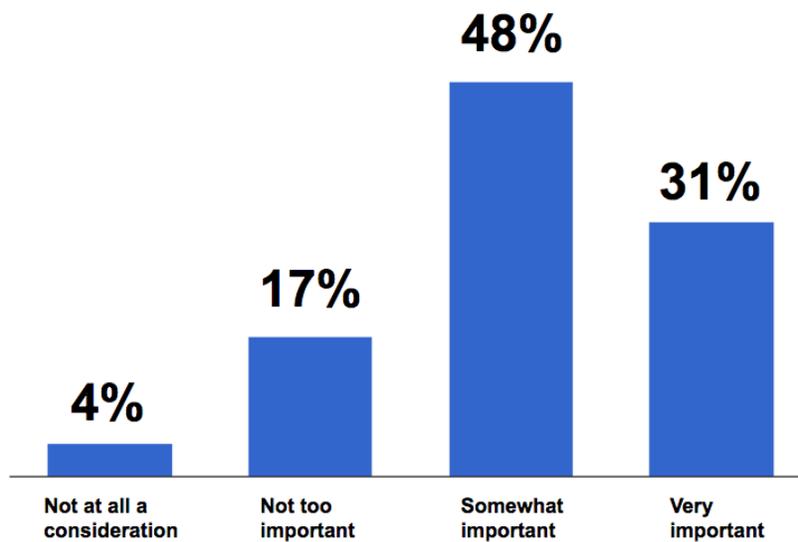
### Consumer Perceptions on Local Food Availability

Our survey aimed to grasp consumer perceptions through direct questions such as how important availability is to them and indirect questions such as “do you agree or disagree that there is a lack of selection of local food where you shop?”

When asked “how important is the availability of local food to you when choosing where to shop?”, 30.77% responded “very important,” 47.84% responded “somewhat important,” 17.07% responded “not too important,” and only 4.33% responded “not at all a consideration” (Figure 12). From this data, it is clear that the majority of consumers surveyed feel that the availability of local food is somewhat important to very important to them when choosing where to shop. Therefore, if consumers are not made aware of the availability of local food in grocery stores through a clear marketing initiative, they are likely to perceive that the store does not have a high availability of local food and potentially choose to shop elsewhere for local items.

Figure 12: The Importance of Local Food Availability to Consumers

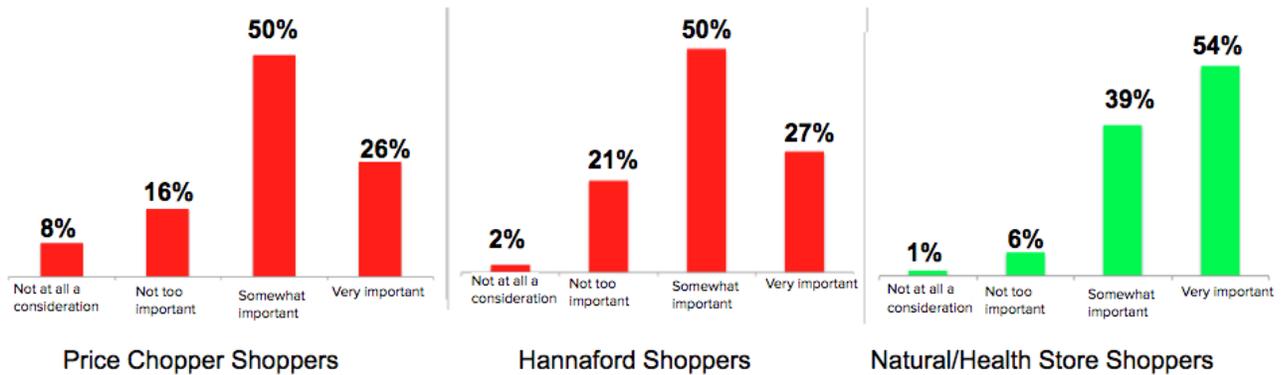
### How important is the availability of local food when choosing where to shop?



When comparing responses of individuals who shop at Price Chopper, Hannaford, or natural/health food stores once every other week to twice per week, both Hannaford and Price Chopper shoppers had similar responses regarding the importance of the availability of local food when choosing where to shop. The majority of both Hannaford and Price Chopper shoppers responded that local food availability is “somewhat important to them”, whereas 27% and 26%, respectively, responded that local food availability is “very important to them.” 21% of Hannaford shoppers and 16% of Price Chopper shoppers responded that local food availability is “not too important,” and 2% of Hannaford shoppers and 8% of Price Chopper shoppers responded that local food availability is “not at all a consideration” (Figure 13). Natural/health food store shoppers believed the availability of local food to be more important overall when choosing where to shop. 54% of natural/health food store shoppers responded that local food availability is “very important,” whereas 39% responded it is “somewhat important.” 6%

responded that it is “not too important,” and only 1% responded that it is “not at all a consideration” (Figure 13).

*Figure 13: Importance of Availability of Local Food To Regular Price Chopper Shoppers, Hannaford Shoppers, and Natural/Health Food Store Shoppers*



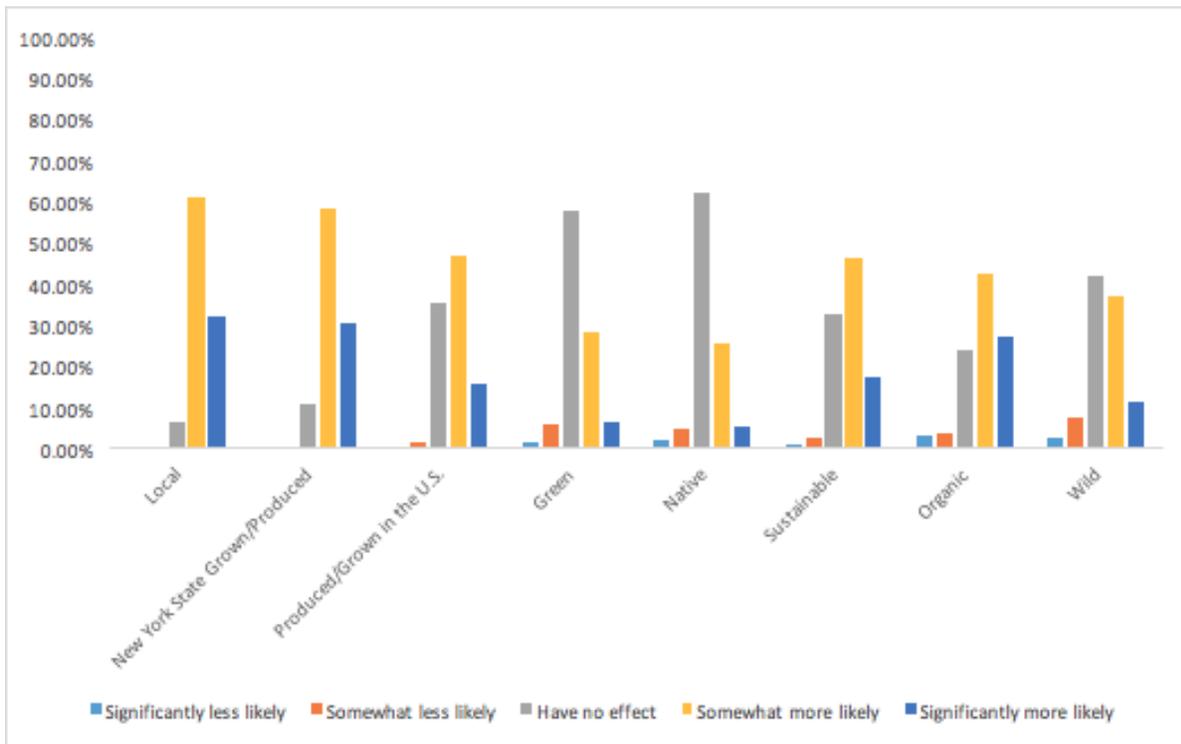
57% of participants with a High School degree answered that the availability of local food is “very important” while only around 25% of some college/technical school and bachelor’s degree chose “very important.” Only 33% of participants with a master's degree and 32% of those with a professional degree thought local food availability was “very important” when choosing where to shop (Appendix D: Figure 14).

When asked to what degree they agreed with the statement “There is a lack of selection of local food where I shop” very few individuals selected that they strongly agree or strongly disagree, collectively 18% of all responses (Figure 11). No answer was heavily chosen for the question asking how strongly respondents agreed or disagreed with the statement “I can’t find local food” 2.18% of participants, the least amount, selected they strongly agree with the statement (Figure 11). Age, income, education level, whether or not the individual is the primary food shopper for his or her household, and percent spent on food a month did not show any significant differences.

## **Consumer Perceptions on Local Food Marketing**

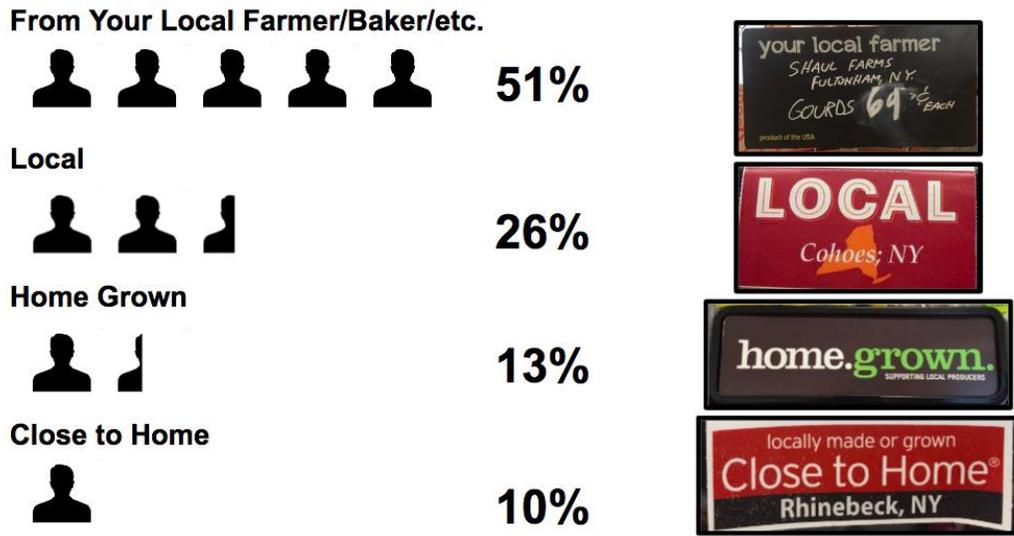
Through results gained from our consumer survey, we were able to determine that from the marketing terms “Local”, “New York State Grown/Produced”, “Produced/Grown in the U.S”, “Green”, “Native”, “Sustainable”, “Organic”, and “Wild”, seeing a food item marketed as “Local” makes the consumer the most significantly more likely to purchase that item. Out of the 416 responses, 35% said “Local” made them significantly more likely to purchase the food item and 57% of consumers said seeing an item marketed as “Local” made them somewhat more likely to purchase said item (Figure 15). The marketing term “New York State Grown/Produced” showed to be the second most popular among consumers with 32% of responders saying that seeing an item marketed as such would make them significantly more likely to purchase that item while 56% of responders said that term would make them somewhat more likely to make that purchase (Figure 15). The terms “Green” and “Native” were the least popular among respondents with only 7% of consumers saying marketing an item as “Green” would make them significantly more likely to purchase said item, and only 6% of consumers saying marketing an item as “Native” would make them significantly more likely to purchase said item (Figure 15).

Figure 15: For Each Phrase Indicate if Each Description Would Make you Significantly More Likely to Buy it, Somewhat More Likely, Have No Effect, Somewhat Less Likely, or Significantly Less Likely To Buy it.



Consumers were asked to rank four terms different grocery stores we surveyed use to market their local foods from the term making them most likely to purchase the food item to the term making them least likely to purchase the food item. From the same 416 respondents, 51% of consumers responded saying that if a product is marketed as “From Your Local Baker/Farmer/etc” they would be the most likely to purchase said item. The term “Local” received 26% of all responses ranking it as the second most popular marketing term, “Close to Home” received 13% of responses, and “Home Grown” only received 10% of the vote putting it in last place, determining it is the least effective phrasing used when marketing local food (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Percent of Consumers who prefer each type of label phrasing



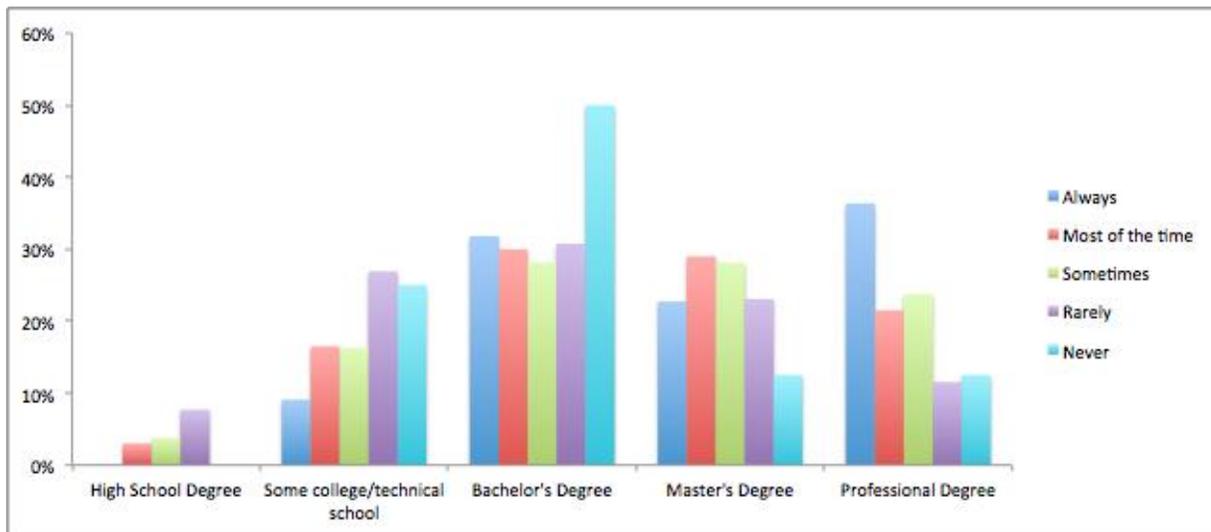
### Can Consumers Distinguish Local Food?

When asked whether or not consumers can distinguish which foods are local and which foods are not, only 5% of consumers responded that they can always distinguish which foods are local and which are not. 48% responded most of the time, 39% responded sometimes, 6% responded rarely, and 2% responded never (Appendix D: Figure 17). This shows us that the majority of consumers claim to be able to distinguish which foods are local most of the time to sometimes.

Out of the individuals who claim to always be able to distinguish which foods are local and which are not, 36.36% have a professional degree, 22.73% have a master’s degree, 31.82% have a bachelor’s degree, 9.09% have some college/technical school background, and 0% have only a high school degree (Figure 18). Out of the individuals who claim to most of the time be able to distinguish which foods are local and which are not, 21.50% have a professional degree, 29% have a master’s degree, 30% have a bachelor’s degree, 16.50% have some college/technical school background, and 3% have a high school degree (Figure 18). Out of the individuals who

responded they can sometimes distinguish which foods are local and which are not, 23.75% have a professional degree, 28.13% have a master’s degree, 28.13% have a bachelor’s degree, 16.25% have some college/technical school background, and 3.75% have a high school degree (Figure 18). Out of the individuals who responded that they can rarely distinguish which foods are local and which are not, 11.54% have a professional degree, 23.08% have a master’s degree, 30.77% have a bachelor’s degree, 26.92% have some college/technical school background, and 7.69% have a high school degree (Figure 18). Lastly, out of the individuals who can never distinguish which foods are local and which are not, 12.50% have a professional degree, 12.50% have a master’s degree, 50% have a bachelor’s degree, 25% have some college/technical school background, and 0% have only a high school degree (Figure 18). There were no significant differences between an individual's income and their ability to distinguish which foods are local which are not when grocery shopping.

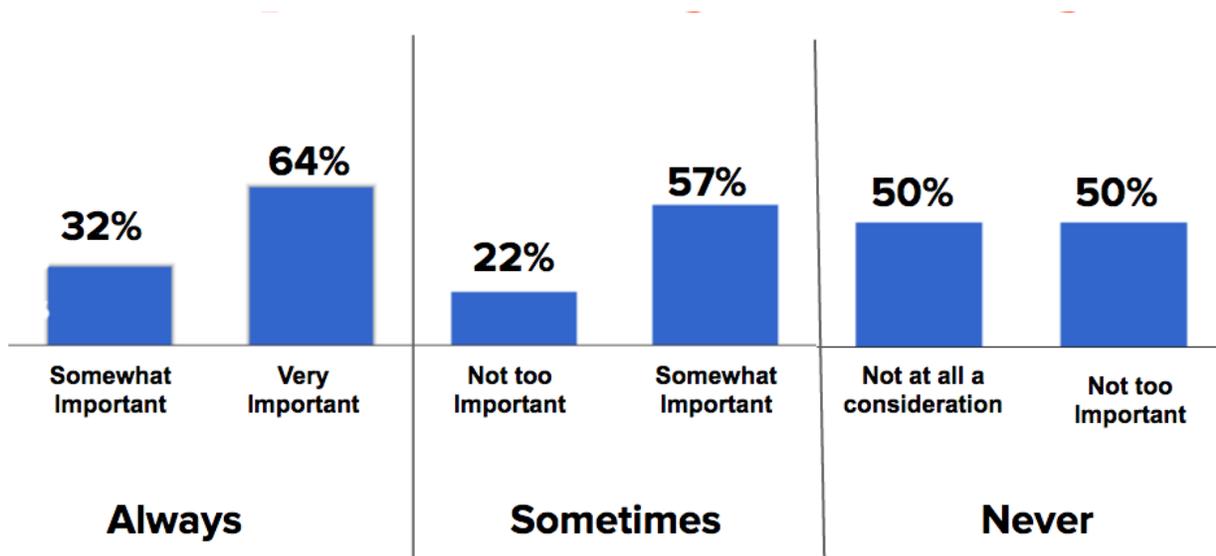
*Figure 18: Ability to Distinguish Local Food By Education Level*



Out of the individuals who claimed they can always distinguish local food, 64% believe that finding local food is very important and 32% believe that finding local food is somewhat

important. Out of the individuals who claim they can sometimes distinguish local food, 57% believe that finding local food is somewhat important and 22% believe that finding local food is not too important. Lastly, out of the individuals who claim they can never distinguish local food, 50% believe that finding local food is not too important, and for 50% finding local food is not at all a consideration (Figure 19). This shows that individuals who most value local food are generally better able to distinguish it and are potentially willing to search for it more than individuals who think local food is somewhat important to not at all a consideration when food shopping.

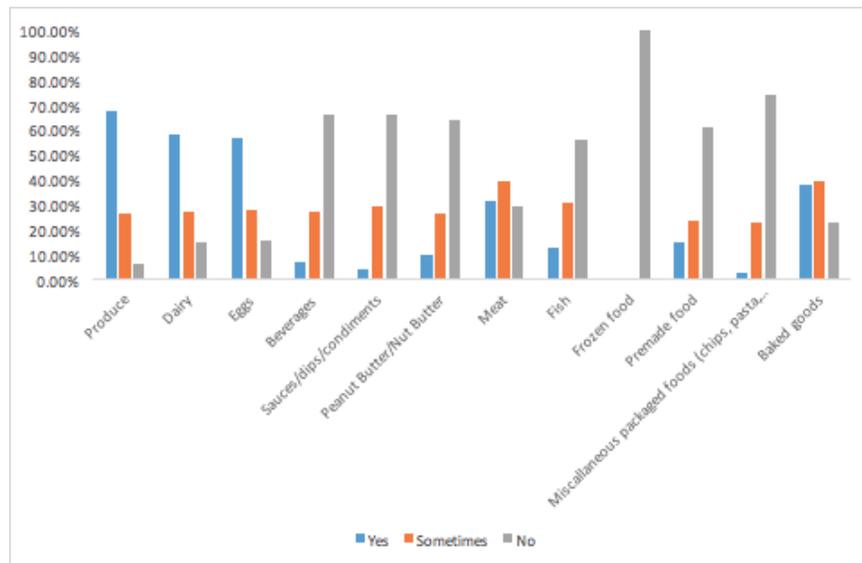
Figure 19: Being able to always, sometimes, or never distinguish local food vs. How important the availability of local food is when choosing a place to shop.



When consumers were asked if they look for local food in different categories of groceries, consumers responded that the top five categories that they search for local food in are: produce, dairy, eggs, baked goods, and meat. 71.15% of consumers responded yes to produce,

62.65% of consumers responded yes to dairy, 61.45% of consumers responded yes to eggs, 41.79% of consumers responded yes to baked goods, and 36.43% of consumers responded yes to meat. Baked goods was the category that had the highest percentage of sometimes responses, 37.92%. 37.41% of consumers responded that they sometimes look for local meat, 33.90% responded that they sometimes look for local sauces/dips/condiments, and 31.39% responded that they sometimes look for local fish. 100% of consumers responded that they never look for local frozen food, and 74.29% never look for local miscellaneous packaged foods such as pasta, chips, and drink mixes. Lastly, 66.29% responded that they never look for local beverages and the same percentage never looks for local sauces/dips/condiments (Figure 20).

Figure 20: Consumer Want to Purchase Local by Category of Food

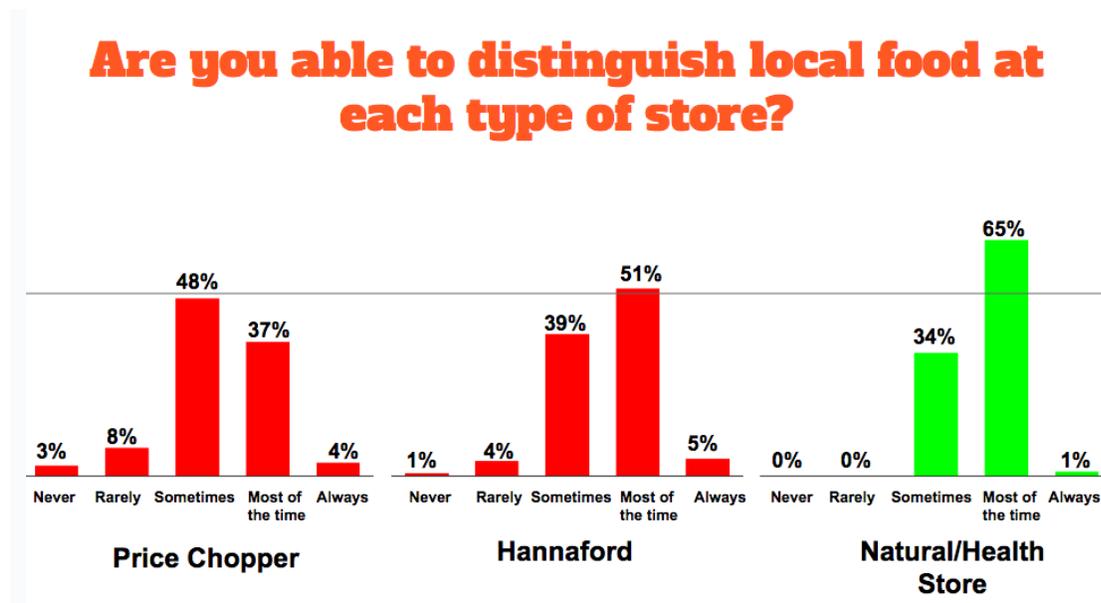


### Consumer Ability to Distinguish Local Food per Store

A cross tabulation was created on Qualtrics to show how well consumers who regularly shop (once every other week to twice per week) at Price Chopper, Hannaford, or natural/health food stores are able to distinguish local food. The results display that Price Chopper shoppers have the most difficulty differentiating which products are local. 3% of Price Chopper shoppers

claimed they can “never” distinguish local food, 8% responded “rarely”, 48% responded “sometimes”, 37% responded “most of the time”, and only 4% responded “always.” Hannaford shoppers have an easier time distinguishing which products are local, with 1% of shoppers claiming they can “never” distinguish which foods are local, 4% responding “rarely”, 39% responding “sometimes”, 51% responding “most of the time”, and 5% responding “always.” Natural/health food store shoppers appeared to have the easiest time distinguishing which products are local and which are not, with 0% of shoppers responding “never” or “rarely”, 34% responding “sometimes”, the majority (65%) responding “most of the time”, and 1% responding “always” (Figure 21).

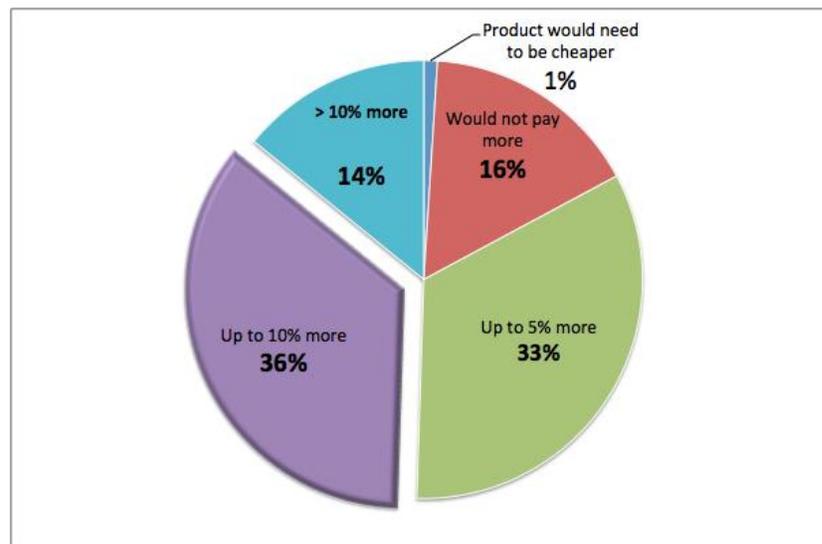
*Figure 21: Are you able to distinguish local food at each type of store?*



## Consumer Willingness to Pay For Local Food

Consumers were asked if they would be willing to pay extra for local food and if so, how much extra. The options were: Product would have to be cheaper, Would not pay more than for other products, Up to 5% more, Up to 10% more, More than 10% more. Only 19% of consumers said they would not pay more for a local food item than a comparable conventional item. Almost 70% responded saying they would be willing to pay 5% to 10% more for a local item and 12% of consumers said they would even pay more than 10% more if an item was local (Figure 22).

*Figure 22: Percent extra consumers are willing to pay for local food*



According to the consumer survey results, the greater an individual's income, the more likely it is that they are willing to pay extra for local food. 24.70% of individuals who have an annual income of 25k-75k would pay up to 10% extra for local food, whereas 43.84% of individuals who have an annual income of 75k-100k are willing to pay up to 10% extra for local food. 46.90% of individuals who have an annual income greater than 100k are willing to pay up to 10% more for local food.

However it is not only their income that matters; the consumer survey results show that the amount a consumer cares about shopping at a store that provides local food also correlates to the amount extra they are willing to pay for a local product. Of the consumers who said the availability of local food when choosing where to shop is very important to them, 40% would pay up to 10% more and 29% said they would even pay more than 10% more for a local item. Then, looking at the results of the consumers who responded that the availability of local food when choosing where to shop is not at all a consideration, almost 67% said they would not pay more for a local item compared to a conventional item. However, only 4% of all respondents said that the availability of local food when choosing where to shop is not at all a consideration. Whereas 31% of all respondents said it is very important (Figure 23).

*Figure 23: Importance of local food availability when choosing where to shop vs. willingness to pay more for a local item*

|   |  | How important is the availability of local food to you when choosing where to shop? |                         |                          |                          | Total                     |
|---|--|---|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
|   |  | Not at all a consideration  | Not too important       | Somewhat important       | Very important           |                           |
| How much extra are you willing to pay for local food? | Product would need to be cheaper           | 0<br>0.00%<br>0.00%   | 1<br>20.00%<br>1.41%    | 3<br>60.00%<br>1.52%     | 1<br>20.00%<br>0.78%     | 5<br>100.00%<br>1.20%     |
|   | Would not pay more than for other products | 12<br>17.65%<br>66.67%  | 20<br>29.41%<br>26.17%  | 25<br>36.76%<br>12.63%   | 11<br>16.18%<br>8.59%    | 68<br>100.00%<br>16.39%   |
|   | Up to 5% more                              | 4<br>2.88%<br>22.22%  | 31<br>22.30%<br>43.66%  | 76<br>54.68%<br>38.38%   | 28<br>20.14%<br>21.88%   | 139<br>100.00%<br>33.49%  |
|   | Up to 10% more                             | 1<br>0.69%<br>5.56%   | 15<br>10.42%<br>21.13%  | 77<br>53.47%<br>38.89%   | 51<br>35.42%<br>39.84%   | 144<br>100.00%<br>34.70%  |
|   | More than 10% more                         | 1<br>1.69%<br>5.56%   | 4<br>6.78%<br>5.63%     | 17<br>28.81%<br>8.59%    | 37<br>62.71%<br>28.91%   | 59<br>100.00%<br>14.22%   |
| Total   |  | 18<br>4.34%<br>100.00%  | 71<br>17.11%<br>100.00% | 198<br>47.71%<br>100.00% | 128<br>30.84%<br>100.00% | 415<br>100.00%<br>100.00% |

### Grocery Store Brand Disloyalty

In our consumer survey, we asked how often consumers visited the grocery stores we already surveyed. Of those we surveyed, 86% shopped at Price Chopper and 83% shopped at Hannaford, making up the top two most visited grocery stores. Our analysis revealed 41% of consumers who shop at Price Chopper also shop at a natural/health food store and 27% of

Hannaford consumers also shop at a natural/health food store. Consumers who shop at Price Chopper are more likely to seek out a natural/health food store than Hannaford shoppers. We theorized this brand disloyalty was due in part to Price Choppers failure to supply and market items for the growing local food niche shoppers.

## **Discussion**

### **Comparison Between Grocery Store Definitions of Local Food and Consumer Definitions of Local Food**

The majority of consumers surveyed across all demographics define “local” as within 100 miles of their home, whereas grocery stores had varying definitions of local. Overall, grocery stores appeared to have a broader definition of local than consumers. For example, Hannaford stores label foods as “Close to Home” or local if they are grown or produced within the entirety of New York State. Price Chopper has an even broader definition of local, including the Northeast trade area (New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, and New Hampshire). Smaller, privately owned grocery stores, particularly those that fall into the category of health and natural food stores, seemed to have slightly narrower definitions of local that are more in keeping with consumers’ definition of local. Healthy Living does not have a local definition but aims to supply as many Saratoga County grown and/or produced products as possible. Four Seasons Natural Foods labels all produce grown within Upstate New York as local (although New York State produced products are also labeled as local). Steuben St. Market, another natural food store, defines local as coming from New York State, however many of the products labeled as local happened to come from the Saratoga County area.

Stores that have broad definitions of local such as Price Chopper appear to be disconnected with the majority of consumers' narrower definition of locally produced foods.

### **Comparison between Local Food Availability in Grocery Stores and Consumer Perception of Local Food Availability**

Shoppers generally care about local food availability in the grocery stores they shop at with up to 76% of consumers selecting “somewhat important” to “very important” when asked the importance of local food availability when choosing where to shop. Our survey's results showing consumer concern over local food accessibility contradicts the narrative of consumer apathy we gathered from grocery store employee interviews.

Consumers are confused about if they can or cannot find local food across all ages, incomes, and education levels. However, consumers generally think there is a lack of local food where they shop. Our grocery store analysis demonstrates the opposite is occurring; stores have more local items than they're marketing for. Only three out of the 28 stores surveyed did not supply any local food, yet up to 14 stores did not have local labeling. Only 57% of the grocery stores with labeling maintained a consistent local label throughout the store.

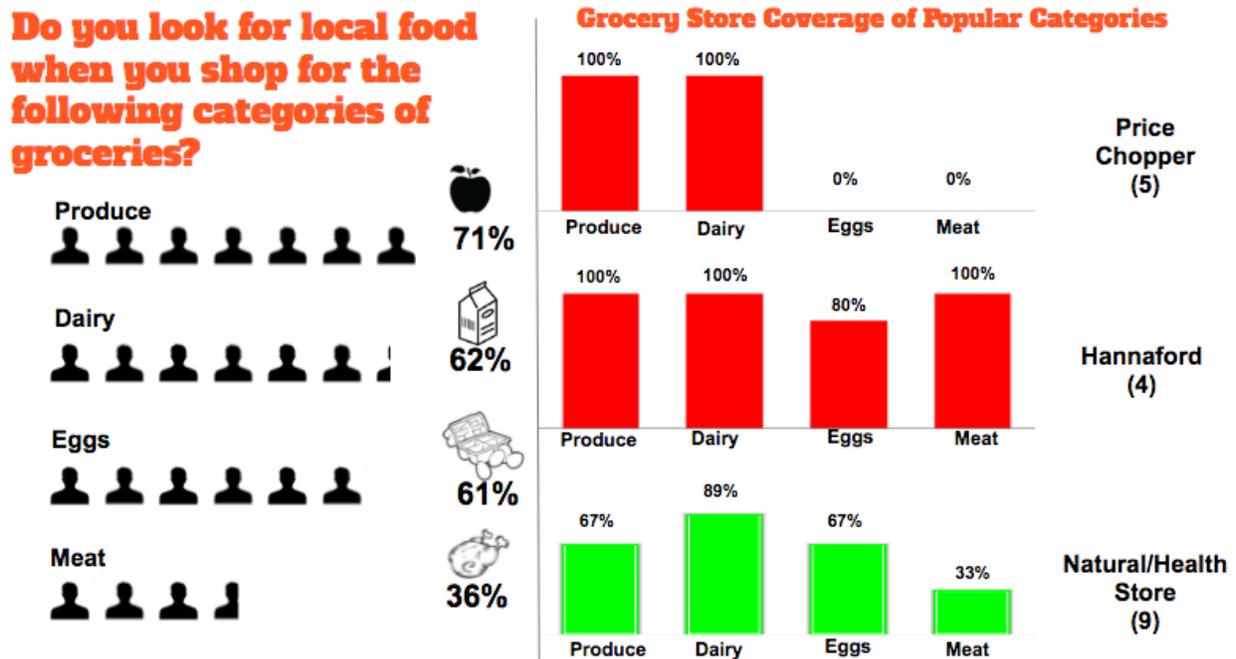
### **Comparison between Local Food Categories Consumers Desire to Buy and Categories Grocery Stores Supply**

The top four categories consumers look for local food was produce (71%), Dairy (62%), Eggs (61%), and Meat (36%). Our results from the grocery store checklist showed 100% of the Price Choppers and Hannafords supplied local produce and Dairy. However, 0% of Price Chopper stores supplied local eggs and meat. At Least one health food store supplied local food

in all the categories, however the percent health/natural food grocery stores with each category was lower than that of hannafoods (Figure 24).

Figure 24: Local Food Categories Consumers Look for Vs. Percent each Grocery store

Supplies Local Food in Top Food Categories



**Comparison between Local Food Marketing in Grocery Stores and Consumer Perception of Local Food Marketing**

386 out of 416 consumers surveyed responded that seeing a food item marked with a label that reads “Local” results in them being either somewhat or significantly more likely to purchase the item. With this in mind it is detrimental to grocery stores that only 10 of the 28 surveyed market their local food with the actual term “Local.” It is shocking that with so many consumers being drawn to local foods, over half of the grocery stores surveyed that do carry a variety of local foods do not make marketing them as “Local” a priority. Simply put, if local foods are not labeled as such, fewer consumers will be aware of their locality and will likely

result in fewer purchases. Labels that do not use the word local but are intended to highlight that a food item is local proved to be the least successful in appealing to consumers due to their ambiguity. For example, the Hannaford “Close to Home” label and the Price Chopper “Home.Grown” label were both rated least appealing among consumers according to our survey. More specific labeling that stated “From Your Local Farmer” or “From Your Local Baker” and listed the exact city, state, and farm or bakery that the food item originated from proved to be most successful. Overall, it appears that consumers find specific labeling with the word “local” the most appealing.

## **Price Chopper Vs. Hannaford**

### **Marketing**

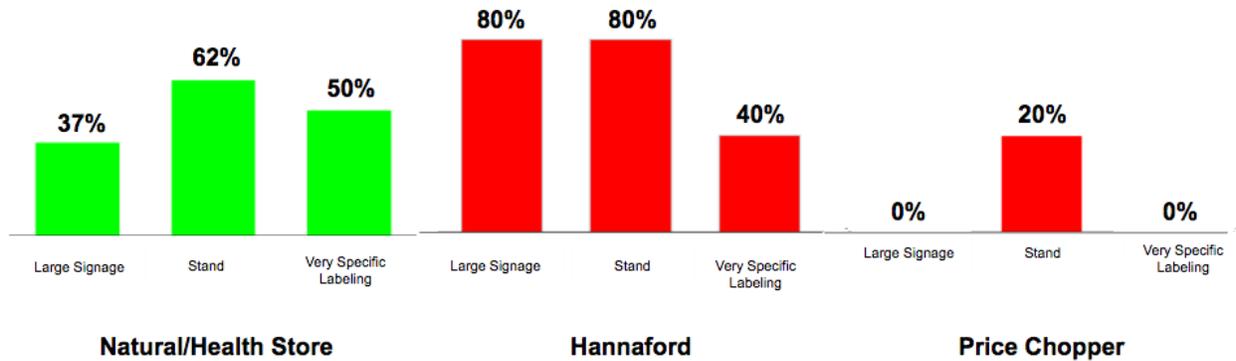
The survey results conclude that 30% of consumers go to Hannaford about once every week whereas only 26% of consumers go to Price Chopper about once every week. Price Chopper shoppers are also more likely than Hannaford shoppers to shop regularly at a natural/health Food Store in addition to Price Chopper. The reason for this could potentially be that people who regularly shop at Price Chopper are unable to distinguish which products are local, and therefore perceive that there is a low availability of local food at Price Chopper (even though Price Chopper has a fair amount of local food). This displays the importance of a clear marketing initiative and how it has the ability to change consumers’ perceptions of local food availability.

In addition, both Price Chopper’s “Home.Grown” label and Hannaford’s “Close to Home” label are unsuccessful at conveying that a food item is local. Consumers also do not find these phrases appealing. Hannaford’s more specific local labels that state “From Your Local

Farmer/Baker, etc.” were rated as the most appealing labels to consumers. If Hannaford changed the phrasing of their “Close to Home” label as “Local” or “From Your Local Farmer/Baker/Producer, etc.,” their local labeling initiative would be more successful at appealing to consumers and conveying to them that the labeled items are indeed local. Price Chopper would also be more successful at conveying a food item is local if the store adopts a clear marketing initiative and labels all local food items as either “Local” or “From Your Local Farmer/Baker/Producer, etc.” Stating the specific city and state that the item originates from would also be beneficial and more appealing to consumers.

The forms of local food marketing that are the most obvious are large signage, specific local food endcaps or local food stands/structures, and very specific labeling that gives details on where exactly the product was grown or produced. Hannaford had the highest number of these more obvious forms of marketing compared to Price Chopper. Compared to natural/health food stores, Hannaford had more large signage and local food stands, however natural/health food stores had slightly more specific labeling. Both Price Chopper and Hannaford would benefit from utilizing large signs with the phrases mentioned above to attract consumer attention as well as having specific local food sections or structures in their stores. Have separate local food structures or sections makes local food easier to find and stand out to consumers (Figure 25).

Figure 25: Differences in Marketing Strategies Between Hannaford, Price Chopper, and Natural/Health Food Stores



### Disconnect Between Employees and Headquarters

After conducting semi-structured interviews with grocery store managers, employees and grocery store headquarters, it was clear that there was a disconnect, particularly at Price Chopper between the employee level and the corporate level on local food availability in stores. When asked about local food, a Price Chopper Customer Service Representative stated, “we don’t really have local products...it all comes from our distribution center.” However, when the Price Chopper Marketing Program Coordinator at Price Chopper Headquarters was asked about local food, he responded, “We have both a dedicated Local Foods Category Manager and Category Managers in various merchandising departments who seek out and determine which local products to offer in our stores.” This illustrates that there is a large gap between the employee and corporate level on whether or not Price Chopper has local food at all whatsoever. It also demonstrates that potentially the reason why the Price Chopper Customer Service Representative was unaware of Price Chopper’s local food availability is because it is not labeled and Price Chopper stores lack a clear marketing initiative. If it is difficult for Price Chopper employees to

distinguish which foods are local and which are not, it must be exceedingly difficult for consumers to distinguish local products at Price Chopper. It is also no wonder why more individuals who regularly shop at Price Chopper also shop at a natural/health food store to potentially seek out local food options. They do not believe that Price Chopper has much local food availability and therefore feel the need to go elsewhere to purchase it.

When other Price Chopper employees were asked about local food and if they feel consumers value local food, many responded that consumers very rarely ask about local food and therefore they do not feel that consumers care about local food. Price Chopper Headquarters appears to value local food, however, and realize that consumers value local food. This once again shows the disconnect that exists between the employee and corporate levels.

While Hannaford appeared to have a smaller gap between the employee and corporate levels, nonetheless, a gap still exists. When one store manager was asked about how consumers value local food, he responded that consumers generally do not ask about local food unless they are seeking out a specific local product such as Saratoga Peanut Butter. In his opinion, consumers have loyalty to certain brands that may happen to be local such as Saratoga Peanut Butter, however they do not necessarily purchase these products solely because they are local. Another Hannaford store manager stated that the only time consumers ask about local products is during the summer when more local produce is available in Upstate New York. He did not seem to feel that consumers desire local products other than produce. He also viewed local food specifically as a seasonal commodity. While we were unable to reach individuals from Hannaford's corporate level, by looking at Hannaford's website as well as the signage present in stores, it is clear that Hannaford headquarters values local food and believes that consumers value local food as well. Overall, however, unlike Price Chopper, Hannaford employees and

store managers were aware that Hannaford carries a wide range of local products due to its extensive marketing initiative. They did not seem to be aware of how consumers value local food, but were aware that Hannaford headquarters puts emphasis on advertising local food and seeking it out by welcoming local vendors to pitch their products to individual stores and then to Hannaford headquarters.

### **Conclusion**

Our results demonstrate a majority of consumers (82%) would pay more, between 5% and 10%, for a local product. Consumers are also looking for specific local product categories like produce, dairy, eggs, baked goods, and meat, which the two most shopped at stores, Hannaford and Price Chopper, have varying availability of in their stores. A higher number of Hannaford stores supply local items in the top five categories consumers look for local food than Price Chopper stores. Consumers demonstrated a loyalty to stores with stronger local food marketing initiatives and higher local food availability. Specific labeling that states “From your local farmer/baker” with the town and state the product is from was ranked as the top signage consumers desire to buy a product labeled with the phrasing. Hannaford’s and Price Chopper’s labels, “Close to Home” and “Home.Grown.” both ranked lowest in label wording that appeal most to consumers. The labeling language and size as well as local food placement correlated with consumers ability to easily distinguish or find local food in stores. We observed a disconnect between locally owned chains’ headquarters and employees concerning if the store had local items at all and the chains’ local marketing initiative. We estimate this disconnect might account for inconsistent labeling across stores as well as the general confusion consumers have finding local products.

## **Recommendations For Future Research**

We feel this research is only the start to a better understanding of local food availability and marketing within grocery stores. With that in mind, there are a multitude of avenues future researchers could combat.

First off, there were some obvious gaps in our data. For one, due to the location we were based in and the people we had access to, about 50% of our consumer survey results came from Saratoga Springs residents leaving the other 50% as a combination of the other four cities surveyed (Albany, Troy, Schenectady, and Mechanicville). To obtain stronger data in these cities we suggest trying to create stronger contacts with influentials in each city who would be willing to distribute the survey to people they trust to take it. Additionally, surveys could be passed out in person outside of grocery stores, schools, meeting places, or a variety of other locations where large, diverse, groups of people visit. However, in many of these situations it is likely that permission would have to be gained by the owner of the property and this is likely to pose a challenge.

Additionally, in order to obtain more concrete consumer information, focus groups could be implemented to work in conjunction with the consumer survey. More specific questions should be asked in more of a conversational style. Also, a more diverse sampling could be reached especially if the focus groups made sure to include a variety of consumers from each city studied as well as a variety of consumers who shop at each category of grocery store.

Then moving forward from these focus groups, we recommend directly contacting the grocery stores consumers claim to purchase local food from and look into gathering quantitative data on consumer purchasing patterns. From this data, it can be confirmed whether or not the

consumer survey results saying that consumers care about purchasing local food actually matches with their true actions.

Moving on from consumers, one area our research was unable to touch on is the process grocery stores and local food producers need to go through in order for a local food item to begin being sold in certain grocery stores. This could be researched by conducting interviews with the head of purchasing at each store, with the head of the distribution center for each larger store, and with the heads of different local food producers. These interviews have the potential to provide information on why some local food are sold in some stores and why some are not, creating more depth to the question of local food availability each store provides. With how complicated the intricacies of the food system are, it seems likely there may be barriers within the process of local food producers trying to get their foods to be sold in grocery stores and potentially also within the process grocery stores must go through to seek out local items to sell.

Lastly, our specific research could be conducted again but with greater attention to details on the availability and marketing present within each grocery store. The specific amount of food available in each of the 20 categories could be recorded for each store as well as the most popular brands available in each category. Additionally, the number of each size of local signs each store provides could be recorded so that a more concise and accurate comparison between the marketing measures of each store could be conducted.

## Appendix

### Appendix A: City Data

*Figure 2: Cities Surveyed in Capital District Region*

| 2014 US Census                        | United States | Saratoga Springs   | Troy          | Albany        | Schenectady | Mechanicville   | Glens Falls |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Median household income               | \$53,482.00   | <b>\$67,303.00</b> | \$39,526.00   | \$41,099.00   | \$38,916.00 | \$43,355.00     | \$45,538.00 |
| Per capita income (in past 12 months) | \$28,555.00   | <b>\$39,395.00</b> | \$21,625.00   | \$24,342.00   | \$20,652.00 | \$23,525.00     | \$27,630.00 |
| Percent persons in poverty            | 14.80%        | 7.60%              | <b>27.60%</b> | 26.70%        | 23.80%      | 18.90%          | 14.00%      |
| Population per square mile (2010)     | 87.4          | 947.3              | 4,840.10      | 4,575.30      | 6,135.50    | <b>6,178.40</b> | 3,817.20    |
| Population estimate (2014)            | 318,857,056   | 27,436             | 49,910        | <b>98,566</b> | 66,135      | 5,172           | 14,428      |

### Appendix B: Grocery Store Data

*Figure 3: Grocery Store Categorization*

| Location (City) | Grocery Store Name | Type of Grocery Store |                     |                   |                  |                                 |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|
|                 |                    | Ethnic/Specialty      | Natural/Health Food | Convenience Store | Big-Box Retailer | Locally Owned Chain Supermarket |
|                 |                    |                       |                     |                   |                  |                                 |

Figure 4 : Map of Grocery Stores by Grocery Store Categories

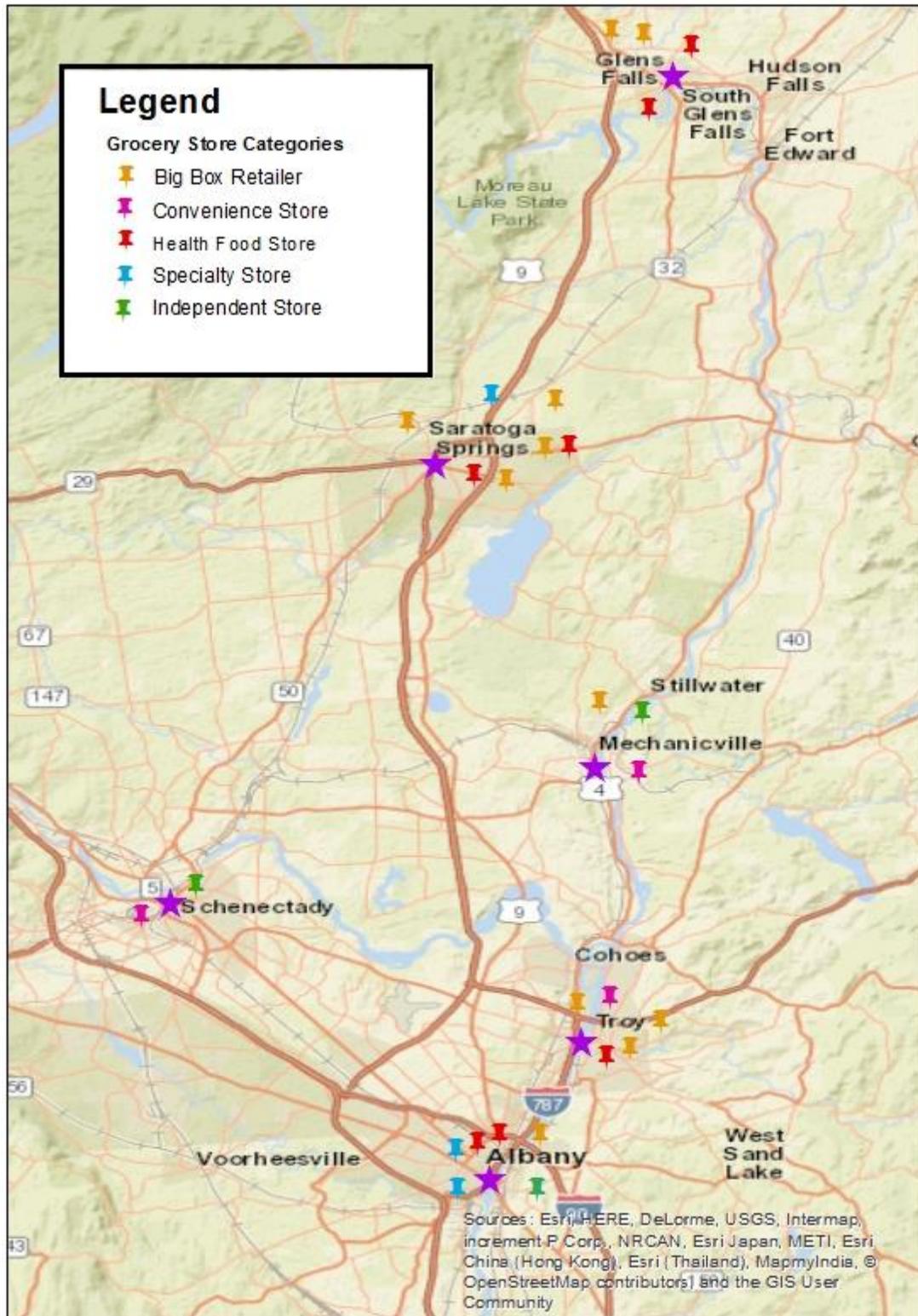


Figure 5: Grocery Store Local Evaluation

|                                 |  | Location of Local Food |         |         | Size of Signage                      |  |   |   |  |                             |
|---------------------------------|--|------------------------|---------|---------|--------------------------------------|--|---|---|--|-----------------------------|
| Local Labeling?<br><br>(Yes/No) | Store wide program?<br><br>(Yes/No)<br><br>If “yes”, text of “local” program (e.g. “close to home”, “we love local”) | Disperse               | Section | End Cap | Small<br><br>(Only on the price tag) | Medium<br><br>(Separate sign on shelf) | Large<br><br>(Section heads or the label on an end cap) | Location details provided<br><br>(e.g. “Made in U.S.A., N.Y State,<br><br>City, Farmer information) | Consistent labeling on all local items throughout the store? | Local promotion on website? |

Figure 6 : Specifics of Local Labeling

| Store                                   | Who decides labeling     |                   | Prominence of Local Labeling |    | Specificity of Labeling           |                   |                                |  |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|--|
|   | Individual Stores        | Headquarters      | Yes                          | No | Specific Farmer/producer location | Specific Location | Product of NY (or other state) | “Local,” “Close to Home,” “Home Grown” |
| Market 32 Price Chopper (Wilton)        |                          | X                 | X                            |    |                                   |                   |                                | X                                      |
| Target (Wilton)                         |                          | X                 | X                            |    | X                                 |                   |                                |  |
| Hannaford (Wilton)                      | X (have some discretion) | X (must sign off) | X                            |    | X (baked goods)                   | X                 |                                | X                                      |
| Healthy Living (Wilton)                 | X                        |                   | X                            |    | X                                 | X                 |                                |  |
| Price Chopper (Saratoga Springs)        |                          | X                 |                              | X  |                                   |                   |                                |  |
| Four Season's (Saratoga Springs)        | X                        |                   | X                            |    | X (some produce)                  |                   | X                              |  |
| Fresh Market (Saratoga Springs)         |                          | X                 | X                            |    |                                   |                   |                                | X                                      |
| Price Chopper (Mechanicville)           |                          | X                 |                              | X  |                                   |                   |                                |  |
| Stewart's (Mechanicville)               |                          | X                 |                              | X  |                                   |                   |                                |  |
| Hoosic Valley Shop N Save (Schacticoke) | X                        | X                 | X                            |    |                                   | X                 |                                | X                                      |
| Hannaford (Troy)                        | X                        | X                 | X                            |    | X (baked goods)                   | X                 |                                | X                                      |
| 4 Corner Grocery Store (Troy)           | X                        |                   |                              | X  |                                   |                   |                                |  |
| Big Lots (Troy)                         |                          | X                 |                              | X  |                                   |                   |                                |  |

|  |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| Walmart Supercenter (Troy)                   |   | X |   | X |   |   |  |   |
| Uncle Sam's Good and Natural Products (Troy) | X |   |   | X |   |   |  |   |
| Hannaford (Albany)                           | X | X | X |   |   | X |  | X |
| Tierra Farm Store (Albany)                   | X |   | X |   | X |   |  |   |
| Asian Supermarket (Albany)                   |   | X |   | X |   |   |  |   |
| Al Medina Market(Albany)                     | X |   |   | X |   |   |  |   |
| Whole Foods (Albany)                         | X | X | X |   | X | X |  | X |
| Price Chopper (Albany)                       |   | X |   | X |   |   |  |   |
| Streuben St. Market(Albany)                  | X |   | X |   |   |   |  | X |
| Fabio Grocery (Schenectady)                  |   | X |   | X |   |   |  |   |
| Gabriels (Schenectady)                       | X |   | X |   |   |   |  | X |
| Hannaford (Glenn's Fall)                     | X | X | X |   | X | X |  | X |
| Price Chopper (Glenn's Falls)                |   | X |   | X |   |   |  |   |
| Adirondack Natural Foods (Glen's Falls)      | X |   | X |   |   |   |  | X |
| Pure N Simple (Glen's Falls)                 | X |   |   | X |   |   |  |   |

Figure 7: Categories Covered vs Type of Store

|                               | Ethnic/Specialty | Natural/Health Food | Convenience Store | Big-Box Retailer | Locally Owned Chain Supermarket |
|-------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Produce                       |                  | X                   |                   | X                | X                               |
| Herbs                         |                  | X                   |                   |                  | X                               |
| Milk                          |                  | X                   | X                 |                  | X                               |
| Cheese                        |                  | X                   | X                 |                  | X                               |
| Yogurt                        | X                | X                   |                   | X                | X                               |
| Ice Cream                     |                  | X                   | X                 |                  | X                               |
| MISC. Dairy                   |                  | X                   | X                 | X                | X                               |
| Eggs                          | X                | X                   | X                 | X                | X                               |
| Meat                          |                  | X                   |                   |                  | X                               |
| Seafood                       |                  | X                   |                   |                  |                                 |
| Chips/<br>Crackers            |                  | X                   | X                 | X                | X                               |
| Sauces/<br>Condiments         |                  | X                   |                   | X                | X                               |
| Honey                         | X                | X                   | X                 | X                | X                               |
| Maple Syrup                   |                  | X                   |                   |                  | X                               |
| Nut Butter                    |                  | X                   |                   | X                | X                               |
| MISC.<br>Packaged/<br>Grocery | X                | X                   |                   | X                | X                               |
| Prepared<br>Foods             |                  | X                   | X                 |                  | X                               |
| Frozen Foods                  | X                | X                   | X                 |                  | X                               |
| Baked Goods                   |                  | X                   | X                 |                  | X                               |
| Beverages                     |                  | X                   | X                 | X                | X                               |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|

**Appendix C: Consumer Survey**

Q1 - There are a variety of definitions for “local food”. How would you define “local”?

- a) Within my own country
- b) Within 100 miles of my home
- c) Within Upstate New York
- d) Within all of New York
- e) Within the Northeastern United States
- f) Other (please specify)

Q2 - How often do you go to these food stores?

|  | Twice a week | Once a week | Once every other week | Once a month | Once every few months | Never |
|--|--------------|-------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Price Chopper  |              |             |                       |              |                       |       |
| Hannaford  |              |             |                       |              |                       |       |
| ALDI or other discounted grocery store   |              |             |                       |              |                       |       |
| Target, Walmart, BJ's or other Big Box Retailer                                |              |             |                       |              |                       |       |
| Farmer’s Market  |              |             |                       |              |                       |       |
| CSA (Community Supported Agriculture)  |              |             |                       |              |                       |       |
| Natural Food/Health Food Store (Whole Foods, Healthy Living, Four Season, etc) |              |             |                       |              |                       |       |
| Specialty Store/Ethnic Food Store  |              |             |                       |              |                       |       |
| Stewart’s or other convenience store   |              |             |                       |              |                       |       |

Q3 - How important is the availability of local food to you when choosing where to shop?

- a) Not at all a consideration
- b) Not too important
- c) Somewhat important
- d) Very important

Q4 - Do you look for local food when you shop for the following categories of groceries?

|   | Yes | Sometimes | No |
|---|-----|-----------|----|
| Produce   |     |           |    |
| Dairy   |     |           |    |
| Eggs  |     |           |    |
| Beverages   |     |           |    |
| Sauces/Dips/Condiments  |     |           |    |
| Peanut Butter/Nut Butter  |     |           |    |
| Meat  |     |           |    |
| Fish  |     |           |    |
| Frozen Food   |     |           |    |
| Premade Food  |     |           |    |
| Miscellaneous packages foods<br>(chips, pasta, drink mixes, etc.) |     |           |    |
| Baked Goods   |     |           |    |

Q5 - About what percent of your monthly food bill is spent on locally grown or produced foods?

- a) 0-10%
- b) 10-20%
- c) 20-30%
- d) 30-40%
- e) >40%

Q6 - When shopping for your household, how often do you typically purchase locally grown foods when in season?

- a) Weekly
- b) Monthly
- c) A few times a year
- d) Once a year
- e) Never

Q7 - When you go food shopping, can you distinguish which foods are locally produced/grown and which are not?

- a) Always
- b) Most of the time
- c) Sometimes
- d) Rarely
- e) Never

Q8 - Below are statements about local food. Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with them.

|  | Strongly agree | Somewhat agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat disagree | Strongly disagree |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Local food is too expensive  |                |                |                            |                   |                   |
| There is a lack of selection of local food where I shop            |                |                |                            |                   |                   |
| I would rather buy organic than local                              |                |                |                            |                   |                   |
| I can't find local   |                |                |                            |                   |                   |
| Local food tastes better   |                |                |                            |                   |                   |
| Local food is not attractive/rotten/not fresh                      |                |                |                            |                   |                   |
| Local food is better for the environment                           |                |                |                            |                   |                   |
| Buying locally grown foods greatly contribute to the local economy |                |                |                            |                   |                   |
| Local food is healthier than the alternatives                      |                |                |                            |                   |                   |

Q9 - How do you trust each format to deliver local food?

|  | Not at all | Not really | Neutral | Somewhat | A lot |
|--|------------|------------|---------|----------|-------|
| Big box retailer (Walmart, Target, BJ's, etc.)                   |            |            |         |          |       |
| Locally-owned chain supermarket (Price Chopper, Hannaford, etc.) |            |            |         |          |       |
| Natural foods market   |            |            |         |          |       |
| Gourmet specialty store  |            |            |         |          |       |
| Convenience store  |            |            |         |          |       |

Q10 - How much extra are you willing to pay for local food?

- a) Product would need to be cheaper
- b) Would not pay more than for other products
- c) Up to 5% more
- d) Up to 10% more
- e) More than 10% more

Q11 - The following are words and phrases that describe food products. For each please indicate if each description would make you significantly more likely to buy it, somewhat more likely, have no effect, somewhat less likely, or significantly less likely to buy it.

|                               | Significantly less likely | Somewhat less likely | Have no effect | Somewhat more likely | Significantly more likely |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Local                         |                           |                      |                |                      |                           |
| New York State Grown/Produced |                           |                      |                |                      |                           |
| Produce/Grown in the U.S.     |                           |                      |                |                      |                           |
| Green                         |                           |                      |                |                      |                           |
| Native                        |                           |                      |                |                      |                           |
| Sustainable                   |                           |                      |                |                      |                           |
| Organic                       |                           |                      |                |                      |                           |
| Wild                          |                           |                      |                |                      |                           |

Q12 - the following are words and phrases that describe food products. Please rank each phrase in order of your desire to buy the food product labeled with the phrase. 1 being the most likely to buy the product, and 4 being the least likely to buy the product.

- 1) Close to Home
- 2) Local
- 3) Home Grown
- 4) From Your Local Farmer/Baker/etc...

Q13 - Which city/town do you live in>

- a) Saratoga Springs
- b) Albany
- c) Schnectady
- d) Troy
- e) Glens Falls
- f) Mechanicville
- g) Other (Please specify)

Q14 - What is your age group?

- a) 18-33
- b) 34-49
- c) 50-65
- d) 66+

Q15 - What is your gender?

- a) Male
- b) Female
- c) Other

Q16 - Are you the primary food shopper in your household?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Q17 - What best describes your education level?

- a) No high school degree
- b) High school degree
- c) Some college/technical school
- d) Bachelor's Degree
- e) Master's Degree
- f) Professional Degree (Ph.D., M.D., etc.)

Q18 - Generally how much do you spend on food each month?

- a) <\$100
- b) \$101-\$150
- c) \$151-\$200
- d) \$201-\$300
- e) \$301-\$400
- f) \$401-\$500
- g) \$501-\$750
- h) \$751+

Q19 - What is your income?

- a) <\$25k
- b) \$25k-\$75k
- c) \$75k-\$100k
- d) >\$100k

**Appendix D: Consumer Survey Data**

*Figure 14: Importance of Local Food Availability when Choosing Where to Shop vs. Education Level*

|   |                            | What best describes your education level? |                    |                               |                   |                 |   | Total          |
|---|----------------------------|---|--------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|---|----------------|
|   |                            | No high school degree                     | High school degree | Some college/technical school | Bachelor's Degree | Master's Degree | Professional Degree (Ph.D., M.D., etc.) |                |
| How important is the availability of local food to you when choosing where to shop? | Not at all a consideration | 0<br>0.00%                                | 1<br>7.14%         | 5<br>7.25%                    | 6<br>4.84%        | 4<br>3.51%      | 2<br>2.15%                              | 18<br>4.35%    |
|   | Not too important          | 0<br>0.00%                                | 3<br>21.43%        | 14<br>20.29%                  | 18<br>14.52%      | 15<br>13.16%    | 21<br>22.58%                            | 71<br>17.15%   |
|   | Somewhat important         | 0<br>0.00%                                | 2<br>14.29%        | 33<br>47.83%                  | 66<br>53.23%      | 57<br>50.00%    | 40<br>43.01%                            | 198<br>47.83%  |
|   | Very important             | 0<br>0.00%                                | 8<br>57.14%        | 17<br>24.64%                  | 34<br>27.42%      | 38<br>33.33%    | 30<br>32.26%                            | 127<br>30.68%  |
|   | Total                      | 0<br>100.00%                              | 14<br>100.00%      | 69<br>100.00%                 | 124<br>100.00%    | 114<br>100.00%  | 93<br>100.00%                           | 414<br>100.00% |

*Figure 17: Consumer Ability to Distinguish Local Food*

**7.** When you go food shopping, can you distinguish which foods are locally produced/grown and which a...

| # | Answer                           | Response | %    |
|---|----------------------------------|----------|------|
| 1 | <a href="#">Always</a>           | 22       | 5%   |
| 2 | <a href="#">Most of the time</a> | 200      | 48%  |
| 3 | <a href="#">Sometimes</a>        | 161      | 39%  |
| 4 | <a href="#">Rarely</a>           | 26       | 6%   |
| 5 | <a href="#">Never</a>            | 8        | 2%   |
|   | Total                            | 417      | 100% |

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