



NUTRITION

Fewer Consumers Making Changes To Improve Their Diets

While consumers continue to be “very” and “somewhat” concerned about nutrition (87 percent), beyond eating more fruits and vegetables (68 percent), there is no overwhelming trend in dietary changes. The specific actions consumers take to improve their diets have not changed significantly over the past three years, according to FMI’s *Trends — Consumer Attitudes and the Supermarket*, 2000. The most common actions include buying products labeled “low fat” (79 percent), “low cholesterol” (59 percent), “natural” (59 percent) and “low fat” (54 percent).

The four most frequently cited nutrition concerns continue to be fat, cholesterol, salt and sugar; however, this year overall concerns diminished. The nutritional features that concern consumers the most have changed little over the past five years. Nearly half of the consumers (46 percent) cited fat content in FMI’s 2000 *Trends* survey, followed by cholesterol levels (17 percent), salt/sodium (17 percent) and nutritional value (12 percent). See Graph.

Almost all shoppers (96 percent) said nutrition is a “somewhat” or “very important” factor when they purchase food, according to FMI’s *Trends*. Only taste was important to more consumers (97 percent). Both figures are similar to the 1999 survey data, when nutrition was an important factor in purchasing food to 95 percent of those surveyed, and taste to 99 percent.

The relative importance of taste and nutrition has remained steady since FMI began asking consumers to rate these factors 10 years ago. Only two other concerns are considered “very important” by over half of the shoppers in the survey: price (71 percent) and product safety (70 percent) See Chart 1.

Nutritional Concerns Differ Among Shopper Groups

FMI’s *Trends* study found that the number of consumers who are “very” concerned about nutritional content

varies by gender and increases with age, education and family income:

- Less than half of the men (46 percent) and nearly half the women (49 percent) are very concerned about the nutritional content of food.
- Nearly half of shoppers over age 49 (49 percent) are very concerned. Shoppers under 25 are less likely than other to be very concerned (32 percent). Shoppers with some college are more concerned with nutrition than those with a high-school education or less (52 percent vs. 40 percent).

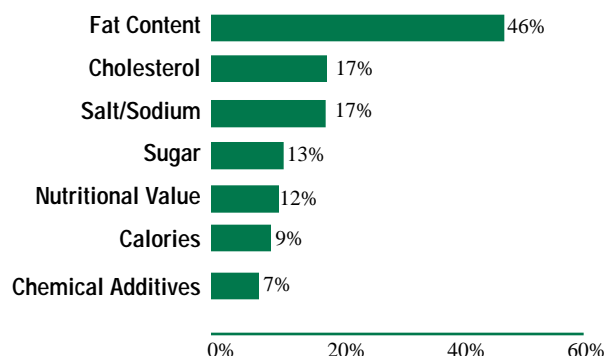
Most Consumers Believe Their Diets Could be More Healthful

Shoppers continue to be less than fully satisfied with healthfulness of their diet. Nearly seven in 10 (68 percent) believe their diet could be at least “somewhat” or “a lot healthier,” and less than one in 10 (8 percent) says it is as “healthy as it could possibly be.”

In pursuit of a healthier diet, shoppers are most likely to eat more fruits and vegetables (68 percent), fewer fats and oils (22 percent), less red meat (22 percent), less snack or junk food (18 percent), less sugar (17 percent), more chicken and turkey (9 percent), less salt (8 percent) and fewer fried foods (7 percent). See Chart 2.

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Consumers’ Top Nutritional Concerns



Source: *Trends in the United States — Consumer Attitudes and the Supermarket*, 2000

Effect of Nutrition Labels

Most shoppers have sought and purchased products because of nutrition claims on the label. Nearly eight in 10 (80 percent) have sought out and purchased products because of “low-fat” claims. Nearly six in 10 (59 percent) have done so because of “low-cholesterol” claims. Almost as many shoppers report purchasing products with other nutrition claims, such as “natural” (59 percent) and “low salt” (52 percent).

Who do consumers think should be responsible for ensuring that the food they buy is nutritious? Nearly half (47 percent) assume that responsibility themselves. Nearly two in 10 (15 percent) hold manufacturers and food processors responsible, as many (15 percent) believe that it is the government’s role and few (5 percent) believe that supermarkets are responsible. See Chart 3. ■

Chart 1

Importance of Various Factors in Food Selection

	Very Important	Somewhat Important
Taste	89%	8%
Nutrition	71	25
Product Safety	71	20
Price	69	27
Storability	46	38
Food preparation time	37	39
Ease of preparation	36	40
Product packaging that can be recycled	29	38

Source: *Trends in the United States — Consumer Attitudes and the Supermarket, 2000*

Chart 2

How Consumers Are Changing Their Diets

Any dietary changes	93%
More fruits/vegetables	68
Less meat/red meat	22
Less fats/oils	23
Less snack foods/junk foods	18
Less sugar	17
Eating more chicken/turkey/white meat	9
Less salt/sodium	8
Less dairy products	7
Less fried foods	7
More fish	5
More low-fat or skim milk products	5
More fiber	3
More starch/rice/potato/pasta	2
More whole grains	4
Less cholesterol	3
More balanced diet/wider/variety	1
Less bread	3
More fresh foods	1
More juices	3
More protein	3
More vitamin/mineral supplements	2

Source: *Trends in the United States — Consumer Attitudes and the Supermarket, 2000*

Chart 3

Reliance to Ensure Foods Are Nutritious

Yourself as an individual	47%
Manufacturers/food processors	15
Government institutions or agencies	15
Food stores	5
Consumer group/organizations	5
All/everybody	8
Farmers	2

Source: *Trends in the United States — Consumer Attitudes and the Supermarket, 2000*



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