



FEW AMERICAN CONSUMERS SUBSCRIBE TO "BUY LOCAL" PHILOSOPHY

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The number of restaurant companies using local products is growing, but according to a restaurant trade publication, few American consumers subscribe to the "buy local" philosophy.

Nation's Restaurant News (<http://www.nrn.com>) reported recently that market research firm Mintel's survey on local shopping found that only 17 percent of American consumers buy local products and services as often as they can. These consumers whose mantra is "buy local" don't mind paying more for local goods. They will even choose them over better competing products from elsewhere, the publication reported. Local shoppers tend to be singles aged 25 to 34 and families with children.

Mintel's survey found that 30 percent of American consumers want to buy local but don't know how to find local products, or how to differentiate them from other products. Twenty-seven percent don't care about the origin of products.

Food products are the items most frequently purchased locally. About 31 percent of consumers said they buy local fruit or vegetables at least once a week; and 25 percent say the same for baked goods, meats, cheese and dairy products, the report said.

Because this issue could affect your business, AFTC is constantly monitoring it. Some consumers think that buying local products helps the environment as well as their pocketbook because they assume that buying local products reduces transportation costs and emissions. Transportation professionals know, however, that this is often a false assumption. The competitive advantages and efficiencies of today's production and distribution system often make nationally or internationally sourced products cheaper and more environmentally sound.

Statistics generated by consumer research can be presented in different ways to suggest different meanings. Someone could say that the Mintel study shows a victory for the perspective of our modern system, since only 17 percent actually buy local products whenever they can. Others could say that 47 percent agree that buying local is a good idea, and that may not bode well for our industry.

Regardless of the angle of how these numbers may be viewed AFTC will continue to monitor this issue to ensure that the view of the industry is represented if any public policy implications are brought into play.