

Engaging Manitobans on our Agri-food Industry - Survey Results

The Manitoba government is committed to working collaboratively with stakeholders to build the public's trust in the agri-food system in our province. Manitoba Agriculture and Resource Development launched an agri-food public trust survey on EngageMB to identify public perceptions about the agri-food system, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Survey responses will help identify opportunities to increase consumer confidence in Manitoba's agri-food system.

Engagement Overview

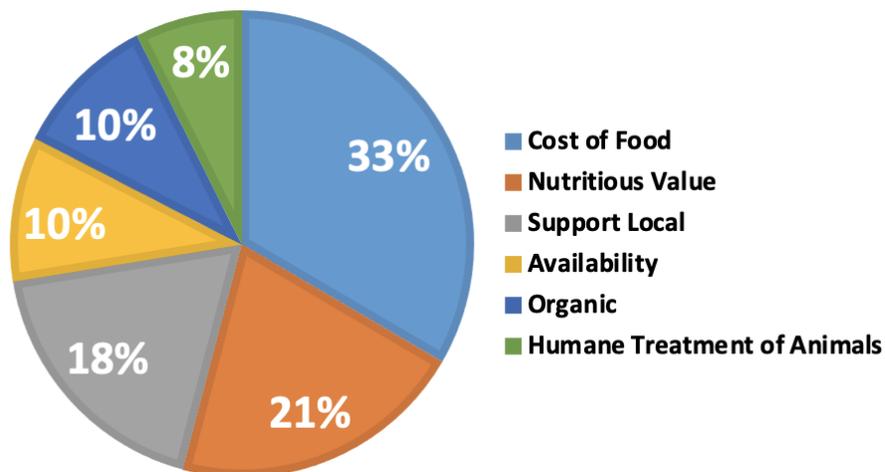
Manitobans were invited to provide their feedback on our province's agri-food industry through an online survey from January 8 to February 5, 2021. In total, 686 participants provided their feedback. This document provides a summary of the responses received.

What We Heard

Food purchasing Decisions:

The majority of respondents demonstrated confidence that the Manitoba agriculture industry produces food safely and ethically. In addition, there was a demonstrated preference for purchasing products grown and processed in Manitoba. Participants highlighted food safety, food quality, environmental footprint and the desire to promote local businesses as key influences in local food purchasing decisions. Further purchasing decision influencers are included in the graph below.

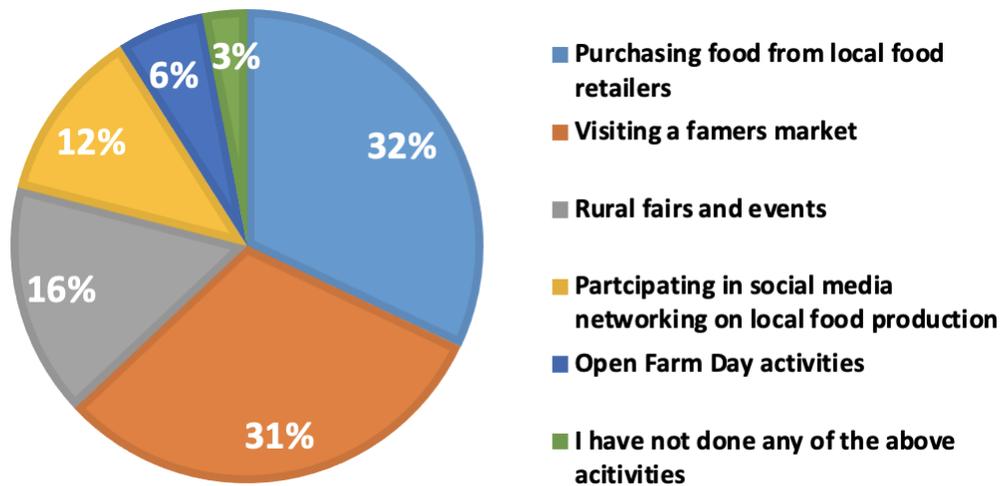
Factors Influencing Food Purchasing Decisions



Connecting to Food Producers:

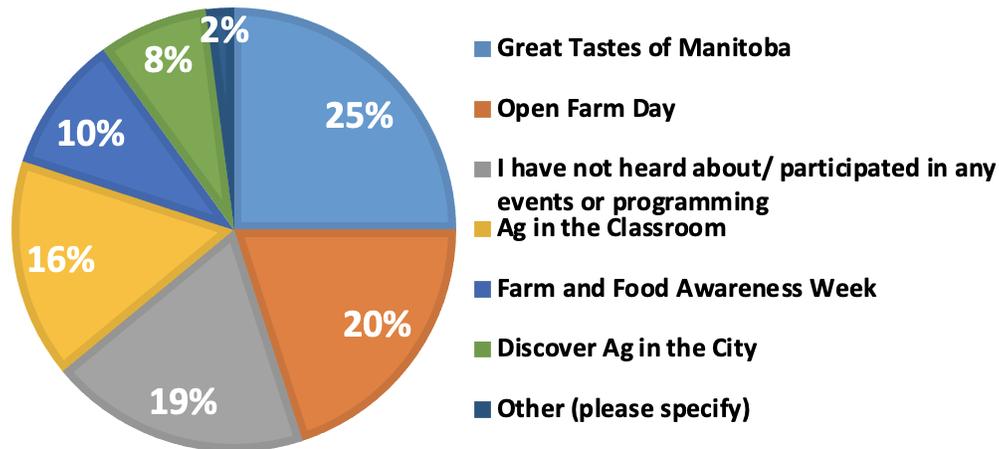
The majority of participants (97 per cent) have taken actions to enhance their knowledge of food production models including seeking out food from local retailers, visiting farmers' markets, attending rural fairs and events and participating in other learning opportunities as available.

Participation in Food Events and Activities



The Manitoba agri-food sector participates in, and hosts, various learning events and connection opportunities for the public. Of these, respondents were most familiar with Great Tastes of Manitoba (25 per cent), Open Farm Day (20 per cent) and Ag in the Classroom (16 per cent). However, 19 per cent of respondents indicated being unfamiliar with available learning events. Participants were motivated to attend these events for various reasons, however, the greatest value was attributed to events that are educational, create an opportunity to connect with food producers and provide a fun activity.

Participation in Agri-Food Events and Activities



The survey asked Manitobans about potential information and knowledge sharing models. Participants indicated strong support for the continuation of in-person events and websites (51 per cent). Social media and YouTube videos were supported as alternative forms of outreach (32 per cent combined), although social media was identified as being an untrustworthy source of information by 75 per cent of respondents.

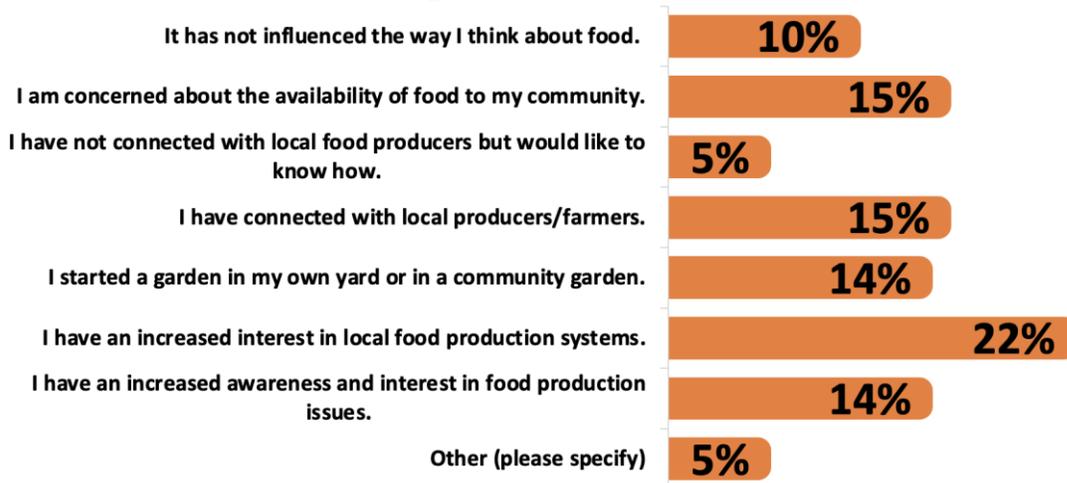
Farmers (89 per cent), their own medical doctor (87 per cent), dietitians (83 per cent), agricultural organizations (74 per cent), family/friends (71 per cent), and information from public health (72 per cent) are the most trusted sources of food information.

How has COVID-19 influenced food purchasing decisions?

COVID-19 has influenced food purchasing decisions and flagged concerns about food availability within communities. There is an increased preference for local food partnered with interest in actions to build consumer and producer connections.

Respondents (36 per cent) noted an increased interest in local food production models and issues. Respondents also indicated strong interest in learning more about sustainability, food production and food security (42 per cent combined). The chart below highlights the impact of COVID-19 on thoughts about food.

Impact of COVID-19 on Thoughts about Food

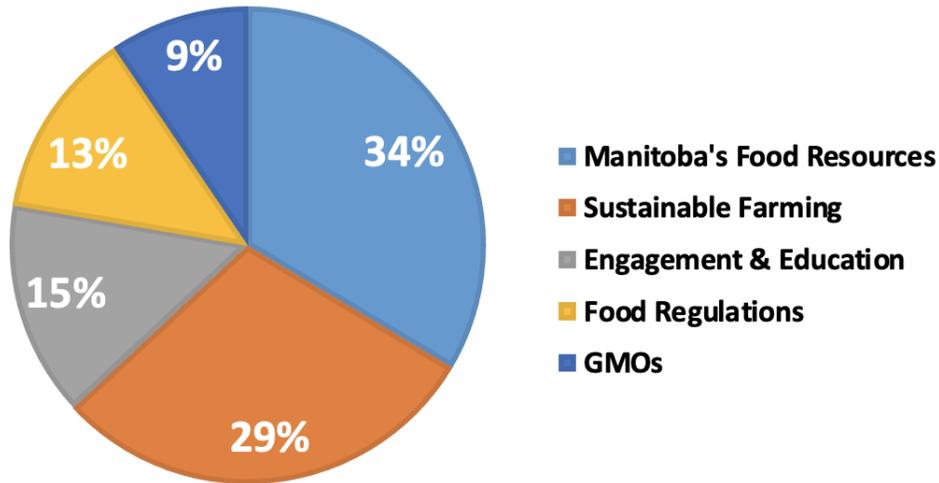


Building Confidence Now and in the Future:

Respondents would like to see advancements in Manitoba's local food production and technology for the betterment of Manitoba's future. There is a desire to see increased locally grown or processed foods and ensure good quality, nutritious food is accessible to all communities in Manitoba. Government support to increase Manitoba's local food market availability and awareness is required. Manitobans feel sustainable farming is a key opportunity for driving growth in the Manitoba food sector. The topic of sustainability intersects the entire food system; however, respondents want to understand how the food system can address the climate change challenge and create positive impacts on our environment.

Respondents expressed the need for government to better engage and educate the public on Manitoba's local food systems and sustainable farming practices. Respondents expressed the need for increased food regulations, including pesticides, chemicals, genetically modified organisms, current food sale regulations, limiting food waste, and stronger environmental standards.

Top 5 Future Opportunities and Challenges



Next Steps

Thank you for your participation in this survey. The results of this engagement will inform the development of provincial public trust initiatives in the agri-food sector. For information on local food in Manitoba, please visit www.manitoba.ca/agriculture/local-food/index.html.

Questions?

If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact Jillian Einarson Smith at Jillian.EinarsonSmith@gov.mb.ca.