

Organic Shoppers Want Functional Foods: Survey

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Eight in 10 natural and organic consumers regularly read ingredient labels for health and nutrition content and express interest in purchasing functional foods with additional health, nutrition and dietary benefits, with four in 10, or 39 percent “very interested” in these kinds of foods, according to MamboTrack research from Collingswood, N.J.-based Mambo Sprouts Marketing.

Consumers said they’re most interested foods containing organic ingredients (65 percent) and low-sodium grocery products (47 percent), followed by low-fat/cholesterol (39 percent) and vegetarian items (31 percent). Functional food products with added calcium (44 percent), omega-3 (44 percent), antioxidants (43 percent), probiotics/prebiotics (38 percent), and vitamin D (30 percent) were also popular choices.

The study also revealed interest in specific ingredient-free foods, with one in three natural product consumers looking to buy allergen-free foods. Shoppers were most likely to report purchasing gluten-free/wheat-free items (25 percent), followed by dairy-free products (9 percent). Fewer eschewed soy (6 percent) or peanuts (4 percent). Among the gluten-free products, bread (59 percent), cereal (56 percent), chips and snacks (54 percent), and pasta (46 percent) were the most sought after.

Shoppers are turning to such items for a range of reasons. More than four in 10 gluten-free buyers believe these products are healthier for their family (43 percent), while another one in three (34 percent) had a household member with celiac disease or wheat intolerance, or noted that their favorite brands were already free of gluten (36 percent).

Packaging plays a key role in deciding which brands to buy, the research found. Four in 10 (40 percent) recently tried a new brand or switched brands specifically because of more earth-friendly packaging. Two in three purchased products with recyclable packaging or packaging made of recycled materials (66 percent), and 44 percent bought products with compostable/biodegradable packaging. Among the new eco-packaging options with the most appeal among one in two were compostable/biodegradable, reusable and refillable product packaging.

The study was based on the results of the online Mambo Sprouts Marketing Quick Poll, which surveyed 600 MamboTrack health and natural product consumers between April 19 and April 26, 2010.