

Industry News - AM Research shows how food system can better communicate to consumers
By [Meatingplace Editors](#) on 1/10/2011

U.S. consumers adopted a more positive attitude about the food system after reviewing educational information about nutrition, food safety, the treatment of farm animals and use of technology in food production, according to new research by the Center for Food Integrity.

For example, consumers were more likely to agree that meat does not increase the likelihood of disease when presented with USDA research that recommends eating 5.5 ounces of meat a day and Harvard studies showing no link between red meat or processed meat and colon cancer, or significant differences in cardiovascular disease risk.

The Center for Food Integrity, which works to improve trust in the food system, surveyed more than 2,000 food shoppers to determine which messages and programs were most successful in changing attitudes for the better. The report, titled “Messages that Matter,” also found consumers were more likely to agree that:

- **Meat is full of nutrients** after seeing details on protein, iron, mineral and vitamin content.
- **Raising animals indoors is beneficial** after reviewing information on how housing systems keep animals healthier and protect them from predators and weather.
- **U.S. farm animals are humanely treated** after learning about training and certification programs including third-party verification and seeing university or independent research showing decreases in animal disease and mortality.
- **Government agencies are doing a good job ensuring food safety** after receiving information on the drop in food-borne illnesses due to FDA and USDA oversight, on FDA’s Food Code and on USDA’s HACCP plans at meat and poultry plants.
- **FDA strictly regulates antibiotic use in farm animals** after receiving details on FDA’s antibiotic approval program.

The research also found that shoppers’ attitudes showed a statistically significant improvement toward a range of issues when messages communicated that food producers share the same values as consumers.

“CFI research indicates that demonstrating shared values is three to five times more effective in building consumer trust in today’s food system than messages based solely on science or economics,” the report said.