

FOOD LABEL IS OPPORTUNITY TO MARKET PRODUCT

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Feedstuffs Foodlink, March 31, 2008

Forty-four percent of consumers say health professionals are more significant than any other source in influencing dietary changes, followed by family and friends (42%) and food labels (38%), according to Shelley Goldberg, a public health specialist, registered dietitian and senior director of the International Food Information Council. This "gives you an important opportunity to use (food labels) to speak to consumers," she said in a presentation to the marketing workshop at the annual business meeting of the National Turkey Federation.

Basing her remarks on recent research by the council, Goldberg said although price and taste almost always are the first two factors influencing consumer food purchases, food's healthfulness and nutrition are playing a greater role. Indeed, 66% of consumers reported changing food selections in 2007 to improve the healthfulness and nutrition of their diets - a statistically significant change from 57% in 2006 - and 58% of consumers now rate their diets as somewhat to very healthful, compared with 54% in 2006, she said.

Accordingly, food producers need to do consumer research and education to ensure labels that consumers can use to make dietary decisions and prevent unintended consequences from misinterpretation and misuse, she said.