



# 2014 IFIC Consumer Perceptions of Food Technology Survey

16<sup>th</sup> Edition

Executive Summary

**IFIC**  
International  
Food  
Information  
Council

# Objectives and Methodology



# Objectives

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1. To gauge consumer **knowledge** and **awareness** pertaining to plant and animal biotechnology safety, benefits and labeling, as well as sustainability and emerging technologies.
2. To understand the **attitudes** and **opinions** regarding food biotechnology and the importance of certain benefits of today's modern food supply that are made possible with biotechnology.
3. To gauge purchase **behavior** and determine which information about food biotechnology, and from what sources, best assists consumers with making informed food **decisions**.



# Methodology

- Sampled from the population of U.S. adults (18+)
- All studies weighted to be nationally representative
- Conducted via web
- Statistical significance determined at the 95% confidence level
- Margin of error is +/- 3% for total sample and +/- 7% for Moms/Millennials oversample.

Study Composition	2014	2012	2010	2008
Population:	U.S. adults (18+)			
Sample:	n=1000	n=750	n=750	n=1000
Date:	Mar 28-April 7	Mar. 7-19	Apr. 5-26	July 29 – Aug. 18
Weighted on:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Race</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Marital status</li> <li>• Region</li> <li>• Income (only for 2014 and 2012)</li> </ul>			

Research firm: Market Strategies International (Livonia, Michigan)

# Key Findings



# Summary of Key Findings

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- Confidence in the safety of the U.S. food supply remains consistently high.
- Disease/contamination and handling/prep are still the most mentioned food safety concerns, but at lower levels than in past years.
- Consumers have a positive view of modern agriculture and believe biotechnology can play a role in improving multiple aspects of sustainability.
- Most Americans have heard something about food biotechnology. When discussed in terms of consumer benefits, they are primarily favorable.
- The majority of Americans still support the current FDA policy for labeling of foods produced through biotechnology.
- More consumers this year are aware that there are foods produced through biotechnology currently in the supermarket.
- Health and government organizations are the most trusted sources for information on food biotechnology, animal biotechnology, and sustainability.
- Millennials & Moms differ from the general population on several key factors.

# Confidence in Food Safety, Labeling



# Summary: Confidence in Food Safety, Labeling

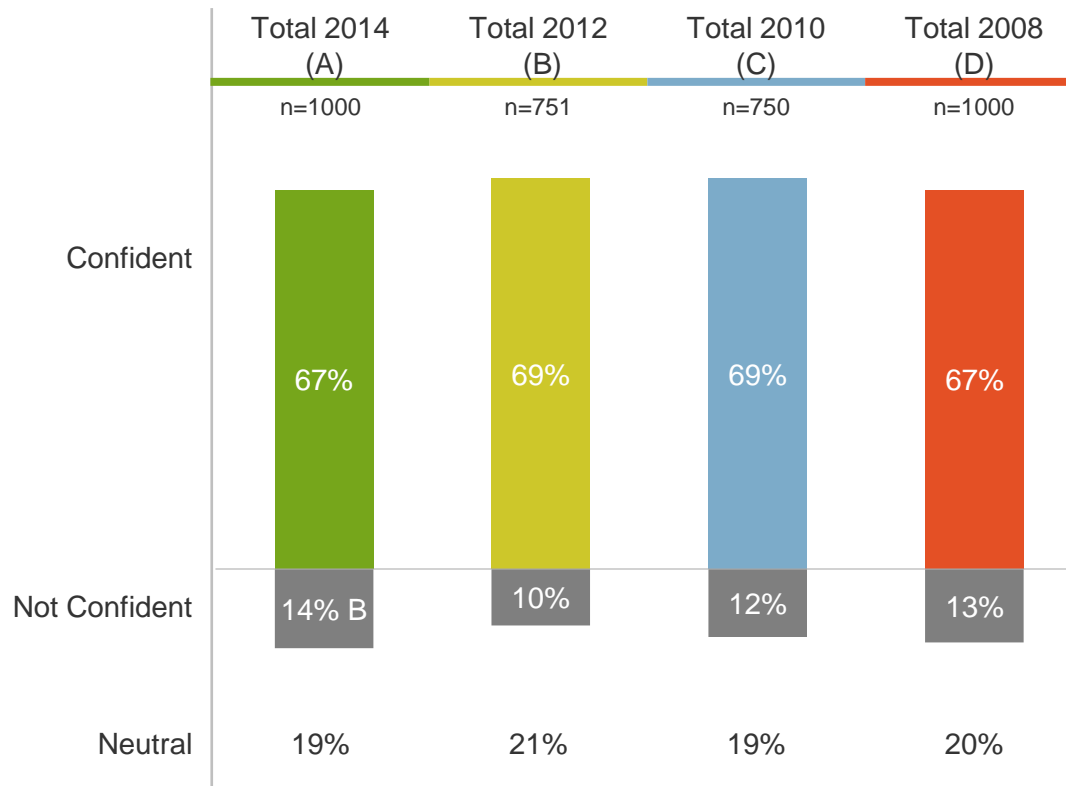
- Confidence in the safety of the U.S. food supply remains consistently high, at 67 percent.
- Disease/contamination (18 percent) and food handling/preparation (18 percent) are still the most mentioned concerns when it comes to food safety.
- Four percent of Americans want information on biotechnology on the label, higher than in previous years, but still relatively low.
- More than half of Americans (53%) say they are avoiding certain foods or ingredients, which is consistent since 2012. Sugars/Carbohydrates (30 percent) continue to be the most-cited foods people are limiting or avoiding.
- The majority of Americans (63 percent) support the current FDA policy for labeling of foods produced through biotechnology, although the percentage who oppose (19 percent) is higher than in 2012 (14 percent).
- Modern agriculture is viewed positively overall; however, four in ten Americans (39 percent) disagree that modern farms are still primarily family-run.





# Confidence in the Food Supply

- Confidence in the U.S. food supply remains consistently high since 2008.

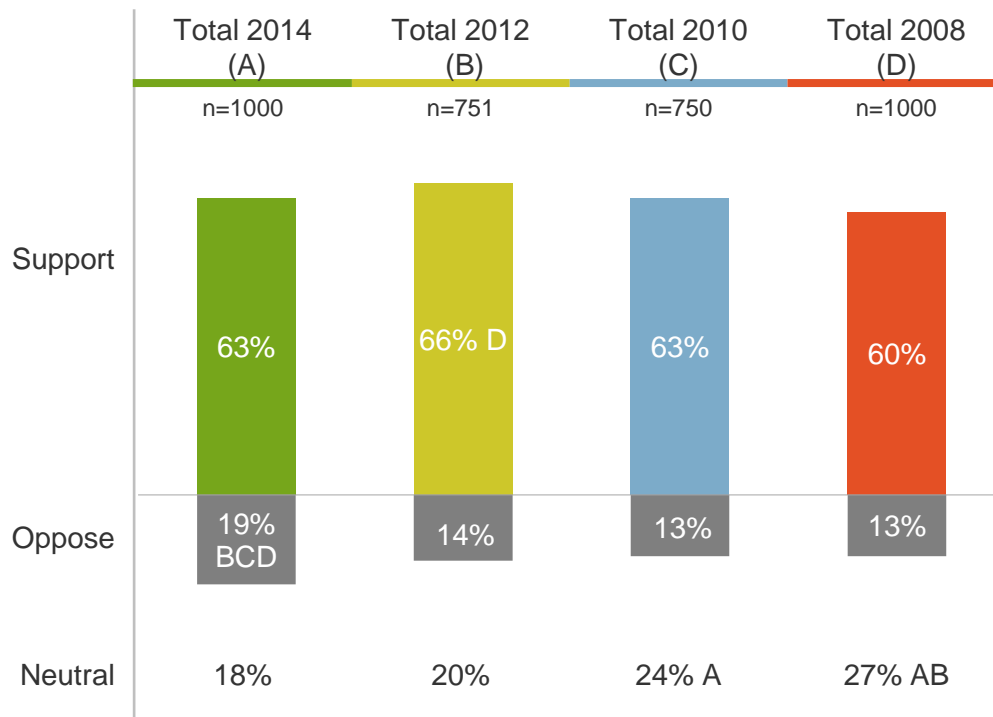


A/B/C/D indicate statistical significance between years

Q11. How confident are you about the safety of the US food supply? Would you say...?

# FDA Food Labeling

- The majority of Americans support the current FDA policy for labeling of foods produced through biotechnology, although the percentage who oppose is higher than in 2012.

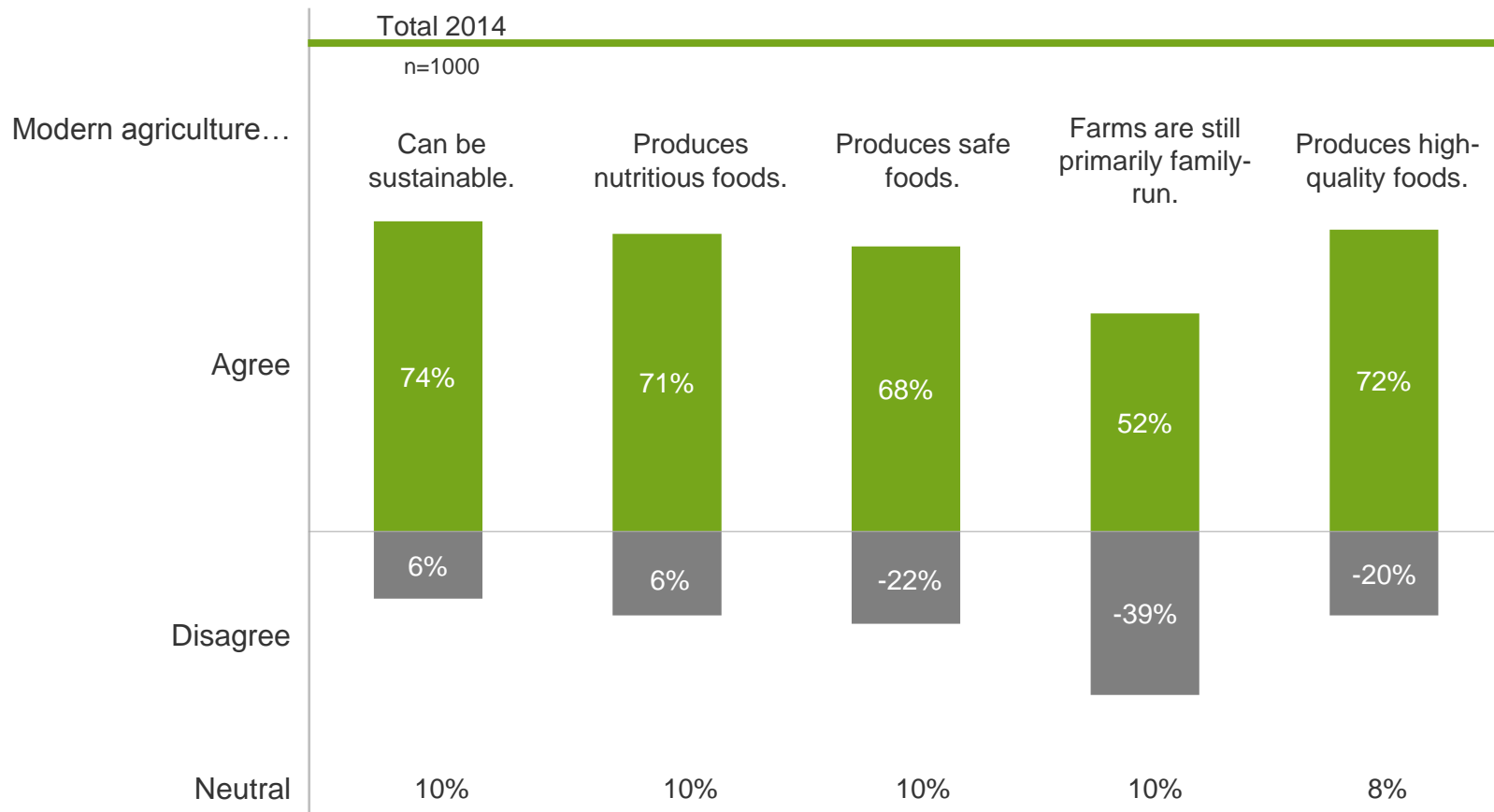


A/B/C/D indicate statistical significance between years

Q28. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires special labeling when a food is produced under certain conditions: When biotechnology's use substantially changes the food's nutritional content, like vitamins or fat, or its composition; or when a potential safety issue, such as a food allergen, is identified. Otherwise, special labeling is not required. Would you say that you support, or oppose this FDA policy?

# Modern Agriculture

- The majority of Americans have a positive view of modern agriculture, with more than seven in ten agreeing it can be sustainable and produce nutrition and high-quality foods.



PB4. In general, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about modern agriculture? (By modern agriculture, we mean conventional farming using today's modern tools and equipment.) Modern agriculture...

# Plant & Animal Biotechnology



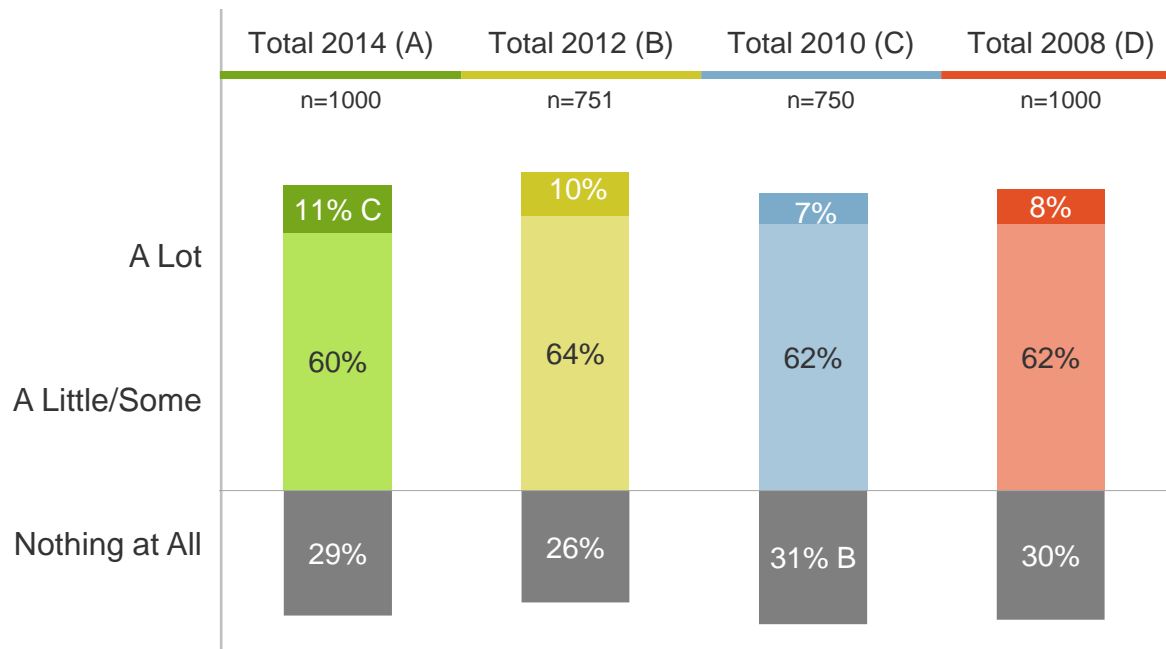
# Summary: Plant & Animal Biotechnology

- Consistent with previous years, most Americans (71 percent) have heard at least *a little* about **plant** biotechnology.
- Nearly three in ten are favorable toward plant biotechnology, with the same number being unfavorable. However, more than four in ten are neutral or don't know enough to form an opinion.
- More than two-thirds of Americans say they would be likely to buy foods modified by biotechnology to provide nutrition and health benefits, such as providing more healthful fats, like Omega-3s (72 percent) and reducing the potential for carcinogens (69 percent).
- More than half (52 percent) of Americans have heard or read at least *a little* about **animal** biotechnology.
- Favorability of animal biotechnology has remained about the same as 2012 levels, with about one-third favorable (31 percent).
- Lack of information (55 percent) and not understanding the benefits (42 percent) continue to be the primary reasons consumers cite for not having favorable impressions of animal biotechnology.



# Awareness of Food Biotechnology

- Consistent with previous years, most Americans have heard at least *a little* about food biotechnology, but only one in ten have heard or read *a lot*.



A/B/C/D indicate statistical significance between years

Q13. As you may know, some food products and medicines are being developed with the help of [OLD: new] scientific techniques. The general area is called "biotechnology" and includes tools such as genetic engineering. Biotechnology is also being used to improve crop plants. How much have you heard or read about biotechnology? Would you say you have read or heard...?

# Likelihood to Purchase Plant Biotech Foods

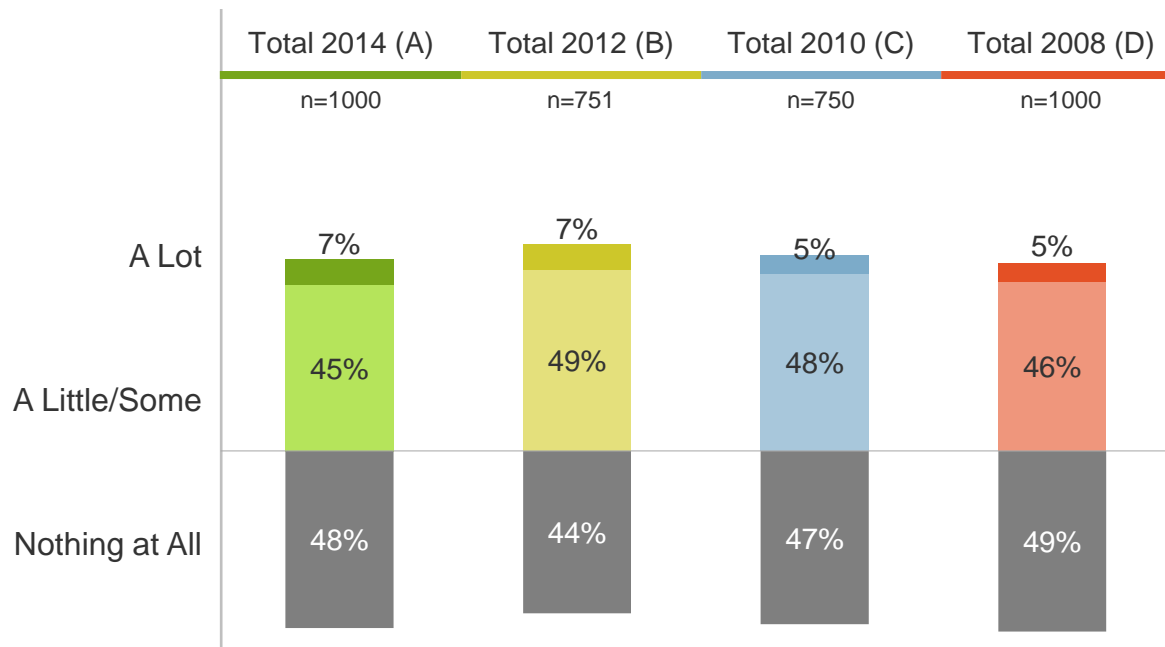
- Consumers show high interest in nutrition & health-related benefits of food biotechnology.
- Nearly three-quarters of Americans say they are likely to purchase foods made with oils modified to provide more healthful fats, such as Omega-3s.

Total 2014 (n=1000)	Not Likely	Likely
Food product made with oils modified by biotechnology to <u>provide more healthful fats</u> , like Omega-3, in the food	28%	72%
Variety of produce modified by biotechnology to <u>reduce the potential for carcinogens</u> (n=501)	31%	69%
Variety of produce modified by biotechnology to be <u>protected from insect damage and required fewer pesticide applications</u>	31%	69%
Bread, crackers, cookies, cereals, or pasta made with flour modified to <u>use less land, water, and/or pesticides</u>	31%	69%
Bread, crackers, cookies, cereals, or pasta made with flour modified to <u>enhance nutritional benefits</u>	33%	67%
Food product made with oils modified by biotechnology to <u>eliminate the trans fat content</u> in the food*	33%	67%
Variety of produce modified by biotechnology to <u>improve vitamin content</u> (n=499)	35%	65%
Variety of produce modified by biotechnology to <u>taste better or fresher</u>	42%	58%

\*Note: Wording change from 2012 - "reduce the saturated fat content"  
 A/B indicate statistical significance between years  
 PB5. Q25 Q22 Q23. All other things being equal, how likely would you be to buy...

# Awareness of Animal Biotechnology

- Consistent since 2008, more than half of Americans have heard some information on animal biotechnology.



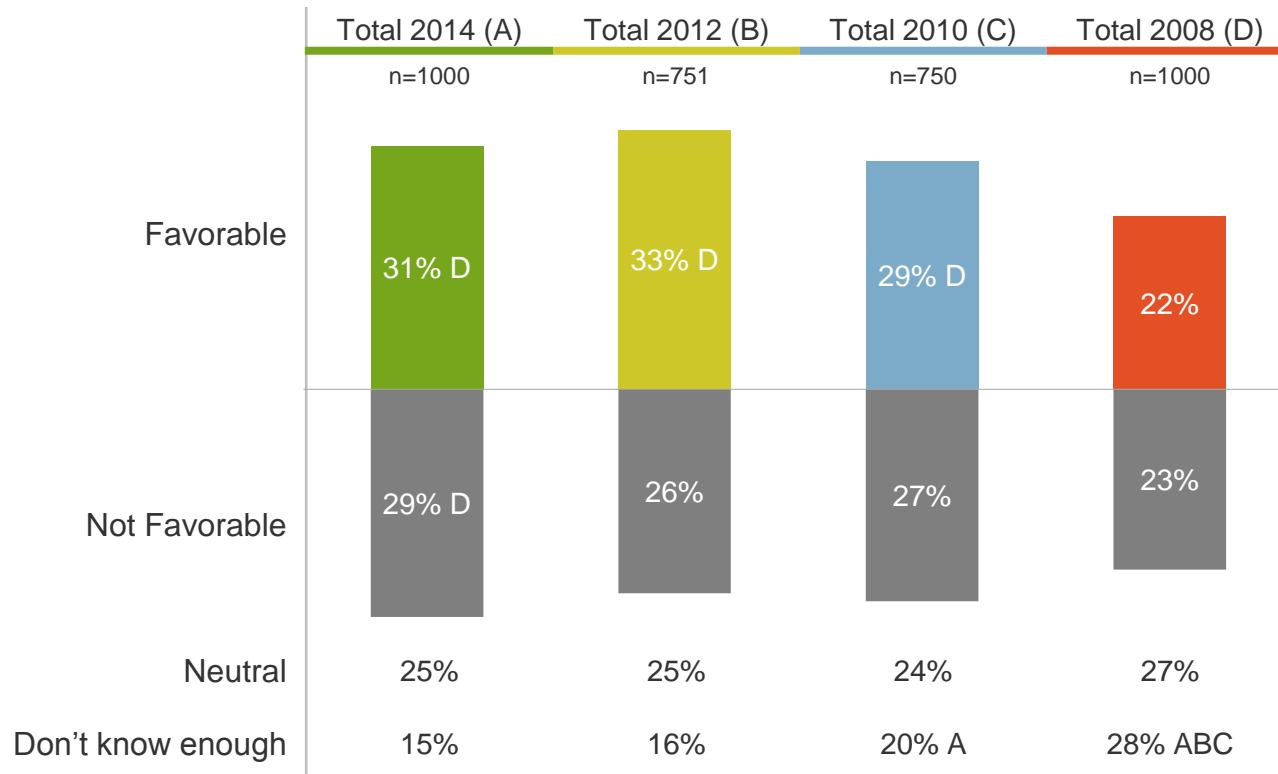
A/B/C/D indicate statistical significance between years

Q31. How much have you read or heard about applying the science of biotechnology to animals? Would you say you have heard...?



# Impressions of Animal Biotechnology

- Favorability toward animal biotechnology remains about the same as 2012 levels.



A/B/C/D indicate statistical significance between years

Q32. What is your overall impression of using biotechnology with animals that produce food products such as meat, milk, and eggs? Would you say you are...?

# Reasons “Not Favorable” Toward Animal Biotech

- “Lack of information” and “not understanding the benefits” of animal biotechnology continue to be reasons consumers cite for being *not favorable* toward animal biotechnology.

Reasons Not Favorable	Total 2014 (A) n=547	Total 2012 (B) n=381	Total 2010 (C) n=382
I don't have enough information	55%	55%	54%
I don't understand the benefits of using biotechnology with animals	42%	42%	39%
I don't eat meat or dairy products	3%	5%	3%
Other	16%	16%	23%

A/B/C indicate statistical significance between years

Q33. Why are you not favorable toward using biotechnology with animals that produce food products.?



# Sustainability



# Summary: Sustainability

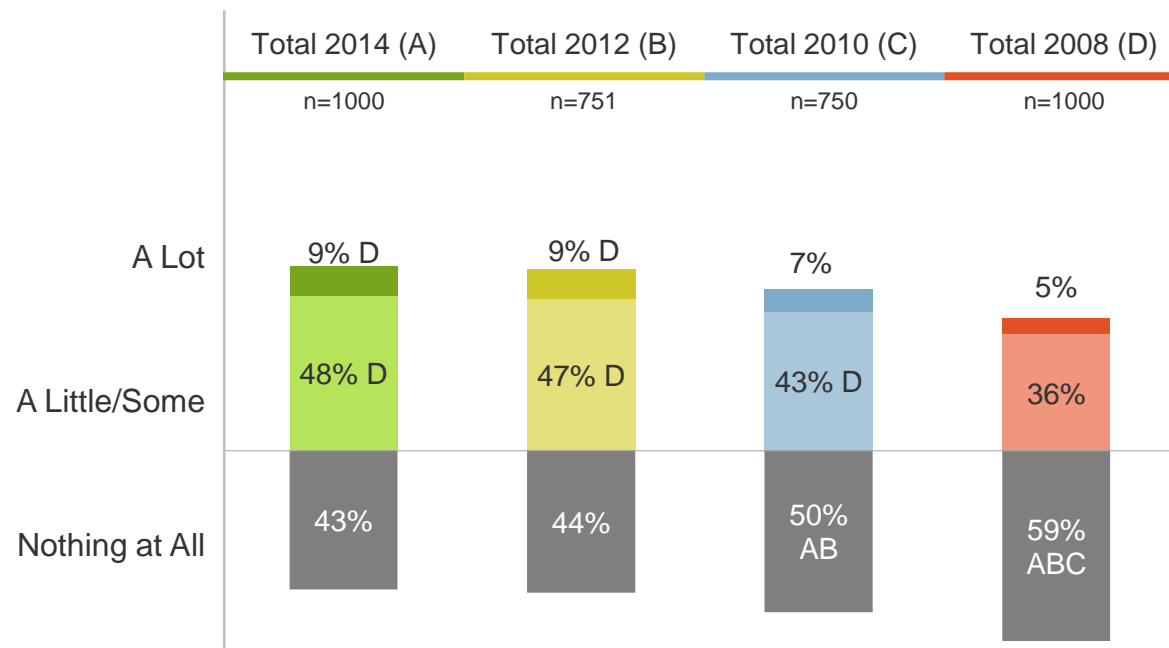
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- More than half (57 percent) of Americans have some awareness of sustainability in food production, consistent with 2012 (56 percent).
- Two-thirds of Americans (66 percent) say it is important that their foods and beverages be produced in a sustainable way.
- The aspects of sustainability most important to Americans are conserving the natural habitat (47 percent); ensuring an affordable food supply (45 percent) and ensuring a sufficient food supply for the growing global population (43 percent).
- Of those who ranked “ensuring a sufficient food supply for the growing global population” in their top three, 72% believe there is a role for biotechnology.



# Awareness of Sustainability in Food Production

- More than half of Americans have some awareness of sustainability in food production, consistent with 2012.

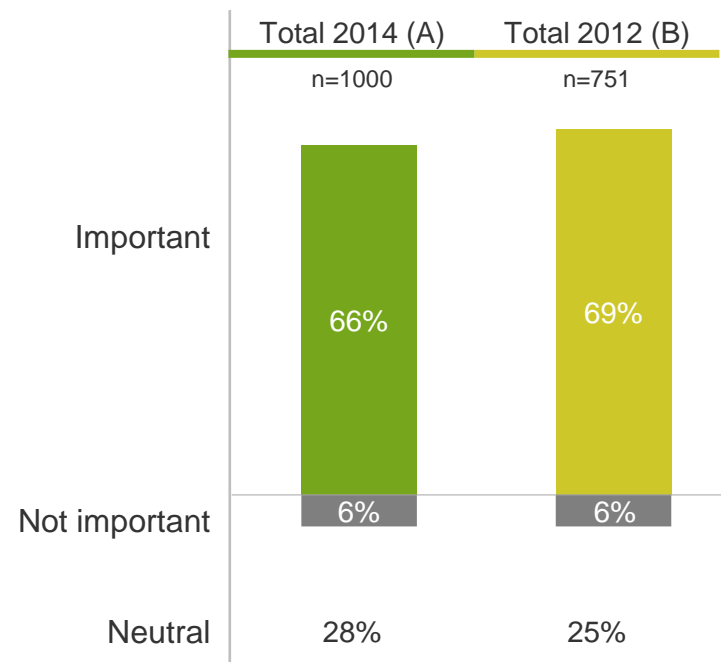


A/B/C/D indicate statistical significance between years

Q43. How much have you read or heard about the concept of sustainability in food production?

# Importance of Sustainability in Food Production

- Two-thirds of Americans say it is important their foods are produced sustainably.



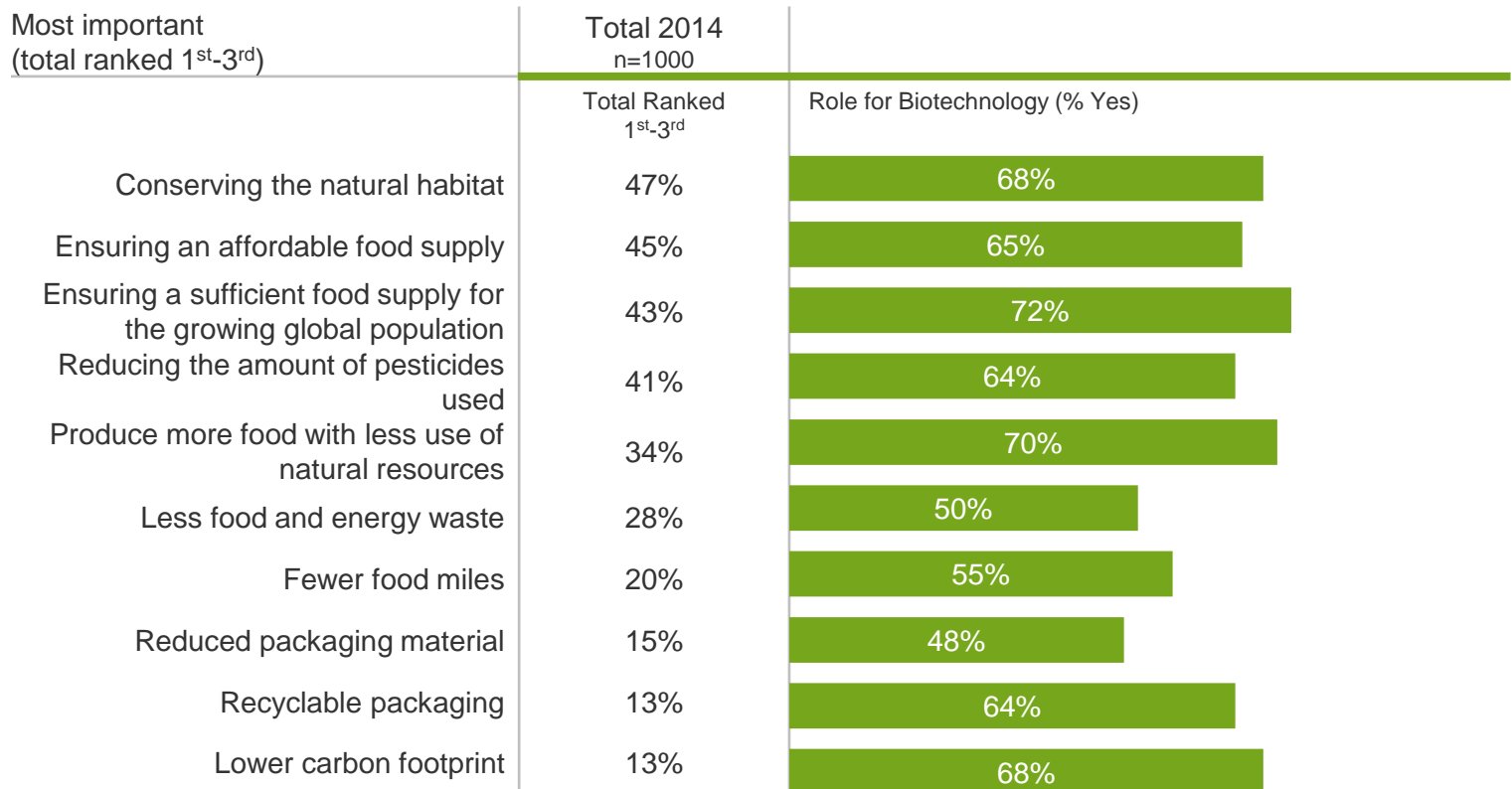
A/B indicate statistical significance between years

Q46. How important is it to you that the food products you purchase or consume are produced in a sustainable way?

Q42. What does the word "sustainability" mean to you? [OPEN END]

# Important Aspects of Sustainability

- The aspects of sustainability most important to Americans are “conserving the natural habitat” and “ensuring an affordable and sufficient food supply.”
- The majority of ranking consumers say there is a role for biotechnology in “ensuring a sufficient food supply” and “producing more food with less use of natural resources.”



Q47. Please rank the top three aspects of sustainability in order of importance to you.

SUS1. For each aspect of sustainability you selected: Do you think there is a role for biotechnology in ...

\*Note: Role for biotechnology questions are out of those that ranked the attribute in top three most important aspects of sustainability.

# Information Sources





# Summary: Trusted Sources of Information

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- Consumers trust health organizations (50 percent), government agencies (45 percent), and health professionals (45 percent) most for information regarding food biotechnology.
- Farmers (40 percent) landed in the top three most trusted sources for information on sustainability in food production this year.
- Journalists (9-10 percent), bloggers (7-8 percent), and celebrities (4-5 percent) are not as trusted for information on these topics.



**FDA**

**USDA**

# Millennials



# Summary: Millennials

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- About two in five Millennials (ages 18 to 34) want more information on food labels (39 percent), significantly higher than ages 35-54 (26 percent) and those ages 55+ (16 percent).
- Like other age groups, nutrition information is the top desired addition to food labels by Millennials (14 percent).
- Millennials are more favorable toward food biotechnology, with nearly 40 percent favorable vs. about one-quarter of other ages.
- More Millennials (15 percent) have heard “a lot” about sustainability in food production compared to other age groups (7 percent of 35-54 year olds and 5 percent of 55+).
- Two-fifths of Millennials (43 percent) are willing to pay more for sustainable foods and beverages, higher than other age groups (26 percent of 35-54 year olds and 16 percent of ages 55+).
- One in three Millennials (29 percent) say they have increased their purchasing of sustainable foods and beverages in the last year, higher than 35 to 54-year-olds (14 percent) and 55+ (7 percent).

# Moms



# Summary: Moms

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- Four out of ten moms say they want more information on food labels, a significantly higher percentage than non-moms.
- Among moms, ingredient information (10 percent) is the top-mentioned desired addition to food.
- Awareness of food biotechnology is higher among moms than non-moms, with 18 percent having read or heard “a lot” about food biotechnology vs. nine percent of non-moms
- Four out of five moms (77 percent) would be likely to purchase foods made with oils modified by biotechnology to eliminate *trans* fat content of foods, compared with 64 percent of non-moms.
- More than one-third of moms (35 percent) are willing to pay more for sustainable foods and beverages vs. one-quarter of non-moms (24 percent).
- Moms are more likely to say they have increased purchasing of sustainable foods and beverages in the last year (26 percent) compared to non-moms (13 percent).





# For more information, visit

[www.foodinsight.org](http://www.foodinsight.org)



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