

Farm Sustainability Top of Mind for Consumers Making Food Choices

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Six Food Trends to Watch

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Buyers want to support businesses they believe are sustainable and focused on regenerative agriculture. (DTN/Progressive Farmer file photo by Rob Lagerstrom)

A lot of people in agriculture may still be working to fully define "sustainability," but according to a new report on consumer buying trends, the word is already a significant driver when it comes to food choices.

Food and beverage consulting company the Hartman Group just released a report on consumer trends for 2022. These trends, the group believes, will inform food choices moving forward.

Laurie Demeritt, CEO of The Hartman Group, noted they are seeing more importance placed on personalized and customized dietary approaches, as well as deepening connections seen by consumers between health and wellness, environmental sustainability, social justice and their own food and beverage consumption.

The report noted six key trends to watch this year.

1. **Regenerative Systems and Agriculture.** Hartman Group analysts reported that consumer awareness of the sustainability challenges of modern agriculture is spreading. Within the regenerative umbrella, the analysts noted that consumers are looking at big-picture issues like climate change, soil health and soil fertility.
2. **Gut Health Nexus.** Consumers are increasingly aware of the microbiome of the gut as the root of all wellness and its connection to mental well-being and immunity.
3. **Plastic.** Innovative packaging solutions that are plastic neutral is a growing area of interest, with consumers looking for ways to reduce their plastic footprint.
4. **Experience Retail.** This trend stresses the importance of exceeding consumer expectations in what the report calls "today's shoppable universe." It notes that "experience retail" prioritizes discovery and engagement.

5. Upcycled and Equitable. Direct, ethically sourced products are increasingly important to consumers who see them as a way to restore ecosystems, mitigate climate change and reduce food waste.

6. Future Nostalgia. Upgrading childhood food and beverage favorites to provide "playful throwbacks" that still align with modern values around health, sustainability and social issues is another key trend.

Demeritt said companies that can successfully leverage these trends will be able to stand out and secure future growth.

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