

Talking Local: Florida Consumers' *Fresh from Florida* Perceptions¹

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As the final publication of the Talking Local series, this EDIS publication focuses on Florida consumer perceptions of *Fresh from Florida*. *Fresh from Florida* is a program administered by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), which aims to advertise and promote Florida products (FDACS 2013). This Talking Local publication series focuses on ways Extension agents can assist Florida farmers and ranchers in the labeling, sale, and promotion of locally produced products. The Talking Local series provides Extension faculty who are interested in local food programming or who work with local food clientele with information about Florida consumers' perceptions of local food. The following publications are included in the Talking Local series:

- [Talking Local: Florida Consumer Definitions of Local Food](#)
- [Talking Local: Florida Consumers' Local Food Purchasing Behaviors](#)
- [Talking Local: Florida Consumers' Reasons for Purchasing Local Food](#)
- [Talking Local: Florida Consumers' Food Buying Decisions when Given Local Food Information](#)
- [Talking Local: Florida Consumers' Flexibility with the Term "Local"](#)
- [Talking Local: Florida Consumers' Fresh from Florida Perceptions](#)

Introduction to Local Food

Consumer demand for and interest in locally grown foods has significantly increased in recent years (Conner et al. 2009). As individuals and organizations continue to make decisions about how and why they purchase or eat particular foods (Coit 2008), a need has developed to further expand localized consumer markets (Zepada and Li 2009). Local food plays a large role in Florida agriculture; in 2011–2012 the local food industry contributed \$8.3 billion to the state's economy (Hodges and Stevens 2013).

In response to growing consumer interest in local foods and its impact on Florida agriculture, the UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education conducted a study to explore consumers' perceptions of local food. For a more comprehensive understanding of consumers' perceptions, a series of 10 focus groups was conducted, with two taking place in each of Florida's Extension Administrative Districts. A total of 93 participants were involved in the study, which included participants from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, occupations, and ages. Focus groups are not generalizable beyond those who participate in the study.

Introduction to *Fresh from Florida*

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services established the Florida Agricultural Promotional Campaign, which is signified by the *Fresh from Florida* logo

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(Figure 1), in an effort to brand Florida-grown, -raised, -harvested, or -produced products (FDACS 2013). The campaign was established to increase consumer awareness of Florida agriculture as well as promote the sales of Florida products (FDACS 2013). Understanding consumer perceptions of the *Fresh from Florida* campaign, as well as their recommendations for improvements on the program, will benefit Extension faculty as well as large and small producers. Not only will these client bases have a better understanding of ways consumers identify growing locations of products, but these consumer perceptions also will provide insight into logo designs.



Figure 1. *Fresh from Florida* logo
Credits: Logo courtesy Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Fresh from Florida

Consumers were shown the *Fresh from Florida* logo (Figure 1) and asked to discuss whether or not they recognized the logo. Consumers were asked a variety of questions about the *Fresh from Florida* logo, including the components of the logo, the state pride they associated with the logo, the attributes of food with the *Fresh from Florida* logo, and the products they associated with the *Fresh from Florida* logo.

LOGO RECOGNITION

Consumers discussed a moderate level of logo recognition after being shown the *Fresh from Florida* logo. Consumers discussed recognizing the logo although they could not place where they had seen it. One Northeast Florida

consumer said, “It’s more of a general sense of logo identification. Yes, I’ve seen this; I cannot definitively say what I’ve seen it on.” Some consumers also discussed never seeing the logo before. One Central Florida consumer said, “I’ve never noticed it.”

LOGO COMPONENTS

Consumers discussed the individual components of the logo. Overall consumers had a favorable attitude toward the logo and discussed each component of the logo. Consumers discussed the logo as portraying a Florida lifestyle. One Northwest Florida consumer said, “You also think of the three major, among the major resources of Florida; green being the land, blue being the water and of course, the sunshine. All leading to a higher quality of life.”

STATE PRIDE

Consumers connected a sense of state pride to the logo. Consumers discussed ownership associated with the state of Florida and taking interest in Florida products. A Northeast Florida consumer said, “Well, I was sort of sitting here thinking about that, like we own this product. When she asked why, I had to say that because I also think of, like, it’s in our backyard and our backdoor.” Consumers also discussed a preference for Florida products; a Northeast Florida consumer said, “I’m a Florida baby, I love anything that’s fresh from here.”

ATTRIBUTES OF FOOD WITH THE FRESH FROM FLORIDA LOGO

Consumers mentioned that food with the *Fresh from Florida* logo would have several different attributes, including healthfulness, quality, localness, and freshness. Consumers discussed the quality of *Fresh from Florida* products being superior due to the reputation of Florida agricultural products. One Northeast Florida consumer said, “I know if it says *Fresh from Florida* it’s gonna be a quality product.” Consumers discussed the expectation that food with this logo would be local. A South Central Florida consumer said they would expect it to be “better tasting.”

FOODS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LOGO

Consumers who had seen the *Fresh from Florida* logo before the focus groups discussed several types of food products on which they had seen the logo. The food products discussed included fruits, vegetables, and seafood. A Northeast Florida consumer discussed connecting the logo directly to fruits and said, “I’d say, I’d definitely only associate it with fruits, not with other produce.” Another Central Florida consumer said, “It does seem to imply vegetables and fruit.” Consumers then discussed the

increased use of the logo with seafood products following the oil spill. A South Florida consumer said, “It seemed like this logo started turning up a lot after the BP oil [saying] that ‘Florida is ready and we are open for business and our seafood is good and everything is just fine, so come on down.’ I think that is when I remember seeing it.”

No participant in the discussion mentioned dairy, meat, processed products, or baked goods. Consumers discussed not knowing if the logo could be found on other types of products and one Northwest Florida consumer asked, “Does it go on anything else besides produce?... Does anybody know?”

Fresh from Florida Decision Making

Consumers then were asked to discuss the *Fresh from Florida* logo and whether or not its presence on a product would affect their purchasing decisions. Consumers were split, with some indicating they would purchase *Fresh from Florida* products over other products while others indicated that the logo had no impact on their decision.

BUYING FRESH FROM FLORIDA OVER NON-LOCAL

Consumers discussed whether, if given the choice, they would select products with the *Fresh from Florida* logo or label instead of non-local products, including products coming from other countries.

Consumers discussed their preference to purchase local foods when available in the grocery store, especially when given the choice. One South Florida consumer said, “I would be inclined to buy more locally, if I had the choice in the grocery store.” Consumers continued their discussion of this topic, and one South Florida consumer said, “Well, I think if I had a choice, and, like, I was saying domestic versus international, if I had California strawberries versus *Fresh from Florida* strawberries, I would probably pick the Florida ones.”

Consumers continued to discuss their preference for *Fresh from Florida* products and their willingness to pay more money for products grown in Florida over products grown in another country. One Northeast Florida consumer said, “Well, I mean if I’m in the supermarket and I have a choice, and if I saw *Fresh from Florida* and something over here from Mexico, I would you know, even if it was a little more money, I’m not talking about dollars more but you know, a little bit more money, I would chose *Fresh from Florida*.”

NO IMPACT ON PURCHASING DECISIONS

Some consumers discussed the *Fresh from Florida* logo having no impact on their purchasing decisions. Consumers discussed not paying attention to the country of origin or paying attention to other factors when making purchasing decisions. One South Florida consumer said, “Really, when I go to the store to shop I usually look at it to see if it is fresh, to make sure the date is not expired, and I look at prices pretty much, regardless of if it is from Florida, or wherever else, it doesn’t really matter, most of the time.”

Does Fresh from Florida Equate to Local?

Following their discussion of the *Fresh from Florida* logo, consumers were asked to discuss if they would consider anything with the *Fresh from Florida* logo on it as being local. Some consumers discussed recognizing the logo as local; however, some consumers discussed considering food with the logo as from the state, but not necessarily local to them.

FRESH FROM FLORIDA IS LOCAL TO THE CONSUMER

Consumers discussed considering any foods with the *Fresh from Florida* logo on them as being local. Consumers discussed the entire state of Florida being local. One South Florida consumer said, “Well, if they are not lying about the wording, it says *Fresh from Florida*, and I consider the whole of Florida as local.” Consumers continued to discuss any products from the state of Florida as being local, and one Central Florida consumer said, “I would give them the benefit of the doubt, anything from Florida, I’ll consider local.”

FRESH FROM FLORIDA IS LOCAL ONLY TO THE STATE

Consumers discussed considering *Fresh from Florida* products as being local to the state, but not necessarily to themselves. Consumers discussed their varied definitions of local; some consumers did not consider the entire state of Florida to be local. A South Florida consumer said, “I don’t necessarily think that from Florida is local.” This consumer continued, “Having that on there doesn’t exclude it, but it doesn’t mean it’s local.”

Opportunities for Extension Agents/Programming

In general, the *Fresh from Florida* campaign was thought well of, evoking both a sense of state pride associated with Florida products and the high quality associated with

Florida-grown products. Sometimes consumers expressed preference for Florida-grown products over non-Florida grown products. The consumer perceptions of the *Fresh from Florida* campaign can be used to guide Extension programming.

- **Encourage producer clientele to utilize *Fresh from Florida*.** While not all consumers indicated the *Fresh from Florida* logo would impact their decision, a large number of consumers would purchase food with the Fresh from Florida logo on it. Extension should encourage producer clientele to take advantage of the *Fresh from Florida* logo and incorporate it in their product labeling when possible. The logo is more easily recognizable than small print indicating the growing location. In addition, incorporation of the logo into the label ensures that the product is always labeled correctly at the point of sale. As more producers adopt *Fresh from Florida* the brand will become more recognizable among consumers, further increasing the consumers' identification with and preference for Florida-grown or Florida-produced food. Extension should seek opportunities to partner with FDACS to develop and incorporate *Fresh from Florida* information into existing programming for producers. For more information on how to sign up for the *Fresh from Florida* program, visit the *Fresh from Florida* website at <http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Marketing-and-Development/Agriculture-Industry/Join-Fresh-From-Florida/Sign-Up-For-Fresh-From-Florida>.
- **Increase awareness of *Fresh from Florida* among consumer clientele.** As seen in the focus group results, some consumers did not recognize the *Fresh from Florida* logo. Extension can help to increase the recognition of *Fresh from Florida* by utilizing *Fresh from Florida* products in cooking demonstrations and specifically highlighting the labeling or origin of the food and by partnering with FDACS to obtain materials about the *Fresh from Florida* program and products to pass out to consumer clientele. Information about *Fresh from Florida* also may be appropriate in nutrition, economic, and other food or gardening programs. By familiarizing consumer clientele with the *Fresh from Florida* products, logo, and information, Extension can help to promote Florida-grown products.

In Summary

Florida consumers had moderate recognition of the *Fresh from Florida* logo and most strongly identified it with fruits, vegetables, and seafood products. Consumers consider some products with the *Fresh from Florida* logo to be local,

especially to the State of Florida, although not necessarily to them personally. Consumers indicate some preference for Florida products and a sense of state pride associated with Florida-grown products. Producers and Extension agents alike can work in almost all areas to raise awareness of the *Fresh from Florida* campaign to help promote foods and products from the state.

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