Abstract. Produce occupation groups were found to have higher reported knowledge and consumption levels than a consumer group for both common and specialty produce items. However, overall knowledge and consumption was low for both groups, indicating a need for more information and education on specialty produce items throughout the produce distribution pipeline and for the general consumer.

Increased fruit and vegetable consumption is suggested in the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, revised 1983, to decrease the percentage of fat in the diet and increase the levels of vitamin A, C, folic acid and fiber (1). The degree of adherence to these recommendations by members of the food distribution system have not been reported.

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SPECIALTY PRODUCE KNOWLEDGE IN THE INDUSTRY

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With increased sophistication in transportation, no world growing areas are beyond 2-3 days of the American market place making the variety of produce available independent of season or local growing conditions. One nation-wide grocery chain stated that on the average, they have in their stores nearly 400 different produce items year-round. These items contribute a variety of nutrients. Data from USDA Food Composition tables indicate that many of the “newer” fruits and vegetables such as guavas, mangos, and papayas are higher in vitamin C and vitamin A than other commonly purchased fruits such as apples and bananas (2). The potential increase in nutrients may be of benefit if these items were or could be purchased by the consumer.

From the producers’ standpoint, low levels of consumer produce purchasing equates to under-consumption and potentially low profit margins for fruit and vegetable production operations. Unfortunately, few consumers have the luxury of buying produce directly from the grower. Consumers must depend upon shippers, retail buyers, and