



# CONSUMER ATTITUDES

ABOUT NUTRITION

INSIGHTS INTO  
NUTRITION,  
HEALTH &  
SOYFOODS



NATIONAL  
REPORT  
2004-2005





# 11<sup>th</sup> eleventh annual survey

This 11th annual nationwide survey provides vital information on consumer attitudes and perceptions about health and nutrition issues. Sponsored by the United Soybean Board (USB), this report takes an in-depth look at:

- Nutrition attitudes and their effect on purchasing decisions
- Consumer awareness of health benefits regarding soy products
- Attitudes about different types of fat
- Perceptions of biotech ingredients and labeling
- Awareness, use and knowledge of organic food products
- Nutritional habits and obesity concerns

Conducted by an independent research firm, the study includes 1,000 random telephone interviews, providing a sample that is consistent with the total American population. The study's margin of error is +/- 1.9 to 3.1 percentage points and has a confidence interval of 95 percent.

USB serves as a resource for soybean-related educational materials. Healthcare and food professionals can utilize this study and other USB resources when making decisions on consumer nutrition. To view soy-specific materials, including up-to-date health research, recipes and the Soy Connection newsletter, please visit USB's Web site at [www.talksoy.com](http://www.talksoy.com).



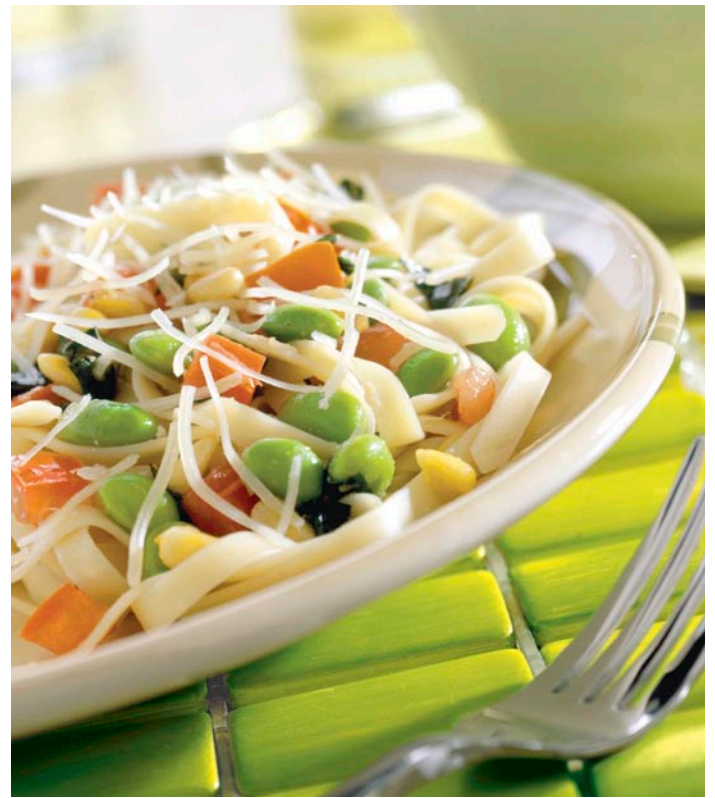
## Nutritional Habits and Obesity Concerns

In 2004, consistent with the past six years, nearly nine out of 10 consumers remain somewhat or very concerned about the nutritional content of food. This year, 74 percent of consumers claimed to have changed their eating habits due to health or nutrition concerns, which is a four percentage point increase from 2003.

Despite this consumer concern, the Centers for Disease Control state that obesity surpassed tobacco this past year as the number one cause of death in regard to preventable disease. Almost 130 million Americans are overweight or obese, reaching 64 percent of the nation's population. This year the tables turned as more consumers, 36 percent, considered the individual responsible for their obesity while 29 percent still blame the fast food industry. Other perceived causes for obesity include not enough exercise (19 percent), overeating (16 percent), too much fat in the diet (six percent), portion size (four percent) and sugar intake (three percent).

*Significantly more consumers than in 2003 say individuals are responsible for their own health, and significantly fewer blame the fast food industry for America's obesity.*

Over 60 percent agree that consuming soy-based foods can play a role in reducing obesity while three-quarters of all surveyed agree soy products are healthy.



### CAUSES OF OBESITY IN AMERICA



## Healthy Food Decisions

Eighty-eight percent of consumers consider the Nutrition Facts Label important when deciding which foods to buy, yet 56 percent of respondents say health and nutrition information is too confusing.

Customer willingness to pay more for healthier versions of foods dropped for the first time in five years from 72 to 68 percent. In regard to dieting, only 17 percent said they participated in a weight loss program, while 51 percent say they look for foods low in carbohydrate.

*Nine in ten consumers agree nutrition information is a big help when looking for healthy foods. But, over half agree nutrition information is too confusing.*



## Cooking Oil Impressions

Consumers continue to recognize olive oil (91 percent) and soybean oil (87 percent) as the two healthiest oils. Sunflower and canola oil tie for third at 82 percent followed by safflower (79 percent) and corn oil (67 percent). Yet, when respondents were asked which nutritional benefits they associated with soybean oil, less than 10 percent could name mono- and polyunsaturated fats and no cholesterol. Sixteen percent named other benefits, while 68 percent did not know the specific health benefits of soybean oil.

## Consumer Attitudes About Fats

Consumers continue to be confused about the health profile of different fats. Similar to last year, half of the respondents still deem polyunsaturated fats (53 percent) and monounsaturated fats (49 percent) unhealthy, not aware that these are important and necessary fats for the body. However, 86 percent correctly report saturated fats as unhealthy. Sixty-six percent of consumers view *trans* fatty acids as unhealthy, which is a 13 percentage point increase from last year. In regard to the perception of Omega-3 fatty acids, a mere 48 percent of U.S. consumers recognize these nutrients as healthy.

Significantly more consumers than in 2003 recall recent media coverage of *trans* fatty acids. Awareness of coverage increased from 22 to 28 percent with one-half unable to recall what the coverage was about, and one-fifth having a general recall about unhealthiness.

*Consumers appear more confident about their perceptions of how healthy various types of fats are, as fewer consumers say they don't know whether a fat is healthy or unhealthy.*

Over half of consumers rate hydrogenated vegetable oils somewhat or very unhealthy, unchanged over the past several years. Over one-half of consumers rate it somewhat or very unlikely that they would buy foods with hydrogenated vegetable oil in the ingredients list, on par with 2003. Consumers continue to say *trans* fatty acids are healthier than saturated fats, although those who now say saturated fats are healthier increased by two points this year.



## Awareness, Usage and Trial of Soy Products

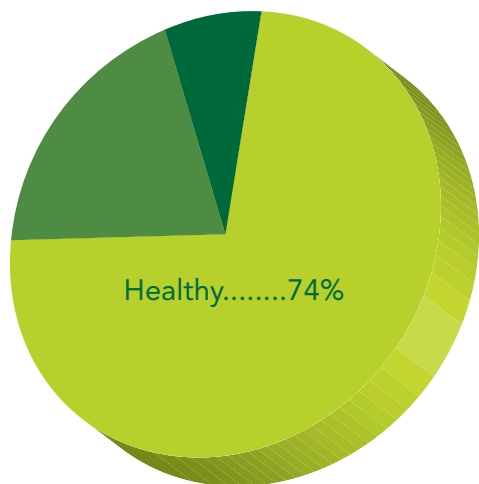
Overall consumer awareness of soy products increased this year. Soymilk's awareness rating stepped up to 90 percent while regular use of soymilk held fairly steady at 16 percent. Compared to 2003, significantly more consumers are aware of dried or canned soybeans (13 percent). The regular consumption of soy nuts increased to six percent while fewer consumers surveyed this year consume soy burgers.

One-quarter of Americans consume soyfoods or soy beverages once a week or more, consistent with last year's results. However, respondents who never consume soy products increased by five points this year, totalling 38 percent. Among those who do not consume soy, 37 percent report that nothing in particular prevents them from including soy in their diet. Consistent with the last several years, 18 percent said taste prevents incorporating soy in their diet.

# Soyfoods and Health

Most U.S. consumers perceive soy products as healthy (74 percent). More females (44 percent) than males (28 percent) stated soy might provide a healthy addition to their diet. This knowledge encouraged 27 percent of consumers to seek out products that specifically contain soy.

## PERCEIVED HEALTHINESS OF SOY PRODUCTS



Neutral ..... 19%  
Unhealthy ..... 7%

Thirty-nine percent of those surveyed recognized awareness of specific health benefits gained by including soy in their diet. Similar to last year, 29 percent of consumers on an unaided basis reported awareness that soy is good for the heart.

Twenty-one percent of the women aware of soy's health benefits reported awareness that soy might relieve menopause symptoms. Many menopausal and post-menopausal women sought out soy as a natural alternative to Hormone Replacement Therapy in 2003 following the cancellation of the

## AWARENESS OF HEALTH BENEFITS OF SOY



National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health clinical trial. The trial found HRT may increase the risk of breast cancer, coronary heart disease, stroke and pulmonary embolism.

*Three-quarters  
of consumers rate  
soy products healthy.*

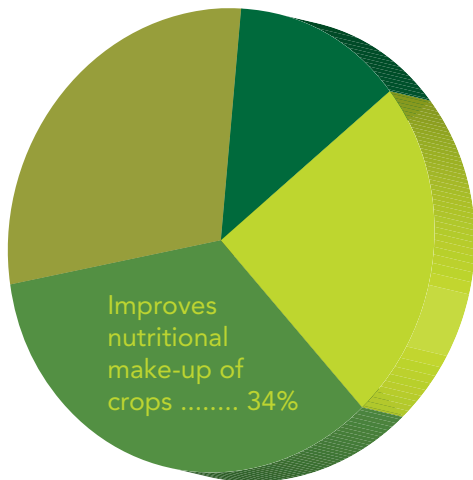
Most consumers read about soy health news in magazines and newspapers (50 percent), while 10 percent received information from friends and family.

## Consumer Perceptions of Biotech Food

Thirty-nine percent of consumers consider themselves at least somewhat familiar with biotechnology and, of this group, 65 percent carry a positive perception of its role in agriculture. This positive perception is held fairly equally by men (66 percent) and women (64 percent).

Over one-third of consumers somewhat familiar with the term biotechnology feel that its role within agriculture is to improve the nutritional make-up of crops, while one-quarter don't know enough about biotechnology to say what role it plays. Thirteen percent think that biotechnology allows farmers to use fewer pesticides, herbicides and toxins.

### CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF BIOTECHNOLOGY

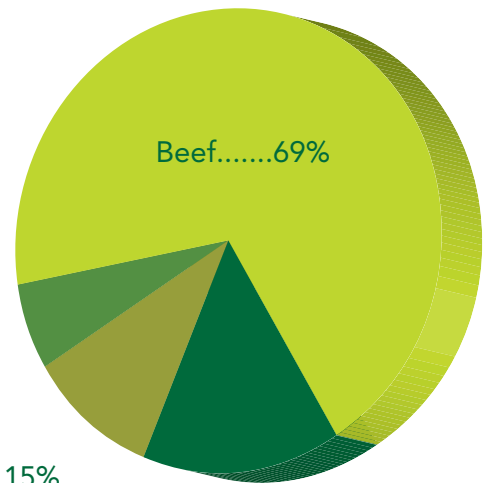


Allows farmers to use fewer pesticides, herbicides and toxins .....13%

Positive perception but doesn't know specific benefits .....24%

Other .....29%

### TYPE OF MEAT PREFERRED TO BLEND WITH SOY



Turkey....15%

Other....10%

Chicken...6%

## Soy Meets Beef?

A new question added to the survey this year reveals overwhelming consumer interest in a ground meat/soy product. Of the 56 percent who were interested, nearly 70 percent would prefer beef as the type of meat to blend with soy.

### CONSUMERS INTERESTED IN BLENDED MEAT/SOY PRODUCT

Somewhat Interested	36%
Very Interested	15%
Extremely Interested	5%



A farmer-led organization comprised of 62 farmer-directors, the United Soybean Board oversees the investments of the soybean checkoff on behalf of all U.S. soybean farmers. For more information, please visit: [www.talksoy.com](http://www.talksoy.com)

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