The Impact of Real Food Labeling on Student Food Choice Behaviors and Attitudes

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ABSTRACT

Real Food is a growing movement of 42 American colleges and universities on 72 campuses, including the University of Utah, pledging to serve 20 percent Real Food by the year 2020. Real Food is locally, humanely, fairly, and ecologically-sound food that is produced and consumed within a values-based food economy. This study developed and tested labeling of local, humane, fair, and ecologically-sound food, which allow students to identify and choose Real Food. Qualifying Real Food products were catalogued by calculating product invoices with Real Food criteria and identifying availability at select on-campus dining locations where Real Food labels were piloted. Labeling Real Food was in cooperation with University Dining Services and Chartwells, the institutional service provider. To sample the U of U’s diverse population of 30,000 students, classrooms near campus dining locations were surveyed with pre- and post-labeling questionnaires. This participant sample is comprised of students in varied disciplines: Computer Science, Entertainment Arts & Engineering, Film, and Health Promotion & Education. Focus groups were conducted with university-sponsored social and multicultural student organizations. This study is important as the first study of humane and fair food on an American college campus and for understanding attitude and behavior outcomes surrounding local, humane, fair, and/or ecologically-sound food.