

# Over 50s are greenest when it comes to buying British grown fruit and veg

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An independent survey by the British Market Research Bureau (BMRB) shows that buyers of fruit and veg are largely unaware of the environmental impact of buying imported foods, and that the majority of shoppers (61%) are unconcerned about which country their fruit and veg has come from.

The over 50s seem to be more environmentally savvy than their younger counterparts, with a greater understanding of seasonality and propensity to "buy British". Only 29% of 25-34s are aware of the concept of food miles compared with 42% of over 50s. Only 32% of 25-34s regularly or always buy food grown in Britain, compared with 54% among the over 50s. A quarter of shoppers do not know whether or not their fruit and veg is grown in Britain.

While the supermarkets have extended their ranges of organic produce, and developed new initiatives such as stocking "locally fruit" and reducing food packaging, it is worth noting that 58% of shoppers blame the supermarkets for a lack of British grown food in the shops. 75% of shoppers say they would buy more British grown food if it was available, and 35% would be prepared to pay more for it.

Commenting on the findings, Paul Green, Head of Communications, Saga said, "Today's over 50s are savvy consumers, they know what good food looks like and tastes like. They know that British local produced food not only tastes better but is also good for the environment - not because of any nostalgic or romantic notions, but because they are wiser and more experienced".

### Shopping Habits

96% of all adults buy fresh fruit and veg and 89% of these shoppers do so least once a week. The main outlet is the supermarkets - 94% of all shoppers buy their fruit and veg there. Although farmers markets are growing in popularity, they still only attract 13% of shoppers.

The majority of shoppers (61%) are not concerned about which country their fruit and veg has come from "only 9% would consider themselves "very concerned" with 30% "fairly concerned". Concern is markedly higher among over 50s (50% very or fairly concerned) compared with 25-34 year olds (36%) and 16-24s (24%).

### Environmental Concerns

There seems to be limited environmental awareness when it comes to food shopping. Only 36% of shoppers are aware of the concept of food miles "this rises to 42% among over 50s.

When presented with a choice of options "around half (52%) thought the UK should import less food so the environment is damaged less, even if this means there is less variety in the shops and food costs more. (This rises to 64% among over 50s compared with 42% of 16-34s).

But nearly a quarter (23%) took the less environmentally friendly view that the UK should maintain or increase imports of food to maintain variety in the shops and keep costs as low as possible, even if this is more damaging to the environment. (Only 18% of over 50s held this view).

### Buying British

Only 38% of shoppers regularly buy British grown fruit and veg. Again, the over 50s are much more likely to do so (54%) than 25-34 year olds (32%).

However, many shoppers are ignorant of the country of origin of their fruit and veg "nearly a quarter of all shoppers (24%) don't know if the food they buy is grown in Britain or not. This rises to 27% among 25-34s and 43% among 16-25 year olds, but is much lower among the over 50s (8%).

75% of shoppers say they would buy more British grown food if it was available, and 35% would be prepared to pay more for British grown fruit and veg that is in season.

58% of shoppers believe the main reason there is not more British-produced food in the shops is that the big supermarkets do not do enough to support small British food producers. This figure rises to more than two-thirds of over 50s (68%).

More than a quarter of shoppers (26%) believe the main reason there is not more British-produced food in the shops is that British food costs too much.

#### Gardening

One of reasons that the over 50s seem to be more knowledgeable regarding food seasonality is that they are more likely to own a garden and grow their own fruit and veg. According to BMRB's TGI survey nearly a third of all over 50s (32%) grow their own fruit or vegetables compared with just 16% among the 16-24 and 25-34 age groups.

“There appears to be a long way to go to improve awareness and educate younger age groups on the environmental issues around importing food and the benefits of growing their own fruit and vegetables. However, as awareness improves I'm sure demand for British grown produce will rise, which will provide an interesting opportunity for the supermarkets” • Steve Cooke Marketing Director, BMRB.