

CMD 501

501 - Determinants of consumer intentions to purchase specific types of functional foods rich in omega-3 or lycopene

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Research Summary

As Canadian consumers become more knowledgeable of the health benefits of specific food components, such as omega-3 and lycopene, the demand for functional foods and nutraceuticals (FFN) is likely to increase. In order to maximize returns on scientific R & D on FFN and to better strategically position itself in the emerging marketplace for FFN, the Canadian agri-food industry needs to know and understand what socioeconomic factors are conditioning consumer demand for specific types of FFN. Using 2004 data from a national randomized sample of Canadian consumers, this study will test a socioeconomic model of willingness-to-purchase different types of FFN that are rich in either omega-3 or lycopene. Among the different types of FFN included in this study are: foods naturally rich in these substances (fatty fish or tomatoes), processed foods that have been enriched with these substances (omega-3 milk or ketchup with added lycopene), foods genetically modified to enhance the presence of these substances, as well as concentrated omega-3 or lycopene extracts. The explanatory variables include standard socio-demographic characteristics, as well as attitudinal variables, such as beliefs that functional foods have health benefits or that one can control one's own health. This study will shed some light on consumer receptivity to different types of functional foods by controlling for the nature of the products containing the functional component.

Significance of Research

The functional substances (nutraceuticals) in foods can be marketed to consumers in a wide variety of formats ranging from foods that are naturally rich in those substances to food extracts available in pill or powder form. It is as yet unknown which product formats are most likely to attract consumer dollars. As Canada continues to invest in the R & D of a wide variety of functional foods and nutraceuticals (FFN), it is becoming increasingly important to make wise decisions about which types of products are most likely to guarantee minimal returns on those investments. These policy decisions will not only affect the agri-food industry, but risk spillover effects on Canadian health care expenditures, if ever consumers begin to make prudent and effective use of functional foods and nutraceuticals. The results from this research will offer policy makers some basic predictions about consumer reactions to different types of FFN.