

## Sample NSAC Research Ethics Board Submission

The following is a sample REB submission and may be used to get a general idea of how an ethics submission should be written. Please note though that each ethics submission has its own research approach, methodology, and most importantly, ethics issues that need to be considered and addressed in the Ethics Submission. Therefore, we encourage you to use this submission as a guide only and to ensure that your submission addresses all ethics issues/concerns specific to your study.

Please also note that this sample may be used for student submissions. Although the student submission form is slightly different, the information required is the same.

**Title:** Buy Local Mail Survey

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**Funding:** Grant funding from Agri-Futures Nova Scotia

**Peer Review:** No

## **2. Purpose of the Research Project**

Recently, there has been a push to support the purchase of locally produced foods, due to the potential benefits to both consumers and farmers. These benefits include more money for local farmers and producers, fewer harmful preservatives in the food, and decreased use of fossil fuels for food transportation. Despite the push to support local foods, there is very little published research concerning consumers' perception of locally produced food nor factors that influence their purchasing behaviour. A search of the literature revealed only two studies that directly address these issues.

A study by Schneider and Francis (2005) in Nebraska examined farmers' and consumers' interest in locally produced foods. They found that consumers demonstrated an interest in buying locally produced foods and were willing to pay a higher price for foods produced locally. Taste and quality were important when making food purchasing decisions but environmentally friendly production as well as local farmer support were also important.

In order to gather information on consumers' preference for locally produced foods, a mail survey was used by Brown (2003) in a study conducted in Missouri. It was found that consumers felt that quality and freshness were most important when purchasing produce and the majority of the consumers felt that local food purchased at farmers' markets was both higher quality and lower price. The survey also found that consumers who were raised on a farm or whose parents grew up on a farm were more likely to prefer local products and pay a premium for it.

In 2006, to promote the purchase and use of locally produced foods, the Women's Institutes of Nova Scotia (WINS) undertook the "Buy Local Challenge", a 12 month public education campaign that sought to increase knowledge about the benefits of locally produced foods with the ultimate goal of changing behaviour towards purchasing locally produced food. The challenge presented a number of activities that participants were asked to complete that involve the incorporation of local food products into their diets. One component of the public education campaign was the completion of a Buying Local Foods Survey.

The Buying Local Foods Survey was led by Dr. Steven Dukeshire and focused on the extent to which people purchase local food products and the factors that influence the purchase of these products. The survey was distributed by Women's Institutes (WI) members through booths at agricultural fairs, WI information campaigns, and through organizations through which WI members had associations. In all, over 2300 Nova Scotians completed the survey. Very briefly, the survey results indicated that Nova Scotians had strong positive beliefs and attitudes towards buying locally produced food, but had concerns about their ability to recognize and obtain local food, particularly in the winter months. The full survey results are available at [www.gov.ns.ca/agri/wi](http://www.gov.ns.ca/agri/wi).

The Buy Local Survey had a methodological shortcoming in terms of the sampling procedure used. In particular, there was concern of the bias introduced by handing out the

survey at events (e.g., agricultural fairs) where people may be more likely to have favourable opinions about buying local. Further, many of the surveys were handed out at the same exact location where the WI was promoting Buy Local. Therefore, people interested in buying local may have been more likely to be drawn to the area where surveys were being distributed, thereby introducing a sampling bias.

Upon presentation of the study results, a representative of Agri-Futures Nova Scotia approached the Women's Institutes, indicating that they would be willing to fund a second survey that reduced the sampling bias noted above. Further, there were concerns expressed by Agri-Futures that the larger cities were not well enough represented in the original survey and that they would like a second survey to ensure a more urban representation. It was decided that the best way to reduce the sampling bias and ensure a proportional representation between rural and urban areas was a through a mail survey.

The mail survey is being conducted in a very timely manner in terms of an increasing buy local movement in Nova Scotia. The release and media uptake of the first Buy Local Survey last year provided additional momentum and almost a rebirth of the WI Buy Local Campaign. In the last provincial budget, \$250,000 was allocated to develop a buy local strategy. The first major initiative that has emerged from that strategy will be the introduction of a "Select Nova Scotia" logo that will be placed on Nova Scotia produced food products.

#### Goal and Objectives

The main goal of the study is to determine Nova Scotians' beliefs, attitudes, and propensity toward buying locally produced food. The study's objectives include:

- 1) Improving confidence in the results of the original Buy Local Survey by conducting the survey on a more representative sample
- 2) Determining the level of awareness and impact of the WI Buy Local Campaign
- 3) Determining the level of awareness of the new Select Nova Scotia logo

### **3. Study Design and Research Methodology**

#### General Methodological Details

The research will be supervised by the Principal Investigator, Steven Dukeshire. The sample will be generated by InfoCanada, a firm that specializes in developing mailing lists. The mailing labels will be generated by a Research Assistant who will be hired to help carry out the project. Preparation (stuffing the envelopes) of the survey for mailing will be carried out by the Research Assistant as well as volunteers from the Women's Institutes. Data entry will be undertaken by the Research Assistant and data analysis and report writing will be undertaken by the Research Assistant and Principal Investigator, Steven Dukeshire.

The research instrument is the Buy Local Survey which was developed by Steven Dukeshire and Theresa Osborne.

The entire research project, including generation of a final report, is expected to be completed by the end of February, 2008. The actual data collection phase will likely occur over a 2-3 week period to allow time for the surveys to reach participants, for the surveys to be filled out, and time for the returned surveys to reach the Rural Research Centre.

### Recruitment

We are planning to mail out 10,000 surveys to a randomly generated sample of Nova Scotian households. We are assuming a 30% return rate, thus we are expecting back 3000 surveys. This number is more than enough for the descriptive statistics and regression analysis that we wish to undertake. To meet Agri-Futures' goal of increasing the number of urban respondents, it is expected that 1200 of the surveys will come from urban areas (we are defining Halifax and Sydney/Glace Bay as urban and they make up approximately 40% of the Nova Scotia population).

Participants will be randomly chosen from households in Nova Scotia. InfoCanada, an organization that specializes in generating addresses for mail surveys will develop the sample. To do so, they select names from the white pages of the Nova Scotia telephone book and through special software and agreements with Statistics Canada are able to generate accurate mailing addresses.

This proposed research involves a mail survey, therefore, participants will be invited to participate by mail. The invitation letter and survey will be sent jointly from the Women's Institutes and the Rural Research Centre. Included in the mail out will be a cover letter, the Buy Local Survey, and an addressed/postage paid return envelope.

### Informed Consent

Individuals receiving the survey by mail will be invited to fill out the survey in an information/cover letter. The letter will outline the purpose of the survey, what participation involves (completing and mailing back the survey), that the survey is voluntary, and that the survey is confidential (see Appendix A for a copy of the letter). Returned surveys will imply consent.

### Subject Participation

Participants will be asked to complete a short, self-administered survey that they will receive by mail. The survey will require them to answer questions concerning factors that influence their food choices; beliefs, attitudes, and propensity toward buying locally produced food; awareness of the WI Buy Local and the Select Nova Scotia campaigns; and demographic information (see Appendix B). Questions 1-4 and 7 are essentially identical (with minor modifications to reflect only Nova Scotians will be completing this survey) to the first Buy Local Survey that was approved by the Research Ethics Board in 2006. Questions 5-6 are additional questions primarily designed to assess Nova Scotians' awareness of two recent buy local campaigns. Finally, a Comments section was added to allow participants to provide their thoughts about buying local. Based on the first Buy

Local Survey, it is expected that completion of the current survey will take most people five minutes or less.

Data from this study will not be linked nor will participants be recontacted. Study results will not be sent directly to participants, but they will be provided with the web address where the final report will be posted for free download. It is expected that the final report will be completed in February, 2008.

#### Data Analysis

Data analysis for questions 1-4 and 7 will be identical to those conducted for the first Buy Local Survey. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means and standard deviations will be reported for the quantitative data from the survey. Relationships between variables will be explored through correlational and multiple regression analysis.

Descriptive statistics will be generated for questions 5 and 6 that address awareness of the two Buy Local campaigns.

Written comments will be content analyzed for themes that will provide us with a better understanding of people's beliefs, attitudes, and buying habits toward local foods.

Results will be summarized into a final report, similar to the report generated for the original Buy Local Survey. The report will be made freely available to the public through its publication on the Women's Institutes website and the Rural Research Centre website. We also intend to publish the results of the study in scholarly journals and present the results at conferences.

#### Confidentiality and Anonymity

There are two potential threats to violating participants' privacy, both of which will be addressed through procedures to ensure confidentiality is maintained. The first threat involves generation of the mailing list and mailing labels that will include potential participants' names and mailing addresses. It is intended that only the Research Assistant and Principal Investigator, Steven Dukeshire will have access to the mailing list file. The Research Assistant (to be hired) and WI Administrative Assistant (Linda Munro) will be responsible for applying the mailing labels to each of the completed envelopes. Each will have signed a confidentiality agreement. The mailing list file will be destroyed once the mail out is completed.

The second threat to privacy comes from identifying who actually returned a survey. Because we are not asking for any identifying information, it will not be possible to determine who returned a survey, therefore privacy will be maintained. With such a large sample from a large population, it is highly unlikely that data could be reported such that someone could potentially recognize who completed a survey. However, in the highly unlikely event that that could occur, the data associated with that result will be suppressed or presented in a different manner so as to not violate privacy.

No information will be provided from the qualitative results (written comments) that could identify a participant. Any identifying information from the comments will be removed prior to their being reported.

Returned surveys will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in an office under the supervision of Steven Dukeshire. The electronic mailing list will be destroyed immediately after the surveys have been mailed out. Hard copies of the mailing list will not be generated.

#### Financial Information

Participants will not receive any compensation for completing the survey.

There is no compensation for the researchers conducting the study.

There is no commercialization potential for the outcomes of this research.

This research is funded through a grant from Agri-Futures Nova Scotia.

#### **Budget**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Research Assistant	\$6500
Printing Surveys/Envelopes	2000
Postage	4500
Supplies (paper, ink, etc.)	700
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$13,700</b>

**Funding from Agri-Futures**      **\$13,700**

#### **4. Potential Risk Posed to the Subjects**

This study represents low physical risk as participants are only required to read and write to complete the survey. The survey questions also do not address personal topics that are likely to cause negative emotional reactions. The time commitment to complete the survey is very short. Thus, we believe this to be a minimal risk study.

#### **5. Potential Benefits for the Subjects**

There are no benefits that participants might directly experience as a result of their participation. Any benefits from this research will be societal, in terms of potentially using the information to increase demand for and consumption of local food products, thus having a positive environmental (reducing food miles) and economic (more money for local farmers) impact.

#### **6. Potential Conflicts of Interest**

There are no conflicts of interest.

**References**

Brown, C. (2003). Consumers' preferences for locally produced food: A study in southeast Missouri. *American Journal of Alternative Agriculture*, 18(4), 213-224.

Schneider, M. L., & Francis, C. A. (2005). Marketing locally produced foods: Consumer and farmer opinions in Washington County, Nebraska. *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems*, 20(4), 252-260.

## Appendices

Appendix A: Cover Letter\*

Appendix B: Buy Local Survey

**\*REB Note:**

Please be aware that there are only certain circumstances when a cover letter may substitute for a signed consent form. These circumstances are noted in the *REB Submission Guidelines and Requirements* document.



[TO BE PROPERLY FORMATTED AND PRINTED ON NSAC LETTER HEAD]

October 1, 2007

Dear sir/madam:

The Women's Institutes of Nova Scotia (WINS) is conducting a survey asking Nova Scotians their thoughts about buying locally produced food. You were randomly chosen to be mailed one of these surveys. The survey is being led by Dr. Steven Dukeshire of the Rural Research Centre at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College. Results of the survey will help us to better understand the views of Nova Scotians concerning local food.

This survey is designed to take less than five minutes to complete. If you choose to complete the survey, please mail it back to us as soon as possible using the postage paid envelope that has been included with the survey.

Although we would appreciate as many people as possible to fill out the survey, completing the survey is totally voluntarily. If you do decide to complete the survey, but there are some questions that you do not want to answer for any reason, please feel free to skip them. The survey is confidential, that is, we do not ask for any information that could be used to identify you. The mailing list that was created for this survey was not shared with any other individuals or organizations and was destroyed immediately after the mail out was completed. Therefore, you cannot be contacted again regarding this survey.

If you are willing to fill out this survey, we would appreciate it if at all possible that you could complete and return the survey within two days. All returned surveys will be treated confidentially and stored in a secure manner according to NSAC Ethics Guidelines. The results of the survey will be available on the Women's Institutes website ([www.gov.ns.ca/agri/wi](http://www.gov.ns.ca/agri/wi)) likely in February, 2008.

If you have any questions about the survey, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Steven Dukeshire at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College by calling 893-6593 or by e-mail at [sdukeshire@nsac.ca](mailto:sdukeshire@nsac.ca). If you have any concerns about the ethics of this survey, you may contact Professor Lauranne Sanderson, Chair of the NSAC Ethics Board at 893-6706 or by e-mail at [lsanderson@nsac.ca](mailto:lsanderson@nsac.ca).

Again, thank you for taking the time to read this letter and considering filling out the survey.

Sincerely,

Steven Dukeshire, PhD  
Assistant Professor  
Nova Scotia Agricultural College

Theresa Osborne  
Executive Secretary  
Women's Institutes of Nova Scotia

## **Buy Local Survey**

Survey was provided in original submission, but not shown here.