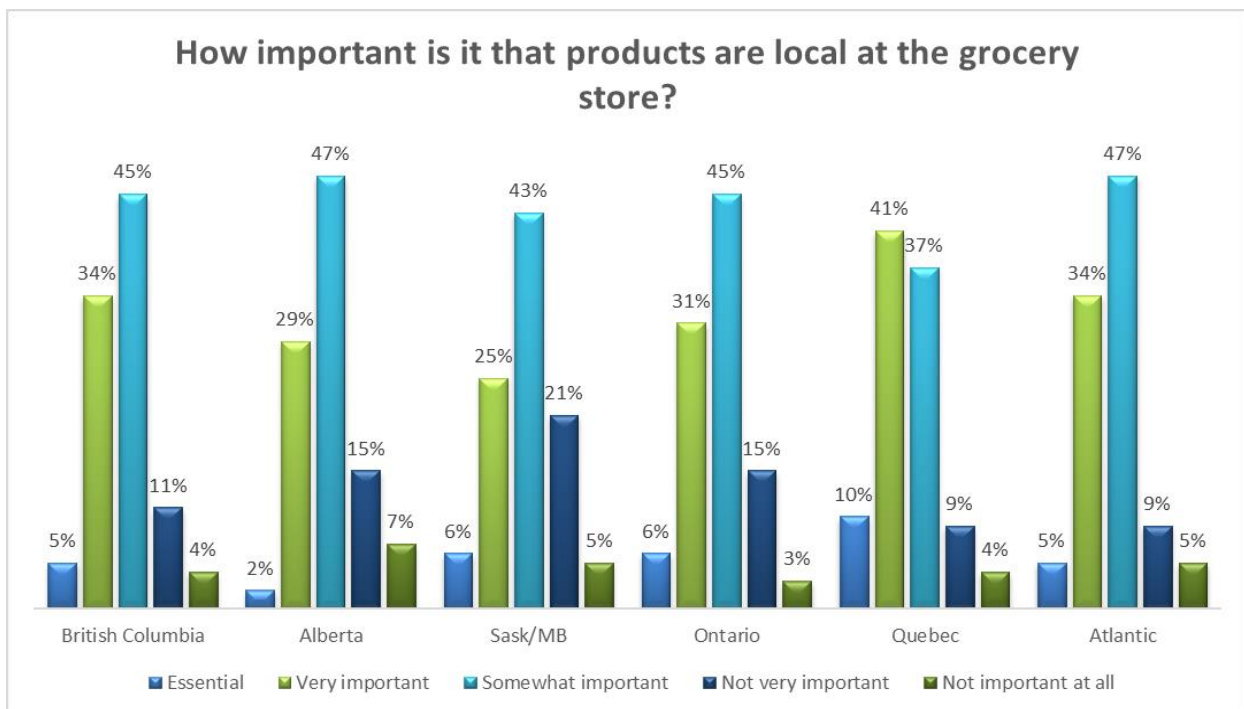


A new report suggests local foods are important to Canadians but not considered more nutritious, affordable or safer

Halifax, June 28, 2022— Local foods have been the subject of discussions around food sovereignty and autonomy for decades. Most surveys have suggested that while consumers want to buy local most of the time, very few actually buy or look for local food products while grocery shopping or when eating at a restaurant. The **Agri-Food Analytics Lab**, in partnership with **Angus Reid** is releasing results of a survey on local food perceptions from across the country. We are also adding a case study on local food competitiveness in the province of Quebec. Working with **BetterCart Analytics** and collecting over 350,000 data points, we looked at how Quebec food product prices compared with comparable food products coming from elsewhere.¹

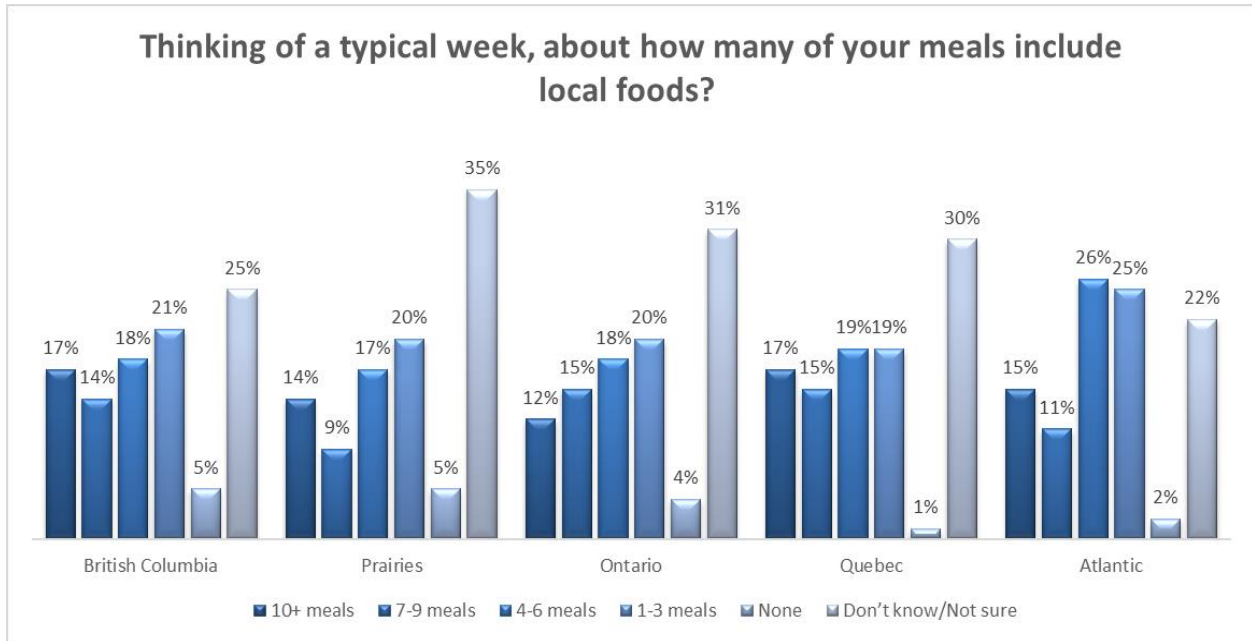
The survey generated some interesting results overall. We first asked Canadians whether local foods at the grocery store were a priority. Unsurprisingly, most Canadians feel that local foods are important to them. While the province of Quebec is where we find the highest level of support, the lowest level of support is in both Saskatchewan and Manitoba.



Questions related to food service and restaurants did not show different results. Results were very similar. In relation to meal management, we asked respondents how top-of-mind local foods were during any given week. Data suggests that both British Columbians and Quebecers consider local food products when managing meals. A total of 17% of respondents in both provinces will prioritize local foods for most of their meals every week. Respondents in the Atlantic region appear to be committed to local foods, but the frequency is not as significant. Results suggest **women** are slightly more inclined to consider local to be important versus **men**, but the percentage difference was less than 5%. Both **education** and **income** were not significant determinants either.

¹ We are aware that various definitions of local foods exist, which is something this study did not consider.

“The fact that socio-economic determinants are not significant is a little surprising,” stated **Janet Music**, Research Associate at the Agri-Food Analytics Lab at Dalhousie University. “It is known that both Quebec and British Columbia have had many conversations about the localization of food systems, and it shows in the data,” said Music.

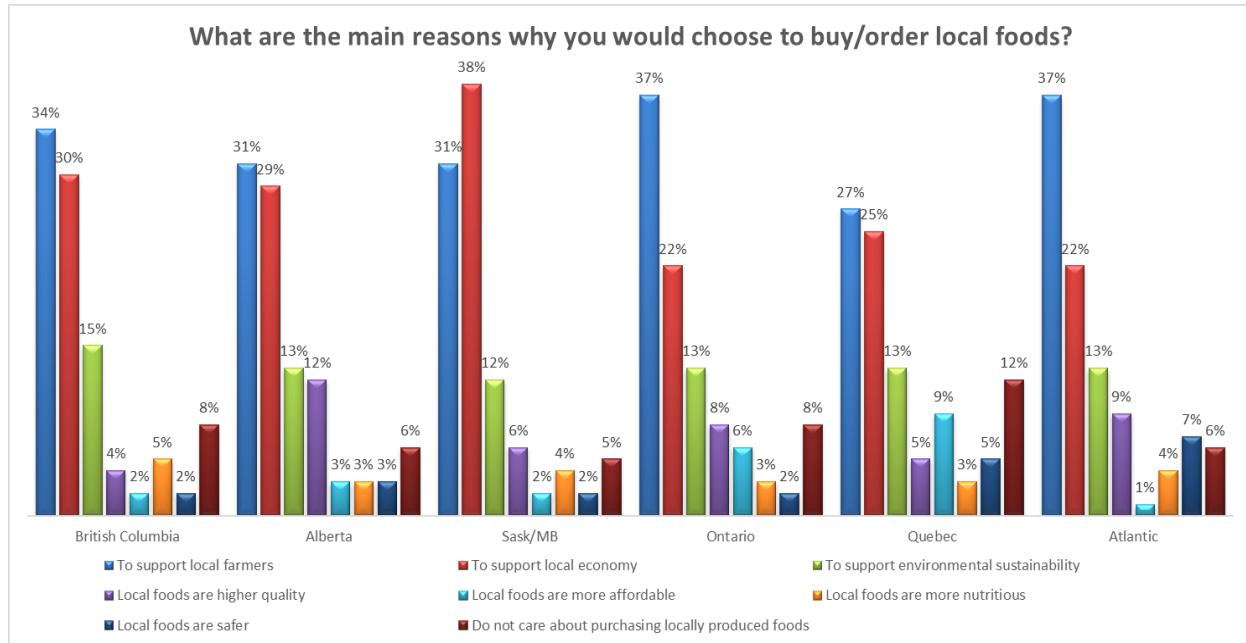


At the grocery store, local food sentiments in general will vary slightly between age groups. Consumers who are older appear to see local foods as important to them. While 45% of consumers aged 55 and older see local foods at the grocery store as important, 37% of consumers between 18 and 34 feel the same. At the restaurant, all age groups feel the same. Local foods are seen as important by anywhere from 36% to 37%, depending on the age group. Differences were not significant.

Last, we asked Canadians for reasons why they choose local. Generally, reasons which appear to motivate Canadians to buy local relate mainly to supporting the economy and farmers. Canadians are motivated to buy local foods for a variety of reasons, but we asked them only to pick one of many.

The most important reason to buy local is to **support farmers**, followed by the will to support the **local economy**. In all regions, to support **environmental sustainability** is the third choice among respondents. But very few respondents believe local foods are either of **higher quality**, more **nutritious**, more **affordable**, or even safer.

“I think the image of local food products needs work. It’s almost as if Canadians just want to do farmers and agri-food companies a favour while purchasing,” said **Dr. Sylvain Charlebois**, Director of the Agri-Food Analytics Lab. “Canadians clearly don’t see how local foods can provide benefits to them directly,” said Charlebois.



Very few Canadians believe local foods are better products. Regarding affordability, only 5% of Canadians believe local foods are cheaper. However, based on a recent study, local foods are not always more expensive.

According to a recent **Dalhousie University** study commissioned by **Aliments du Québec**, local products are as competitive (neutral price difference) or more competitive than products from elsewhere in 70.83% of the categories studied. In a context of high inflation and rising cost of living, [Aliments du Québec](https://www.alimentsduquebec.com/) wanted to find out if local food could be a viable option for Quebec consumers trying to lower their grocery bill by researching the question “*Is eating local really more expensive?*”

The study was conducted in Quebec in January and February 2022. The study included the following food categories: Grocery: drinks (juice, coffee, water, kombucha), granola bars, jam, peanut butter, salad dressing, flour, pancake mix, legumes, barbecue sauce, cookies, cake, chips, and candy; Dairy and dairy alternatives: milk, cheese, ice cream and sorbet, margarine, and plant-based beverages; Meat and fish: sausage and fish; Fruits and vegetables: apples, prepared salads, vegetables, and tofu; Bakery: bread, tortillas, pita bread, and bagels; Deli: bruschetta, smoked ham, and fresh pasta; Frozen foods: frozen meals. More information about the project can be found on the Aliments du Quebec website.

Download the preliminary results of the survey in English and French at <https://www.dal.ca/sites/agri-food.html>.

Contacts

Dr. Sylvain Charlebois, Director

Agri-Food Analytics Lab, Dalhousie University

sylvain.charlebois@dal.ca

Janet Music, Research Program Coordinator

Agri-Food Analytics Lab, Dalhousie University

janet.music@dal.ca

Methodology for survey: Angus Reid is one of the most credible active panels in the Canadian market. A representative survey of Canadians was conducted in June 2022, in partnership with Angus Reid. 1,503 Canadians participated in this survey. Margin of Error: +/- 3.1%, 19 times out of 20. Any discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

Methodology for Quebec case study: Food products in 48 categories within seven major sections were evaluated. Over 134 local products and 431 comparable non-local products were studied, and a total of 351,787 different price data points were analyzed. The local products were selected by the AAL team and then reviewed by Aliments du Québec to ensure that they were available to most Quebec residents and that they were mostly produced, processed and packaged in Quebec by a company with a valid Quebec enterprise number (NEQ). Following that, price data was collected for each Quebec product selected, as well as for its comparable non-local counterparts, on six specific dates: January 24 and 31, and February 7, 14, 21 and 28, 2022. Prices were collected at five different grocery retailers: IGA, Maxi, Metro, Provigo and Walmart.

Disclosure: Funding for the survey was provided by [Angus Reid](#) and **Dalhousie University**. Funding for the Quebec project was provided by **Aliments du Québec**.