



Consumers of Texas Alternative Agriculture: A Brief Study of Preferences and Beliefs

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Introduction

In recent years, consumers have become increasingly concerned about how food is produced. This parallels the increase of smaller farms with particular production methods, which here is termed alternative production (Williams & Hammitt, 2000). A survey was presented to consumers with questions about their preferences on aspects of alternative and conventional agricultural products in an attempt to better understand Texas consumers and trends in demand of such products.

Objective

The objectives of this research were:

- o Determine how consumer beliefs affect purchasing choices
- o Ascertain the viability of substituting “local” for “organic” marketing in terms of lowered input costs and labor, but with similar output prices.

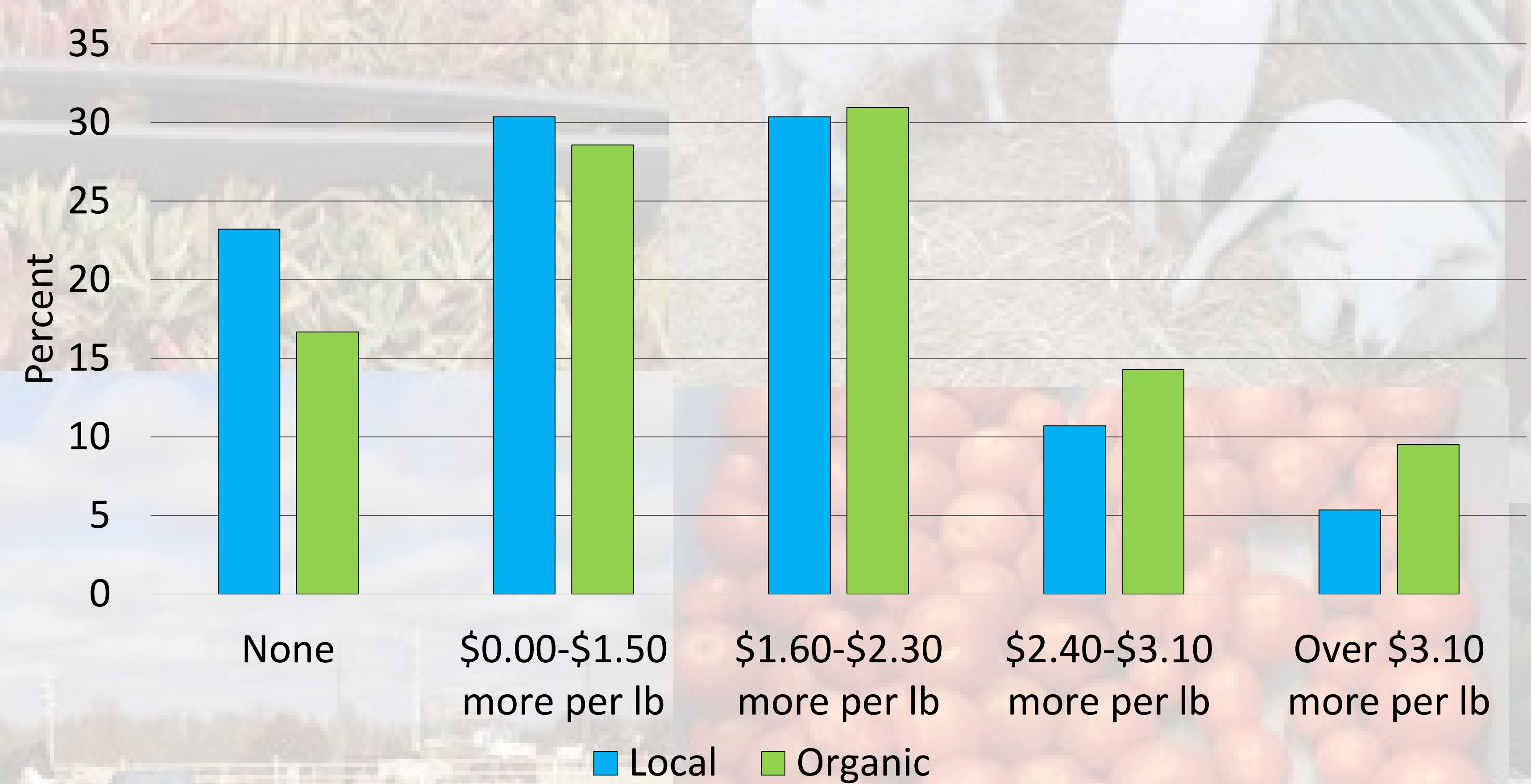
Materials and Methods

Data collection was a Google Form based survey directed toward consumers of Texas agricultural products sent to approximately 250 individuals via email who had elected to receive such emails, and through an email newsletter managed by Texas Department of Agriculture sent to approximately 20,000 Texas residents. Google Forms present the data in aggregate form in a spread sheet without personal identification information. The survey was open from 15 June 2015 through 31 July 2015.

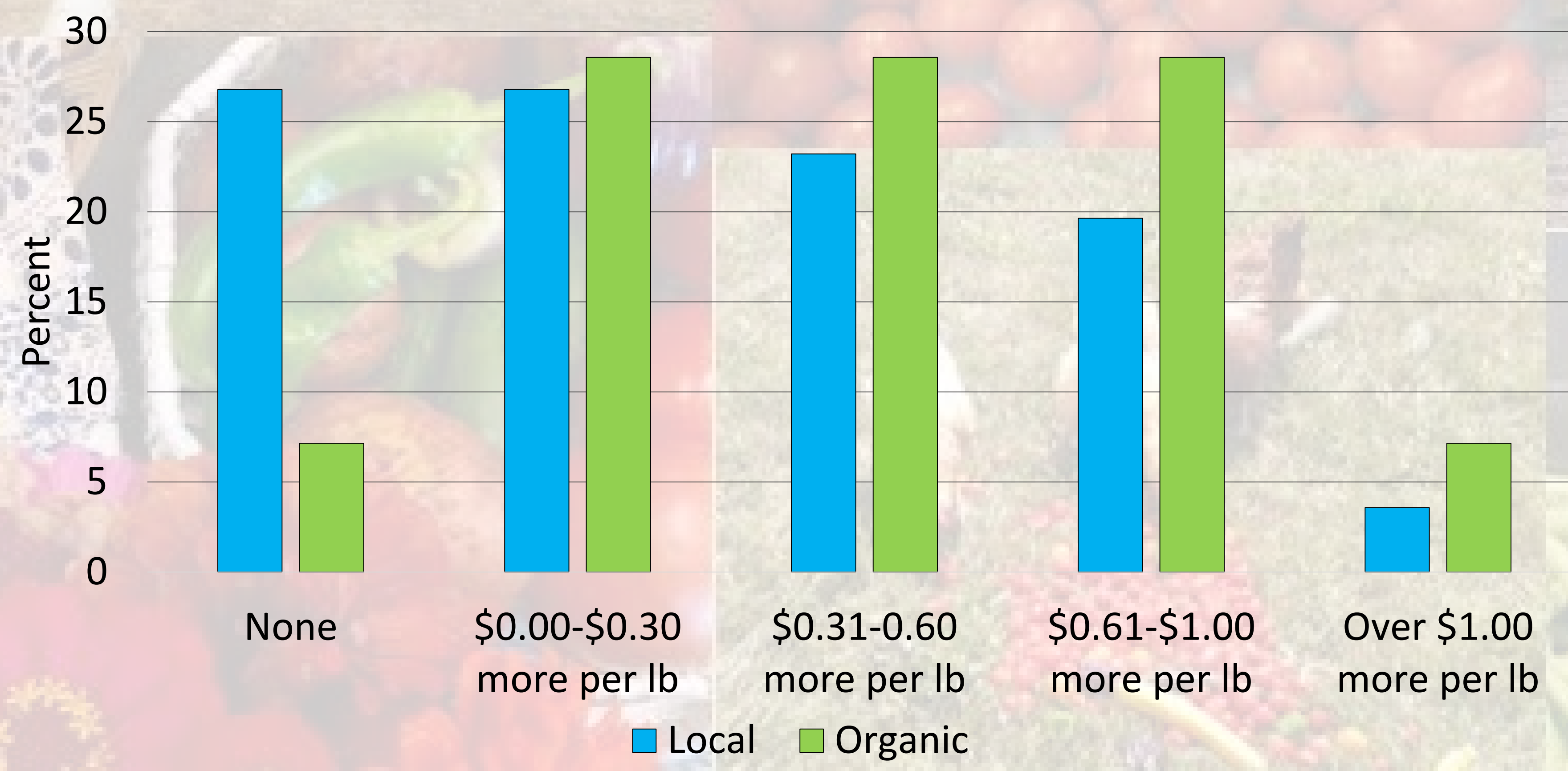
Results

Participants tended to be well-educated females between ages of 26 and 55 with annual household incomes in excess of \$50,000. There were differences between consumers who prefer local foods and consumers who prefer organic foods in regard to beliefs about health, safety, sustainability and what is best for the environment, as well as differences in demographics.

Willingness to Pay More for Preferred Type of Steak (P=0.8501)



Willingness to Pay More for Preferred Type of Tomato (P=0.1494)



Results Continued

The definition of ‘local’ was more likely to be within 50 or 150 miles of purchase for those who preferred organic, whereas the definition was more likely to be within the state of Texas for those that preferred local. However, there was no difference between these two groups in regards to willingness to pay more for the preferred labeled foods. Both were willing to pay up to \$2.39 more per pound for steak, and up to \$1.00 more per pound for tomatoes under their preferred label.

Discussion and Conclusion

Results suggest that each group is significantly distinct and thus would be beneficial to concentrate marketing efforts on the target sector. Producers wanting to secure higher sales price held by organic-labelled products without the increased input costs may substitute a local-grown marketing scheme with potential for lowered input costs (Delbridge, Fernholz, King, & Lazarus, 2013). Results also suggest consumers are willing and capable of voting with their food dollar for the production methods they prefer and have had a profound impact on Texas Agriculture.

Literature Cited

Delbridge, T., Fernholz, C., King, R., & Lazarus, W. (2013). A whole-farm profitability analysis of organic and conventional cropping systems. *Agricultural Systems*, 122, 1-10.

Williams, P., & Hammitt, J. (2000). A Comparison of Organic and Conventional Fresh Produce Buyers in the Boston Area. *Risk Analysis: An International Journal*, 20(5), 735-746.

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