

Local Flavor

Research finds half of N.H. residents buy local farm food regularly

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HARRISON PARADIS-COLLINS '21 WORKS IN THE HIGH TUNNELS FOR FARM TO YOUNH.

Half of Granite Staters report buying food from local farms at least a few times a month but only 15% do so weekly, according to [new research](#) released by the [Carsey School of Public Policy](#) at the University of New Hampshire.

The research also found significant variation in the frequency of purchasing across the state's counties, ranging from 2% in Coös to 89% in Sullivan County. The highest rates of purchasing are along the Vermont border.

"Identifying how to engage consumers both more widely and more deeply can generate greater income for New Hampshire food producers and more local food for New Hampshire consumers," said the researchers. "There is significant room for growth as one in five Granite State residents report never purchasing food from local farms, with rates exceeding 30% in Rockingham County alone."

The researchers noted that it is important to understand consumers' preference for different types of market outlets to help guide local food system development. Even during the pandemic, 88% of residents reported that in-person sales models like farm stands and farmer's markets were easily accessible while just 23% said online options were easily accessible.

"Where there has been an overall rise in online shopping during the pandemic, fewer than one in four residents identified online as easily accessible," the researchers said. "Many of the online platforms are new and consumers may not know they exist. It is also possible that even smaller shares of consumers would have said online platforms were an easily accessible option for local farm foods a year or two earlier. Understanding how best to reach consumers with these platforms is an important next step."

The research was conducted by Jessica Carson, research assistant professor with the Carsey School's Vulnerable Families Research Program; Analena Bruce, assistant professor of food systems; and Isaac Leslie, a postdoctoral research associate in food systems.

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