DYNAMIC SUSTAINABILITY LAB™
AT SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

NY CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF CLIMATE-SMART COMMODITIES

BULLETIN NO. 20241022

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GOAL: Identify markets relevant to climate-smart commodities for informed decision-making to address consumer needs in New York State.

What is a climate-smart commodity (CSC)?

- Climate-smart commodities are products or materials produced using practices that minimize environmental impact by leveraging greenhouse gas benefits to build long-term economic and environmental sustainability into our food systems.

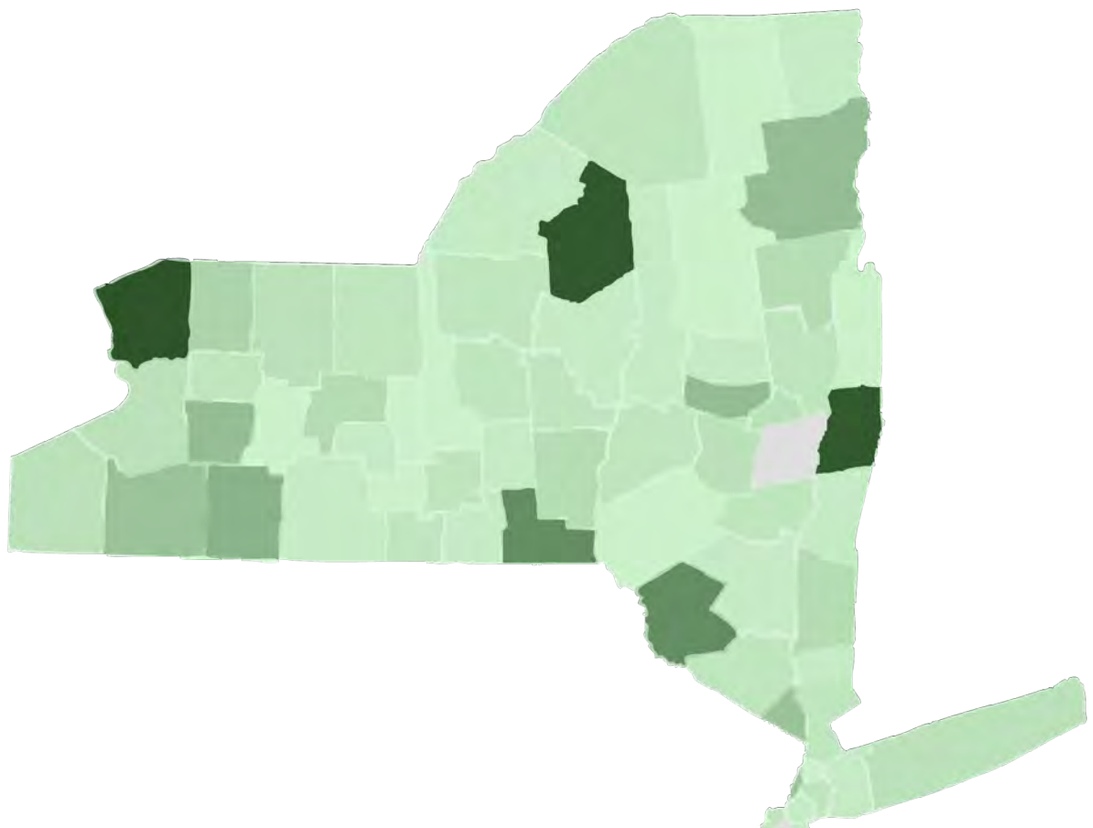
Source: https://www.usda.gov/climate-solutions/climate-smart-commodities

PURPOSE: Why is it important to understand?

To develop market opportunities for CSC, we need to know what the market values. **Understanding consumer perceptions and expectations informs strategies to identify, develop, and connect markets.** By understanding how segments of the market view CSC, we can better **assess potential risks** (e.g., reluctance) and **opportunities** (e.g., growing support).

The success of CSC hinges on the **ability to identify stakeholder needs** and the most effective communication strategies which may, in turn, improve market confidence.

METHODS FOR UNDERSTANDING NEW YORK STATE CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS



An experimental design survey of New York State residents (n=400)

PARTICIPANTS' LOCATION BY COUNTY:

- 0: Albany, Bronx, Cayuga, Delaware, Franklin, Hamilton, Livingston, Schuyler, Seneca, Washington
- 1 (0.25%): Clinton, Columbia, Cortland, Fulton, Herkimer, Jefferson, Kings, Nassau, Oneida, Putnam, Steuben, Tioga, Ulster, Yates
- 2 (0.5%): Chemung, Genesee, Greene, Madison, Onondaga, Orange, Oswego, Ostego, Queens, Richmond, Saint Lawrence, Saratoga, Tompkins, Wayne, Westchester
- 3 (0.75%): Chautauqua, Erie, Monroe, Schenectady, Schoharie, Suffolk
- 4 (1%): Chenango, Dutchess, Ontario, Warren
- 5 (1.25%): Orleans
- 9 (2.25%): Cattaraugus, Rockland
- 10 (2.5%): Essex, Montgomery, New York
- 11 (2.75%): Wyoming
- 12 (3%): Allegany
- 20 (5%): Sullivan
- 22 (5.5%): Broome
- 31 (7.75%): Lewis, Rensselaer
- 32 (8%): Niagara

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

EDUCATION

- 3 had less than a high school education (0.75%)
- 35 were a high school graduate or equivalent (8.75%)
- 56 had some college enrollment (14%)
- 32 had a two-year degree (8%)
- 187 had a four-year degree (46.75%)
- 77 had a professional degree (19.25%)
- 9 had a doctorate degree (2.25%)

ETHNICITY

- 244 identify as white (61%)
- 63 Identify as Black or African American (15.75%)
- 3 Identify as American Indian or Alaskan Native (0.75%)
- 63 identify as Asian: (15.75%)
- 9 hispanic (2.25%)
- 18 (4.5%) specified another ethnicity, which included the following 11 (2.75%) mixed race or mutliracial, 1 (0.25%) Caribbean, and 1 (0.25%) other

AGE

- 47 were 18-24 (11.75%)
- 140 were 25-34 (35%)
- 80 were 35-44 (20%)
- 73 were 45-54 (18.25%)
- 38 were 55-64 (9.5%)
- 20 were 65-74 (5%)
- 1 was 75-84 (0.25%)

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

GENDER

- 211 male (52.75%)
- 179 female (44.75%)
- 8 non-binary/third gender (2%)
- 1 other, please specify (agender, socially male) (0.25%)
- 1 prefer not to answer (0.25%)

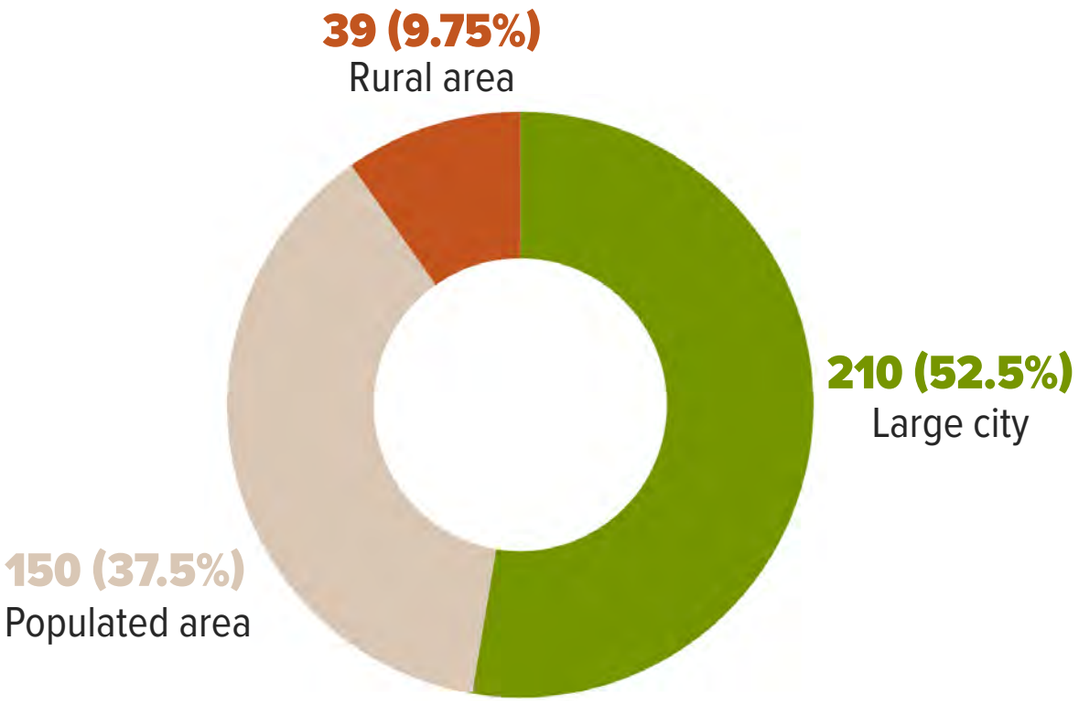
POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

- 198 Democrat (49.5%)
- 80 Republican (20%)
- 118 Independent (29.5%)
- 4 I prefer not to say (1%)

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

- 37 make less than $10,000 annually (9.25%)
- 29 make $10,000-$19,000 annually (7.25%)
- 18 make $20,000-$29,000 annually (4.5%)
- 25 make $30,000-$39,000 annually (6.25%)
- 38 make $40,000-$49,000 annually (9.5%)
- 42 make $50,000-$59,000 annually (10.5%)
- 35 make $60,000-$69,000 annually (8.75%)
- 42 make $70,000-$79,000 annually (10.5%)
- 24 make $80,000-$89,000 annually (6%)
- 22 make $90,000-$99,000 annually (5.5%)
- 54 make $100,000-$149,999 annually (13.5%)
- 33 make more than $150,000 annually (8.25%)

TYPES OF COMMUNITIES THE PARTICIPANTS RESIDE IN



Note: Rural areas were defined as having less than 3000 inhabitants. Populated areas were defined as more than having 3,000 inhabitants.

WHERE PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

- **Social Media** by far the largest with 211 mentions of across all responses
  - Apps like Instagram, TikTok, Reddit and X (Twitter) were commonly reported
- **Traditional print media** additionally makes a large impact with sources like the New York Times, Scientific American, and National Geographic
- **Television,** especially cable news is another major source of news for many respondents, with networks like CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News reported often
- Many reported that they sourced news from **family members or word on the street**

WHAT PARTICIPANTS WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN HOW CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS IS REPORTED

- Agreement across the data that an objective and **easy to understand analysis is preferred**
- Interest in local issues and impacts
- Appreciation of **scientific expert analysis** or perspective
- Reliance on facts, figures, data and statistics to make the case
- Emphasis on a positive angle to the story - how will we overcome this?
- Political attitudes are inextricably linked to this issue, and many diverging opinions are represented in the data
- Throughout the data, there are political opinions that range from far right to far left, bridging that gap is the most challenging maneuver

ALTERNATIVE NAME SUGGESTIONS FOR

“CLIMATE-SMART COMMODITIES”

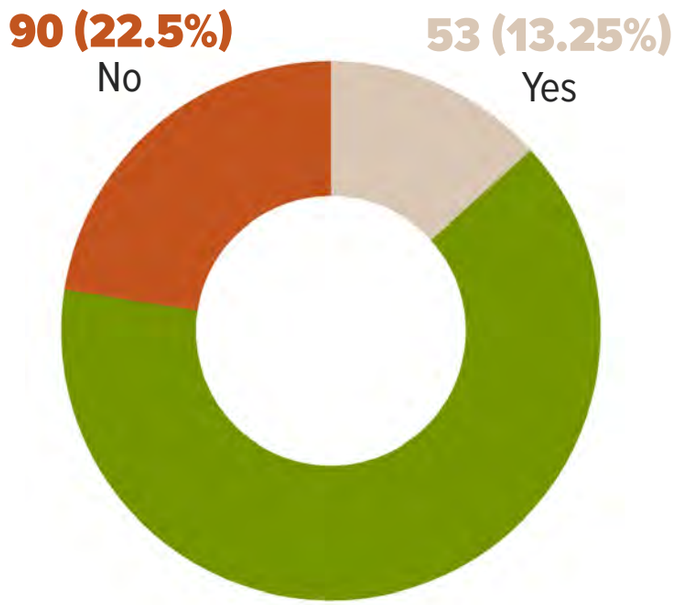
- The term “climate friendly commodity” or “climate friendly product” was consistently used by respondents. The term “friendly” appeared repeatedly.
- Another was the response that we should not change a thing and that the current term worked.
- Several responses indicated that the term climate had become more politically charged and that carbon was a more apt description.

2024 AWARENESS OF CLIMATE-SMART COMMODITIES

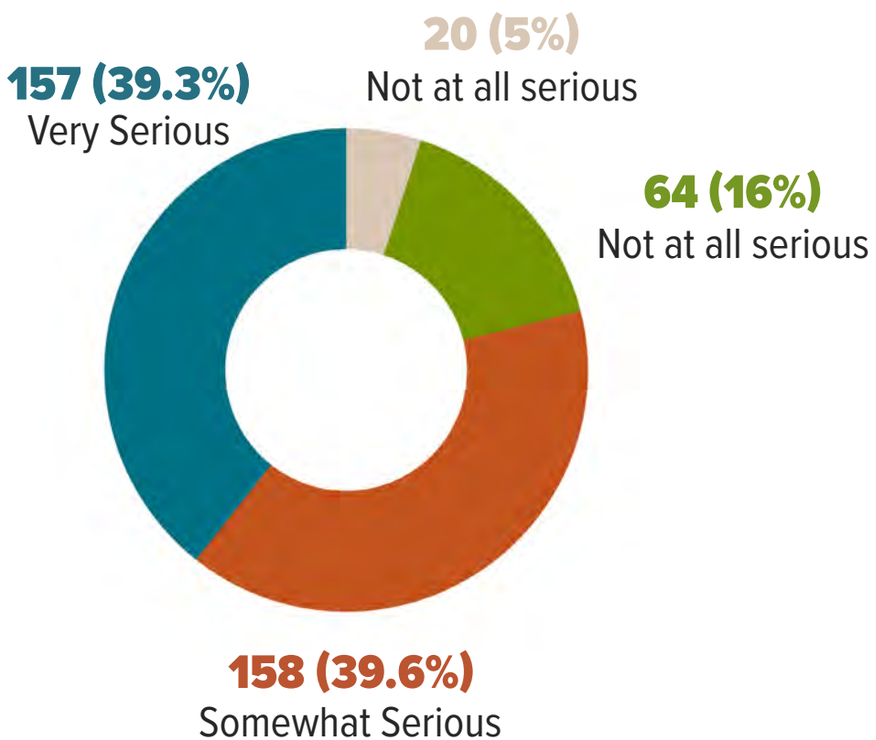
0 (KNOWING NOTHING) TO 100 (KNOWING EVERYTHING THEY COULD POSSIBLY KNOW ABOUT CSC)

- Sample Size: 400
- Average Score: 30.50/100
- Median: 24
- Range: 0-100

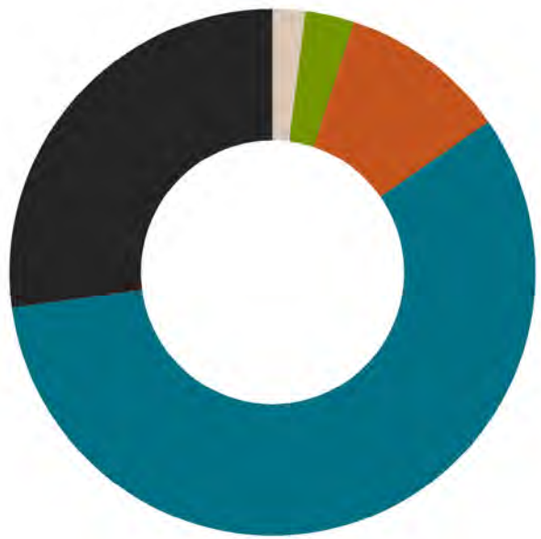
HAVE YOU EVER BOUGHT ANY TYPE OF CLIMATE-SMART COMMODITY AS FAR AS YOU KNOW?



HOW SERIOUS OF A THREAT IS GLOBAL WARMING TO YOU AND YOUR FAMILY?



CLIMATE CHANGE BELIEFS



- 2% (8): “I don’t think that climate change is happening.”
- 3% (12): “I have no idea whether climate change is happening or not.”
- 10.25% (41): “I think that climate change is happening as a result of natural causes”
- 57.25% (229): “I think that climate change is happening and I think that humans are largely causing it.”
- 27% (108): “I think that climate change is both from human activities and natural causes.”

HOW MUCH MORE PARTICIPANTS WOULD BE WILLING TO PAY FOR CSC THAT REGULARLY (NON-CSC) COSTS $1.40, LIKE A PIECE OF FRUIT:

- 18.25% (73): “$0 more.”
- 33% (132): “between 1 and 14 cents more (up to $1.54 - 10% more)”
- 26% (104): “between 15-28 cents more (up to $1.68 - 20% more)”
- 12% (48): “between 29-42 cents more (up to $1.82 - 30% more)”
- 6.75% (27): “between 43-56 cents more (up to $1.96 - 40% more)”
- 3.25% (13) “more than 57 cents more (more than 40%)”

LABEL TESTING

What are participants' impressions of a label that indicates a product is a CSC?

We manipulated the type of information presented on the right side of this label.

LABEL TESTING

Which generates the most positive brand evaluations?

one-way ANOVA
$F(1,398)=33.80$, $p<.001$

100 participants in each condition (between subjects)

Label 1
Mean = 4.16
SD = 1.08

Label 2
Mean = 4.48
SD = 0.92

Label 3
Mean = 4.81
SD = 0.98

Label 4
Mean = 4.89
SD = 0.90

FINDINGS FROM LABEL TESTING

The label with the most description and the QR code (on the left) generated the most positive perceptions of the brand. The label that simply said “Climate-Smart Product” generated the least positive brand evaluations (on the right).

The label with the most description and a QR code generated the most favorable responses, suggesting that consumers value transparency and additional information about what the term means and how it is defined or measured. Emphasizing clear details about CSC benefits, dimensions of sustainability efforts, and a scannable QR code for further information could enhance brand perceptions. In contrast, vague terms like "Climate-Smart Product" may not resonate as effectively, highlighting the need for specific claims to build an understanding with consumers.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to understand NYS consumers and their perceptions of climate change and CSCs. This information provides baseline data to understand how we can identify markets for informed decision-making that address NYS consumer needs. We found that there was not a lot of familiarity with the term Climate-Smart Commodity, but 81.75% of participants were willing to pay more for a product produced with practices that reduce carbon emissions. In fact, nearly half (48%) were willing to pay 20% or more for a this type of product. We also found that over half of participants (57.25%) believe that climate change is happening and that humans are largely causing it.

While this provides insights on the market, it is important to note limitations of our sample. Representation was limited as many participants (46.75%) held a four-year college degree, identified as white (61%), and the majority were from large cities in Sullivan, Broome, Lewis, Rensselaer, and Niagara counties. An effort will be made to recruit a representative sample in future research.

ABOUT THE LAB

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MISSION STATEMENT

Serve as a non-partisan partner to industry, government & NGOs on the risks, unintended consequences and opportunities of the global sustainability transition. Provide unique applied learning and engagement experiences for the students of Syracuse University.

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