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The Effects of Income and Food Values on the Market for Local and Organic Food in Ontario

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Recent years have seen food systems becoming more and more globalized. However, at the same time, we have witness the emergence and coexistence of both short and long agri-food supply chains. Whether a commodity is local and/or organic has become an important question consumers ask themselves when considering different food products. Local and organic can be seen as food attributes which certain consumers find beneficial to their use and consumption. The degree to which consumers benefit from these attributes depends greatly on their socioeconomic characteristics and their food values.

Previous research has examined how various socioeconomic characteristics like gender, age, and income affect the willingness-to-pay for local and/or organic attributes (Hasselbach and Roosen 2015, Darby et al. 2008). Furthermore, the effect of food values such as safety, freshness, and food traditions have also been studied (Bazzani and Canavari 2017, Bond et al. 2008). Using stated preference data from Ontario, this research narrows the scope and pays particular attention to the effects that household income has on an individual's willingness-to-pay for varying degrees of 'locality' and 'organicness'. This research also aims to contribute to the literature regarding how important one's food values are when deciding whether or not to purchase local or organic food.

Preliminary results have shown that household income has an impact on an individual's willingness-to-pay for the 'locality' and 'organicness' of food products and that these effects are felt differently across different categories of food products, i.e. unprocessed versus processed. Moreover, individually held food values may be helpful in explaining some of the heterogeneity observed in preferences for local and/or organic across households with differing income levels.