



## Perceptions of the U.S. Food System: What and How Americans Think about their Food

Bostrom, M (2005) "Digesting Public Opinion: A meta-analysis of attitudes toward food, health and farms." In "Perceptions of the U.S. Food System: What and How Americans Think about Their Food" A compilation of four reports from the Kellogg Foundation. Retrieved on October 15, 2006 from the Kellogg Foundation Website:

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Americans are generally satisfied with various factors in the nation's food system. The positive consequence of strong satisfaction with grocers, farmers, and so on, is the public trusts these factors and is likely to listen to their views. However, the high level of public satisfaction also means that there is little groundswell of public support for government intervention in the nation's food system. In recent years, health-related news coverage of food has increasingly emphasized obesity. While people understand that obesity is a serious health problem, they also view it as a matter of individual consumer choice and each individual is responsible for his or her diet, not the food system itself. This potentially indicates Americans *think* the most effective means to combat obesity seems to be providing public support to provide more information for individuals to make wiser choices, not necessarily providing support for improving food system through public policy.

**Supermarkets and packaged food companies rank first and third in doing a good job serving consumers**

Table 1:

<b>Do a Good Job of Serving Consumers<sup>1</sup></b>	
<b>In Percent</b>	
Supermarkets	92
Computer hardware companies	84
Packaged food companies	83
Computer software companies	81
Airlines	80
Hospitals	79
Online search engines	79
Banks	78
Electric and gas utilities	75
Internet service providers	72
Life insurance companies	70
Online retailers	70
Telephone companies	70
Car manufacturers	66
Investment and brokerage firms	65
Cable companies	63
Pharmaceutical and drug companies	56
Managed care companies, such as HMOs	41
Health insurance companies	40
Tobacco companies	35
Oil companies	31

<sup>1</sup> Harris Interactive, The Harris Poll@ 1,010 adults 18+ nationally, April 5-10, 2005.

**A majority of those surveyed find individual Americans' choices (67 percent) as having a great deal of responsibility for the obesity problem — Importantly, the fewest find government policies responsible (20 percent a great deal of responsibility).**

<b>Responsibility for Obesity Problem<sup>31</sup></b>	
<b>% Great Deal</b>	
Individual Americans in their choice of diet and lack of exercise	67
Fast-food restaurants	43
Schools that allow high-calorie snacks and sweets	40
Manufacturers of high-calorie packaged and processed foods	36
Marketers and advertisers of high-calorie and processed foods	35
Government policies and laws on food content and marketing	20

TNS Intersearch, May 10-16, 2004.

**Support for two categories of policies: policies to provide more information to individuals and policies directed at child health.**

**Support for Government Policies<sup>34</sup>**

	<b>% Support</b>	<b>% Strongly Support</b>
Warning labels on high-fat and high-sugar foods about the health risks of being overweight	75	49
A law requiring restaurants to list the calorie count and fat content of all items on their menus	61	38
A ban on advertising high-fat and high-sugar food on children's television shows and in children's magazines	56	36
A tax on high-fat and high-sugar foods, with the money used for advertising and programs to fight obesity	41	21
A law setting a legal limit on portion sizes in restaurants	23	11

TNS Intersearch, May 10-16, 2004.