

Public opinion favors regulating food labelling, food advertising, sustainable food supply

February 24 2014, by Rebecca Graham



Government control or regulation of food advertising was important to 84 per cent of people surveyed, while environmentally friendly food supply was important to 85 per cent. Credit: epSos .de

The Western Australian community strongly supports regulating food

labelling, food advertising and environmentally sustainable food supply as measures to improve health and protect the environment, according to recent research.

Curtin University School of Public Health Adjunct Senior Research Fellow Dr Christina Pollard was interested in exploring the public's opinions around various government food control policies.

"There is an urgent and important need to improve diets to protect public health," she says.

"Governments have been considering options to improve the [food supply](#) to reduce the risk of diet-related disease and make sure our food supply is secure.

"Public perception is one of the considerations when assessing what 'could or should' be done.

"The Department of Health in WA conducts monitoring surveys so they can keep informed about public views of key policies."

Data from the 2009 and 2012 WA Nutrition Monitoring Survey Series (NMSS)—which assesses nutrition and diet-related opinions and behaviours of randomly selected adults aged 18-64 years via telephone interviews—were pooled, giving a total sample size of 2,147 adults.

The surveys examined how important it was (from "very important" to "not important at all") for the interviewee "that the government has control over or regulates" nutrition information on food labels; health rating on food labels; [food advertising](#), and the supply of environmentally friendly food.

A range of socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, education

and employment status; and personal factors such as diet, weight and fat intake were also collected.

The vast majority of adults surveyed agreed with government control or regulation around the four food policy options assessed.

Nutrition information on food labels was important to over 97 per cent of people surveyed while health ratings on [food labels](#) were important to almost 93 per cent of respondents.

Government control or regulation of food advertising was important to 84 per cent of people surveyed, while environmentally friendly [food](#) supply was important to 85 per cent.

"The results showed that there was overwhelming support among the population, regardless of age, gender or socioeconomic status, for the policy options currently on the table...[suggesting] the public approve of and would accept such moves," Dr Pollard says.

More information: Pollard, C. M., Daly, A., Moore, M. and Binns, C. W. (2013), "Public say food regulatory policies to improve health in Western Australia are important: population survey results." *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 37: 475–482. [DOI: 10.1111/1753-6405.12128](#)

Provided by Science Network WA

Citation: Public opinion favors regulating food labelling, food advertising, sustainable food supply (2014, February 24) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-02-opinion-favors-food-advertising-sustainable.html>

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