

Barriers to Purchase study identifies what prevents consumers from buying more produce
Research highlights pain points industry can address to increase cross-generational sales

Idaho Falls, ID (8.23.17) – Why aren't consumers eating more produce; and, how can the produce industry respond to meet their needs and bolster sales?

These are precisely the critical questions Category Partners (CP) and Beacon Research Solutions (BRS) sought to answer, in their just-released "Barriers to Purchase" study.

Understanding specific challenges the industry needs to overcome, in its sales and marketing efforts, is a key step in accelerating growth; particularly in today's complex retail environment and among an ever-changing consumer base, which spans four generations and comprises diverse motivators. This is the intent of the "Barriers to Purchase" approach, which – opposite typical research – focuses first on what prevents consumers from buying, vs. triggers.

CP & BRS worked with leading produce suppliers and commissions, including Domex Superfresh Growers, Chelan Fresh, Wada Farms, Duda Farm Fresh Foods, Farm Fresh Direct, B&C Fresh, International Fruit Genetics and the California Strawberry Commission, to conduct a multi-generational study. In June 2017, CP & BRS surveyed 4,000 produce shoppers nationwide – evenly split among Millennial, Generation X, Baby Boomer and Silent generations – to better understand what deters shoppers from eating and buying more produce; and what changes can be made to positively influence their behaviors.

The study revealed a sizeable portion of shoppers, across a nearly 70-year age range, who aren't consuming much produce – not even half of consumers eat produce daily and around 10% only eat weekly – and for a multitude of reasons (often, generation specific). The study also presented an opportunity, as all generations seemingly want to eat more produce; if the industry can respond to their unmet needs. The study identified 17 relevant barriers and possible implications, including:

- **Price/too expensive** – *even with an improving economy, price was the top barrier, selected by more than 50%. Price competitively and promote strategically, so consumers perceive value – and are incented – in their purchases*
- **Spoiling/inability to eat it all** – *ensure shoppers know how to select, store and use. Also consider package size in overcoming this barrier, as more consumers "right size" their purchases*
- **Poor appearance/quality/color** – *reinforce quality and related control practices throughout the supply chain (especially store-level rotation, culling and merchandising). Similarly, ensure shoppers understand proper selection practices, per item (i.e., appearance is not the leading factor for all produce; consider shopper education for flavor, touch and smell)*
- **Preferred type/variety not available** – *establish awareness of shoppers' preferences, provide a responsive assortment and avoid controllable out-of-stocks*
- **Packaging is too large and lack of bulk/loose items** – *U.S. households are shrinking, so ensure shoppers have a balanced choice*

Related to the barriers, the study also pinpointed meaningful motivators, throughout shoppers' decision-making process for produce. The results surprisingly indicated consumers – while planning for,

and selecting, produce – may be slower to adhere to broad trends; like social media/blog use, convenience and veg-based diets. Study findings include:

- **More consumers are deciding in store vs. planning**
- **When planning, shoppers are leaning toward traditional vehicles (ads/circulars, personal recipes, cookbooks), vs. newer sources (social media, blogs)**
- **Produce brings shoppers in store, with zero percent selecting home delivery as a purchase format**
- **Flavor, as a driver, is nearly as important as health**
- **While “locally grown,” “natural,” “organic” and “non-GMO” are top of mind for many, 31% of shoppers are not seeking this information**
- **Pescatarians, vegetarians and vegans receive much attention, but 95% of shoppers still are meat eaters**
- **Most consumers enjoy cooking, often devoting more than 30 minutes and several ingredients**

The study’s ultimate goal is to provide the industry actionable insights, both barriers and motivators, so all members – especially retailers and suppliers – can align to develop sales and marketing programs that connect with shoppers and strengthen consumption and sales.