



HOW ARE TODAY'S SOCIETAL VIEWS AFFECTING CONSUMERS' SELECTION OF FOOD CHOICES NATIONWIDE?

Elton Hinton Strawberry Crest FFA
Florida



JUNE 14, 2022
4691 GALLAGHER RD
DOVER, FL 33527
813-707-7522

Courses in which instruction occurred: The instruction occurred at the Strawberry Crest High School Agriculture Department. The seven students involved in the Agricultural Issues Leadership Development Event were instructed through the Agricultural Communications II & III, Animal Science II, Introduction to Horticulture, Agriculture Leadership, and Veterinary Assisting I & II classes on the issue of societal views surrounding food selection and its misconceptions. There were 201 students educated on the agricultural issues previously stated, and they gave appropriate feedback through discussions and debates.

How can the issue be defined? Today, societal views are heavily influencing food choices. These views are being spread by various means, the first being social media. A recent study shows that social media users often see posts of healthy foods that have been heavily supported through social media interaction. This constant viewing of biased materials influences consumers to make food choices based on popular opinions rather than science (Jayashree, 2021). In addition, celebrities have asserted their influence on consumers with various podcasts, television shows, and widespread media coverage. For example, Ellen DeGeneres started a “Be neat. Eat less meat.” campaign telling viewers that cutting meat out of one’s diet is better for the environment and personal health (DeGenerous, 2019). In addition, celebrities such as Kim and Kourtney Kardashian, Lady Gaga, and Russell Crowe adopted a gluten-free diet, even without an allergy or intolerance, and through their fame influenced others to follow this diet (Thome). Another influence is found in the United States educational system, since students are receiving less than eight hours of required nutrition education each school year, far below the 40 to 50 hours needed to affect behavior change (CDC Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 2019). A study by the USDA showed that children participating in certain nutritional education programs increased daily fruit and vegetable consumption (USDA, 2013). This proves that with proper education, food choices can be guided to more beneficial options.

What is the nature of the issue? The public view of food choices has been swayed in recent years by various sources, the most prominent of these being food labels that have been manipulated by manufacturers to add various elements. As a result, marketing tactics mislead consumers. Words like antibiotic-free or hormone-free on meat products that legally cannot contain those additives are just one example of this. The non-GMO label has also been used to persuade consumers. For example, 26 percent of U.S. adults believe that non-GMO labeling is a significant factor when choosing what foods to eat (Hofbauer, 2016). However, the Non-GMO products on the grocery shelves are not produced with crops that have genetically modified variants. Contrary to popular belief, the all-natural label has no implications for nutritional value or production practices, including genetically modified organisms (GMOs), antibiotics, and added hormones (US Food & Drug Administration, 2018). Consumers need to learn the importance of Country-of-Origin labeling and how products in other countries are produced. The marketing trends continue with “Cage Free,” “Vegetarian diet,” “American Humane Certified,” “Fair Trade,” “Animal Welfare Approved,” and “Grass Fed” which are all confusing to the consumer.

What caused the issue? Americans have become increasingly confused about their food choices and are unsure where to turn for answers. This is partly due to the fact that consumers are not educated on what elements they should look for on the label. Today, fewer than 2 percent of Americans live on farms, and as the U.S. population continues to shift away from rural areas into cities and suburbs, consumers are increasingly removed from the agricultural practices that sustain America. This disconnect causes misconceptions to develop regarding food, and many Americans do not trust experts. In a survey by Michigan State University, just 59 percent of respondents reported that they trusted information from academic scientists on nutrition and food safety. Less than half (49 percent) trusted government scientists, and only one-third (33 percent) trusted industry scientists. Due to the lack of trust, consumers instead try to navigate conflicting recommendations from friends, relatives, and celebrities that compete with both the news and social media for attention.

Why is this issue important now? The issue of societal views pertaining to food choices has become imperative to the nation’s consumers. This is caused by a multitude of recent developments, the first being the ease of opinion and misinformation distribution on a national scale. In the United States, over 223 million Americans currently hold social media accounts on one or more platforms. At any given moment, over 5,000 tweets, 50,000 Facebook messages, and 800 Instagram photos are being exchanged (Auxier, 2021). In addition to this, the rise of social media has also been a significant contributor to food labeling misinformation. In America’s younger generations, people have begun to reject traditional news sources due to accessibility and perceived reliability. Instead, these generations

have turned to social media for daily news, giving platforms to many influencers to spread false information. Because of these internet celebrities' popularity and abundant follower count, social media users are more apt to believe such statements and opinions (Blancke, 2015). Finally, food choices among consumers are being affected by various marketing tactics. For example, Tropicana sales declined nearly 25 percent over five years after removing the GMO-free label from their products (Peel Back the Label, 2021). In addition, various strawberry growers in Florida are being pushed to add the GMO-free label to their products by manufacturers (Harrell, 2022). With recent advancements in agricultural science, such as GMO crops, many consumers have become confused about exactly what that technology entails. With the development of those unprecedented crops, only farmers were educated on what GMO's truly were, leading to many misconceptions among uninformed consumers.

What are the benefits? Food labels have been proven to provide many benefits to the consumer, despite the constant truth-blurring of social media. Those suffering from food allergies need transparent food labeling to know what ingredients are in the food they purchase or consume. Allergens can be identified to ensure that consumers with allergies do not consume food that could potentially endanger their health. Also, labels allow consumers to know the location in which the product was produced. Country-of-origin food labeling provides enhanced food security, increases the information on the origin and quality of the product, builds consumer confidence, helps the consumer support locally grown products, and contributes to the transparency of the sources of potentially contaminated products (USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, n.d.).

What are the disadvantages? Food allergies affect approximately 220 million people worldwide, causing one fatality in every 50 million people annually. Consequently, 66 countries have enacted mandatory listing of allergens used in prepackaged foods. (Alessandro Focchi, Davide Risso, Audrey Dunn Galvin, 2021) Unfortunately, the list of allergenic ingredients varies from country to country, making it difficult to trust the food label, even if it is accurate. In addition, food labeling is also impacting farmers in egregious ways. It has given organic marketers a platform to disparage and slander all other agriculturists. Marketing gimmicks are meant to scare consumers away from conventionally produced options. Such marketing tricks hurt consumers and destroy trust in America's food system. Unfortunately, the marketing tactics disproportionately hurts low-income shoppers. Parents trying to make good food choices at the grocery store cannot always afford the higher-cost organic label. But instead of purchasing the more affordable conventional option, parents usually forgo buying fresh produce altogether. These families miss out on a safe and nutritious alternative as a result. (Zaluckyj, 2015)

What is the historical background of the issue? Food labeling can be traced back to the Gould Net Weight Amendment passed in 1913, which required food labeling to contain statements of the package's net contents. (Junod, 2015). As a result, many companies in the late 1990s began to apply the GMO-free label, indicating that their food does not contain genetically modified organisms (McMahon, 2022). No GMO labeling law exists in the U.S. because the government believes that the nature of the product is more important than the production process (Margaret, n.d.). Another concern is the use of antibiotics. Sales of chicken labeled antibiotic-free from retailers rose 34 percent in value from 2013 to 2014 (Mundy, 2015). All meat, poultry, and dairy foods sold in the U.S. are free of antibiotic residues, as required by federal law (Bjork, 2020). Gluten concerns started in the 1940s with the discovery of gluten's adverse effects on people with celiac disease (Howard, 2017). Then the history of gluten-free bread begins with the first wave of modern low and no-carb trends in the mid-to-late 1990s (Kapadia, 2022). On August 2, 2013, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced its long-awaited gluten-free food labeling rule (Celiac Disease Foundation, 2014). Additionally, food such as chicken, seafood, produce, and some nuts are now displaying the Country-of-Origin Labels allowing consumers to make informed decisions on where the food was produced (Agricultural Policy Review Iowa State University, n.d.).

Who is involved in the issue? The pressing issue of food choices involves many organizations across the world, such as the manufacturers, producers, consumers, social media influencers, Public Relations liaisons, Marketing associates, the American Farm Bureau, and government agencies such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) and the National Institute of Health (NIH). These parties contribute to this debate by calling for transparency, spreading falsehoods, or educating others on the facts. In addition, those cultivating food, labeling products, and purchasing items are impacted the most by this issue due to its gravity in their everyday lives.

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| Date | Forums | Location | Number present |
|--|---|--|---------------------------|
| Monday April 11, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. | Hillsborough County Farm Bureau Meeting | Florida Strawberry Growers Association Event Center 13138 Lewis Gallagher Rd Dover, FL 33527 | 27 |
| Tuesday April 12, 2022 at 12:30 p.m. | Rotary Club of Brandon Meeting | Rivard-Simmons Rotary Event Center 3007 S. Kings Avenue Brandon, FL 33511 | 30 |
| Tuesday April 12, 2022 at 10:30 a.m. | UF AEC Ag Ed Collegiate FFA | UF Campus at Plant City 1200 North Park Rd. Plant City, FL 33563 | 7 |
| Monday April 18, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. | Plant City Optimist Club Meeting | Park and Rec. Center 1904 S. Park Rd Plant City, FL 33563 | 20 |
| Tuesday April 19, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. | Plant City Lion's Club Meeting | Smokin' Aces BBQ 2509 N Park Rd Plant City, FL 33563 | 22 |
| Wednesday April 20, 2022 at 12:00 p.m. | Plant City Kiwanis Club Meeting | State Farm Building 1805 Jim Redman Pkwy Plant City, FL 33563 | 8 in person 3 online |
| Thursday April 21, 2022 at 7:30 a.m. | Plant City Toastmasters Meeting | Wesley Center 202 W Reynolds St. Plant City, FL 33563 | 16 in person 3 online |
| Monday May 2, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. | GFWC Woman's Club of Plant City Meeting | Woman's Club Facility 1110 N. Wheeler St. Plant City, FL 33563 | 13 |
| Thursday May 19, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. | Plant City Republican Women Federated Meeting | Gracepoint Church 1107 Charlie Griffin Rd. Plant City, FL 33566 | 15 |
| Monday May 23, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. | Dover Community Forum | Strawberry Crest High School Auditorium 4691 Gallagher Rd Dover, FL 33527 | 62 |
| Tuesday June 14, 2022 at 9:30 a.m. | State Agricultural Issue Leadership Development Event | Florida FFA Convention- Caribe Royale 8101 World Center Dr. Orlando, FL 32821 | 68 |
| Monday August 1, 2022 at 11:45 p.m. | Plant City Rotary Club Meeting | Trinkle Center 12066 N Park Rd Plant City, FL 33563 | 49 |
| Monday August 15, 2022 at 7:15 p.m. | Christmas for Fosters Meeting | Strawberry Crest High School Room 203 4691 Gallagher Rd Dover, FL 33527 | 10 in person 41 online |
| Tuesday August 30, 2022 at 12:00 p.m. | Dade City Kiwanis Club Meeting | Dade City Chamber of Commerce 14112 8 th Street Dade City, FL 33525 | 14 |
| TOTAL PRESENTATIONS | | TOTAL PARTICIPANTS IN AUDIENCE | 408 |

COMMUNITY FORUM

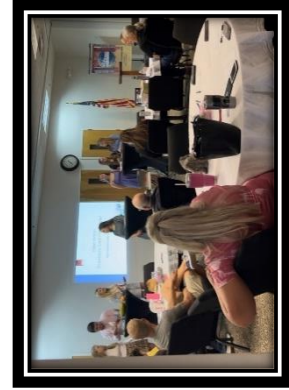
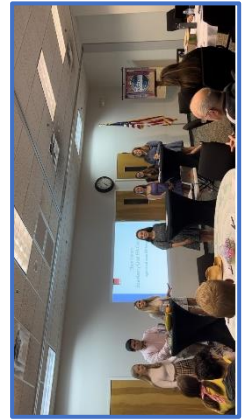
To whom it may concern,

On the date of May 23, 2022, at 6:30 p.m., the community of Plant City had the privilege of experiencing the Strawberry Crest Agricultural Issue Team present their topic of "How are today's societal views affecting consumers' selection of food choices nationwide?" I enjoyed watching their forum alongside the 61 other members of our community who came to support the team. Many of us were uninformed on this topic, and we fell for the misconceptions talked about in this debate. After watching, we are more informed about food selection and can apply their topics to our own lives. The kids were exciting and educational and were a pleasure to watch. Thank you Strawberry Crest FFA for a memorable performance. Thanks to you, the members of our community left informed and educated.

Sincerely,

Matt Hudson

Matt Hudson



President
Karlie Pate

VP Education
Dawn Lucowitz

VP Membership
Amanda Boyer

VP Public Relations
Ryan Odeneller

Secretary
"C.L." Townsend

Treasurer
Cindy Bentley-Roberts

Sergeant-At-Arms
Tammy Simpson

We meet every
Thursday from
7:30 to 8:00 AM

Location:
Wesley Center
202 W Reynolds St
Downtown Plant City

Toastmasters
International
www.toastmasters.org

The mission of a Toastmaster Club is to provide a mutually supportive and positive learning environment in which every member has the opportunity to develop communication and leadership skills, which in turn foster self-confidence and personal growth.

Plant City Toastmasters Club 4051
"Where Leaders Are Made!"



April 27, 2022

Agricultural Issues Team
Elton Hinton FFA Chapter
Strawberry Crest High School

Re: Your presentation at Plant City Toastmasters on 4/21/22

To Whom It May Concern:

The Plant City Toastmasters Club would like to thank your Agriculture Issues team for your amazing presentation to our group. We found your skills to be professional and your knowledge to be awesome. We were impressed with the ease and speed with which you set up and removed your demonstration area. We enjoyed your use of technology and audio-visual tools. We found your presentation educational, entertaining, and enlightening. Your use of fast-paced humor certainly added to your delivery.

The interaction we had after your presentation, when we discussed what we heard, what we felt and what we liked, was likely just as valuable to our members as it was to your team.

We are excited for your FFA Chapter, and your team, as you continue to refine skills and present on even bigger stages. Please keep us informed of your speaking victories and successes. And please let us know how Plant City Toastmasters can help your FFA Chapter and the Agricultural Issues Team in the future.

Attendance: 16 members in person and 3 members via Zoom. (We run a hybrid Toastmasters meeting format)

Sincerely,

Karlie Pate

Karlie Pate
Plant City Toastmasters President

Cc: Susan Mayo, Advisor



Hillsborough County Farm Bureau, Inc.
305 S Wheeler Street
Plant City, Florida
813-685-9121

To: Elton Hinton Strawberry Crest Agricultural Issues Team
From: Hillsborough County Farm Bureau Board of Directors
RE: Ag Issues Team Presentation

On behalf of the Hillsborough County Board of Directors, I would like to thank you for presenting your Agricultural Issue titled, "Are consumer perception and selection of food choices being influenced by social media and confusing food labels" at our most recent board meeting, held at 6:00pm on April 11th at the Florida Strawberry Growers Association's Event Center. This topic was very educational for our board members (17) and guest (10) in attendance. We again thank you for your time and wish your team the best as you compete at State Convention!

Thank you,

Kaylee Poppell

Kaylee Poppell, Executive Director



Plant City Lions Club
PO Box 1059
Plant City, FL 33564
www.PlantCityLions.org
Email: PlantCityLions@gmail.com

May 02, 2022

To Whom it May Concern,

Thank you so much Elton Hinton Strawberry Crest Agricultural Issue team for your presentation on April 19, 2022, at 6:30pm for our club meeting at Smokin Aces in Plant City. We really appreciate your time and commitment regarding your topic "Are consumer perception and selection of food choices being influenced by social media and confusing food labels." The number of people in attendance was 17 members and 5 guests.

**Sincerely,
Patty Garcia
Plant City Lions Club Secretary**





Gulf Coast Research & Education Center
College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at Plant City

1200 North Park Rd.
Plant City, FL 33603
813-757-2248
dmbarry@ufl.edu

April 20, 2022

April 15, 2022

To: Elton Hinton Strawberry Crest FFA Chapter Agricultural Issue Team

The Plant City Kiwanis Club like to take this opportunity to thank you for an outstanding job with presentation on "Are consumer perception and selection of food choice being influenced by social media and confusing food labels."

The meeting took place at State Farm building on the second floor located @ 1805 Jim Redman Pkwy, Plant City, FL. It was eight in attendance and three on zoom April 20, 2022 @ 12noon. Lunch was provided by Culver's in Plant City.

Best Regards,

Sharon Moody

Florida District Kiwanis Governor Elect

Dear Florida FFA Association,

We were very happy to support Strawberry Crest HS Elton Hinton FFA and their presentation for the Ag Issues CDE on the topic "Are Consumer Perception and Selection of Food Choices Being Influenced by Social Media and Confusing Food Labels." The seven UF AIEC Ag Ed Collegiate FFA students in attendance were able to listen to and provide feedback to the team on Tuesday, April 12th, 2022, at approximately 10:30-11:00am. It was a positive experience that benefitted both groups. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Debra M. Barry, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Agricultural Education
Department of Agricultural Education & Communication
CALIS @ Plant City
dmbarry@ufl.edu





**OPTIMIST CLUB
OF PLANT CITY, INC.**
Friend of Plant City Youth Since 1962

Post Office Box 1755, Plant City FL 33564-1755
www.PlantCityOptimistClub.org
www.facebook.com/PlantCityOptimistClub



April 18, 2022

To Whom It May Concern,

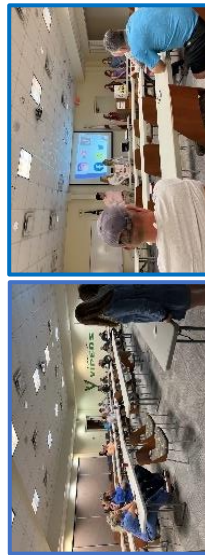
Tonight, August 18th, the Elton Hinton Strawberry Crest Agricultural Issue team presented to our Plant City Optimist Club, which meets at 1904 S Park Rd, Plant City, FL at 6:30pm on the topic of "Are consumer perception and selection of food choices being influenced by social media and confusing food labels". There were 20 people in attendance.

The team did an outstanding job of presenting the issue, of answering questions and demonstrating a wonderful ability to think on their feet. Our club was educated and encouraged by their presentation. We are thankful to have been able to participate with them in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Michael Williamson

**Michael Williamson, 2021-2022 President
Optimist Club of Plant City, FL
President@PlantCityOptimistClub.org**



August 9, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

On Monday, August 1st the Elton Hinton Strawberry Crest Agricultural issue team presented to our club their topic, "How are today's societal views affecting consumers' selection of food choices nationwide." There were 49 members and guest in attendance at HCC Trinkle Center located in Plant City, Florida from 11:45-1 pm. Our members enjoyed their topic and at the end asked questions and gave advice.

Sincerely,

Jodi Stevens

Jodi Stevens
Past President
Plant City Rotary Club



Rotary Club of Brandon
Rivard-Simmons Rotary Event Center
3007 S. Kings Avenue
Brandon, FL 33511

RE: Elton Hinton Strawberry Crest Agricultural Issue Team presentation on "Are consumer perception and selection of food choices being influenced by social media and confusing food labels."

Dear Elton Hinton Strawberry Crest Agricultural Issue Team,

The Rotary Club of Brandon would like to thank you for taking the time to come present to our club about your project "Are consumer perception and selection of food choices being influenced by social media and confusing food labels." It was a great presentation that was very informative on the complicated nature of food labels and how people can become misinformed about the food they eat due to the effects of social media and food labeling practices. Meeting information is as follows.

Tuesday, April 12, 2022
Rivard-Simmons Rotary Event Center
3007 S. Kings Ave
Brandon, Florida 33511

22 members, 8 guests.

All the best,

Patrick Skidmore II
Club Secretary, Rotary Club of Brandon





GFWC Plant City Junior Woman's Club "The Berry Caring Hearts of Our Community!"

May 3, 2022

Strawberry Crest High School
Attn: Susan Mayo
4961 Gallagher Road
Dover, FL 33527

Dear Mrs. Mayo,

We enjoyed your FFA Agricultural Issues team presenting at our club meeting on Monday, May 2, at 6:30 pm. It was located at our Women's Center Building with 13 people in attendance. Our members learned a great deal about both agriculture and the misconceptions surrounding it. The presentation was very enlightening, and we hope to apply the knowledge we gained at the forum every time we enter the grocery store. Again, we are so grateful for your team presenting to us, and we look forward to interacting with you all in the future. We wish you all luck on your competition, as well as any other future aspirations.

Sincerely,

Jessica Worthen

Jessica Worthen
President



Christmas FOR FOSTERS

August 24, 2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

My name is Sarah Weaver and I am the Executive Director and Founder of Christmas for Fosters, a Florida non-profit organization that exceeds the needs of local foster children and the families that serve them.

On Monday, August 15, 2022, the Strawberry Crest Agricultural Issue Team made an informative presentation addressing how today's societal views affect consumers selection of food choices throughout our nation. We had 41 people in attendance through Zoom and 10 in person at Strawberry Crest High School. The presentation was from 7:15pm-7:30pm.

Our team loved the presentation and thought the group of students did a great job researching both sides of the argument and presented them well. The recommendations that our team gave were:

- Slow down when speaking
- Have signage to distinguish the two sides with their IG handles

Cheers,

Sarah Weaver

Sarah Weaver
Executive Director + Founder
Christmas for Fosters



Plant City Republican Women Federated



To: The Elton Hinton Strawberry Crest Agriculture Issue Team
From: The PCRWF
Refer: Debate presentation, 5/19/2022, 6:30 pm social, 7PM meeting verification
Topic: "Are consumer perception and selection of food choices being influenced by social media and confusing food labels?"
Place: GracePoint Church, Plant City, FL

Date: August 14, 2022

Dear Rachel, team members and Susan Mayo,

A big congratulations on your win at the state competition. After witnessing your team's outstanding performance in content, execution and out-of-the-box presentation of issues concerning food labels, our club and School Board Member Stacy Hahn, totaling 15 to observe that evening, were more than pleasantly surprised and impressed with the maturity of the content and performance. Your team's character portrayal and overall thought that went into the scripts, costumes, props and presentation are the things that better movies are made of!

On behalf of the PCRWF, we wish you continued success in the national contest. You give us continued hope for the future!

Most sincerely,

Tina Pike
2nd VP, PCRWF



KIWANIS CLUB OF DADE CITY
POST OFFICE BOX 353
DADE CITY, FLORIDA 33526-0353

Date: August 29, 2022

To: Susan Mayo, Hillsborough County Schools

From: Michael Carr, Dade City Kiwanis Club

Subject: Elton Hinton Strawberry Crest Agricultural Issue Team

Ms. Mayo

Thank you for allowing the Elton Hinton Strawberry Crest Agricultural Issue Team, to present their program to us. It was our pleasure to meet the kids and learn about the important issues facing the agriculture industry today and how the views of our sociality impacts the foods they choose.

The program was informative and entertaining and was enjoyed by our membership.

Amanda Burns

President Of The Dade City Kiwanis.

"INTEGRITY - LEADERSHIP - SERVICE"

