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Focus Group Report

Strategic Message Framing

Agriculture Institute of Florida

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Center for Public Issues Education
IN AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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Background

In 2010, the PIE Center tested several words, messages, and images with consumers for the Agriculture Institute of Florida. The results of the research identified several areas in which agricultural communicator's could improve in order to increase the success of their communication. Some of the improvements required additional research. Therefore, the Agriculture Institute of Florida continued to work with the PIE Center to conduct research that would add to the continued improvement of agricultural communication messaging strategies.

The first phase of the continued research was a content analysis of agricultural awareness campaign from all 50 states. The purpose of the content analysis was to identify how agricultural organizations nationwide were communicating, and to use those communication strategies to inform a series of message testing focus groups. Results of the content analysis indicated that the industry was not taking steps to communicate effectively. The agricultural awareness campaigns analyzed were lacking social media involvement and inclusion of visuals. Additionally, the communication throughout the campaigns included numerous logical appeals, while emotional appeals were used minimally. Only 21 of the 151 campaigns analyzed had enough website traffic to be tracked using Google Analytics. To learn more about the content analysis you can read the executive summary at <http://www.centerpie.com/research/completed-projects/aifanalysis/>. The content analysis findings led to the second phase of this continued research. This included the testing of strategically framed messages about agricultural issues with consumers. The results of these focus groups are detailed in this report.

This research would not have been possible without the support of several sponsors. The PIE Center would like to recognize and thank those who made this research possible: Agriculture Institute of Florida, Farm Credit, Ben Hill Griffin, Florida Cattlemen's Association, Florida Council of Cooperatives, Florida Sod Growers Cooperative, Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association, Sugar Cane Growers Cooperative of Florida, and Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association.

Methods

To conduct this study, three sets of two (6 total) focus groups were held in Tallahassee, Tampa, and Gainesville. The participants targeted for these focus groups were young opinion leaders. Opinion leaders are identified as those who have the ability to influence the attitudes of others. These individuals take a greater interest in current topics and easily share ideas. The recruitment pool of participants was operationalized as adults under 35 years of age who registered voters, with a post-secondary education. A total of 48 representative adults participated in the focus groups. The participants in these focus groups consisted of 21 males and 27 females; they ranged in age from 19-35. The participants' represented Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, Native American, Pacific Islander, and other ethnicities. Additionally, participants' education ranged from some college education to graduate degrees. Those participating in the focus groups held positions in the armed forces and administration, as well as the education, technology, agriculture, legal, health, service, sales, science, and media industries. In addition, some participants were current full-time college students.

Participants were asked about agricultural issues and were shown messages about agricultural issues which were framed strategically to elicit various responses. To analyze the data, results were recorded and transcribed, and content was analyzed using the constant comparative technique to identify emergent themes. Themes were analyzed across all six

groups and findings are based on themes that emerged across the groups. Results are presented below with themes that emerged for each question as well as themes that emerged throughout the focus groups as a whole.

Definitions

The following definitions supplement information found throughout the report.

Appeal

A creative concept used in advertising message strategy to create messages that are meaningful, believable, and distinctive (Kolter & Armstrong, 2006).

Frame

Frames of reference offered to the audience by message creators in order to influence the audience and encourage them to adopt similar frames of reference (McQuail, 2010).

Message Quality Issues

If an individual does not have enough information or senses false or incorrect information in a message, the individual's information processing will be disrupted. This will cause disbelief and distrust in the message from the individual and removes any influence the message might have had on the individual. However, if a message is complete and does not cause information processing gaps, the individual's information processing will be complete. This will cause the individual to believe and trust the message, which will ultimately provide positive influence to long term attitudes and behaviors (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984).

Opinion Leaders

Individuals who have the ability to influence the attitudes of others, take a greater interest in current topics, and easily share ideas (Burt, 1999; Rogers, 2003).

Results

What agricultural issues are most important to you?

At the beginning of the focus groups, participants were asked to talk about the agricultural issues that were most important to them. The agricultural issues that participants identified as being most important included the themes of economic issues, food related issues, sustainability of resources, and corporate power.

Economic Issues

The economic issues theme included the concern with the cost of food to the consumer, as well as the recognition that what is affordable to one person may not be affordable to another. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A member of the armed forces who was from Gainesville, said, "Probably the rising fuel costs which is causing the price of the crops to go up which is in turn, turning the revenue for cattle farmers and people who basically raise our dinner, it is making their prices go up. Which is making the price of pretty much everything go up."

- An educator from Tallahassee said, “For me, I think pricing on agriculture. You know when I go to buy fruits; I am looking for something that is cost effective. Something that I can feed my family with in a healthy way, but at the same time at a good price. And sometimes it can get a bit pricey depending on the season that they come in. So, that is the first thing that comes to my mind.”
- A participant who worked in the service industry and was from Tampa said, “I think cost and supply affect everything daily. I am a cook, if you work in a restaurant or even at home, day to day, your purchases and everything that you eat day to day are affected by supply and cost. People who make less money will not be able to eat as healthy. It is not as convenient, it is not as cheap.”

Food Related Issues

The food related issues theme included concerns with food safety, food components, the origin of food, and availability of food. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A participant from Gainesville who worked in the advanced technology industry discussed concerns with food safety and said, “Lack of regulation and inspection in the meat industry. I mean, every week or every couple of weeks there is a new story of 500,000 pounds of whatever that has to be recalled because of E. coli. There are cantaloupes that have killed people on the west coast. Things like that.”
- An educator from Gainesville discussed concerns with the components that are added to food. This participant said, “I don’t know how to say it, exactly. I would think most of my concern is like, I want to eat healthy food, but there is such a contradiction between what it takes to preserve healthy food to get on the shelf and it is almost like, which is worse? Eating something that has been sprayed all over with whatever pesticides or some ice cream?”
- A participant working in the administrative field who was from Tallahassee expressed concern about where food was coming from. This participant said, “I was thinking like where it is grown, like if it is local or from another country.”
- A participant from Tallahassee who worked in the health industry discussed that it was important that a variety of foods would always be available. This participant said, “I just want to make sure that my kid doesn’t have to eat green beans and carrots every night because that is all that he can find.”

Sustainability of Resources

The sustainability of resources theme included discussion which focused on the availability of resources for future generations, as well as issues surrounding the resources that current agricultural practices are using. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- An educator from Tallahassee discussed the concern of resources being available for future generations. This participant said, “I mean, how much will be left, when my kid gets older. When she is twenty, are we going to have water in the aquifer and stuff like that?”

- A participant who worked in the media industry and was from Tampa discussed concerns with a possibility of a shortage of resources and how this could affect food supply. This participant said, “Shortages of food or resources needed to do whatever, either grow the food or supply it in some way.”
- An educator from Gainesville discussed concerns with the resources that current agricultural practices are using and damaging. This participant said, “Mine would be all the resources that we put into raising meat. We are probably eating more meat than we have ever eaten and using a lot of water and grain and we produce a lot of pollution runoff. There are huge manure areas that just run into all of our water systems.”
- A college student from Tallahassee expressed concerns with natural habitats still being available for wildlife. This participant said, “And what about the animals? All of the land that we are cultivating for this agriculture, what about their food supply and their homes? Animals tend to come back to where they know that they are from, so it is hard for them to come back into this new field and then possibly be killed for being on it when it was their land in the first place. So, that is my big thing right there, like what are the animals eating now that you are cutting down all of these trees and doing all of this extra stuff to the animals?”

Corporate Power

The corporate power theme included discussion from the participants which included concerns surrounding, industrialization, monopolization, and the loss of the small farmer. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A college student from Tallahassee said, “Well, there is not a lot, there is not a lot left. Like even in the farming business because of industrialization and the factories and everything. People are not allowed to have a talent within their own home; they have to be out in the economy. They have to be out in the big world, the big scheme of things. You can’t just be a farmer and that be sufficient for you and your family. So, it is killing what they have been doing for years and their traditions and their values, just because of what we are doing on the outside.”
- A participant working in the media industry who was from Tampa said, “People not being able to, like independent farmers not being able to put out products because major corporations are pushing them out of the industry, and basically monopolizing the industry.”
- A participant from Gainesville who worked in the advanced technology industry said, “A lot of corporate farms have a lot of lobbyists which essentially pay off all the politicians to look the other way. And it is really the regular citizens are the victims of that, the end result. Because politicians don’t look there, lobbyists don’t look there.”

How do you stay informed on agricultural issues? If you needed to find something out about agriculture, where would you look?

After indicating what agricultural issues are most important to them, the participants were asked how they stayed informed regarding agricultural issues. In addition, the participants were asked where they would look for agricultural information. The responses to these two questions were intertwined. Therefore, the results are being presented together.

Participants indicated that they stayed informed about agricultural issues or if they needed to find something out about agriculture they would do so through the internet, news, television, print, and word-of-mouth.

Internet

Those who indicated that they used the Internet to look for or stay informed on agricultural issues referenced social media, governmental, educational, Extension, and search engine sources. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A participant who worked in the media industry and was from Tallahassee said, “I would just type in agriculture and see what Google pops up. You know the searches that people have made. Type a word or two in and it shows you. Then I would go from there and I would pick something that looked interesting.”
- A participant working in the service industry and who was from Tampa said, “And I can search for agriculture on Facebook, I am sure they have a page.”
- A participant from Tallahassee who worked in the service industry said, “I would also look at government websites and like you said and university statistics. I probably wouldn’t be as skeptical of maybe whether the professor was lying, as much as it is one study in the context of probably many. But that would be probably, the first couple of places that I would go if I wanted information about agriculture.”
- A participant from Gainesville who worked in the advanced technology industry said, “I would search on the USDA website or FDA website.”
- A health industry employee from Tallahassee said, “I always start with the local Extension office, because there is a lot of good information there about agriculture. It is like it’s their job or something.”

News

Those who indicated that they used the news to look for or stay informed on agricultural issues referenced television news, online news, radio news, and newspapers. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A participant from Tampa working in the administrative field indicated the news is how they stayed informed on the issue. This participant said, “The news is a good source.”
- A participant in the education field from Gainesville turned to newspapers for agricultural information. This participant said, “Read the news, I read the newspapers.”
- An educator from Tallahassee referenced online news and television news as sources of agricultural information. This participant said, “Read the newspaper on the internet and also watch the news on TV.”
- A participant who was from Tallahassee and working in the health industry referenced accessing agricultural information from “NPR,” while a participant working in the media industry from Tampa referenced “talk radio.”

Word-of-Mouth

Those who indicated that they used other opinion leaders and general word-of-mouth to look for or stay informed on agricultural issues referenced gaining information from acquaintances, educators, politicians, and agriculturalists. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- An educator from Gainesville said, “You know, as a relatively new teacher, I don’t have a whole lot of time on my hands, so I think the only way I hear about these things is word of mouth and through other people, unfortunately. “
- A college student from Gainesville said, “I guess it is sort of a part of my major, food science. Agriculture is a large part of it. My teachers usually do their best to try to keep students like us informed since this is going to be what we are going to be, ideally, affecting in the future.”
- A participant working in the entertainment industry who was from Tampa said, “A bunch of different farmers or people that are involved with water and people in Plant City, hearing it straight from their mouth about what they go through, or what they have had experience to get where they are. I think it is best, hearing it straight from them. They have several shows, I don’t know if they are considered shows, but people display their fruits and vegetables and they will educate you themselves if you just attend their seminars and stuff. It could be anywhere from plants to crops.

Television

Those who indicated that they used the television to look for or stay informed on agricultural issues referenced gaining information from commercials, documentaries, and specific television programming. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- An educator from Tallahassee discussed information seen on a commercial and said, “I think as far as like the Department of Agriculture, they are fully entwined in this because they definitely produce the commercials that we see where it is telling us to shop locally. And all the commercials that you see about orange juice where they are telling you how this has this much, and this is why our orange juice is better, it is X,Y,and Z. They definitely have a major part to play in this.”
- A participant who worked in the media industry and was from Tallahassee said, “A friend of mine recently showed me a movie called *Dirt*. It is just about how, it plays into a lot of things, but there is one section where it talks about monoculture. Agricultural industries produce just one thing on a huge swath of land and it is just the totally wrong way to. It just basically kills the dirt and makes it so you can’t really grow anything there. And what you are supposed to do is use crop rotation and all of these other things that you hear about in elementary school and you don’t really see put in practice. And so, that is another thing I guess, too. That movie made it seem as though we are losing topsoil and it is a humongous problem.”
- An educator from Gainesville discussed accessing agricultural information by “watching documentaries.”

- An educator from Tallahassee discussed having seen agricultural programming on television. This participant said, “The farm and ag report, AgDay. Obviously I have been up a couple of mornings at like four in the morning when you are just randomly up. AgDay, oh crap, I need to go to bed.”

Print

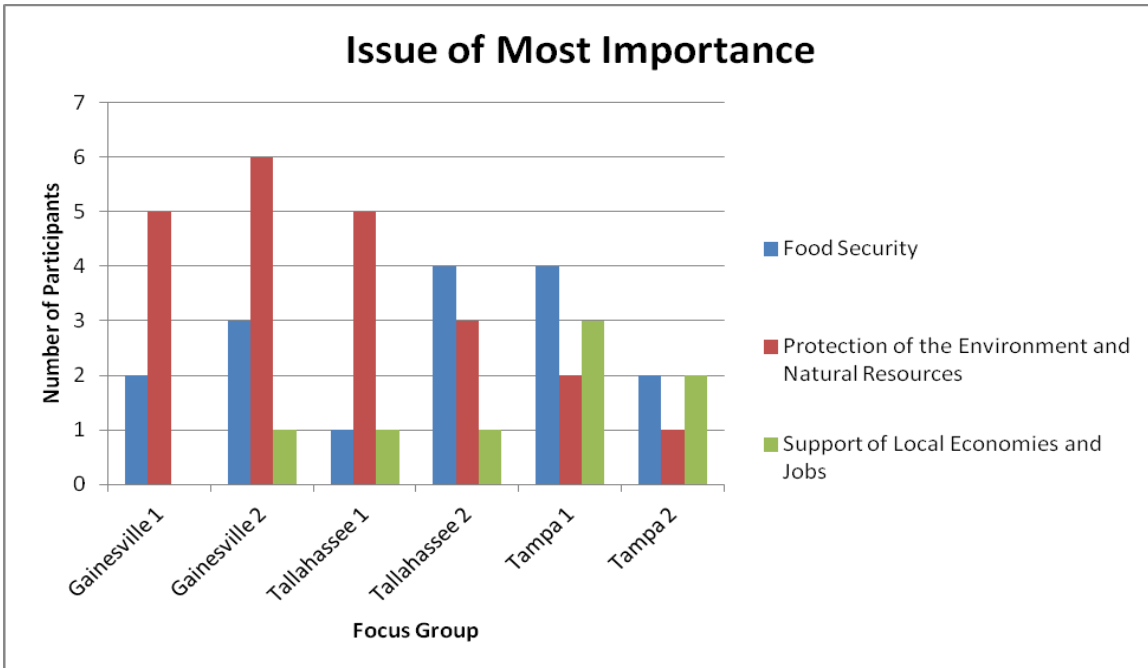
Those who indicated that they used print sources to look for or stay informed on agricultural issues referenced gaining information from magazines, books, and by reading food labels. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A participant from Tampa who worked in the advanced technology field discussed accessing information through magazines. This participant said, “I just read magazines.”
- An educator from Gainesville referenced reading books to find agricultural information. This participant said, “I tend to gravitate toward comparisons like, choose this, not that, because I want to make decisions. Every time I step into the grocery store, like I read books even on how many choices there are. This book, *What to Eat* by Marian Nestle, I came across this book and I bought a bunch of them because I thought it was so great about how to make choices, no matter what section of the grocery store, because we are marketed towards. It talks about that hundreds of thousands of items in a grocery store, but just realizing that you have to make the best choice so that you can look and feel your best.”
- A participant who was from Tallahassee and working in the health industry discussed accessing information from food labels and said, “Yeah, reading labels is a big one. I have a nine month old son and when we first started looking at baby food, you know, we figured it would be no problem to find stuff. A can or jar of strained peas is strained peas, right? Nooooo. There are only two brands out there that are strained peas. Then there is stuff that five ingredients down you get to the peas, and it is like, I want peas, I don’t want synthetics.”

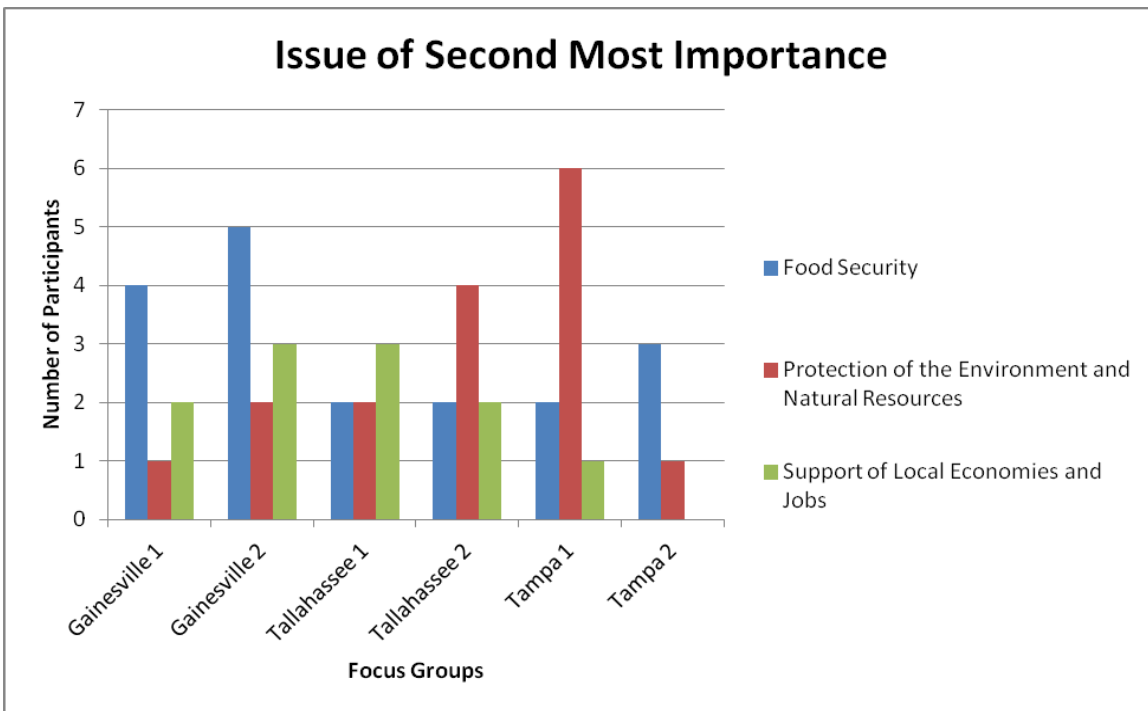
Order the issues of food security, protection of the environment and natural resources, and support of local economies and jobs in order of most importance to you.

After identifying the agricultural issues that were most important to them, participants were asked to order three specific agricultural issues in order of importance to them. These issues were food security, protection of the environment and natural resources, and lastly support of local economies and jobs. Descriptions or definitions of these issues were not given to participants prior to ordering. The results of this exercise can be seen below.

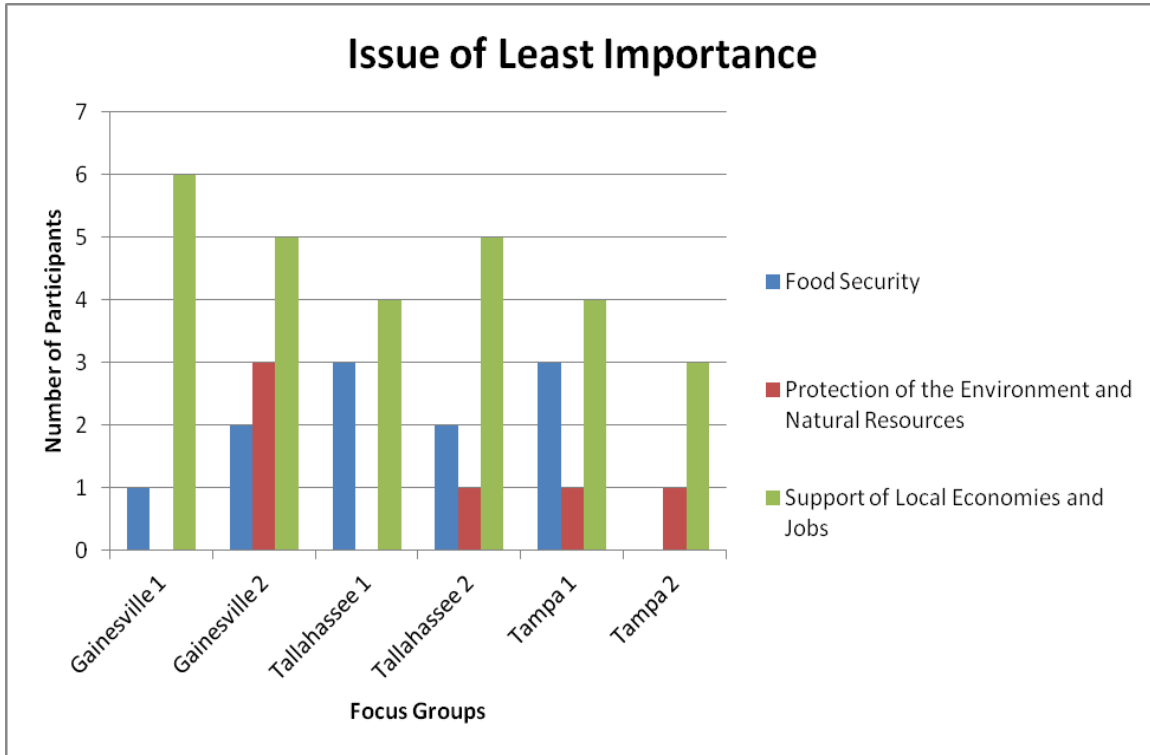
Issue of most Importance



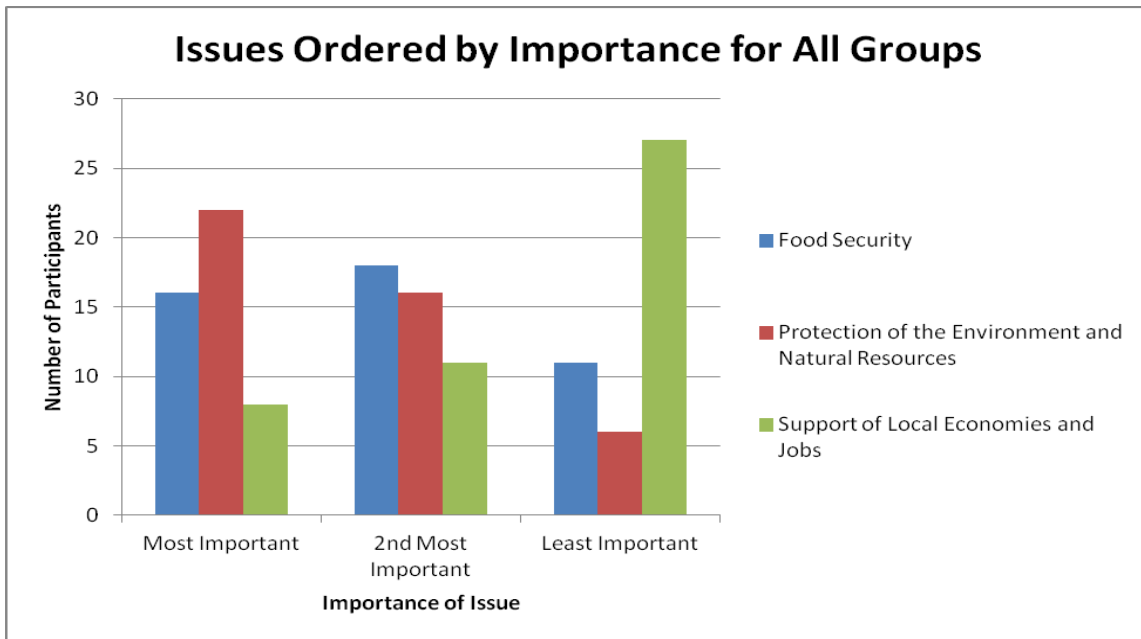
Issue of Second Most Importance



Issue of Least Importance



Issues Ordered by Importance for All Groups



Why did you order these issues the way that you did? What does each one of these issues mean to you?

After ordering the issues of food security, protection of the environment and natural resources, and support of local economies and jobs, in order of importance, the participants were asked to reflect on how they ordered the issues and what the issues really meant. Themes relative to each issue can be seen below.

Food Security

The discussion surrounding food security included confusion regarding the definition of food security, personal importance of food security, and discussion that food security logically comes first when ordered with the other two issues.

Confusion Regarding the Definition of Food Security

The participants had many questions and different opinions about what food security meant. As a whole the participants thought that food security either had to do with food safety, food availability, and regulations regarding food. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A Tallahassee participant working in the education field discussed food security from a food safety standpoint. This participant said, “I interpreted food security as meaning the food was safe to eat, so I thought that was critical, because if you are looking at an opportunity cost between having poisonous food and the environment, then that is going to win out for me.”
- A participant working in the service industry from Tampa discussed food security from a food availability standpoint. This participant said, “I think that there are more ways to look at food security, though. I look at it as more of, ‘What do you do if the grocery stores ran out of food?’”
- An employee working in the administrative field that was from Gainesville discussed the food security from a regulatory standpoint. This participant said, “I thought food security sort of was government regulations and how the FDA monitors, or is supposed to monitor that foods are at a consistently safe level for consumers. Otherwise we get things like the salmonella outbreaks with eggs or with Peter Pan peanut butter or something like that.”

Personally Important

When discussing food security many participants reasoned that the issue of food security was personally important to them. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A participant from Tallahassee that worked in the health field said, “For me, I think that is was rather difficult since the issues are all very much related. Ideally, if we can protect the environment and keep food resources available here, we are also protecting the local economy instead of consistently outsourcing and ordering fruits and vegetables or fresh things, or even processed foods from outside of our city. But, I felt that food security was the most important one because that is something that we need to live. It is just as required as water, that was already mentioned, and of course a roof over your head.”

- A Tampa participant working the media industry said, “Food security, I think of that as food for myself and my family. So, I put that as number one. I feel bad that I put environmental protection as number three, I feel bad putting it as number three, but I mean, I put myself first, sorry, but I did. And, then I put support for local economies. To me, that is just my personal importance. But I do care about the environment.”
- A participant working in sales and who was from Gainesville said, “For me it was, that is what I do. Some of the other ones are other people’s problems, or other generation’s problems, but food security affects me and my family today.”

Logic Ordering

The discussion surrounding food security included discussion that logically food security comes first and affects the other two issues. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A participant working in the service industry that was from Tallahassee reasoned through each issue. This participant said, “I felt like it was hard for me to rate the second, number two and three. I put food security as my most important issue, but I felt like the other two issues both really correlate to that, at least the way I interpret food security as, again, having enough domestic growers to feed an entire population of people. But I think when you do that, then you have American growers who are required to meet federal standards which may or may not protect the environment. I mean, certainly that is part of the goal of creating regulations surrounding farming. And then if you have more local growers, that is going to support local jobs and economies, especially if you need more farmers considering how much we import from other countries. If you have more farmers, that is going to create, I guess, different economic realities in certain areas which may or may not be a good thing depending on how successful farming is.
- A Tampa participant working in sales said, “Without food security, none of this other stuff could be accomplished because the average person is not going to be able to farm and grow food. It is not going to happen. So, food security I think, has to come first. After that, natural resources and the environment, because of the big picture, long term, not just short. And if you do both of those things, the local economy and the jobs will thrive.
- A participant from Tampa working in the service industry said, “I mean the food security is what is going to keep us here. And, if we are not here, we are not going to be able to help the environment. We are not going to have a job.”

Protection of the Environment and Natural Resources

The discussion surrounding the protection of the environment and natural resources included the themes of maintaining the environment and resources, industry greed, personal importance, and logic ordering.

Maintaining the Environment and Resources

When discussing the protection of the environment and natural resources many participants discussed the importance of sustaining a healthy environment and ensuring that resources will continue to be available. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A participant working in the media industry from Tallahassee said, “Yeah, I mean, using things like natural resources, for instance to use the example that people have water, I guess. Just making sure that we are not drawing too much water that the environment can’t sustain, do you know what I mean? So if you withdraw too much, then it might alter the way the river flows which could have all these other effects that you don’t even really think about. It really pertains to pretty much everything that we do.”
- A Tampa participant working in the media industry said, “I would just say that the protection of the environment and natural resources should be acknowledging that people a thousand years from now should have the exact same opportunities that we have today as far as the environment and our natural resources. That would be, obviously, not just a thousand years, however long we occupy this planet, everybody should have the same opportunities. We need to be able to preserve that for them.”
- An educator from Gainesville said, “I think maybe preserving the food and how it has been grown, but also where it can be grown as well. Because you have to be able to preserve the land that the animals are grown on and the crops are grown on, or as well as the crops themselves. That is a big part of everything.”

Industry Greed

When discussing the protection of the environment and natural resources many participants expressed that the industry uses a lot of resources and is more concerned with making a profit than ensuring that they are not damaging the environment. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A college student from Tallahassee said, “It is as much the industries fault in my personal view that we even have to worry about protecting the environment and resources. If we have to have certain systems in place, just using them in a way that you take toxic waste and reduce or refine it or whatever they do with it, instead of just dump it into a river because it is cheaper. You don’t just externalize all of the things that would cost more to keep the product safer or protect the environment or whatever.”
- A participant from Tampa who was employed in the sales industry said. “Yeah, making sure that we have people watching these corporations on what they are doing as far as dumping, but also the safety as far as oil goes and a lot of other stuff like that as well as cutting down trees and also with dumping into lakes. I interpret it more as having someone make sure these corporations don’t get lazy and try to dump a lot of stuff onto the land.”
- A participant working in the service industry from Tallahassee said, “I was just thinking as far as the protection of the environment, just that agriculture played kind of an iffy role there because there are a lot of ways that agriculture can be damaging to the environment. And then the environment in a broader sense of including animals and habitats and how agriculture takes land out of use for animals, and then the overproduction of land reduces minerals and I guess, nutrients in the soil. So, it can even be damaging to itself. So, I guess in that sense, I don’t see agriculture as necessarily protecting the environment as much as it more obviously contributes to the other two things.

Personally Important

When discussing protection of the environment and natural resources many participants reasoned that this issue was personally important to them. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A participant from Gainesville who worked in the health industry said, “I like the protection of the environment first, that is most important to me. I try to be environmentally conscious and that just means a lot to me. I appreciate food security, but I put it last on my list. Not that I am not interested in it, but it is just lower than support of local economies.”
- A Tallahassee participant who worked in the science industry said, “I think about the environment a lot, so I ordered that one first and I deliberated over food security and support of local jobs and economies. I thought that food security was food safety, so I thought that was pretty important to me. I guess I just put support of local jobs last because it was the last one left.”
- An employee in the media industry from Tampa said, “I went with the protection of the environment because I am more of a long run type of person. I feel like that is pretty important for our food, in general.”

Logic Ordering

The discussion surrounding protection of the environment and natural resources included that logically this issues comes first and affects the other two issues. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A participant working in the administrative field from Gainesville said, “Well, I picked the protection of the environment and natural resources because I think that is where it begins. I feel like if your environment is unhealthy, how can you manifest healthy crops and healthy meat or whatever?”
- A participant from Tallahassee who was employed in the agricultural industry said, “I had protection of the environment first. To me that is more important because if you protect the environment then you can grow the food that you need to eat.”
- A Tampa participant working in the advanced technology industry said, “Well, protection of the environment, in order to grow the crops, and everything, if there is pollution and everything, nothing is going to grow. If you don’t take care of the environment, things are just going to die out and not be able to provide food or any other life, if it is not there.”

Support of Local Economies and Jobs

The discussion surrounding support of local economies and jobs included the themes of buying local, conflicting realism and ideology, personal importance, and logic reasoning.

Buying Local

The discussion surrounding supporting local economies and jobs led participants to talk generally about buying local. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A participant working in the administrative field in Tampa said, “I think also supporting the local economy, I mean like buying from local farmers and whatnot, is keeping the money in the community, it is not going to some other country, or some other continent completely far away from us. Keeping it, or even in another city that is in your same state, still staying in that community and supporting that community.”
- A participant from Tampa working in the sales industry said, “I would much rather spend my dollar at a local produce stand than spending it a grocery store that comes from the middle of the United States where I don’t know where it is from.
- An educator from Tallahassee said, “Sometimes you have to spend a little more money to support your local community, but a lot of times you end up getting a better product.

Conflicting Realism and Ideology

The discussion surrounding supporting local economies and jobs included participants talking about how buying local and supporting local economies is a great idea, but realistically it is not completely feasible. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- An educator from Gainesville said, “I guess I feel bad when I go to Wal-Mart, then I look at my paycheck and think, well, Wal-Mart gives me the low prices and so I have that kind of catch-22. I hate you, Wal-Mart, but, thank you for cheaper food. So, I know Wal-Mart is not necessarily like great. I could go to the farmer’s market and buy local food.”
- A participant working in the service industry and who was from Tallahassee said, “I was just thinking that my opinions on this are kind of conflicted because I feel like I have been talking about kind of pushing that we would need more farmers if we are going to feed our entire population and be self sustaining. But then at the same time, when I think of support of local jobs and economies, I think in a lot of ways, being a farmer would be a really terrible job. I don’t really know a lot about industrial farming, but just as an individual, non-corporate farmer you are your own boss which would theoretically be kind of cool, but you have no health care other than that which you buy yourself, you have to work all the time and you really don’t make any money and you have a lot of overhead. Like everybody says, farmers are cash poor but asset rich. So, you might have a ton of trailers and a ton of tractors that you use for your job, but at the end of the day, you are really not making a lot of money. Theoretically, yes I would want to buy more stuff local, but having a bunch of people, like if we just went back to being a very agrarian society, I don’t know if that would be the very best thing for a very prosperous economy either.”
- A participant from Tampa who was employed in the media industry said, “But a lot of times you have to go into a health food store to get local stuff. First of all, number one, most people wouldn’t do that, they would go to a regular grocery store. Even if you do make the step and you do go into a store that just sells that kind of food, it is a lot more expensive. Like significantly. Even more so than just buying organic food at Publix.”

Personally Important

When discussing supporting local economies and jobs many participants reasoned that this issue was personally important to them. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A participant working in the legal field and who was from Tallahassee said, “It means a lot to me. Our family was hit with the unemployment thing for over a year and it was hard to find a job.”
- A participant from Tampa who worked in the media industry discussed support of local economies and jobs and said, “I just kind of felt like this is what is the most affected to me now. You know, like the environment, I do care about the environment, but it is going to be here after I am gone, I think.”
- A college student from Tampa discussed the importance of the issue and said, “Having enough jobs for the agriculturists, having enough people around to do what we need and to take what we need.”

Logic Ordering

The discussion surrounding support of local economies and jobs included that logically this issues comes first and affects the other two issues. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- An educator from Tallahassee said, “I put support of the local jobs because, like she said, all three are kind of tied in together. Like, if you tend to get more locally produced foods, you will tend to have better food security because many times if you notice, when you see the food security issues, a lot of times it is food that is shipped from somewhere else. Or it is something that they had packaged from a long ways. And then I had food security and I had protection last because food security and protection are kind of one in the same to me.”
- A participant from Tampa who worked in the advanced technology field said, “The environment, I was kind of torn whether it would be number one or the last, because it could go either way. But then, if you support the economy, especially if you look at local, there being so much agriculture, especially around here, then you would have food security. So that is why I did support the economy first and then food security, because if you supported the economy then you would have the food security. And I don’t know, maybe if you are supporting the economy and the jobs, then people will care about the environment and take care of it.
- Two educators and a college student from Gainesville had the following discussion. Educator 1: “If it’s locally grown, it is more sustainable because you are not paying for all of the transportation costs.” The college student responded “And also, it affects the environment less because you are not taking it from one place to another and using all the energy, and gasoline and everything else to transport it.” Educator 2 added “And you are supporting your local businesses and farmers which is very important for these times.”

What attributes would you prefer to see on a website containing agricultural information?

This question was asked to gain an understanding of what types of things participants would prefer to find on agricultural websites. The participants indicated that they would prefer websites that provided specific information about agriculture, were easy to navigate, included visuals, and had trustworthy components.

Specific Agricultural Information

Participants indicated that they would prefer to find information about specific aspect of agriculture rather than general information on agricultural websites. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- An educator from Tallahassee said, “Kind of like you said, I mean it is like when you write a paper. If you are going to write a history paper, I am not just going to write about World War II, that is not fair to the subject. I am going to write about a certain experience during the war. If I choose all of agriculture, it is just too much. I need to choose the focus path and research that and study about that and learn about that. And once I have mastered it, then I will move onto something else.”
- A college student from Gainesville said, “Probably specific, because if I were to look it up, I would probably be looking up a specific question for a certain cause. I probably wouldn’t look up the whole thing, in general, if I had to do a report or if I had a question about one kind of food security or some subsection.”
- A Tampa participant who worked in the advanced technology industry said, “Sometimes I will see a plant or something and think, what is that growing? So, it will be a more general search of how I interpreted it looking like and then plugging it in. And then I might look for pictures or something like that. For the most part, you usually have to have the specific item that you are looking for, where you could find it.”

Easy Navigation

When discussing favorable attributes of agricultural websites, participants indicated that they are always looking for webpages that have components that makes the website easy to navigate. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A participant from Gainesville working in the health industry said, “I like things with headings for the specific areas within a page so I can jump right to whichever paragraph that has what I want.”
- An employee in the health industry from Tallahassee said, “I guess organization, presentation, content. Have it be accessible but not overwhelming.”
- An educator from Tallahassee said, “I will tell you the way that I interpret it, I like short condensed, quick, easy access information. Statistics, numbers, something that I can grab and I can use immediately and it makes sense, too. That is what I generally like.”

Inclusion of Visuals

The participant indicated that the inclusion of visuals would be favored on agricultural websites. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A college student from Gainesville said, “I am a visual person, so I like photographs and tiny explanations.”
- An educator from Tallahassee said, “Yeah, definitely pictures. Pictures help, because it actually allows you to mentally put yourself into that situation.”

- Three participants from Tampa including a college student, a participant in the media industry, and a participant in the service industry had the following discussion regarding visual preferences. The college student said that they had preferences for “Outlines and flow charts.” The participant from the media industry added “I would say maps.” The participant from the service industry summed up the discussion and said “I would say photographs, in general.”

Trustworthy Components

It was discussed that it was important for agricultural websites to have trustworthy components. Components identified as adding trustworthiness by the participants included detailed evidence, reliable sources, and expert/unbiased approval. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A member of the armed forces from Gainesville discussed needing evidence and said, “I have to see it to believe it.”
- A participant from Tampa who worked in the media industry discussed needing details in order to add to the trustworthiness of the information. This participant said, “Okay, I would probably want to know the history of that branch. How something that was being cropped a thousand years ago differs from how it is being done today.”
- An educator from Tallahassee said, “I want sources. I want sources. Who are your sources? What are you backing this up with? I don’t want you to just spitting out stuff, I want to know that this is valid. Because I am not trusting just anybody.”
- A Tampa participant working in the media industry said, “I just look for the truth, research truth. Kind of like what she was saying, you know, references and if I am looking for something specific, I want an unbiased opinion. I don’t want a company telling me that their food is the best, I want to know, looking for a certain food, I want to know what is in it. If there is a certain process for farming that someone is supposed to use or not using. You know, I was talking about earlier with the pesticides or the way they turn their crops. I don’t know too much about farming, but I know that the issue with corn is really big if they don’t farm that correctly. And then they wind up eating a bunch of garbage that they aren’t supposed to be eating.

In general, what types of websites do you visit most often?

In order to understand what types of websites may be best to reach audiences with agricultural information, participants were asked what types of website they visit most often. Common responses included social media sites, search engines, news sites, email servers, shopping, and sports sites.

Message Testing with Strategic Appeals

The second-half of the focus groups included message testing of messages created with the inclusion of strategic frames. The first set of strategic messages included messages about the three issues presented earlier in the focus groups (food security, protection of the environment and natural resources, and support of local economies and jobs). For each issue three strategic messages were created. One message included a logical appeal, one included an emotional appeal, and one

included an ethical appeal. The participants were not informed that appeals were strategically used in the formation of the messages. The definition used for each appeal included the following:

- logical appeal – based on rational arguments that support sets of assumptions already accepted by the audience
- emotional appeal – based on specific examples of suffering or potential threats and tap on an audience’s emotions
- ethical appeal – based on shared moral values and call upon an audience’s sense of right, justice, and virtue

Food Security Strategic Messages

Participants were asked to react to each of the following messages about food security. The participants were not told which appeals were present in each message.

- If farmers are able to continue producing food for a growing population, our food supply will be abundant and secure. (Logical Appeal)
- Continuing to produce food as we have always done ensures that our children will never go hungry. (Emotional Appeal)
- The agricultural industry is committed to producing safe food for future generations. (Ethical Appeal)

Food Security Logical Appeal

When participants discussed the food security message containing the logical appeal (If farmers are able to continue producing food for a growing population, our food supply will be abundant and secure) they indicated that it had some message quality issues, but also some favorable components.

Message Quality Issues

The food security message containing a logical appeal was discussed as having some logical gaps that were either consciously or unconsciously not addressed that led to message quality issues. Some of the observed information gaps included that the message did not address land availability, was too futuristic, did not address food safety, was un-realistic, and did not address the affordability of food. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- An educator from Gainesville said, “I immediately have a little bit of a negative reaction to it and almost, like to me, it seems shortsighted in the way that, yes, if farmers are able to continue producing food for a growing population, we would be secure. But, if we continue to grow our population, they are going to need more land. The land is not going to, there is not going to be more land. We are going to keep putting houses and buildings and businesses and taking up that land. So, for me it seems a little shortsighted. That is my initial reaction.”
- A Tallahassee participant working in the science industry said, “I thought that the first one was, you can’t look that far into the future, really it is too difficult.”
- A participant working in the administrative industry and who was from Tampa said, “I mean, the first one is just, I don’t think it is a possibility. But, if there was some miracle where our growing population, which is growing

exponentially, somehow figured out how to continue to feed everybody the way that we feed each other, then it would have to be a miracle.”

- A Gainesville participant working in the education field said, “In that first statement, I think about, I haven’t been formally educated on this topic, but it is just an interest on the side and so I feel like I have heard things like the issue isn’t the supply, it is being able to get food where it needs to go before it goes bad. And also, there is no issue addressing the constant rising cost, even if it’s available. I pay attention to just little things in the grocery store and I notice for instance, like a tub of yogurt that I buy like once a week, within six months it had gone up like 40 cents. Minor, but if everything is going up, I just wonder why. So, supply isn’t even, well I guess that depends, it determines the cost or whatever, but there are so many more issues, and they are interrelated.”

Favorability

The food security message containing a logical appeal was discussed as having favorable components or was more favorable than the other two messages about food security. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A college student from Tampa said, “I think the first one is good, too. It is basic, but it is also saying that if farmers are able, if they have enough resources. It is important to keep our resources around and maintain those so that they can keep producing food.”
- A participant working in the service industry and was from Tallahassee said, “I like number one the most. I will just put that out there.”
- A discussion between an educator and college student from Gainesville explained their favorability toward the food security message with a logical appeal. The educator said, “I like one because it is the least wrong. It is so general that you could really turn it in to anything that you want. “If farmers are able to continue to produce food for a growing population, our food supply will be...” Well okay, you can interpret that in a lot of different ways, so that is the one that is most vague and bendable to whatever agenda, really.” The college student added “It also sounds the most hopeful. I think the second one sounds kind of frozen in place, the third one sounds kind of like it is a catch-phrase, like something that a corporation would say; you would find it on their website or something.”

Food Security Emotional Appeal

When participants discussed the food security message containing the emotional appeal (Continuing to produce food as we have always done ensures that our children will never go hungry) they indicated that it was a false statement in that we have not “always” produced food the same or the right way.

False Statement

The food security message containing an emotional appeal was discussed as being false primarily due to the fact that there are starving children today. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A Gainesville participant working in the sales industry said, “And I still go back to the “our children will never go hungry,” but they are going hungry today.”

- A Tallahassee college student said, “For the second one, I think that is the one that is most glaring for me as far as there are plenty of children that are going hungry right now, so continuing to produce in the way that it is done now, done currently, does not ensure anything.”
- A participant working in the service industry who was from Tampa said, “If it were a true or false question, it would be false.”

“Always” in Agriculture does not exist

The discussion of the food security message containing an emotional appeal led participants to indicate that agriculture has not “always” been the same and the industry has not “always” done things right. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A Tallahassee participant working in the service industry said, “I feel like with the second one, I think it is not true on several levels, because even when I just read the statement, I am like ‘as we have always done.’ I think maybe people perceive farmers, sometimes, as being kind of backwards, as if nothing has changed in farming since the 1800’s. But, that is totally not true and farming is evolving all of the time in a lot of different ways. So, I don’t even think that there is a way that we always have produced food and then that, yeah I just don’t even agree with the statement, in general as a way to make sure that people will never go hungry.”
- A college student from Gainesville said, “It assumes that what we are doing right now is the absolute right way, the most sustainable way. I just don’t think that is true. Even in anything, there is always room for improvement and I think with overfishing and there are lots of issues that can be improved. That doesn’t leave room for improvement.”
- A participant working in the service industry and who was from Tampa said, “I think the way it is worded, it kind of seems like ‘continuing to produce as we have always done,’ well there are problems and a lot of people have issues with the way it is being done. And talking about producing for an ever growing population, that kind of sounds like changes need to be made, but we are not going to tell you what they are. Just know that we are committed to producing safe food for future generations. My next question would be, how?”

Food Security Ethical Appeal

When participants discussed the food security message containing the ethical appeal (The agricultural industry is committed to producing safe food for future generations) they indicated that it was an ideal concept. In addition, they discussed corporate distrust and the current safety of food when talking about this message.

Ideal Concept

The food security message containing an ethical appeal was discussed as being an ideal concept that if it is true would be favorable. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- An educator from Gainesville said, “Oh, I would have to say I like three. The third one, because it is like a declaration that we will continue, ‘we are committed to producing safe foods.’ Hopefully, they will do that.”

- A participant from Tallahassee who worked in the service industry said, “I mean, three is like an ideal that should be aspired to, so I guess I like it as a concept.”
- A Tampa participant working in the media industry showed favorability toward the concept and said, “Well, I mean, you know, you could probably say that the whole industry is generally about producing safe food.”

Corporate Distrust

When discussing the food security message containing an ethical appeal the participants discussed corporate distrust that they had toward large companies. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A participant working in the advanced technology field who was from Gainesville said, “For me, the third one is completely false. I use ‘agriculture industry’ in the corporate sense, where they are not committed to producing safe food, they are committed to producing a profit whether the food is safe or not. I mean, if they could feed you poison and charge a hundred dollars for it, they would do it. So, that one is a non-starter.”
- A Tallahassee participant working in the health field said, “That last one gets me though, the word industry. If it said the agricultural regulators or the agriculture department or something which puts an authority over it. The industry, all I am seeing is somebody who is making money off of this. That doesn’t make me feel like they are doing it for safety reasons.”
- A participant from Tampa working in the media industry said, “The more I read the bottom one, the more actually it is making me uneasy because it does seem like something that a company would tell you that, ‘Oh, we are committed to producing good food. We are committed to producing a safe cigarette. Doctors all agree, this is the cigarette for you.’”

Current Safety of Food

When discussing the food security message containing an ethical appeal the participants discussed the current safety of food. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A participant from Tallahassee who was working in the service industry said, “I think that there are also a lot of things that seem like a good idea at the time and then research later shows that they are very dangerous. So, I mean like, in regard to certain pesticides being safe, was it DDT that they sprayed as far as mosquitos? And then it is like, ‘Oh, wait, we are actually just kidding, that is terrible.’ So, I feel like with certain pesticides, even if you are committed to producing safe food, you may not realize that you are using something dangerous or just especially with certain scientific developments as far as like animal engineering or even with plants. Some things seem safe and then time shows you otherwise.”
- A Tampa participant working in the advanced technology field said, “But safe food, that is each person’s own opinion. Because with pesticides and everything in there, is it really safe? If you look at what they add to it, maybe they are adding more, because they sell it by the pound or whatever, you know it will make it grow bigger or something, you know what I mean? They wouldn’t actually be making it safe, but it is safe according to whomever sets those limits.”

- A Gainesville participant working in the administrative industry said, “The third one, I don’t know, I feel like what he was saying, sometimes ‘drummettes’ almost look like legs and it is like where are they getting these chickens?”

Protection of the Environment and Natural Resources Strategic Messages

Participants were asked to react to each of the following messages about the protection of the environment and natural resources. The participants were not told which appeals were present in each message.

- Farmers value the environment and natural resources because they need them to farm. (Logical Appeal)
- Farmers take steps to ensure that clean water and air is available for their families and yours. (Emotional Appeal)
- Farmers take care to leave the land better than they found it and improve upon it for future generations. (Ethical Appeal)

Protection of the Environment and Natural Resources Logical Appeal

When participants discussed the protection of the environment and natural resources message containing the logical appeal (Farmers value the environment and natural resources because they need them to farm) they indicated that the message was believable.

Believable

When discussing the protection of the environment and natural resources message containing a logical appeal the participants discussed that the message was believable. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A participant from Gainesville working in the advanced technology field said, “And I think one seems a little self-serving so I believe it more, maybe yes, they do need the environment in order to survive, so I don’t know, I trust it more.”
- A Tallahassee participant who worked in the legal industry said, “Yeah, most likely the first one is very true. You have got to protect your own interest.”
- A participant working in the sales industry and who was from Tampa said, “I would say though, that even though the first one sounds very common sense, it at least is believable because it shows that there is a cause and effect, that we value these things because we get something in return and the other two don’t. And I would say that I believe the first one more than I do the other two.”

Protection of the Environment and Natural Resources Emotional Appeal

When participants discussed the protection of the environment and natural resources message containing the emotional appeal (Farmers take steps to ensure that clean water and air is available for their families and yours) they indicated that the message had favorable components, but was also seen as not believable by some participants.

Favorability

When discussing the protection of the environment and natural resources message containing an emotional appeal the participants discussed that the message was favorable because it included components of truth, demonstrated action, and considered others. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A Tampa participant working in the sales industry said, “The second one seems like it has the most, it doesn’t necessarily make me think of just small businesses. The second one lets me think of both your small ones and your larger corporations. Even large corporations, to a degree, they wouldn’t be able to mass produce and farm if they didn’t have the land and clean water and air. So, I think to a degree it benefits them, I think they that do care about it.”
- A participant working in the health industry who was from Gainesville said, “I think I prefer the second one more, just because it’s a little more action oriented.”
- An educator from Gainesville said, “I think from an advertising perspective, the second one has a really good, by including ‘their families and yours’ in it, I think it is a nice tactic as far as advertising goes, because then it is of course they care, it is their families, too.”

Not Believable

When discussing the protection of the environment and natural resources message containing an emotional appeal the participants discussed that the message was not believable because they had seen instances where farmers were not acting responsibly when it came to water and air, the participants thought farmers could not impact the issue, and that caring for water and air conflicted with other goals of farming. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A participant working in the administrative field who was from Tallahassee discussed farmer irresponsibility when it came to clean water and air. This participant said, “I think that second one is the least believable. But just the things that we are finding out now about local water pollution is that their best interest is to grow stuff quickly and overuse of fertilizer which pollutes the water. I think if anything, some of the stuff that farmers do pollutes the water. It is more expedient to them just to get something out so that they can keep producing and make money for their families. Clean water and air is not a priority.”
- A participant from Tampa working in the media industry discussed that farmers could not impact clean water and air issues and said, “I don’t really see how clean water and air can be helped by farmers. I don’t see how they could do anything about that or how they can take steps to ensure that we have clean air and water.”
- An educator from Gainesville said, “I am also concerned about the clean water issue. Farmers do want to have their crops grow, and part of that is fertilizing, so there is a conflict of interest there, and how do they balance that? Do I think they are intentionally harming the water? No, but they also want their crops to grow and have something to sell. I think that there is definitely a conflict of interest that they have to balance.”

Protection of the Environment and Natural Resources Ethical Appeal

When participants discussed the protection of the environment and natural resources message containing the ethical appeal (Farmers take care to leave the land better than they found it and improve upon it for future generations) they indicated that the message had message quality issues and was unfavorable.

Message Quality Issues

The protection of the environment and natural resources message containing an ethical appeal was discussed as having some message quality issues. Some of the observed information gaps included that farming takes nutrients out of the ground and that history shows that this has not always been done or may not continue to be done. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A college student from Gainesville said, “It’s because, it’s just logically, how can you constantly improve, generation after generations? Future innovations, they take years to make, most of the time you are stuck with how fast people can make new discoveries or possibly improve things. Generally you are just going to stay where you are until there’s an innovation.”
- A participant working in the service industry and who was from Tampa said, “How do you improve the land when you are actually taking the nutrients out of the ground? I am not contradicting anybody, I am just saying that was my one question with that, how do you improve the land if you are taking nutrients from it to grow a vegetable? You are pulling nutrients out of it to grow a vegetable. Like aren’t you taking it out? How could you even improve it with that? Unless they pour Miracle-Gro on it after they leave.”
- Two participants from Tallahassee, one working in the health industry and another working in the administrative industry had the following historic conversation. The participant working in the health industry said, “I think 100 years ago it definitely would have been true because future generations, you knew that your farm was going to go to your son because you got it from your granddaddy. These days farmers are lucky if they stay on the same property.” The participant working in the administrative field added, “The last one is definitely something that comes from the Dust Bowl. They just kind of worked the land until they can’t work it anymore and then it is like, ‘Oh, crap. We can’t grow anything on it now.’ So you had to, you had to do that.”

Unfavorable

The protection of the environment and natural resources message containing an ethical appeal was discussed as being unfavorable. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A college student from Tallahassee said, “I think the one I dislike the most is probably the third one, because even though I think farmers strive to take care of the land, I think at this point it is mostly about how much money they can make. How much money they can make from their crops, and from growing each year and like (name omitted) said, once they kept growing the same crop over and over and over and they depleted the land they had to start doing crop rotation so that the soil would be usable. I think it is more about making money and still having that soil to still grow stuff on rather than, ‘Oh, I need to take care of this land.’ It is about how much they can get out of it.”

- A participant working in the sales industry and who was from Gainesville said, “I think it’s cheezy. I mean, they are farming land and it is not like they are bettering it and making it something more than it is.”
- A Tampa participant working in the sales industry said, “I don’t know if that is what they are trying to portray, but farming isn’t like that anymore. It has become industrialized, really. It is not believable at all, the second or the third one.”

Protection of the Environment and Natural Resources Overarching Theme

When participants discussed the protection of the environment and natural resources they discussed that all of the messages in the group had a farmer specific element to them.

Farmer Specific

The protection of the environment and natural resources messages included discussion indicating that the believability of the statement would depend on what type of farmers you were talking about. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- An educator from Gainesville said, “I think I am cautious or I am wary of them because they say ‘farmers,’ and it is not broken down for us. So, I am wary of who it is referring to because, no, not all farmers take steps to ensure clean water. So, I am wary of the all encompassing nature of it.”
- A participant working in the media industry and who was from Tallahassee said, “I mean, to me the validity of those statements, a farmer would be a really broad term. I would kind of break it down into corporate farmer versus individual farmer and then further. I mean corporate farmers, there are like the Tyson chicken farms that I am thinking that are these huge mass produced things with mice running all over the floor and this I know because I know someone who used to work there, I am not just saying that for no reason.”
- A Tampa participant working in the administrative field said, “I think it is somewhat true, but it depends on the scale, like you have a small local farmer, maybe a lot of this is true for them. But when they get to the big mass-production farming, then I feel like that becomes less true. That is more about producing than taking care of the environment.”

Support of Local Economies and Jobs Strategic Messages

Participants were asked to react to each of the following messages about the support of local economies and jobs. The participants were not told which appeals were present in each message.

- Florida agriculture supports over 700,000 jobs and provides over \$103 billion dollars to the state’s economy. (Logical Appeal)
- Agriculture is the life blood of every community – large or small. (Emotional Appeal)
- Agriculture is the traditional foundation of the American society as we know it. (Ethical Appeal)

Support of Local Economies and Jobs Logical Appeal

When participants discussed the support of local economies and jobs message containing the logical appeal (Florida agriculture supports over 700,000 jobs and provides over \$103 billion dollars to the state's economy) they showed favorability toward the message, but also had feelings of skepticism.

Favorability

When discussing the support of local economies and jobs message containing a logical appeal the participants discussed that the message was favorable because it included factual components and Floridian values. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A college student from Gainesville said, "I like the first one, because even with nothing to compare it to, at least you have some information. Whereas the second and third one, they both kind of, you could argue either way for. The first one, it is like, it contributes 103 billion dollars, you can't deny that."
- A participant working in the service industry from Tallahassee said, "I like the first one because it makes, as a Floridian, it shows you how important it is to buy from the state of Florida."
- A Tampa participant working in the health industry said, "I like the first one because it gives details. The facts."

Skepticism

When discussing the support of local economies and jobs message containing a logical appeal the participants discussed skepticism surrounding the message. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- An educator from Gainesville said, "I would be skeptical of the jobs as well, because I know they like, 'fudge.' How many of them are really jobs that are sustaining people. Like she said, what is the quality of life? Is it someone who works ten hours a week but has to have three other jobs? But, they would count that as a job because it looks good. They will count anything, somebody that like walked by the farm, you know, that's a job, or something."
- A participant working in the health industry and who was from Tallahassee said, "I like it, but again, I am sorry. The skeptic in me reads that these are jobs that are going to those orange pickers, not that I am mad about that, but they don't get paid anything. There are often 15 of them in one house, so you are telling me that it provides 103 billion to the state's economy, but roughly point two-five billion of that is actually going to the people that are working those seven hundred thousand jobs. It's just me. Somebody is profiting 103 billion dollars, more or less."
- A Tampa participant working in the media industry said, "I think I would want to know, I mean it says that it provides a 103 billion dollars to the state's economy, but I would want to know how much of that goes to the CEO of the company as opposed to the employees of the company."

Support of Local Economies and Jobs Emotional Appeal

When participants discussed the support of local economies and jobs message containing the emotional appeal (Agriculture is the life blood of every community – large or small) they discussed that the message had some logical gaps.

Message Quality Issues

The support of local economies and jobs message containing an emotional appeal was discussed as having some message quality issues. Some of the observed information gaps included that agriculture was not the life blood for “every” community and that other things contribute to the life blood more than agriculture. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A participant from Tampa who was working in the media industry said, “I don’t understand how “agriculture is the lifeblood of every community large or small.” I think of a city, like, go to Chicago. How is agriculture the life blood, to me, life blood is the surviving, the thing that makes it survive. And, agriculture isn’t really in the city. If we are talking about farming, how is it in the center of a big city?”
- A college student from Gainesville said, “Well, I have been thinking it over, but in the second one I am thinking, well, it is true that ‘agriculture is the lifeblood of our community.’ Without food, without clothes, without things and stuff, but, if we think locally, a lot of our, especially in the larger communities, we get a lot of our stuff imported from overseas. It is not like agriculture is the lifeblood of every community; it could be that it is the lifeblood of what we are importing, especially these days, since it is cheaper overseas. We can get our clothes made in sweatshops in India or something like that. Or our iPad made in China, well, that is not agricultural. Just the idea of the items that we buy, are not necessarily supporting local.”
- A Tallahassee participant working in the service industry said, “I think number two in relation to Tallahassee, I feel like, no. State government and FSU and FAMU are the lifeblood and TCC are the lifeblood of this community. So, I am kind of thinking, yes, everybody in Tallahassee needs to eat, but we wouldn’t have any money to buy food if those other industries weren’t here.”

Support of Local Economies and Jobs Ethical Appeal

When participants discussed the support of local economies and jobs message containing the ethical appeal (Agriculture is the traditional foundation of the American society as we know it) they discussed that it had favorable and unfavorable components, and that they did not feel the message was currently accurate.

Favorability

When discussing the support of local economies and jobs message containing an ethical appeal the participants discussed that the message was favorable because they thought it was true and patriotic. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A participant from Gainesville who was working in the health industry said, “And the third one, I am just mulling over. It is a nice kind of statement, ‘traditional foundation of American society.’ It needs a flag waving behind it or something.”
- A college student from Tallahassee said, “Well, the last statement, I think it is true, well, it has to be true because then we wouldn’t have the shortcuts that we have now. If there was nothing to start with, we wouldn’t know how to tweak it and master it.”

- A participant working in the service industry from Tampa said, “Actually it is like the traditional foundation of every society. I mean, cavemen all knew how to do something that had to do with agriculture, otherwise we wouldn’t be here.”

Unfavorable

The protection of the environment and natural resources message containing an ethical appeal was discussed as being unfavorable. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A college student from Gainesville said, “I think that number three, historically, is just inaccurate. We adopted a lot about what we know about farming and agriculture from the Native Americans that were here when we got here. Even though farming was around in Europe and stuff back then. I just feel like the sustainable portion of it and the whole idea of farming for your families came from that.”
- A participant serving in the armed forces and who was from Tampa said, “Well, like they have been saying, the first one seems actually relevant and important. All the other comments have been just words that don’t really mean anything at all. I mean, ‘traditional foundation of American society.’ Like, what is that even supposed to mean, honestly?”
- An educator from Tallahassee said, “The last one brings up bad connotations. When people think rural American traditional society, people may think about the dark part of history.”

No Longer Accurate

The protection of the environment and natural resources message containing an ethical appeal was discussed as being no longer accurate because other industries have replaced agriculture as the foundation of society. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A college student from Tallahassee said, “I think at one time agriculture was the traditional foundation, but I think, like he said, the internet is probably it now. It changed over the decades. Agriculture at first and then the Industrial Revolution, and then industry was the traditional foundation and then now, everything is about technology. So, I guess it depends on what time.”
- An educator from Gainesville said, “I was going to say, if it was the foundation, I don’t think it is anymore. Society has kind of moved beyond an agricultural society. It is still important, frankly, but it is not necessarily the foundation that it needs to be.”
- A Tampa participant working in the sales industry said, “And then the last one, ‘a traditional foundation,’ maybe, maybe not.”

Message Testing with Strategic Frames

The second-half of the focus groups tested messages with strategic frames. The second set of strategic messages included messages about local food and agriculture in general. For each issue, four strategic messages were created. The messages

included a gain frame, a loss frame, a non-gain frame, and a non-loss frame for each issues. The participants were not informed that messages were strategically framed. The definition used for each frame included the following:

- Gain frame - focus on obtaining a desirable outcome
- Loss frame - focus on attaining an undesirable outcome
- Non-gain frame – focus on not obtaining an undesirable outcome
- Non-loss frame - focus on failing to attain a desirable outcome

Local Food Messages

Participants were asked to react to each of the following messages about local food. The participants were not told which frames were present in the messages.

- Buy local to support your community. (Gain Frame)
- If you do not buy local you will not know where your food is coming from. (Loss Frame)
- Buy local to reduce your impact on the environment. (Non-gain Frame)
- If you do not buy local you cannot be sure that your food was grown and processed in a safe and appropriate manner. (Non-loss Frame)

Local Food Gain Frame

When participants discussed the local food message containing the gain frame (Buy local to support your local economy) they showed favorability toward the message.

Favorability

When discussing the local food message containing a gain frame the participants discussed that the message was favorable because they favored local food and the message contained favorable components. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A participant from Tallahassee who was working in the health industry said, “I am all about buy local from food to everything else you can think of. So, I like the first statement.”
- A Tampa participant working in the sales industry said, “I like the first one just because it is like, I don’t know, you could just read it on a sticker or something.”
- An educator from Gainesville said, “I like the idea behind one.”

Local Food Loss Frame

When participants discussed the local food message containing the loss frame (If you do not buy local you will not know where your food is coming from) they indicated that the message was false and threatening.

False Statement

The local food message containing a loss frame was discussed as being false because there are ways of finding out where food comes from and even if food is local you never really know where it comes from. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A Tampa participant working in the media industry said, “The second one is actually not true. Because they have apps now for typing in the number on your produce and it will tell you exactly where it came from and how long it took to get to you. So, it’s just not true.”
- An educator from Gainesville said, “I think it is possible to buy local and still not know where your food is coming from. I go down to the farmer’s market and Bob sells me some oranges, I mean, I don’t know where they came from.”
- A participant working in the service industry from Tallahassee said, “When I look at number two, I mean, especially on vegetables and fruits, there is usually a sticker that says where it is from.”

Threatening

The local food message containing a loss frame was discussed as sounding threatening or attacking. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A Tampa participant working in the service industry said, “The second one almost sounds like a threat. I don’t need to have my tomatoes threatening me.”
- An educator from Gainesville said, “I do feel a little attacked by the second one.”
- A participant from Tallahassee who was working in the media industry said, “The second one feels threatening.”

Local Food Non-Gain Frame

When participants discussed the local food message containing the non-gain frame (Buy local to reduce your impact on the environment) they indicated that the message had favorable components, but also questioned how true the message was.

Favorability

When discussing the local food message containing a non-gain frame the participants discussed that the message included favorable components. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A college student from Gainesville said, “I really stand by the first one, actually, because in the big picture of things, those two minute car rides back and forth here are nothing compared to a cross-country drive for oranges from California. Or like the gas it would take to fly them over, even. I don’t know the numbers or anything, but I feel like it is a lot smaller than the impact on that much gas.”
- A Tampa participant working in the media industry said, “I would say that generally it probably is true just because of the fact of when you are, you know, I don’t want to kill it or beat the subject to death, but if you are

buying stuff from a family owned farm or a small business they would usually be taking pride in how they grow and how they put their stuff out.”

- A college student from Tallahassee said, “I think the first one does have a ring of truth to it.”

Questionable Truth

When discussing the local food message containing a non-gain frame the participants discussed that they were not sure how true the message was because growing food will always impact the environment. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- Discussion between two Tampa participants, one working in the administrative field and one working in the media industry included the following discussion. The participant working in the administrative field said, “And the first one, just because it was grown locally doesn’t necessarily mean that it was grown sustainably either.” The participant working the media industry added “That is what I was going to say.” The participant working in the administrative field responded and said, “It may have been grown with pesticides as well.”
- An educator from Gainesville said, “I guess that I don’t understand number one. How would buying locally reduce your impact on the environment as opposed to somewhere else? I mean, the environment is being impacted locally and also wherever else you decide to buy your food.”
- A college student from Tampa said, “I think the first one, going back to the ‘better’ word from the other statement earlier, it’s like saying that just because it is local it is going to be better for the soil. But you are still doing the same thing that the other guy is doing, just less preservatives for the plant. It is basically the same thing, so you don’t really know that.”

Local Food Non-Loss Frame

When participants discussed the local food message containing the non-loss frame (If you do not buy local you cannot be sure that your food was grown and processed in a safe and appropriate manner) they indicated that the message was false.

False Statement

The local food message containing a non-loss frame was discussed as being false because just because something is local does not mean it was produced in a safe manner. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A college student from Gainesville said, “I think the second one is like what I said the first time, I don’t go and visit the farm, I am not an FDA inspector, I have no idea what they are doing versus what the guy out in California is doing. I can’t say that they are doing any a better of a job. Not to mention, I don’t know what the local or state regulations are in Florida versus other states. I think it has a better chance of being more efficient, being less wasteful, but it doesn’t necessarily mean that it is. It has a greater opportunity, obviously. It doesn’t mean it necessarily is.”
- A participant working in the service industry from Tampa said, “Yeah, and the second statement. Just because I go buy something at a local farmer’s market doesn’t necessarily mean that it was grown safely or appropriately.”

- A Tampa participant serving in the armed forces said, “I think the second one is just plain stupid. Just because food is grown locally doesn’t mean you automatically know that it was grown and produced in a safe and appropriate manner. That statement is pointless.”

General Agriculture Messages

Participants were asked to react to each of the following messages about agriculture in general. The participants were not told which frames were present in each message.

- Support agriculture to ensure a safe and affordable food supply. (Gain Frame)
- Without agriculture you would be naked and hungry. (Loss Frame)
- Support agriculture to decrease the risk of food not being available. (Non-gain Frame)
- Without agriculture we cannot guarantee the future success of our country. (Non-loss Frame)

General Agriculture Gain Frame

When participants discussed the general agriculture message containing the gain frame (Support agriculture to ensure a safe and affordable food supply) they identified some logical gaps.

Message Quality Issues

The general agriculture message containing a gain frame was discussed as having some message quality issues. Some of message quality issues included that even with support, you cannot ensure safety or affordability and consumers already support agriculture by buying food. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A Tampa participant working in the administrative industry said, “Well, the first one, I would say that, I mean, you can’t ensure just by supporting it that it would be safe and affordable.”
- A participant working in the media industry from Tallahassee said, “Yeah, I don’t feel like, I don’t see what I could do to support agriculture in any of the, I mean, I don’t know what I could do to ensure that it is safe or affordable. I mean, it doesn’t really seem like there is a whole lot that I personally can do other than buy it.”
- A participant from Gainesville who was working in the administrative field said, “You can’t. There is no way to ensure that everything is safe. We are not regulating pricing, right? We are not regulating the price on the food, so how do you ensure this?”

General Agriculture Loss Frame

When participants discussed the general agriculture message containing the loss frame (Without agriculture you would be naked and hungry) they indicated that the message was thought provoking.

Thought Provoking

The general agriculture message containing the loss frame was discussed as being thought provoking and led participants to think more deeply about agriculture. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A Tallahassee participant working in the service industry said, “That just makes me want to think for like 10 minutes.”
- A participant working in the administrative field from Tampa said, “I mean, I have to say that the second one is out there, but it is probably true at the same time, you know. Agriculture is where our whole society grew together and creating, bartering, growing things, hunting, gathering, all that stuff grew from there. So, I would have to say that yes, I guess I would agree with it.”
- An educator from Gainesville said, “And with the second statement, I guess I am realizing just how for granted I am taking agriculture. I mean, we would be naked and hungry. So, that is a wakeup call.”

General Agriculture Non-Gain Frame

When participants discussed the general agriculture message containing the non-gain frame (Support agriculture to decrease the risk of food not being available) they indentified some logical gaps.

Message Quality Issues

The general agriculture message containing a non-gain frame was discussed as having some message quality issues. Some of the observed informational gaps included that even with support you cannot ensure availability and consumers already support agriculture by buying food. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A Gainesville participant working in the advanced technology field said, “‘Support agriculture’ is a pretty vague, big premise. How do you support it? What do you want us to do? What is the definition of support? Do I make a sign? Do I educate myself? How am I supporting agriculture? How am I going to decrease the risk of food by supporting it?”
- An educator from Tallahassee said, “I can support agriculture all day, and it still not available for certain people, you know, so I don’t know, there are people even in our country, in particular, and certain parts of the region that just don’t have access to it. So, I don’t know.”
- A college student from Tampa said, “The first one just goes back to the other first one. Supporting, you are already paying so you need food to survive, so you are still going to keep supporting it, no matter what. I just don’t get it.”

General Agriculture Non-Loss Frame

When participants discussed the general agriculture message containing the non-loss frame (Without agriculture we cannot guarantee the future success of our country) they discussed the message briefly, but no common themes emerged. This may be attributed to participant fatigue, as it was the last message in the focus group.

Overarching Themes

Throughout the focus groups, several themes emerged across all groups. These themes included corporate distrust, skepticism, dislike of negativity, lack of personal connection/understanding of agriculture, transparency, personal importance, food choice, supply and demand, and local food.

Corporate Distrust

Throughout the focus groups, participants discussed the corporate distrust that they had toward large companies. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- An educator from Gainesville said, “Big business wins out over everybody. So, when big business farmers are involved, I think they don’t care because they are living in another country or living in another city and the farm that they make their money off, it is like a second thought, they may have never even seen it.”
- A participant working in the sales industry from Gainesville said, “Look at what we are doing in southern California, some of the best farmland in the US is becoming condos. So, not only are we losing the ability to grow our own food, we are outsourcing it and importing stuff from third world countries. We don’t know exactly what they are using to fertilize their product. And then with the lack of the family farms, you have a very small group of people managing all of your food supply. You have corn companies that don’t allow corn seeds out of the field to be replanted. If they go out of business or something, corn will go extinct in a matter of years. And that is, corn is a huge part of our food supply.”
- A Tallahassee participant working in the administrative industry said, “Big business in general, they don’t want to hire Americans because we are too expensive. They outsource all of our jobs to India and other foreign countries. So, all these jobs are leaving the country because it is cheaper for them, tax breaks for them. The government at this point would have to force them to come back and say ‘No. Stop, you can’t do it anymore. You have to come back and hire people in your own country.’ It has kind of gotten out of control.”
- An educator from Tallahassee said, “Kind of like what you said, if industry, I don’t trust businesses like that. I don’t trust big business. Big business doesn’t really support the people.”
- A Tampa participant working in the media industry said, “There are a lot of companies in the agricultural industry that aren’t exactly there for the well-being of people, they are there for the profit.”
- A participant who was employed in the sales industry and who was living in Tampa said, “It is all about money. I mean, unless you are dealing with small time mom and pop farmers who sell their stuff in the organic farmers markets or just regular farmer’s markets. I don’t know what the percentage, but I am willing to guess that a good 95% of farmers in America are working for some of the largest corporations in the world and that doesn’t allow them to focus their attention on, ‘Oh, I really love the way my land looks.’ They have got a lot of things that they have to worry about because they are not working for themselves.”

Skepticism

Throughout the focus groups, participants discussed skepticism they had toward the topics being discussed or displayed skepticism in their responses. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A participant serving in the armed forces and who was from Gainesville said, “I know with organic foods they have to qualify for USDA standards and stuff. I kind of wonder about some of the local grown operations, if they inspect what they do as highly as they inspect the organic. Whenever I see organic, I mean organic, because if it is

organic, if they used this and this, but oh, they skip a corner and use something else. I kind of wonder because I know that USDA has to inspect them to see everything. Same with, you know, the beef cuts and stuff. I wonder if they do, like I said, check them as closely as they do the organic operations.”

- An educator from Gainesville said, “I feel like anybody can just say, ‘organic.’ But, is it approved organic or are they just putting a sticker on it, you know? You see organic lollipops. How is a lollipop organic? That is what I want to know.”
- A participant employed in the service industry and who was from Tallahassee said, “I just don’t think that for the bottom statement on the last line, the bottom statement on this, it is just pissing me off. Because I know you can verify just about anything if you really want to know. And then in terms of the buying local to reduce your impact on the environment, I mean, I am just skeptical about a lot of things, so I need to know how is that true? Is it because of the transportation as (name omitted) said, or is it, what is the reason that it is reducing your impact on the environment?”
- A Tampa participant working in the service industry said, “I want to hear a lot of things, but that doesn’t necessarily mean that they are accurate. Could they have worded some of these things better? I think so. Like the second one creates skepticism, at least for me.”
- A Tampa participant working in the advanced technology field was discussing that blanket statements lead to skepticism. This participant said, “I think it causes more questions.”

Dislike of Negativity

Throughout the focus groups, participants discussed that they disliked negativity or messages that tried to scare them. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A Tallahassee participant working in the service industry said, “I think, yeah, these are both negative. I think people get enough negative bombardment throughout their day and a bit more is not going to phase them. Maybe something more like, “Buy local to help the environment.”
- A participant employed in the administrative field and who was from Gainesville said, “I agree, and I kind of feel that these statements are really similar to the ones that we just saw and these are just the same things reworded in a negative light which I really don’t like. I feel like without any kind of optimism in the statement, you are losing part of it already there. You have to have some sort of optimistic statement saying that we can do it, if we don’t do it, this is what is going to happen. And it is depressing to look at that.”
- An educator from Gainesville said, “I wonder if it works different ways for different people, because I see this and I feel so depressed I don’t want to even deal with it. But then I see it the other way, and I am like, “Oh, here is what I could do, here is how I can help.” Maybe we need both statements out there. There are all different types of people to be made aware.”

- A Tampa participant employed in the service industry said, “I like the statements grouped together, some of them are positive, but the others ones kind of send a negative message. Like food not being available or the one before where they gave us a specific thing about the amount of jobs and money and then the next one was our economy will collapse without it. That is not really a positive thing. That doesn’t support change.”

Lack of Personal Connection/Understanding of Agriculture

Throughout the focus groups, participants discussed that consumers, including themselves, lack a personal connection and understanding of agriculture that often leads them to take agriculture for granted. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A college student from Gainesville said, “I guess it is kind of far from where I personally, I don’t feel like agriculture is part of my, it’s not something that I am personally attached to, or something that my societal values are based on. I mean, it is important, but it is not something that is part of my blood or something like that, I guess.”
- An educator from Gainesville said, “I agree with that, I feel like I don’t know. I read something on that, most people have no idea where their food came from. And I think that is true because when you go to the grocery store, Publix, Wal-Mart, or wherever, and you just pick it up. You know? You don’t really think about where it came from, even if it has a California stamp on it. Well, now I know it came from California, but really, where in California and how did it come to be here? You know? Maybe more education about agriculture, in general.”
- A Gainesville participant working in the service industry said, “I was just looking back over the last four slides, thinking about this whole thing, I just think there needs to be, in the media there needs to be more positive attention to agriculture. It seems like most of the stories are about outbreaks of pathogens or contaminants or something like that. I think there needs to be more positive press about it because we do take things for granted.”
- An educator from Tallahassee said, “‘It is more than you think it is.’ When you think of agriculture, you think oh, yeah go get an apple. You don’t think of everything that agriculture does. Agriculture is heavily in, as we talked earlier, we talked about the land quality and everything else. Agriculture has to do with farming and tree cutting and all that kind of stuff, so it is not just simply fruits and vegetables. It is logging and other stuff too. It is more than what you think it is.”
- A Tampa participant working in the advanced technology field said, “Yeah, I mean people just need a better understanding of where their food and or trees and everything, where everything comes from. Just having more education.”
- A participant employed in the service industry and who was from Tampa said, “Like you have been saying, education, because in a situation where there was a disaster or something and the grocery stores ran out of food, there would be very few people who would know what to do or be able to sustain anything.”

Transparency

Throughout the focus groups, participants discussed that they would like the agriculture industry to be more transparent. They discussed transparency in terms of explaining details, providing honesty, images, and real time communication. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A Gainesville participant working in the administrative field indicated preference for honesty. This participant said, “Something that acknowledges that it is not perfect now, and that they are going to improve and that acknowledges a bit of fault now. You feel safe to say that we know we did something wrong, here is what it is, we are going to fix that. So, acknowledging the issues.”
- An educator from Gainesville discussed needing more details. This participant said, “I actually am not, we keep using agriculture and I don’t even know that I necessarily, 100% would know how to define that. So, I think if this was something that was going out to the public, there is a lot of me out there, so I would almost need something to go along with this to explain what is going to decrease the risk of food or what can I not be without? What do you mean by agriculture?”
- A participant from Tallahassee who was working in the health industry discussed preference for real time communication. This participant said, “Like (name omitted) was saying, sort of behind the scenes sort of thing. I think I read somewhere that the percentage of Americans working in agriculture has been decreasing and decreasing and decreasing. So, it is almost like less people have direct ties with that now. So, it is almost like it works behind the scenes or you don’t know everything that they are doing to basically keep you alive right now.”
- An educator from Tallahassee discussed preference for more details. This participant said, “If they talked about research that was done on the things that they do, if they have to chemically treat their crop, research that has been done that shows that it is healthy for you. I think that would be essential.”
- A Tampa participant working in the sales industry said, “The whole idea that agricultural corporations could become more transparent so that we don’t have to find out about things like 5, 10 years later through private investigative journalism by people secretly trying to find out what the quote, unquote farmers are doing to the food. I would rather that the companies take me seriously. I mean, I don’t even know too much about it now about how transparent they are, but I would like to hear that it is becoming a lot more transparent. So that we don’t have private corporations just regulating it. More so that anyone can really see what is going on with the way that they produce these foods.”
- A participant who worked in the advanced technology field and was from Tampa discussed a preference for images. This participant said, “Maybe if you had pictures or something to support. I don’t know, that might cause people to understand more.”

Personal Importance

Throughout the focus groups, participants discussed that they cared most about issues that would affect them or their families now, or in the future, and things that were personally important. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A Gainesville participant working in the agriculture industry said, “I would like to have fresh fruit year ‘round, but I don’t want it to come at the price of health, not if it is going to affect my health or passing on bad juice to my kids.”
- A participant working in the health industry who was from Gainesville said, “I would like to know that local things are really helping someone here, if there is a family associated with it or a real person, that makes me feel a little better about it. I can talk to them.”
- A Tallahassee participant working in the service industry said, “In a perfect world, I would like there to be somehow, be able to produce all of the variety of all of the foods that I like to eat from all over the United States and all over the world that were somehow able to be produced in a 50 mile radius of where I live so that it is easily transported to me and I still get all of the variety, but have fewer concerns about the distance that it has traveled. I would really love for all of that to be grown in a way that is safe, regardless if it means organic, or pesticides, just to have confidence that the manner in which it was produced is a-okay and good for my body. That would be my ideal statement, I guess, for agriculture.”
- A participant working in the legal industry from Tallahassee said, “It is just important to me because I think about all the things that we have and I want them to still be here for my son and his kids, just...forever.”
- A college student from Tampa said, “Anything that benefits me and my family. That sounds really selfish, but that is what I really want to know.”
- A Tampa participant working in the service industry said, “I am with her, I mean, yes it is great to support the local community and everything else, but at the end of the day, I may move out of Florida in a year. So, no offense, but what the hell do I give a damn about here, if I am moving somewhere else? I want to make sure that whatever they are doing is going to benefit me, my daughter, things like that.”

Food Choice

Throughout the focus groups, participants discussed their food choices and the variety of foods that they prefer. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A Tampa participant working in the service industry said, “And then, buying local to support your community, I guess that is a concept that really resonates with me but I am also not someone who is at a farmer’s market all of the time. So, maybe I am kind of a fraud. But, then at the same time, it is like but, I like the variety in fruits and vegetables, so I do want to buy local, but I still want to be able to buy things that we can’t grow here and that aren’t being grown here.”

- A participant working in the media industry and who was from Tampa said, “Like I was saying before, I like to shop healthy, and I like to buy food that doesn’t have as much preservatives and is more natural.”
- A participant from Tallahassee who was working in the media industry said, “It gets to a point, too though, that people have got to acknowledge that there are certain things, we want to have certain things, like I want to be able to get a kiwi 365 days a year and I am going to have that. I am an American and that is what I deserve. So, I am saying that the idea of buying local, there is no way that you could buy everything locally.”
- An educator from Tallahassee said, “Not all the fruits that you do want come from or are even produced in this area. You have to get them from other areas. So, it is a little misleading if you just took one alone, so. And I like to think that all our local food is the best quality food. I’ll tell you, it is not really. An embarrassing moment, but I had my in-laws come in town recently, and I bragged about how good our grapefruits and our oranges were. And I went and bought a variety of them and I put them on there. My wife already had some sitting off to the side, I didn’t realize, but they are eating them and I am watching their faces, and they are not, you can just tell that they are not happy with it. They are not content with the oranges or the grapefruit that they are eating. They are all right, but they are faking it that they are good. The next morning I notice that they are eating the other ones that we left off to the side. And I went and looked at where those were done, they were from South Africa. And I am looking and I’m going, this is much better quality coming from a whole other country. And I want to brag. I want to say, “Check out the watermelons that are coming from Arkansas, check out our potatoes from Idaho.” But the bottom line is, sometimes the stuff that is local is not as good as other stuff. And that is my taste in comparison to other tastes. So it is subjective.”
- An educator from Gainesville said, “Yeah, I think buy local when you can, but really we have become spoiled by having a much greater variety of food than we really should for being in Florida. I looked into a community sustainable agricultural co-op, buying into a share, and I will be honest, I wanted more variety. So, I didn’t want everything that we grow on this end of Florida.”
- A Gainesville participant serving in the armed forces said, “I think regardless, I would still rather buy local just because you know where it came from, or grow it yourself, that way you know what you have.”

Supply and Demand

Throughout the focus groups participants discussed the supply and demand of food and particularly focused on the future supply and the ability to meet the demands of a growing population. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- An educator from Gainesville said, “At the same time, we are eating more meat than ever. I don’t think you can say, “Let’s just keep eating more meat, as much meat as we want, every meal.” Consumption, I mean...great, if you can raise a cow on half the land, okay, the population is still growing to the point where it doesn’t really matter how well you can raise a cow if people are eating x amount of cows per year per person.”

- A Tallahassee participant working in the health industry said, “I think certain people will always be okay and I think that is already happening in a lot of other countries, in that there are the haves and the have nots. And if you keep putting the gap in that, then yeah, farmers can continue producing food for a particular growing population, but the rest of them, what happens?”
- A college student from Tallahassee said, “I have always thought that the over-population thing is way blown out of proportion. Population growth has been falling ever, I was reading National Geographic and the population growth has been falling since the 70’s and is projected to round out at about 10 billion. I think we are at 7 billion right now and we will round out at 9 or 10. And, humans will find a way. Humans will find a way to keep feeding, they will have huge desalinators in the ocean if they have to. We are going to be okay. That is my viewpoint of the whole over-population thing.”
- A Tampa participant working in the sales industry said, “Well, from a business perspective, if there is demand, there is always going to be supply. It might not be affordable and it might not be easily accessible, but it is going to be there. One way or another, it is going to exist.”
- A participant working in the advanced technology field from Tampa said, “The other thing, the only time that I think about food not being available is, okay, it is not in season. So, it would cost too much to get it here or I don’t know, they were having a bad year with growing the crops or something.”

Local Food

Throughout the focus groups participants discussed local food. This discussion included favorability of local food, local food regulations, barriers to buying local, and the shortfalls of local food. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme.

- A college student from Tallahassee said, “I would like to hear more messages encouraging people to buy from local farmers markets and local businesses, I guess. I know culturally, sometimes my mom will take me into Jackson County and we will go to the little farmer’s market or whatever. And the fruit that I buy there always tastes way better than what we buy in the grocery store. It always tastes a million times better.”
- A participant working in the legal industry and who was from Tallahassee discussed the barriers of buying local, “I mean, I got upset when I was seeing that commercial to drink Florida orange juice and then I go to Publix and it is like \$4.79 for a frigging half gallon of Florida orange juice. And I just get some cheap-o Donald Duck brand for like 2 bucks.”
- A Tallahassee participant working in the service industry said, “Along that line, I do wonder if the best of a local area is shipped to the surrounding areas for the reputation? Because I have kind of heard people say, ‘Florida orange juice is the best, just don’t get it in Florida, because they use the worst oranges to make it there.’ You are not necessarily catering to people in your area, like being able to sell oranges in Florida, people aren’t going to necessarily, there is not going to be a shipment of oranges into Florida whereas Florida, yeah, large population state but if you look at the rest of America that doesn’t really have oranges, that is a much larger market to send

your best product to. They would then be addicted to Florida oranges and then you create this reputation for a very good product and so that region is then enhanced by that reputation.”

- A Tampa participant working in the service industry said, “I think that once you buy locally, and you get used to the people, they are so into what they are doing that they want to educate you. You go out, you see their setup, you see so much of what they are doing that makes you feel that comfort level that it is safe and appropriate.”
- A participant employed in the sales industry and who was from Tampa discussed barriers to buying local. This participant said, “Different plants grow in different environments. I think, I don’t really know. Maybe there needs to be a little bit more information of what is grown locally so that people can be more informed of where to go to. Because, we are flooded by all these commercials by Publix and stuff like that. Someone needs to be supporting these local growers, so people can start helping the community as well as the environment and jobs.”
- An educator from Gainesville said, “I might say that buying locally is actually fresher food or better tasting food. I mean the best tasting pineapple I ever had was in Costa Rica and they literally chopped it off right in front of me, you know? So, in theory, locally produced food is a closer time between the crop being harvested and to your table. I think that is one of the big selling points of local food.”
- A participant from Gainesville who worked in the sales industry discussed barriers of buying local. This participant said, “You know, if buying local, you have to go to the local meat store, your dairy products and then you have to go to someone else for your fruits and vegetables, and then drive across town to this little niche shop and before you know it, you have spent a lot of money on gas and where I could have ridden my bike up to Publix and picked up everything and ridden my bike back without even getting in the car. You know? I mean, it’s again, it is kind of a whole organic craze. I think it is more of, ‘Ooh, I want to feel good.’ It’s marketing, ‘I did my best, I went and bought this from a little shop,’ you know?”
- A Gainesville participant serving in the armed forces said, “I know with organic foods they have to qualify for USDA standards and stuff. I kind of wonder about some of the local grown operations, if they inspect what they do as highly as they inspect the organic.”
- A Gainesville participant working in the sales industry said in reference to local food, “I think it is the ideology, like, what makes you feel good. It is like, in a perfect world it will work great. But now that the world is so global and has been branched out so much, it is that. It is kind of just an ideal, it is not practical. You know?”

Findings

The results of these focus groups provide a lot of information that takes a look into the opinion leader mindset. The summary below compiles the results.

Favorability vs. Message Quality Issues

Throughout discussion of the messages created with strategic appeals and frames the participants’ favorability toward a message would be counterbalanced by message quality issues including false information, red flags, or information

processing gaps that left them feeling skeptical and untrusting. Opinion leaders think through message claims regardless of what appeal or frame is used. When opinion leaders can logically process a message they tend to favor it; however, if any information gaps are identified while they are processing the message then they will tend to find the message unfavorable. The following table summarizes the favorability versus message quality issues balance that was observed in the results. Additionally, it demonstrates the participants' tendency to not favor a message of poor quality and information processing gaps, while they tend to favor a message if their information processing was undisturbed. Opinion leaders did not respond positively to "blanket statements" that led them to be skeptical of the information presented.

Messages with a counterbalance of favorability and message quality issues

<u>Message</u>	<u>Themes</u>	<u>Explanation</u>
<p>Food Security Logical Appeal - If farmers are able to continue producing food for a growing population, our food supply will be abundant and secure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Message Quality Issues • Favorability 	<p>In this message, participants were split on whether or not the message was favorable or had too many logical gaps. Some of the logical gaps identified by the participants included that the message did not address land availability, was too futuristic, did not address food safety, was unrealistic, and did not address the affordability of food. Those who favored this message favored it because it was basic, helpful, and focused on the importance of being able to continue to produce food.</p>
<p>Protection of the Environment and Natural Resources Emotional Appeal - Farmers take steps to ensure that clean water and air is available for their families and yours.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favorability • Not Believable 	<p>In this message participants initially favored the message because logically any farmer, large or small, is going to have to have clean water and air to be able to farm. Additionally, they favored the message because they could personally connect to the care for families, and the message was action oriented. However, some participants' favorability toward the message was outweighed by their disbelief. Some participants felt that the message could logically not be true because they had seen instances where farmers were not acting responsibly when it came to water and air, the participants thought farmers could not impact the issue, and that caring for water and air conflicted with other goals of farming.</p>

<p>Support of Local Economies and Jobs Logical Appeal - Florida agriculture supports over 700,000 jobs and provides over \$103 billion dollars to the state's economy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favorability • Skepticism 	<p>Throughout the focus groups, the discussion of this message repeatedly began with participants showing favorability toward the message. They favored the message because it included factual components and Floridian values. However, as the discussion would continue, participants began identifying red flags in their thought processes that made them feel skeptical about the message. Skepticism arose surrounding the thoughts that the numbers could have been exaggerated and probably included many immigrant type workers living in poor conditions and getting paid very little. Additionally, the participants indicated that the CEOs of these companies were probably see a lot more of the money than their employees.</p>
<p>Support of Local Economies and Jobs Ethical Appeal - Agriculture is the traditional foundation of the American society as we know it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favorability • Unfavorable • No Longer Accurate 	<p>This message was initially seen as favorable because it was seen as true and patriotic by some participants. However, other participants found the message to be unfavorable because it was seen as historically inaccurate, associated with bad connotations, and was meaningless. Logically participants also had a hard time as seeing the message as accurate because they felt things like technology and the internet have replaced agriculture as the traditional foundation of American Society.</p>
<p>Local Food Non-Gain Frame - Buy local to reduce your impact on the environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favorability • Questionable Truth 	<p>Participants found this message to be favorable because they believed that it was true, liked the environmental component, and felt that local would take more pride in how they produced food. However, this favorability was counterbalanced when some participants identified some perceived logical gaps that made them question the truth of the message. The participants questioned the truth because they felt that local farmers may not care for the environment properly and growing food is always going to</p>

impact the environment.

Messages with message quality issues, information processing gaps, false information, or red flags

<u>Message</u>	<u>Themes</u>	<u>Explanation</u>
Food Security Emotional Appeal - Continuing to produce food as we have always done ensures that our children will never go hungry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • False Statement • “Always” in agriculture doesn’t exist 	Participants found this message to be false because there are children in the United States that are hungry today. Additionally the participants identified that logically the word “always” did not make sense because agriculture has not always been the same and has not always done things right.
Food Security Ethical Appeal – The agricultural industry is committed to producing safe food for future generations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideal Concept • Corporate Distrust • Current Safety of Food 	This message was discussed as a concept that would be ideal if it were true. However, participants did not believe the message was true because of the corporate distrust that surrounded this message. “Agricultural industry” causes participants to think about corporate power. Additionally, participants felt that our food is currently not always safe or produced in a safe manner.
Protection of the Environment and Natural Resources Ethical Appeal - Farmers take care to leave the land better than they found it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Message Quality Issues • Unfavorable 	Participants identified message quality issues in this message and found it to be unfavorable. The issues that the participants identified included that farming takes nutrients out of the ground and that history shows that protecting the environment has not always been done or may not

and improve upon it for future generations.		continue to be done. Therefore they found the message to be unfavorable because profit outweighs caring for the land and farming is industrialized and does not make the land better.
Support of Local Economies and Jobs Emotional Appeal - Agriculture is the life blood of every community – large or small.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Message Quality Issues 	Participants did not like this message because they identified information gaps. These gaps included that agriculture was not the life blood for “every” community and that other things contribute to the life blood more than agriculture.
Local Food Loss Frame - If you do not buy local you will not know where your food is coming from.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • False Statement • Threatening 	This message was seen as false because the participants said there are always ways of finding out where your food came from and if just because it is local does not mean you really know where it came from. Additionally the participants felt that the message was threatening or attacking them, something they do not like.
Local Food Non-Loss Frame - If you do not buy local you cannot be sure that your food was grown and processed in a safe and appropriate manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • False Statement 	This message was seen as false by the participants because local does not ensure that food is safe or was grown in an appropriate manner. Therefore, logically the participants could not agree with the message.
General Agriculture Gain Frame - Support agriculture to ensure a safe and affordable food supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Message Quality Issues 	Logically, this message did not make sense to consumers because you cannot ensure safety or affordability just because of support and consumers already support agriculture by buying food.
General Agriculture Non-Gain Frame - Support agriculture to decrease the risk of food not being available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Message Quality Issues 	Logically, this message did not make sense to consumers because with just support you cannot ensure availability and consumers already support agriculture by buying food.

Messages with Favorability

<u>Message</u>	<u>Themes</u>	<u>Explanation</u>
Protection of the Environment and Natural Resources Logical Appeal – Farmers value the environment and natural resources because they need them to farm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believable 	This message was seen as favorable because it was believable and no message quality issues were identified by the participants. The participants thought this message was believable because the environment and natural resources are needed to farm and they thought farmers would protect their own interests.
Local Food Gain Frame - Buy local to support your local economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favorability 	Participants favored this message because they favored local food and the message contained no unfavorable components.
General Agriculture Loss Frame - Without agriculture you would be naked and hungry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thought Provoking 	Participants tended to feel favorable toward and agree with this message because it made them think and served as a wake-up call to them.

Personal Importance

Throughout the results, the idea of personal importance was displayed in several instances. The importance of an issue or topic to an individual or their family led participants to make decisions and hold certain values and beliefs about agriculture. When participants were asked to make decisions about which issue was the most important (food security, protection of the environment and natural resources, and support of local jobs and economy) they indicated that they made their decisions based on which issue was most important to them. Additionally, personal importance came up many times throughout the focus groups and was identified as an overarching theme.

Corporate Distrust

Throughout the results, the idea of corporate distrust was displayed in several instances. Any topics, words, or issues that caused a participant to think about corporations often led participants to express feelings of distrust, skepticism, negativity, and greed. Corporate power was identified at the very beginning of the focus groups as an issue by participants. Additionally, participants discussed industry greed in relation to the protection of the environment and natural resources when asked to order the three given issues by importance. Discussion of corporate distrust was also observed in the conversations surrounding the food security message with an ethical appeal (The agricultural industry is committed to producing safe food for future generations) and was part of the overarching theme for the Protection of the Environment and Natural Resources messages. Because of the recurrence of the topic throughout the focus groups, corporate distrust was identified as an overarching theme. If participants are triggered to think of corporations they often express distrust, skepticism, negativity, and opposition toward the information.

Transparency

Transparency is defined as the process of making both positive and negative information available to the public in a timely, accurate, and balanced fashion. The participants indicated toward the beginning of the focus groups that when looking for agricultural information on websites they preferred specific information, sites that were easy to navigate, visuals, and trustworthy sources. These preferences indicate that the participants preferred transparent-type characteristics within online-communication. Additionally, transparency was identified as an overarching theme because the participants mentioned transparency concepts throughout the focus groups. Another overarching theme in the results included the lack of personal connection/understanding of agriculture. Consumers are aware that they are not closely connected to agriculture and realize that their understanding of agriculture is not great. Therefore, it is not surprising that the participants preferred transparent components and concepts because their understanding and connection is likely to be enhanced in a more transparent environment.

Recommendations

Based on the results and findings of this research the following recommendations have been made.

General Recommendations

- Continue to research and test messages about agriculture that include strategic frames and appeals and that target specific segments such as opinion leaders, urban audiences, media/policy professionals, etc. However, the inclusion of these strategies needs to be developed on the basis of understanding the thinking process of these audience segments. If a message cannot be logically processed by a consumer, and/or if it includes message quality issues like blanket statements that can lead to skepticism, then the strategic frames and appeals will have no effect.
- Work to incorporate personal components to their messages. The participants mentioned throughout the focus groups that they cared about issues and topics that were personally important and relevant to them. Further research should be done to identify topics and issues that personally resonate with consumers and specific audience segments. Once identified, these components should be worked into regular communication and used consistently in messaging.
- Consumers in these focus groups expressed a lot of distrust and skepticism, especially when talking about large corporations. Focus on small scale operations when communicating about agriculture where appropriate, but the corporate side of agriculture should not be ignored in communication. Consumers want honesty and truthful communication about the industry; therefore the corporate side of agriculture needs to be acknowledged, but work needs to be done to position this aspect in ways that enhance consumer understanding. Results from this a previous studies show a strong tendency to see anything “corporate” or “industry” based as negative. Research should be conducted to establish corporate based frames that might be seen as favorable by consumers.
- Transparency is something that the participants in these focus groups favored; however, professionals in the industry are currently in disagreement about how transparent the agricultural industry should be. Further

research should be conducted to test transparency of the agricultural industry with consumers and establish how different levels of transparency affect consumers' attitudes and perceptions regarding agriculture.

- Public understanding of agriculture is multidimensional in nature. Opinion leaders in this study were interested in knowing more about both the products and the processes involved. They wanted details, they knew where to go to get information if they were activated to seek it out, and they also recognized that some priming through positive media coverage is necessary to make agriculture more top-of-mind. Therefore, agricultural organizations should work to incorporate more detailed information into their communication materials. In addition, effort should be made to build strong relationships with media personnel in order increase positive media coverage of agriculture.

Recommendations for Practitioners

- As often as possible, communication materials should be tested with relevant groups of consumers before being released to the public. What practitioners or industry professionals think sounds great and will be received well may not actually fare well with the general public. Therefore, pretesting communication materials is essential to overall success.
- An evaluation of current communication materials within agricultural organizations should be assessed to establish what is working, what needs improvement, and what is not working. Establishing a solid base of current communication materials and strategies will give organizations the opportunity to incorporate new strategies and successful communication in the future.
- Agricultural organizations should make a conscious effort to include consumers, specifically opinion leaders, as one of their target audiences. It is common for organizations to communicate primarily within their direct stakeholder groups. By including consumers as a target audience, the industry will be making strides toward reconnecting the consumer to the industry and increasing their understanding of agriculture and natural resources. It should be noted that communication that is used with stakeholders is, in general, not easily tailored to meet the needs of more generalized audience.
- Increase collaboration among Florida's governmental entities, land grant institutions and commodity group associations to develop consistent and strategic messages about Florida agriculture.
- Agricultural communicators should work to incorporate more emotional appeals into their messages. Emotional appeals have been shown previously to be effective when communicating with the general public. In addition, communicators should work to include strategic appeals in their communication that are most effective with their target audience.
- When using strategic framing in messages, communicators should make sure that frames are being used that are attractive to the target audience. For example, the opinion leaders in these focus groups disliked messages with negative and threatening tones. These messages tended to include loss and non-loss frames. Therefore, communication with opinion leaders should focus more on gain frames rather than loss frames. In addition, the

opinion leaders in these focus groups showed interest in issue-related information, especially when it was personally important to them. By increasing issue-related framing the opinion leader audience will be more influenced by the messages being communicated.

- Create specific websites for agricultural campaigns and make a strategic plan for those sites. These websites should take into account design, message effectiveness and placement, and target audiences. Specifically, practitioners should:
 - Identify a target audience before creating a website to ensure those elements will appeal to that audience.
 - Consider targeting information toward females between the ages of 35 and 44 as previous research has shown that these individuals are regularly visiting websites containing agriculture information.
 - Design attractive websites to ensure that key messages can be absorbed in two minutes or less and that include key messages located on the home page.
 - Increase the number of visuals used on websites. These should include high quality visuals of children and families, farmers, stereotypical agricultural images, and environmental and natural resource visuals. It is important to use images that are easily recognizable by the audience in order to prevent skepticism, confusion, or misunderstanding.