

Green Consumers Grow Wary of 'Natural' Labels

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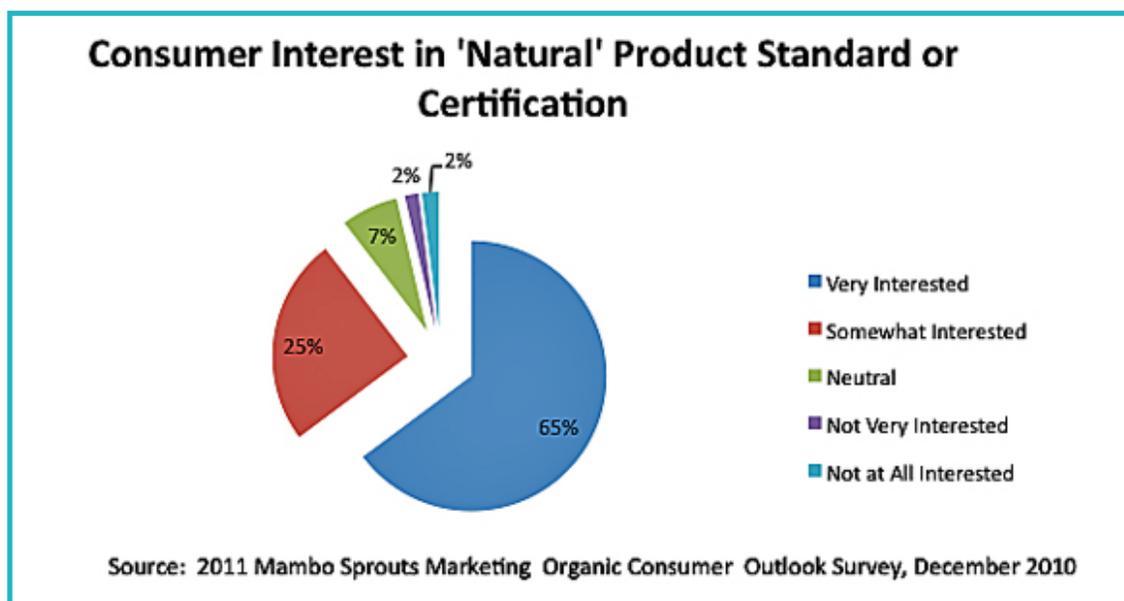
COLLINGSWOOD, NJ — Eco-conscious grocery shoppers say they remain committed to their green purchasing habits, but they've grown wary of "natural" labels and say there should be standards for products bearing that description.

The findings are among the results of a poll conducted by *Mambo Sprouts Marketing* to gauge the buying habits and the outlook of 1,000 consumers of organic and natural products. Mambo Sprouts is releasing its results in a study that will be available for purchase in January.

According to *Mambo Sprouts*:

- 34 percent of respondents said they are "not very" or "not at all" confident in "natural labeling."
- 65 percent said they are "very interested" in seeing standards set or certification for products that are labeled "natural," as the chart below indicates.
- When asked about their preferences for administering certification, 33 percent favored oversight by an independent nonprofit organization; 27 percent said a government standard would be acceptable; 23 percent said an industry- or company-supported standard would be all right and 18 percent indicated retailer certification would suffice.

Interestingly, Eco Pulse -- the annual survey conducted by green advertising firm Shelton Group -- has shown for the past two years that mainstream American consumers are more likely to reach for products labeled "all natural" or "100 percent natural" rather than "organic," often because shoppers mistakenly believe that use of the term "natural" is regulated.



In its recent survey, *Mambo Sprouts* also asked green consumers whether their buying habits will change in the coming year if the economy improves. *Mambo Sprouts* specializes in marketing natural and organic products and provides free coupons for green grocery items and products and services provided by businesses that promote health, wellness and green living.

For the most part, respondents said they won't be scaling back practices adopted during the Great Recession -- such as finding the best value on eco- and healthy products, clipping or downloading coupons, and opting for store brand organic products -- even in better times.

The survey found:

- 46 percent said they do not plan to change food shopping and eating habits in 2011.
- 21 percent of health and natural product consumers said they expect to make "significant changes to their food shopping and eating habits as the economy improves and the recession ends."
- 81 percent use coupons regularly, 55 percent said they plan to use the same amount of coupons in 2011, 43 percent said they would use more.
- Use of online printable coupons is expected to rise from 90 percent this year to 96 percent in 2011, and use of coupons available on mobile devices is expected to more than double, jumping from 11 percent in 2010 to 31 percent next year.
- 38 percent plan to buy more house brand or private label organic products in 2011, 56 percent said they would buy the same amount, and 4 percent say they would buy fewer store branded organic goods.

"Consumers remain cost conscious, and coupon use has become the new normal," said *Mambo Sprouts Marketing* Research Director Karen Herther. "The growing acceptance of online and digital mobile coupon promotions signals this savings trend is here to stay."