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### Consumer understandings and attitudes towards local food: an exploration of australian consumers' perspectives

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#### Recommended Citation

Rebbeck, Ellena; Condon-Paoloni, Deanne; and Yeatman, Heather, "Consumer understandings and attitudes towards local food: an exploration of australian consumers' perspectives" (2012). *Faculty of Science, Medicine and Health - Papers: part A*. 389.

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## Consumer understandings and attitudes towards local food: an exploration of Australian consumers' perspectives

### Abstract

Concerns exist about the sustainability of current globalised food systems, and have led to increased interest in alternative food systems. It has been argued that local food will reduce environmental impacts, provide consumer benefits of connection and health, and support local economies.

### Keywords

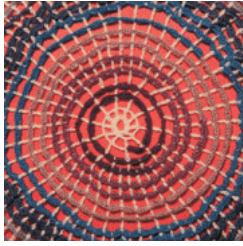
local, attitudes, Australian, consumers, understandings, food, consumer, exploration, towards, perspectives

### Disciplines

Medicine and Health Sciences | Social and Behavioral Sciences

### Publication Details

Rebbeck, E., Condon-Paoloni, D. & Yeatman, H. 2012, 'Consumer understandings and attitudes towards local food: an exploration of Australian consumers' perspectives', World Nutrition Rio2012 - Knowledge Policy Action: Abstracts CD, WPHNA & ABRASCO, Brazil,



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#### CONSUMER UNDERSTANDINGS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS LOCAL FOOD: AN EXPLORATION OF AUSTRALIAN CONSUMERS' PERSPECTIVES.

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**Kind of submission:** Research reports

**Theme:** 1. Equitable food systems with dietary diversity

**Subtheme:** 1.1-Local food for improving nutrition

*Introduction:*

*Concerns exist about the sustainability of current globalised food systems, and have led to increased interest in alternative food systems. It has been argued that local food will reduce environmental impacts, provide consumer benefits of connection and health, and support local economies. A few studies have explored consumers' needs and the ways they understand and perceive local food provision, but this has not previously been studied in Australia.*

*Objectives:*

*To explore how residents in Kiama, a small urban centre in NSW Australia, define the concept of local food and the values, benefits and barriers that consumers associate with local food.*

*Methods:*

*A mixed methods framework was adopted with a primary qualitative research approach and development and pilot of a quantitative questionnaire as an intercept survey at various shopping locations. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with residents of Kiama and interview transcripts were thematically analysed. Food retailer websites were analysed to identify how they positioned local food within their communications.*

*Results: Definitions of local food in this Australian study were complex and included geography, quality attributes and citizenship parameters. Participants associated local food with freshness, health and nutrition, connection with community and family, environmental benefits and trust, and emphasised support for farmers. However expediency factors hindered purchasing of local food. The pilot survey showed similar results. Food retailers indirectly used concepts of local food to add implied value to their food and position themselves as socially responsible.*

*Conclusions:*

*Consumer definitions were multifaceted and included quality attributes, citizenship values and trust. However, the importance of expediency in food purchasing suggests that development of a local food system requires attention, to support local distribution systems and facilitate access and availability. Findings from the pilot survey show that a broader survey roll-out would depend on access to key locations, or alternative delivery methods such as electronic media.*

*Source of funding:*

*Partial funding from the Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences, University of Wollongong.*

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