Abstract:

The Real Food Challenge is a national student movement that is spreading to higher education institutions across the country and has the potential to create significant market demand for “real” food. The “real” attribute encompasses local, ecologically sound, fair, and humane characteristics of food. We surveyed 904 undergraduate students at the University of Vermont using contingent valuation to examine students’ willingness-to-pay (WTP) for the “real” attribute. We found that a majority of students are willing to pay a positive premium for “real” food, but that the average premium is quite small. Furthermore, we found that student characteristics and attitudes significantly influence WTP. Specifically, gender, residency, college, and attitudes about price and origin of food were significant predictors of WTP.