

# Consumers willing to pay extra for organic meat, survey finds

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Consumers, particularly those who occasionally or habitually buy organic chicken, are willing to pay a premium price for organic meat, according to a study conducted by personnel at the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Center for Food Safety. The extent of their willingness to pay the premium, however, depends on the type of organic label.

The published results of the study were among the 15 most downloaded at the SciVerse ScienceDirect.com website. The results were published in the journal Food Quality and Preference in an article by lead author Ellen Van Loo, a former UA food science graduate student who is now a doctoral researcher in the food consumer science unit at the department of agricultural economics at Ghent University in Belgium. The co-authors are Jean-Francois Meullenet, head of the University of Arkansas department of food science; Steven C. Ricke, director of the Center for [Food Safety](#); Rodolfo Nayga, UA professor of agricultural economics and agribusiness; and Vincenzina Caputo of Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna, Italy.

"Considering that consumers think of high price premiums as the strongest limiting factor when purchasing organic meat, it is then important to know consumers' [willingness](#) to [pay](#) for these products," Van Loo said. "Willingness-to-pay estimates can also provide insights on how consumers value the organic attribute in meat products and can be used as input in analyzing the marketability of the products."

Surveys of consumers asked them to make choices in hypothetical situations regarding purchases of chicken. The surveys found that consumers would be willing to spend a 35 percent premium for a general organic labeled chicken breast and would pay a 104 percent premium for a USDA-certified organic labeled chicken breast. (To receive the USDA organic certification, a product must meet the agency's organic requirements for production, handling and processing and accredited agents must have certified the farm and the handling and processing companies.)

When broken down further, the survey results showed that [consumers](#) who do not generally buy organic products would be unwilling to pay a premium, occasional buyers of organic products would pay a 35.7 percent premium for a general organic labeled chicken breast and a 97.3 percent premium for USDA-certified chicken breast, and habitual buyers of organic products would pay a 146 percent premium for a general organic labeled chicken breast and 244.3 percent premium for USDA-certified chicken breast.

Van Loo noted that more research is needed that would include real market data reporting actual consumer purchases.

Provided by University of Arkansas

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