

Tracking IPM Awareness and Attitudes in New York

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Abstract: A telephone survey of 800 New Yorkers conducted in early 2006 indicates that they still have a strong preference for IPM grown fruits and vegetables – similar to results from surveys conducted in 1989 and 1995. However, many New Yorkers are unaware of the meaning of IPM until it is explained to them. When it is briefly explained, they also indicate a strong preference for the use of IPM practices in their schools, homes, golf courses and municipal settings.

Background and Justification: Extensive surveys asking New York state residents about their awareness and attitudes toward IPM were reported by Petzoldt et al. (1989), Burgess et al. (1990) and Pool (1995). Results indicated low awareness of IPM among the general population but strong interest in IPM when the concept was explained. Between 1989 and 1995 awareness of IPM increased from 12% to 18% of survey respondents. Since 1995 a Community IPM program has been developed in New York. In order to continue to track public awareness and interest in IPM, nine questions were included in the Empire State Poll conducted by the Survey Research Institute at Cornell University.

Objectives:

- 1) Ask a sample of 800 New York State residents four key questions (that were asked in 1989 and 1995) about IPM to determine if a change in IPM attitudes and awareness is occurring.
- 2) Ask a sample of New York State residents five key questions pertaining to Community IPM.

Procedures: Between February 2, 2006 and March 19, 2006 staff of the Survey Research Institute at Cornell University conducted the Empire State Poll, a multi-topic telephone survey of 800 New York State residents. The nine IPM questions listed in the ‘Results’ section of this report were included. Phone numbers were selected using a random digit dial process within New York State, and the survey took an average of 34 minutes per respondent to complete. . The survey has a confidence interval of 3.5%.

Results:

The following questions and statements (italics) were read to 800 phone survey participants as part of the Empire State, in the order shown. Response rates are shown in bold.

Q1) *Have you ever heard of Integrated Pest Management (IPM)?*
Yes 16.7% No 83.3%

This statement was then read:

“Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a crop production program in which a combination of pest control techniques are used. The farmer does not rely completely on the regularly scheduled use of chemical pesticides. Other methods are used such as pest resistant plants, natural enemies, and destruction of places where pests reproduce. Only when those methods fail to control the pests, does the farmer use chemical pesticides as a last resort. With IPM, farmers can usually reduce their use of pesticides by one-third or more.”

Q2) If there were fruits and vegetables available in your local grocery store that were certified as IPM grown, do you think you would be more likely to buy them than standard produce?

Yes 75.8% No 24.2%

Q3) If the appearance and quality of the IPM grown fruits and vegetables were the same as the standard produce would you pay more for IPM grown produce?

Yes 62.1% No 37.9%

Q4) How likely would you be to purchase fruits and vegetables from a different grocery store than the one you currently use if the other carried IPM grown products?

Very 27.2% Somewhat 39.7% Not Likely 27.2%

This statement was then read:

"IPM techniques can also be used in non-farm settings to manage pests in places such as homes, schools, restaurants, and parks"

Q5) Schools should: (Choose one)

- not use pesticides regardless of resulting quality and pest levels. **26.1%**
- use a broad array of IPM techniques to prevent and manage pests, retaining quality and minimizing pest levels. **62.5%**
- use pesticides as the primary method of pest control in an attempt to eliminate pests. **11.4%**

Q6) Golf courses should: (Choose one)

- not use pesticides regardless of resulting quality and pest levels. **22.8%**
- use a broad array of IPM techniques to prevent and manage pests, retaining quality and minimizing pest levels. **61.9%**
- use pesticides as the primary method of pest control in an attempt to eliminate pests. **15.3%**

Q7) In your home would you rather: (Choose one)

- not use pesticides regardless of resulting quality and pest levels? **31.8%**
- use a broad array of IPM techniques to prevent and manage pests, retaining quality and minimizing pest levels? **55.3%**
- use pesticides as the primary method of pest control in an attempt to eliminate pests? **12.9%**

Q8) Municipalities, including cities, towns, villages and counties should: (Choose one)

- not use pesticides regardless of resulting quality and pest levels. **18.0%**
- use a broad array of IPM techniques to prevent and manage pests, retaining quality and minimizing pest levels. **69.0%**
- use pesticides as the primary method of pest control in an attempt to eliminate pests. **13.0%**

Q9) Have you ever: (Check all that apply)

- used an IPM technique in your home?
Yes 31.9% No 68.1%
- purchased an IPM grown food product or ornamental plant?
Yes 28.3% No 71.7%
- advocated for the use of IPM in your community or workplace?
Yes 12.2% No 87.8%
- preferentially done business with companies, organizations or individuals that use IPM?
Yes 19.1% No 80.9%
- hired an IPM lawn care, landscape or pest control company?
Yes 6.7% No 93.3%

Discussion: While awareness of IPM among the general public in New York appears to have grown only slightly since the original 1989 survey, New Yorkers continue to assert a strong willingness to purchase vegetables and fruit produced using IPM methods. They also reaffirmed their willingness to pay more for IPM grown products and to change stores in order to obtain them. In addition, New Yorkers indicated a strong preference for the use of IPM practices in their schools, golf courses, homes, and municipalities. To the best of our knowledge, IPM attitudes for community settings in NY have not been formally tracked previously. It will be important to follow this poll by providing further IPM education, choices and opportunities for New Yorkers. IPM attitudes should also continue to be measured periodically in the future to assess both IPM awareness and societal preferences towards IPM.

10. References:

- Burgess, R., J. Kovach, C. Petzoldt, A. Shelton, J. Tette. 1990. Results of IPM Marketing Survey. Reports from the 1989 IPM Research, Development and Implementation Projects in Vegetables.
- Petzoldt, C.H., J. Kovach, R. Burgess, and A. Shelton, 1989. Results of IPM Marketing Survey. Proceedings of the Fifty First Annual New York State Pest Management Conference
- Pool, William M. 1996. Results of Consumer Attitude Survey on Pesticides and Produce Quality. MS Thesis, Rochester Institute of Technology.