

CATCH THE BUZZ

Top Food News Story of 2014: The Great Western U.S. Drought

Hunter Public Relations' 12th Annual Food News Study Reveals What's Garnering Consumer Attention

NEW YORK, NY--(Marketwired - Dec 11, 2014) - From fun flavor trends and brand marketing campaigns to more serious issues, 40 percent of Americans rated news related to the food we eat as more important than other news in 2014, according to the Hunter Public Relations' 12th annual [Food News Study](#). The study, created and conducted in partnership with Libran Research & Consulting, finds that the food story Americans are most aware of in 2014 is the Great Western Drought. [The Shrinking Bee Population](#) and the War on Sugar came in second and third, respectively.

"For more than a decade, we've asked Americans what food news stories resonated with them most," says Grace Leong, CEO and partner at Hunter PR, one of the nation's leading food and beverage public relations agencies. "But we don't stop there. When we consider the impact these stories have on consumer behavior and that the media sources they rely upon directly affect the type of food news they see, a snapshot of America's ever-evolving food media palate emerges."

The Hunter Public Relations 2014 Food News Study reveals the following:

Top 2014 News Stories - Overall Awareness

1. The Great Western U.S. Drought
2. Bee Population Shrinking
3. The War on Sugar
4. New Food Labeling Standards
5. GMOs

Top 2014 News Stories - Behavior Changes

1. The War on Sugar
2. New Food Labeling Standards
3. GMOs
4. Soda Calorie Cutback
5. The Great Western U.S. Drought

Environmental Food News Stories Dominate

Since the inception of the Hunter PR Food News Study in 2003, only twice have environmental food stories ranked among the top five most important of the year: in 2005, when Hurricane Katrina's wrath devastated New Orleans and hobbled its rich food culture; and in 2012, when a Midwest drought affected farmers across the region, driving higher food prices and diminished supply nationwide. In 2014, the top two food stories of the year focused on environmental events, but had less direct influence on behavior, as they are less actionable than other news that made the list.

Actionable News Influences Behavior

In 2014, Americans reported a higher level of behavioral change overall based on food news stories than in 2013. In fact, one-quarter of all polled said that the stories detailing the War on Sugar directly impacted their behavior. Of note, Americans with children in the household ranked the stories that related to their family directly and where immediate and measurable change was possible highest -- such as checking food labels more often, eating less sugar and paying more attention to where their food comes from.

Media Channel Preference Influences Story Rankings

In 2014, social media continued to gain steam and was the primary tool for Millennials accessing food news. When looking at these results through the lens of media channels, it becomes clear that *where* each generation is accessing their news is directly correlated to the *type* of news they digest and consider important. Gen X-ers, Boomers and Matures all favor more traditional media sources (TV, radio, newspapers and magazines), where broader, less food-centric stories -- like the top two in this year's study -- tend to be covered. But with [Millennials, who get their general food news from Facebook more than any other source \(30 percent\)](#) and are self-curating their social media content, pop cultural and cause-related news stories dominated: (1) Coke's "Name" Campaign, (2) GMOs and (3) Pumpkin Spice Mania.

Social & Mobile Eating it Up

While websites, TV, magazines and newspapers continue to rank as the top sources of food-related content, social media continues its upward influence trajectory and is making serious inroads into the dissemination of food information. Significant increases were seen in where Americans source food recipes (up 7 percent from 2013) and nutrition information (up 8 percent). Other trends revealed by the 2014 Hunter PR Food News Study include:

- **Americans are more likely than last year (21 percent, up from 17 percent in 2013) to consider purchasing a product or trying a recipe they saw on Facebook. Gen X-ers, followed closely by Millennials are the most likely groups.**
- As more and more Americans access social and online content via their mobile devices, so too do they increase their mobile food tasking, with marked increases in recipe searches (up 10 percent), storing shopping lists (up 7 percent) and watching video recipe demos (up 7 percent).
- Millennials "out-mobile" their counterparts by significant margins, relying on their mobile devices for a range of food-related activities: searching for recipes (46 percent), checking nutrition information while shopping (25 percent) and watching videos for cooking directions (27 percent).
- Instagram continues its popularity with more people than ever sharing their amateur food photography, with nearly a quarter of all Millennials participating in this social/culinary activity.

What is not in the news can be as revealing as what is; and after dominating headlines for many years, [food safety issues did not make](#)

[Hunter PR's list of Top Food News for the second year in a row.](#) Is America's food supply becoming safer? Time will tell. Time will also tell if social media continues to gain traction among older generations, or if these Millennial-driven channels, so integral to the new food media environment, will become less ubiquitous.

For additional information about the Hunter PR 2014 Food News Study, including a SlideShare with detailed study results, visit <http://www.hunterpr.com/our-pov/foodstudy.html>.

ABOUT HUNTER PUBLIC RELATIONS

Hunter Public Relations is an award-winning consumer products public relations firm based in New York City. Beginning with [research-driven consumer insights](#), Hunter PR executes strategic public relations programs that build equity, increase engagement and drive measurable business results for branded consumer products and services. The 100-person team employs a powerful blend of [traditional publicity, social and digital media](#) outreach, strategic partnerships and influencer marketing to reach the hearts, minds and spirits of target consumers. Founded in 1989, Hunter PR is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2014.

ABOUT THE STUDY

The 12th annual Food News Study commissioned by Hunter Public Relations examined the top food news stories of 2014 in terms of general awareness and concern. The study also explored how food news stories influence consumer behavior and the top media sources for food information -- broken out by recipes, general food news and nutrition.

Hunter PR partnered with Libran Research & Consulting for this study. Libran Research addresses business issues with critical decision-making and impartial judgment -- helping to drive action in their clients' marketing strategies and tactics. Libran Research surveyed 1,004 Americans ages 18 years and older via an email invitation and online survey. The respondent sample was balanced to the U.S. population on key demographics. Results of any sample are subject to sampling variation. For the interviews conducted in this particular study, the chances are 95 in 100 that a survey result does not vary, plus or minus, by more than 3.1 percentage points.

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