



The Tasmania Project

Share your experience during COVID-19.

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The importance of Tasmanian grown produce during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Tasmania has experienced disruptions to the food supply chain, including imports and exports, and social distancing restrictions have impacted the experience of shopping for food. The Tasmania Project's Food Survey asked 1,170 Tasmanians about their perceptions of Tasmanian produce during the COVID-19 pandemic, including how important they think Tasmanian produce is, how their perceptions have changed, where they've bought produce and what Tasmanian produce they are eating.

Tasmania has a thriving local food economy, producing some of the best fresh food in the world. Previous [research](#) prior to the COVID-19 pandemic reported that the majority of Tasmanians highly valued regionally grown fresh produce – but how has the pandemic impacted Tasmanians perceptions of regionally grown food?

Key findings

- The vast majority of survey respondents (89%) valued Tasmanian produce, reporting that Tasmanian produce was extremely or very important.
- Most respondents (54%) thought Tasmanian produce was more important as a result of the pandemic.
- 43% of respondents reported buying either 'a lot more' or 'somewhat more' Tasmanian produce, and 49% had bought about the same
- Fresh Tasmanian produce, including fruits and vegetables were the most commonly purchased produce.
- Older respondents reported buying more Tasmanian produce, including meat, dairy and seafood, in comparison to younger respondents.
- Independent supermarkets were important sources of Tasmanian produce with 75% of respondents reporting purchasing Tasmanian produce at these stores.



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Survey results

Similar to previous Tasmanian research findings, the respondents to The Tasmania Project's Food Survey placed a high value on purchasing Tasmanian produce. The overwhelming majority (89%) of the respondents reported that Tasmanian produce is 'extremely important' or 'very important'. A further 10% reported it was 'somewhat important' and only 1% of respondents reported that it was not very important to them. Respondents who reported that it was only 'somewhat important' were more likely to be younger, identify as male, and from an urban area rather than a rural area.

Interestingly, the COVID-19 pandemic has strengthened perceptions of Tasmanian produce, with 54% of survey participants reporting that they believe Tasmanian produce is more important than before the pandemic. 45% had not changed their opinion of Tasmanian produce and less than 1% thought it was less important or did not have an opinion. Respondents who thought it was less important or did not have an opinion were younger (less than 45 years).

The Tasmania Project's Food Survey also asked whether respondents had bought more or less Tasmanian produce as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. 43% of respondents reported buying either 'a lot more' or 'somewhat more'. Most participants (49%) had bought about the same, and 4% had bought 'somewhat less' or 'a lot less'. Those who reported buying 'a lot more' or 'somewhat more' were more likely to be female and aged in the 55-65 year old age bracket. Those who bought 'somewhat less' or 'a lot less' were more likely to be younger or be [food insecure](#).

Information on the types of Tasmanian produce purchased in the month prior to the survey was collected, with 80% of respondents reporting buying Tasmanian grown fruit, and 92% buying Tasmanian grown vegetables. 70% of respondents reported buying Tasmanian produced meat, 58% bought Tasmanian chicken, 77% bought Tasmanian eggs, 74% bought Tasmanian dairy and a lower proportion (41%) had bought Tasmanian seafood. A further 12% reported buying 'other' Tasmanian produce which included bread and other grains-based foods, wine and alcohol, preserves and honey, and specialty products like chocolate.

A greater proportion of female respondents and those living in urban areas reported buying Tasmanian grown fruit, and more respondents from age brackets over 35 years were likely to buy Tasmanian grown vegetables.

Tasmanian produced meat was more frequently purchased by Tasmanians aged 35 years or over in comparison to younger age groups, where 77% of those aged 35-45 bought Tasmanian meat in comparison to 37% of those aged 18-25 years. In addition, more Australian citizens bought Tasmanian meat (71%) in comparison to 50% of those born overseas. 60% of single person households bought Tasmanian meat, which is lower than couple families (75%).

Fewer Tasmanians from the Northern regions bought Tasmanian seafood (34%) in comparison to the North West and West region (42%) and South (44%). Older Tasmanians bought more Tasmanian seafood, with 53% of those 65 years or older reporting buying it in comparison to 34% of those aged 26-35 and 11% of those aged 18-25.

Fewer unemployed respondents (31%) bought Tasmanian seafood in comparison to employed Tasmanians (40%). Tasmanian chicken was bought more frequently by older respondents aged 65+ years (65%) in comparison to the youngest respondents aged 18-25 years (30%), and by those currently employed (56%) in comparison to those currently unemployed (40%). Tasmanian dairy was bought by more older Tasmanians aged 56-64 years (80%) and aged 65+ years (79%), in comparison to 44% of respondents aged 18-25 years, and those on lower incomes (68%) versus higher incomes (82%).

Most survey respondents reported purchasing Tasmanian produce at Independent supermarkets (75%) and major supermarkets (65%), highlighting the convenience of these shopping outlets. Fewer respondents reporting shopping for Tasmanian produce at butcher shops (44%) and fruit and vegetable shops (39%), however these numbers are higher than [The Tasmania Project findings](#) from a month earlier, which showed only 26% of Tasmanians shopped at their local butcher. The difference may be related to relaxing restrictions around the State. Smaller numbers of respondents reported purchasing Tasmanian produce through specialty shops (18%), farmer's markets (16%), home delivery box schemes (17%) and direct from farm gates or at wharf sales (16%).

Where next?

Positively, Tasmanian respondents to this survey have demonstrated a clear preference for Tasmanian produce. Their continued support for Tasmanian producers by buying Tasmanian produce will assist with strengthening the local Tasmanian market if food exports and international markets continue to be disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As intrastate restrictions around Tasmania continue to ease, it will be important to continue to monitor food security and how Tasmanians are shopping for food, including the role of Tasmanian produce.