Consumer Perceptions of Food Fraud

International Food Information Council (IFIC)
www.foodinsight.org

The goal of this research was to assess public perceptions about food fraud and economically motivated adulterants in food.

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Background

- 1,000 interviews were conducted online among adults ages 18+ from December 13–14, 2019 and were weighted to ensure proportional results.

- The Bayesian confidence level for 1,000 interviews is 3.5, which is roughly equivalent to a margin of error ±3.1 at the 95% confidence level.
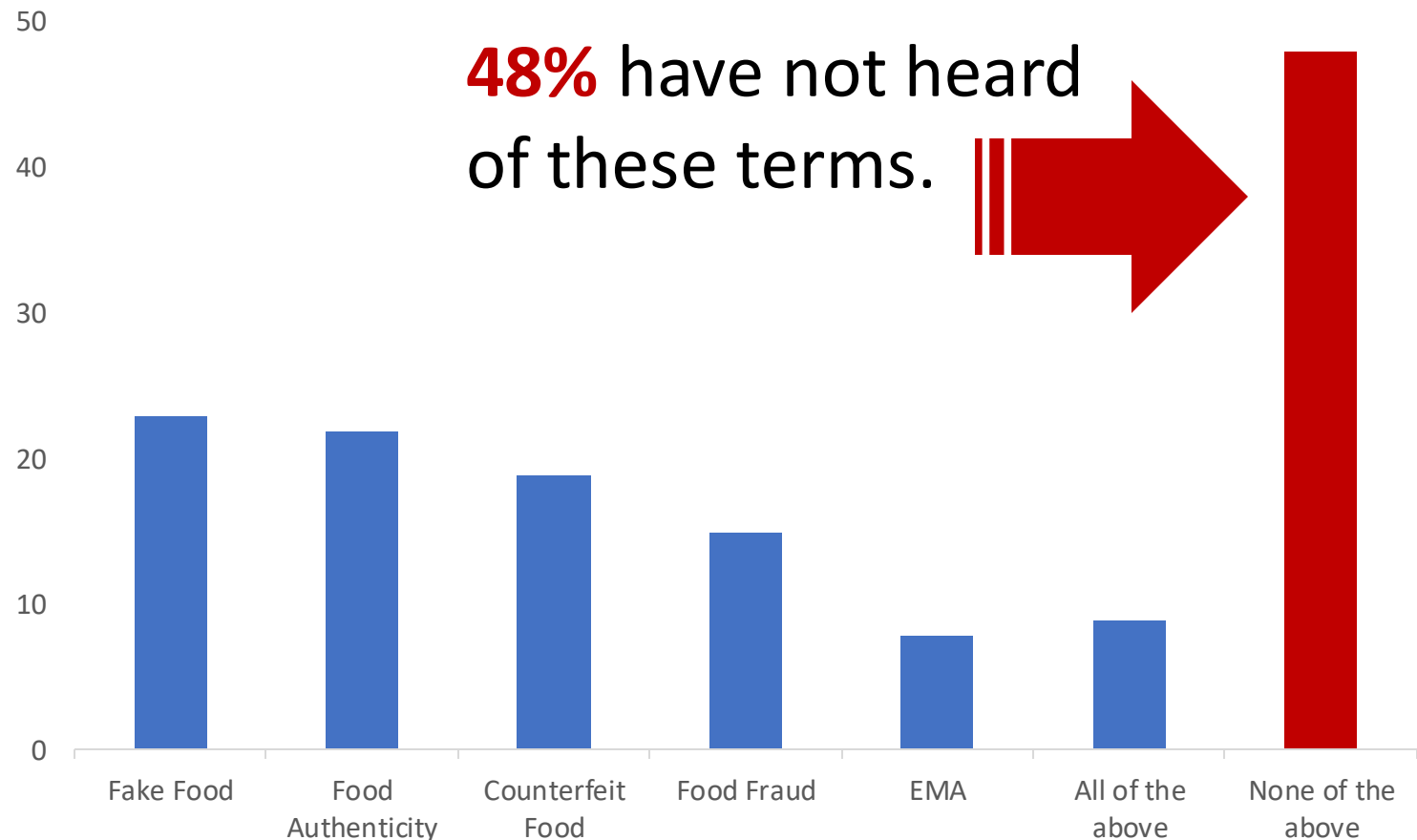
Survey Results

What does the U.S. consumer think about food fraud?

Nearly half are unfamiliar with food fraud terminology.

**Q1:** Which of the following terms have you heard of before?

- Fake Food
- Food Authenticity
- Counterfeit Food
- Food Fraud
- EMA
- All of the above
- None of the above (48%)

48% have not heard of these terms.

Chart: bar values approximately — Fake Food 23, Food Authenticity 22, Counterfeit Food 19, Food Fraud 15, EMA 8, All of the above 9, None of the above 48.

Contaminated pet food, peanut butter and infant formula are most recognized food fraud incidents.

Q2. And do you remember ever reading or hearing something in the news about any of the following? *Please select all that apply.*

- Contaminated pet food (38%)
- *Salmonella* in peanut butter (U.S.)
- Contaminated infant formula (China)
- Fake olive oil (U.S.)
- Horse meat (UK)
- Seen all in the news
- Never seen any in the news (28%)

28%

38%

All of the above, 10%

"Never seen any in the news"

Contaminated Pet Food

Horse Meat, 20%

Olive Oil, 21%

Infant Formula, 25%

Peanut Butter, 30%
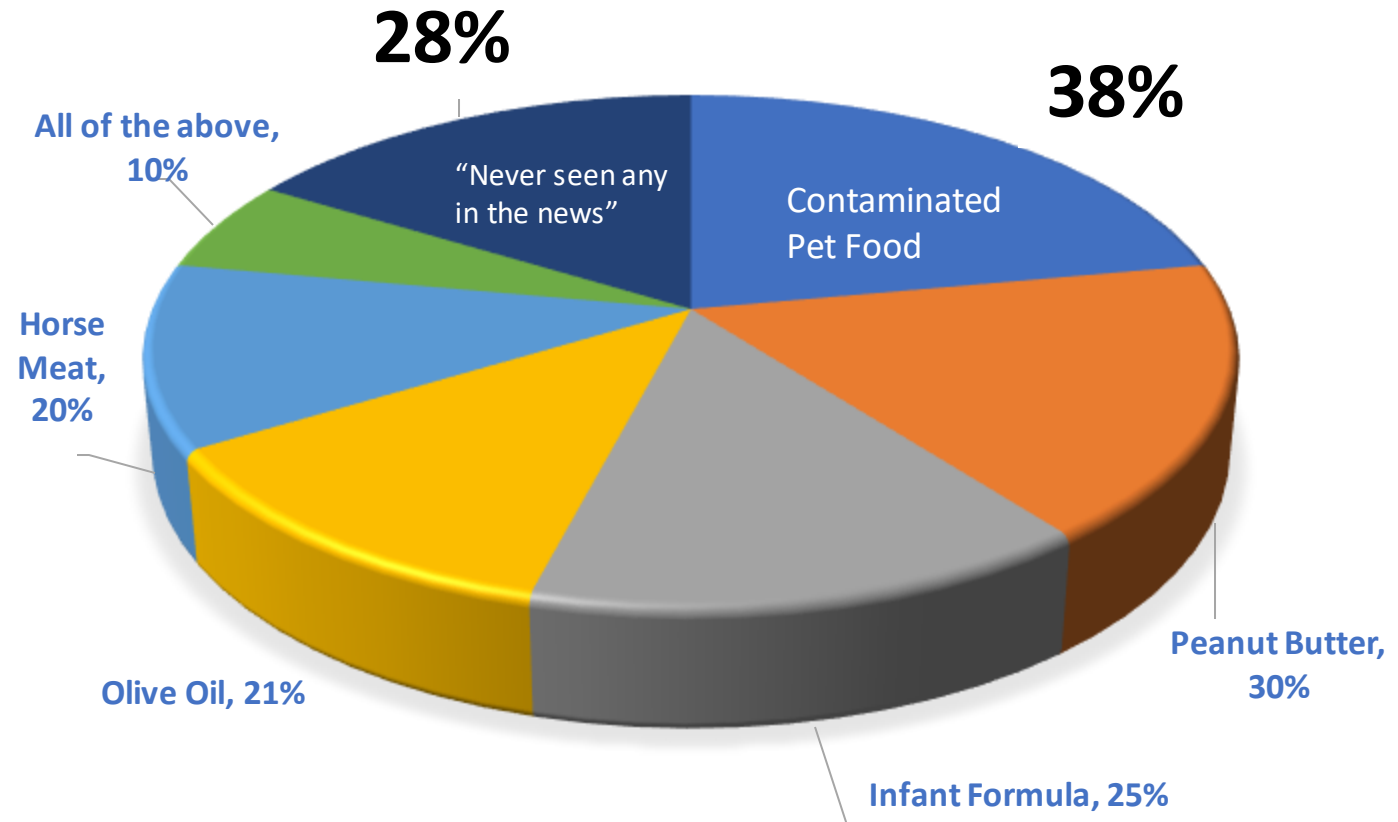
Food Fraud *defined*

Q3. For purposes of this survey, "Food Fraud" can be defined as "The deliberate and intentional substitution, addition, tampering, or misrepresentation of food, food ingredients, or food packaging; or false or misleading statements made about a product for economic gain."

Source: Michigan State University

# Consumers are split on whether they've heard of food fraud.

Q3. After reading the definition of "Food Fraud," have you ever heard of food fraud happening in the United States?

- Yes, I've heard about it happening. (42%)

- No, I've never heard about it happening. (42%)

- Don't know. (16%)

16%

42%

Don't know

YES

No

42%
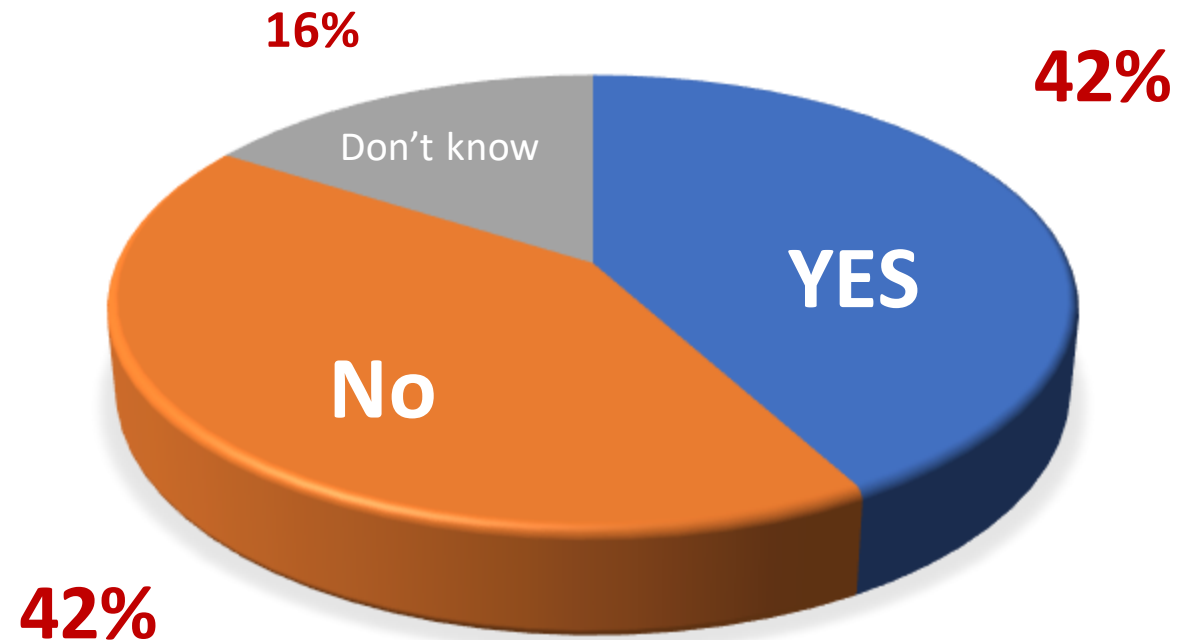
Some are concerned about food fraud while shopping for food.

Q4. Are you concerned about food fraud when you're shopping for food and beverages?

42% do not think about it.

18% Yes, often

Don't know

8%

32% Sometimes, it depends
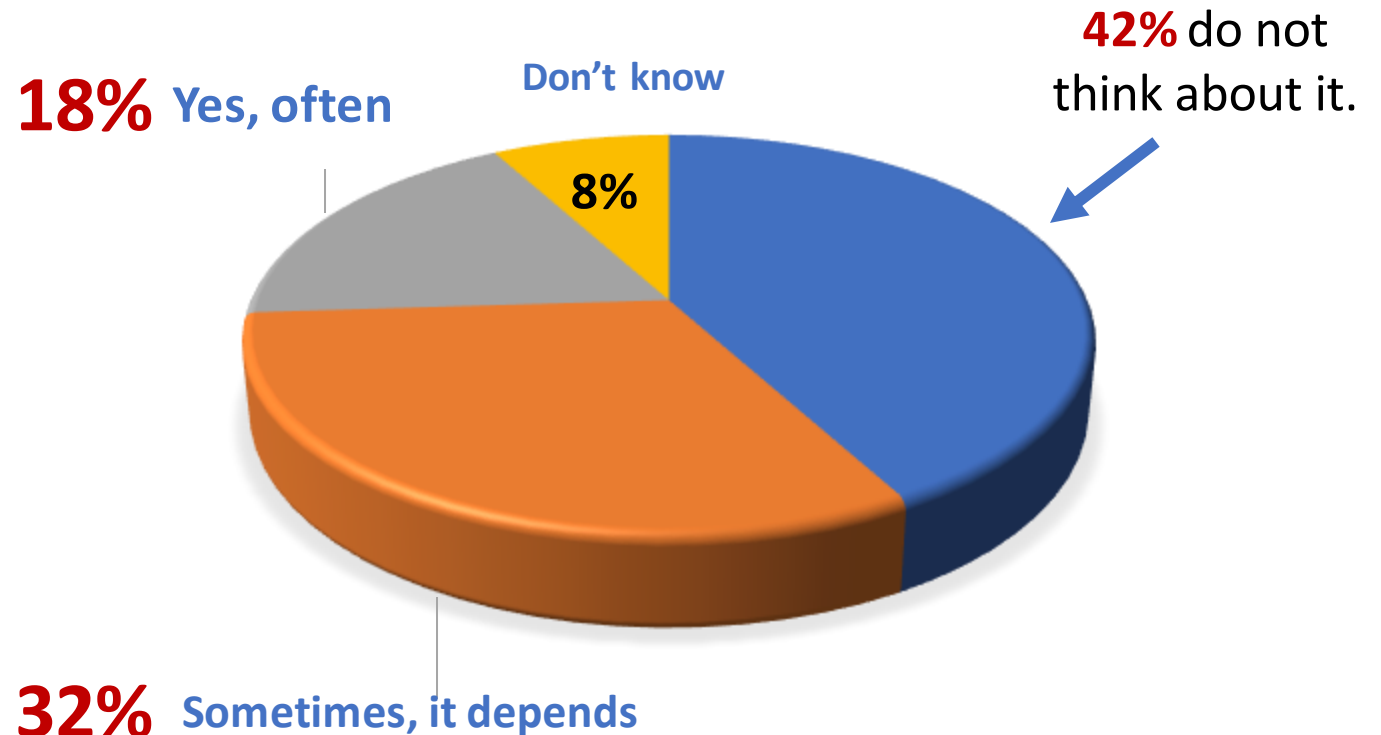
Over half at least somewhat agree that the food industry works to protect consumers from food fraud.

Q5. And to what degree do you agree with the following statement: "The food industry works to protect consumers from food fraud."

More than half (59%) of Americans at least somewhat agree.

28% Strongly agree

31% Somewhat agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat disagree

Disagree

Don't know
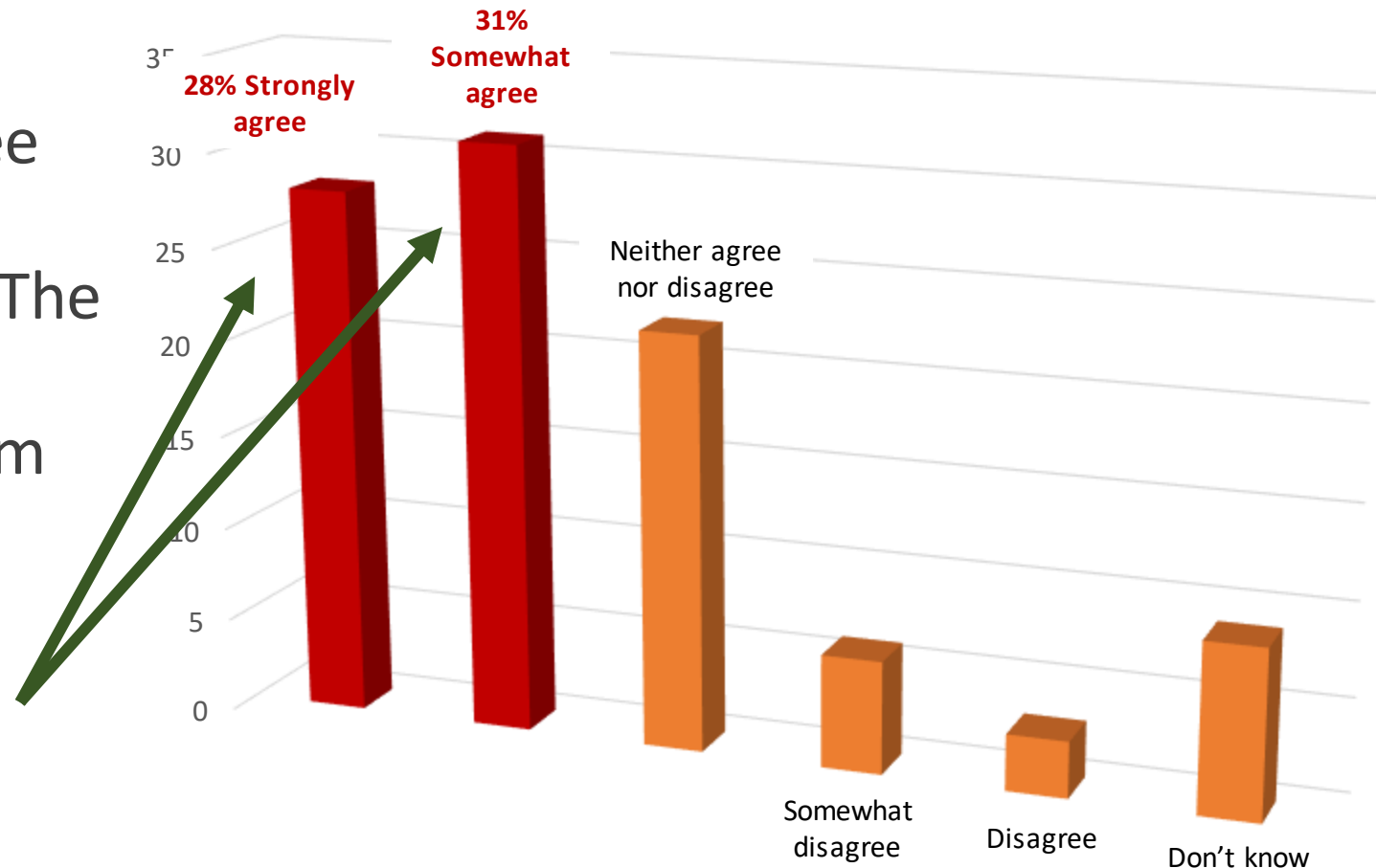
# Consumers are split on seeking out more information and throwing away the food.

Q6. If you heard that a product you bought was subject to food fraud in some way, would you:

- Keep the food and eat it anyway (9%)
- Throw away the product (36%)
- Seek out additional information before making a decision (36%)
- Not sure / it depends (19%)

9% "keep the food and eat it anyway"

36% "throw away the product"

36% "seek out additional information"

19% "not sure / it depends"
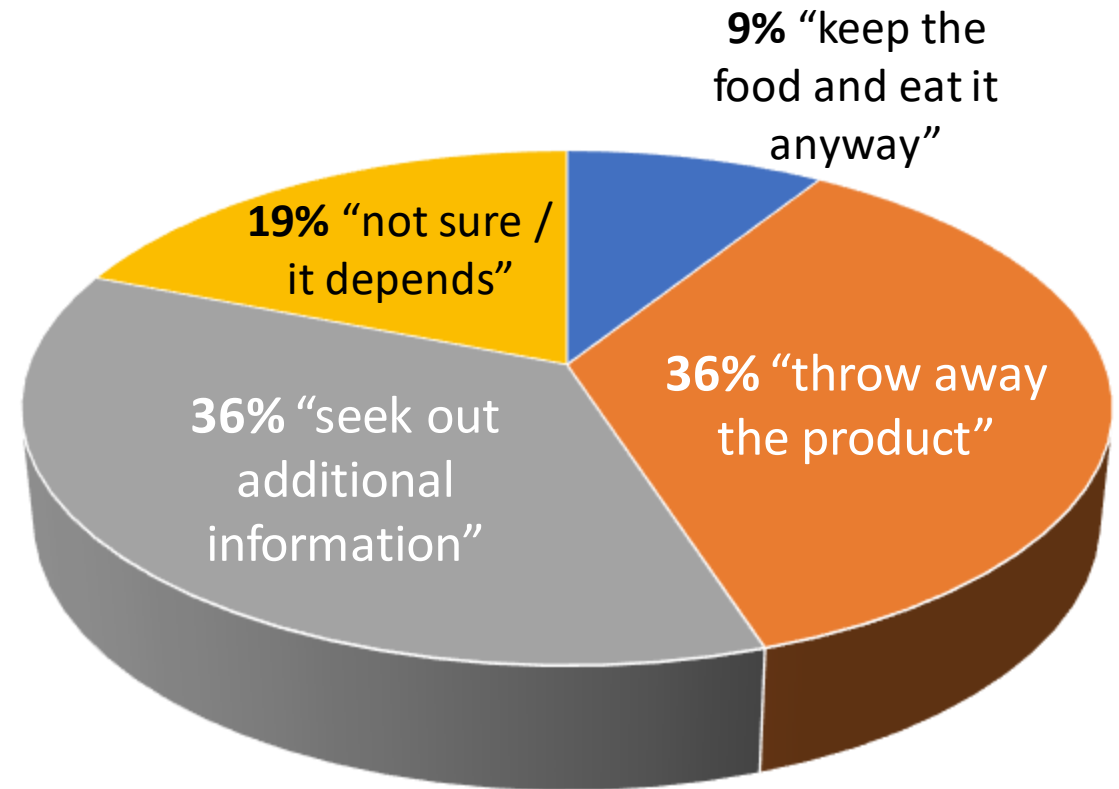
Consumers believe meat and meat products are at the highest risk for food fraud, followed by fish and seafood.

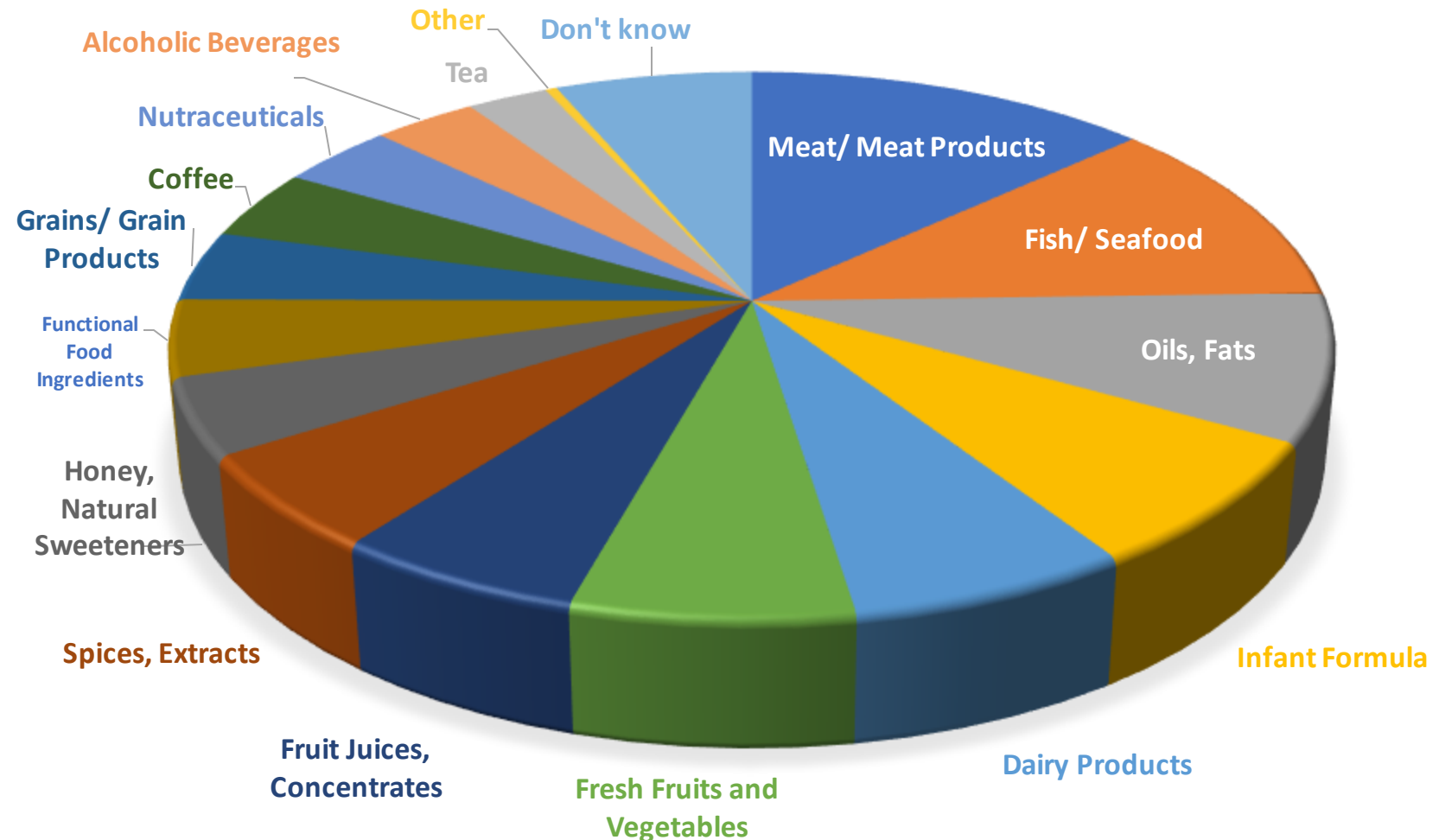**Q7.** Which of the following foods do you think are at the highest risk for food fraud? *Please select your top 3.*
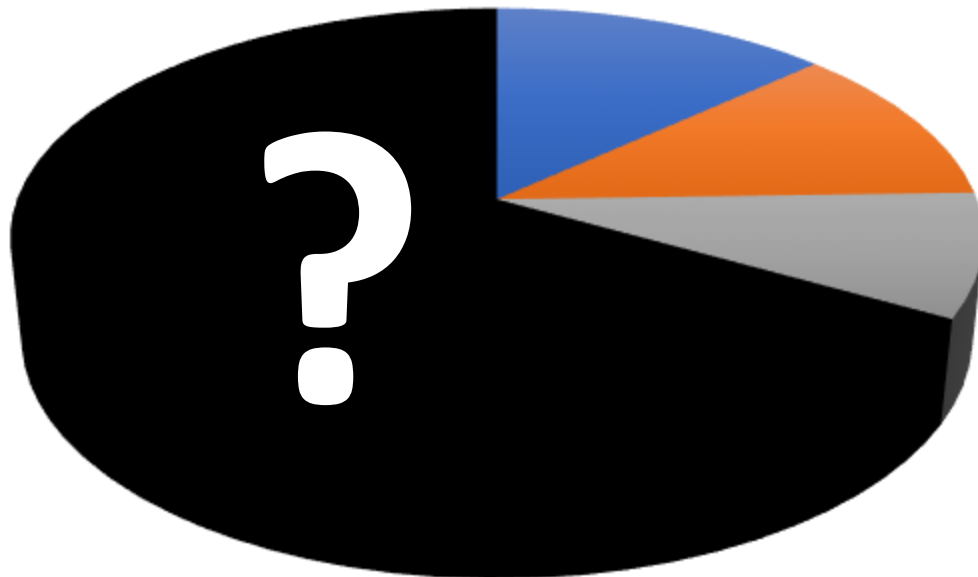
Top 3 Foods:
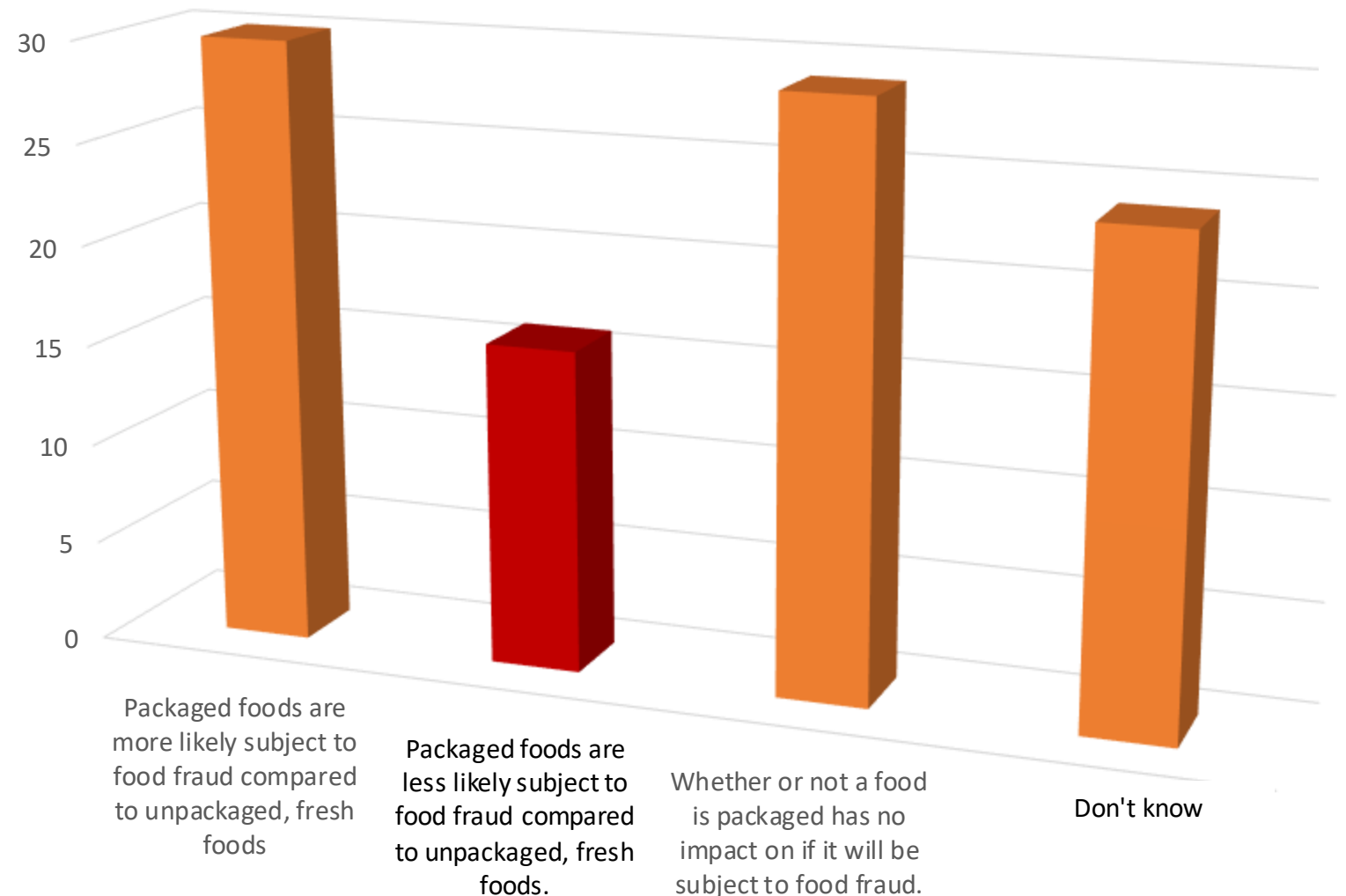Meat / Meat Products (35%)
Fish / Seafood (30%)
Oils / Fats (23%)

Additional perceived risks of food fraud

Perceived types of food subject to food fraud

Q8. Which of the following do you most agree with?

IFIC Consumer Research:
"Consumer Perceptions of Food Fraud"
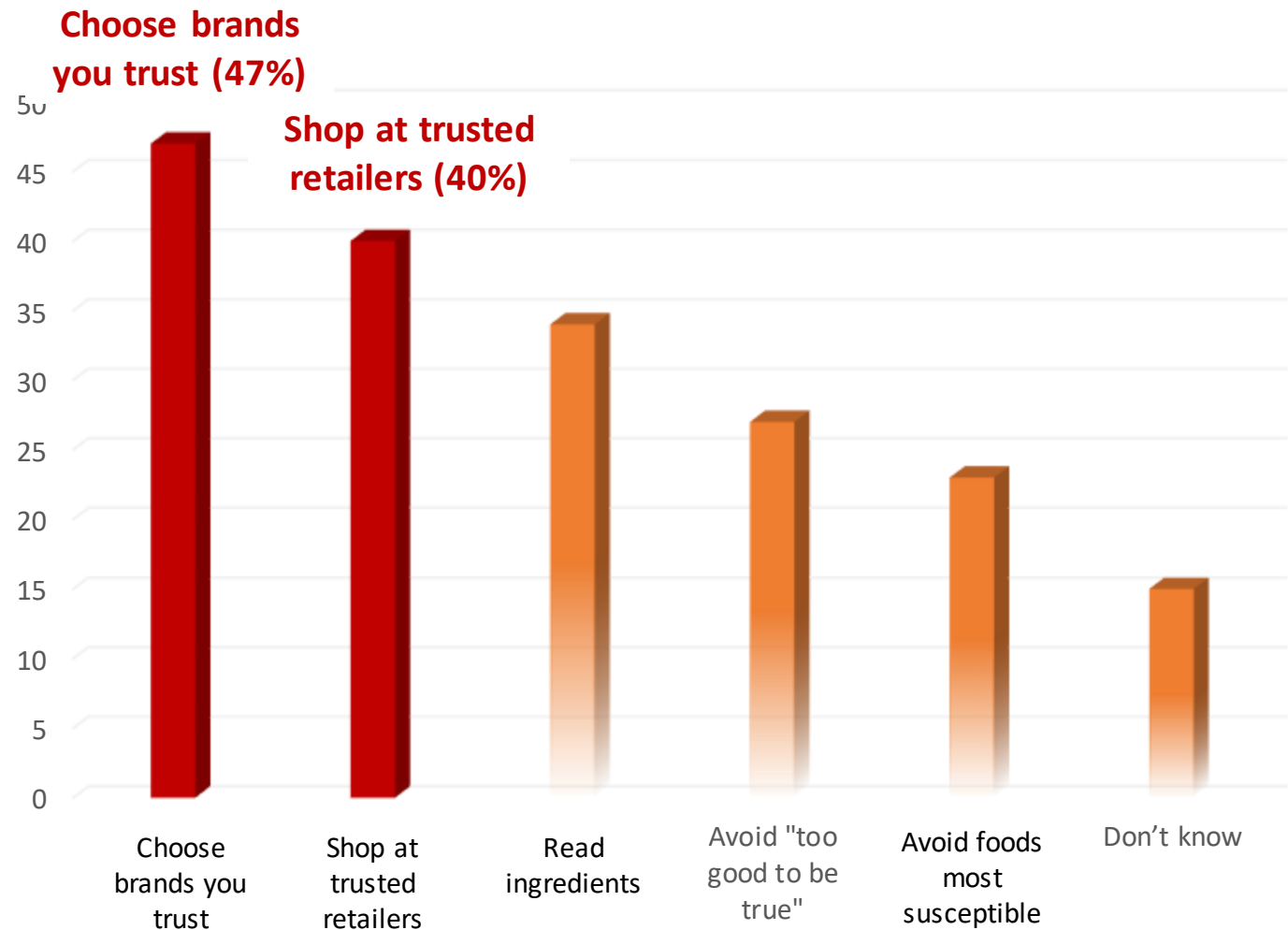*February 2020*

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Reducing the Risk of Food Fraud

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Nearly half say choosing trusted brands would reduce the risk of food fraud.

Choose brands you trust (47%)

Shop at trusted retailers (40%)

Bar chart with categories:
- Choose brands you trust
- Shop at trusted retailers
- Read ingredients
- Avoid "too good to be true"
- Avoid foods most susceptible
- Don't know

Over half would trust the FDA and other government websites to learn more about food fraud.

Q10. When using the internet to learn more about food fraud, which websites do you believe would be the most trustworthy? *Please select your top two.*

- **FDA / other government websites**
- **Food safety websites**
- Nutrition website
- Retailer website
- Daily news website
- Food company website
- University website
- Other
- **Don't know / don't use internet**

Don't know / don't use internet: 15%

Other: 2%

FDA / other government websites: 53%

Food safety websites: 42%

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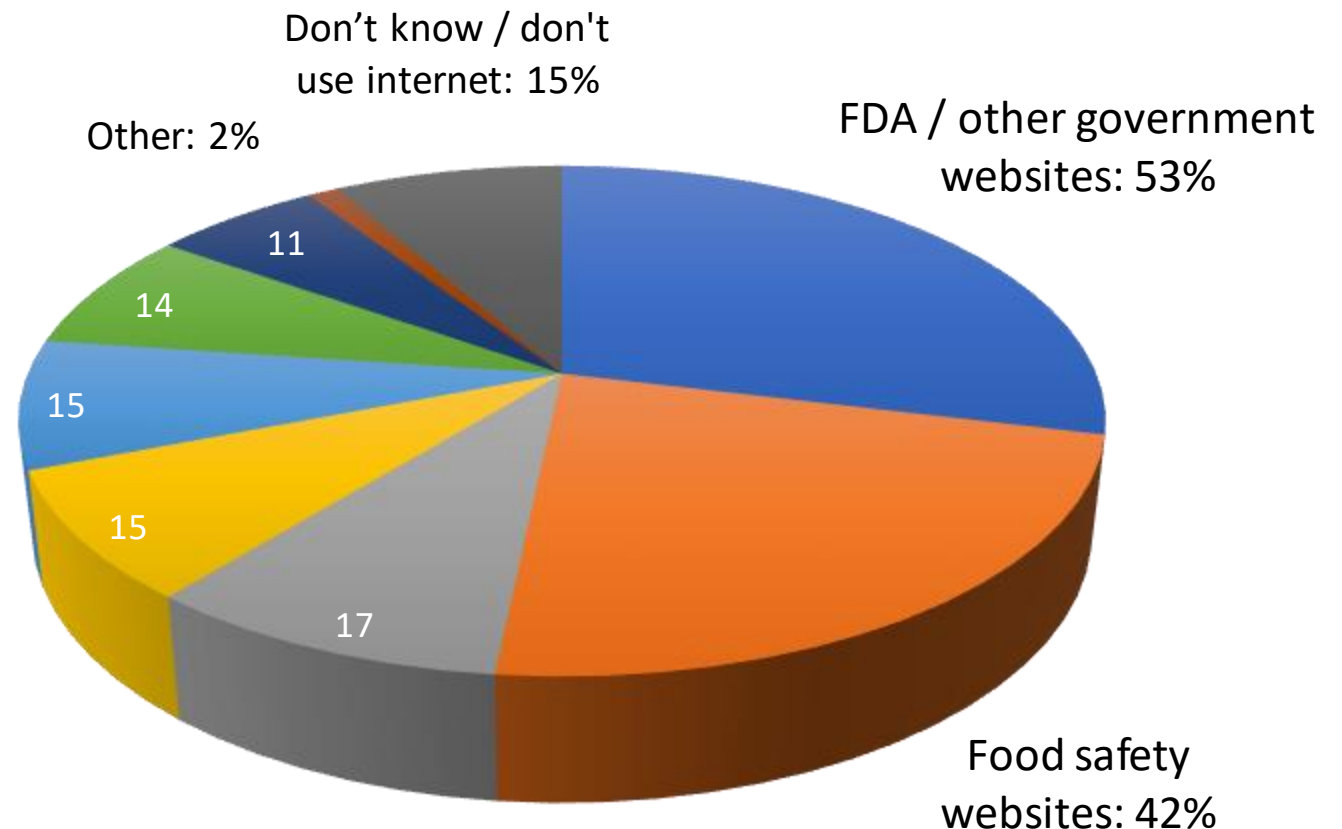
Thank You!

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