

Researchers find market

Seafood consumers studied

Fishermen, take note. Texas A&M University researchers think they have found out where the market for seafood lies. Drs. Samuel Gillespie and Michael Houston of TAMU's Marketing Department have published a study of consumers' attitudes toward seafood. The study was supported by TAMU's Sea Grant Program. Gillespie said the data for the

study was obtained through questionnaire samplings in three Texas Communities. "The people surveyed were the individuals in the household who typically prepare family meals," he noted. One of the main findings is that the status of seafood as a regular menu item in American families is considerably less than that of beef, pork and poultry.

"If nutrition and price were the only criteria by which meal items were chosen, seafood (especially finfish) would probably perform much better in the marketplace," Gillespie explained. "However, the dimensions of meal preparation extend beyond nutrition and economy to include preparation ease and the tastes of the entire family. "Finfish and shellfish rate poorly on these areas relative to other menu items," he pointed out. "It doesn't seem unreasonable, then, to suspect that consumer beliefs with regard to the family taste and preparation ease are playing the most significant role in dampening consumer choices of seafood as a main menu item."

"In other words, if the consumer sees two items as the same in nutrition she makes her selection on the basis of less important reasons like the ease of preparing the dish," interjected Houston. "As a means of increasing consumption it would be extremely difficult to promote seafood to the point that it is perceived sufficiently more nutritious than products currently recognized as nutritious," he attested. Gillespie said a more effective approach would be to improve ease of preparation beliefs through home economist food demonstrations and

family taste preferences through in-store sampling programs. "Past research suggests that such recipe demonstrations and in-store sampling programs where consumers have the opportunity to become involved with seafood is a much more effective approach to increasing family consumption," he continued. "Three additional observations can be made from the information we found," Houston added. "First, man is a product of his environment, particularly in his formative years," he noted. "If, during this time, an individual develops favorable attitudes toward seafood, his consumption patterns in later life remains favorable to seafood. "Second, as an individual improves his status in life, that is his social class, with more education, a better job, and increased income, more favorable behavior toward seafood occurs." Houston said. "There is greater consumption of seafood in restaurants as well as in the home. Individuals occupying positions in higher social classes are the primary consumers of shellfish in the home and all seafood in restaurants. "Finally, only one variable is significant in identifying the main consumers of finfish," Gillespie contended. "Only growing up close to the coast plays a role in current fin-

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A&M horticulturist questions 'bargains'

BARGAINS GALORE! CHEAP! 50% OFF! SALE! All these signs and ads are eye-catching and tempting but when it comes to plant buying—BEWARE! Everett Janne, landscape horticulturist for the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, warns, "A bargain is only a bargain if you get something that gives enough personal satisfaction to make you feel it was worth the money you spent." To help identify a bargain the next time you are in the market for nursery stock, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Can you recognize quality nursery stock? If not, does the firm have a good reputation for quality?
2. Are the plants tagged and identifiable with specific variety names?
3. Are the salespeople able and willing to offer opinions of what plants might best fill your landscaping needs?

4. Do you have a varied choice of sizes, colors and shapes from which to choose?
5. What type of guarantee is mentioned, and is the salesman willing to discuss any inquiries you make about guarantees?
6. Most important of all, does the plant fit into your landscape plan, or are you buying it because the price is cheap?

"If you can give yourself a satisfactory answer to each of these questions, in all likelihood you have a bargain," contends Janne. Remember, by the time you've planted it, the initial cost of the plant is only the beginning. Don't forget about the cost of materials and labor that comes afterward. Keep this in mind. If a plant dies or fails to grow and flourish because of improper handling before you bought it, it's no bargain even if it was given to you. You would actually be losing money on the materials and labor you invest later on.

raelis conducting research at A&M. Dr. Hovav Talpaz, visiting assistant professor of agricultural economics, and Itshak Borosh, assistant professor of mathematics, have developed a computer program that will help increase profits and cut costs for the farmer when the project is complete. "This is a theoretical model for a strategy of pesticide application," Talpaz explained. "This is part of a huge project that involves entomologists, bioengineers and agronomists in a multi-state area. "What we want to do is optimize the pesticide dosage and the number of treatments," he explained. "This is to maximize profits and minimize the cost of treatments and the damage caused by pests. "The model is outlined for a single crop, a single pest population, a single season and a single pesticide," Talpaz pointed out. "Into this we add the price of pesticide, the price of cotton, the damage rate per day per pest and the reproduction rate of the insect pest. One can also add the immigration rate, the length of the season and the initial pest population. "We developed a computer algorithm which takes these parameters as input and gives us optimum solutions for each case," he noted. "The sensitivity of the model can be checked by manipulating a single parameter and observing the change in cost. You can see in a minute what is the best strategy."

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