

# **Rebuilding Consumer Confidence In Fresh Produce**

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# The Timeline

- ❖ **Aug. 19: 1<sup>st</sup> illness confirmed**
- ❖ **Aug. 31: 1<sup>st</sup> victim death**
- ❖ **Sept. 8: CDC alerted to cluster of E.coli 0157:H7**
- ❖ **Sept. 13: Spinach implicated in outbreak**
- ❖ **Sept. 14: FDA Consumer Advisory**
- ❖ **Sept. 29: FDA withdraws Advisory**
- ❖ **Nov-December: Additional outbreaks**



# The FACTS





# Every Bite, Every Time



# The Facts Are Real

**The Industry Can Do More**



# The Facts Are Real

- ❖ **Commitment to food safety did not begin on September 14, 2006**
  - **Cost of doing business -- millions invested annually**
  - **Research**
  - **Training**
  - **Constant search for enhancements based on best science**
- ❖ **Collaboration did not begin on September 14, 2006**



Facts are not always enough



# The Reality of Perception



***“Consumers will care  
about how much we know  
when they know how much  
we care.”***



# Reality of Crisis Communications

- ❖ Acknowledgement
- ❖ Empathy
- ❖ React



# Keys To Industry Success

- ❖ **Industry wide agreement and adoption of enhanced food safety practices**
- ❖ **Endorsement of practices by credible food safety experts, regulatory and political officials**
- ❖ **Third-party certification, oversight and enforcement**
- ❖ **Consistent and collaborative delivery of messages that explains the rationale, justification and execution of each of the above to all stakeholder audiences**



# Ongoing Efforts

- ❖ **\$2 million towards research**
  - **Creating produce safety research initiative at UC Davis**
    - **Help coordinate and fund research**
    - **Not just greens, not just California**
    - **Seeking private and public funds to supplement**
    - **Clearinghouse for information on worldwide research**
    - **Funding from California and UC Davis**
- ❖ **Creation of New Training Programs**
- ❖ **Communications Initiatives**



# Communications

Helping the industry  
find its voice

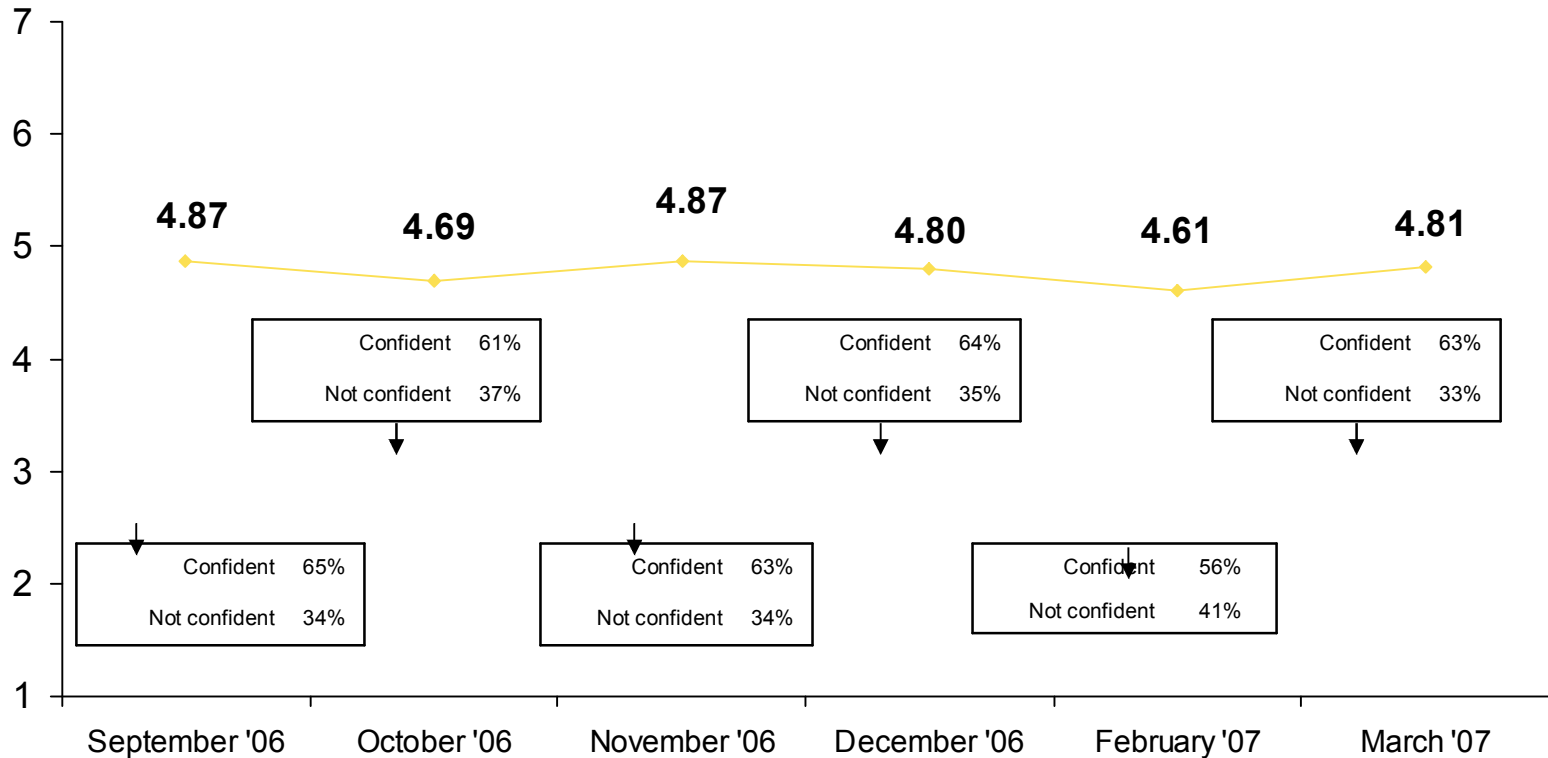


# Primary Shopper Research

- ❖ **Sept. 18-19: 1<sup>st</sup> consumer research project**
- ❖ **Oct. 10: Second survey during lettuce recall**
- ❖ **December: Third survey**
- ❖ **February- March surveys during peanut butter**
- ❖ **Margin of error is + or – 3.1%**



# Confidence in fresh produce safety?



On a scale of 1=*not confident at all* and 7=*extremely confident*

**Q1** Note: In boxes, *confident* = a rating of 5-7 and *not confident* = a rating of 1-4



# Consumer Research Results

Safety of fresh produce overall	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Feb.	March
7 (Extremely)	19%	16%	15%	16%	11%	13%
6	18%	17%	17%	18%	14%	19%
5	28%	28%	31%	30%	31%	31%
4	14%	15%	18%	15%	22%	16%
3	9%	10%	10%	9%	9%	9%
2	3%	4%	3%	5%	4%	3%
1 (Not at all)	8%	8%	3%	6%	6%	5%
<b>Mean</b>	<b>4.87</b>	<b>4.69</b>	<b>4.87</b>	<b>4.80</b>	<b>4.61</b>	<b>4.81</b>

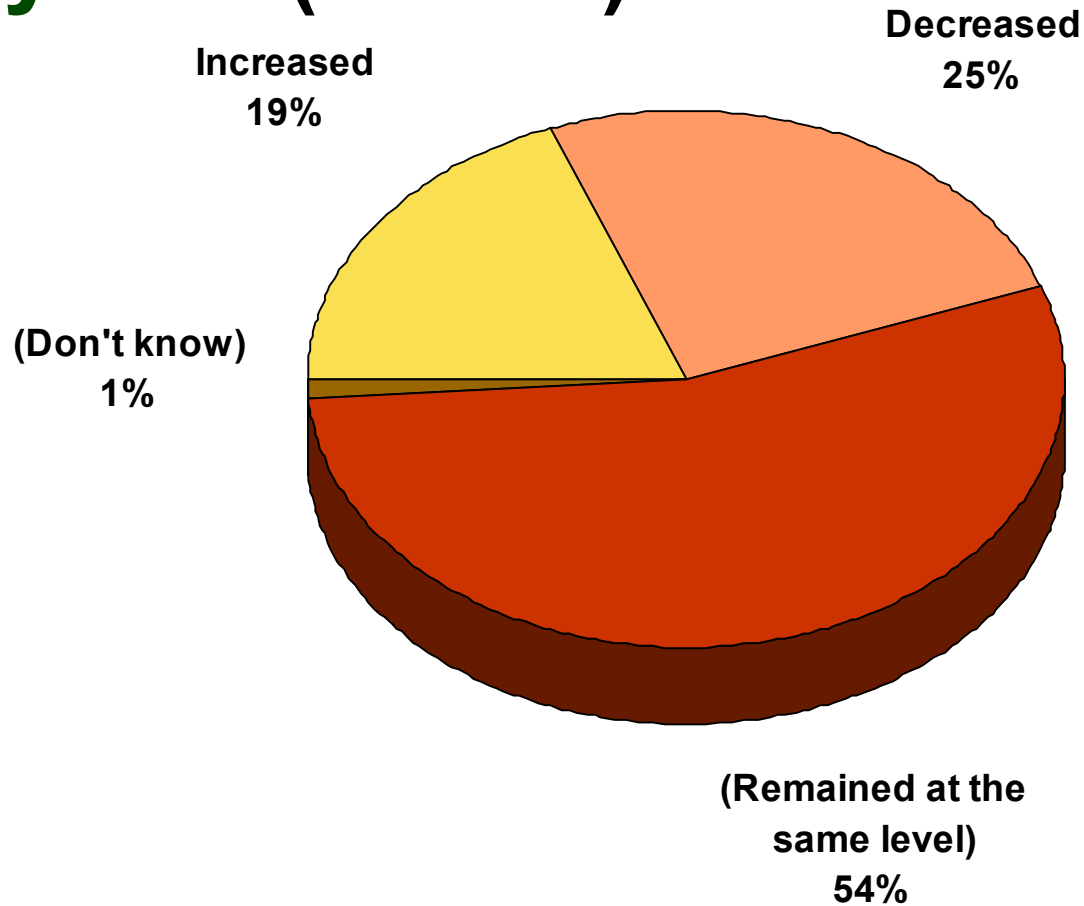


# Consumer Research Results

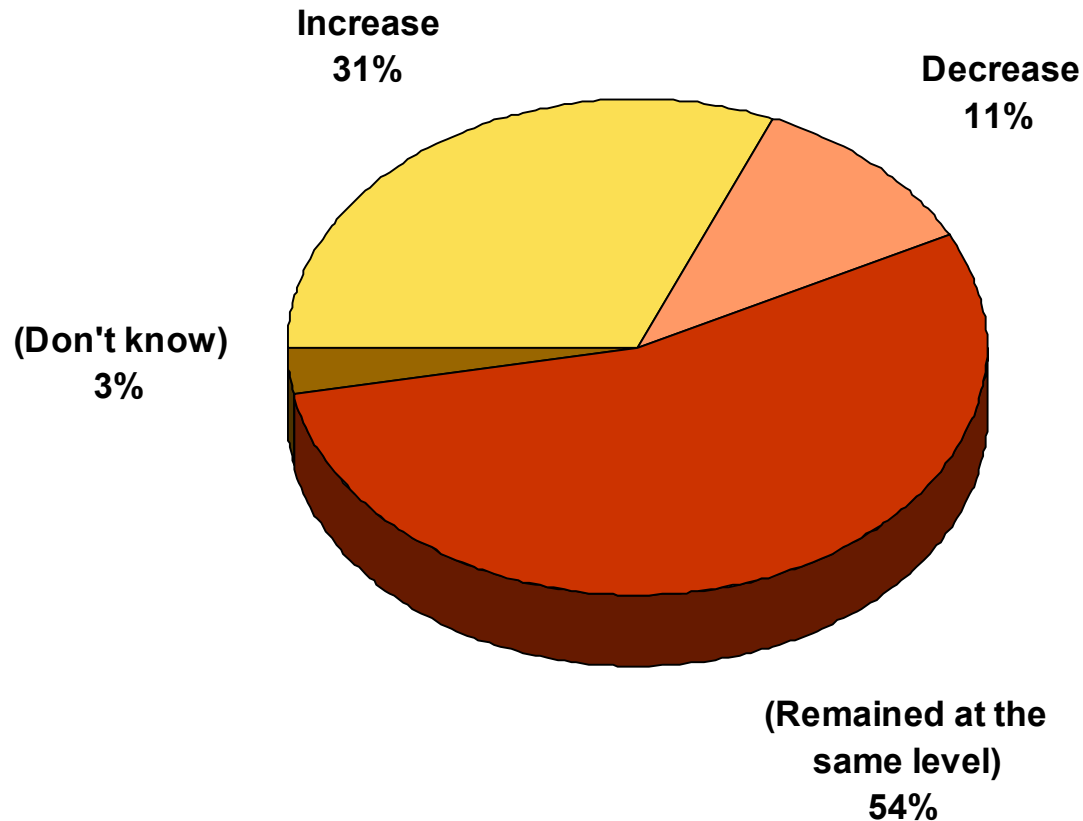
<b>What impact did the spinach issue and voluntary lettuce recall have on your overall purchases of fresh fruits and vegetables?</b>	<b>Oct.</b>
<b>A lot</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Some</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>Hardly any</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>None at all</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>Don't know</b>	<b>1%</b>



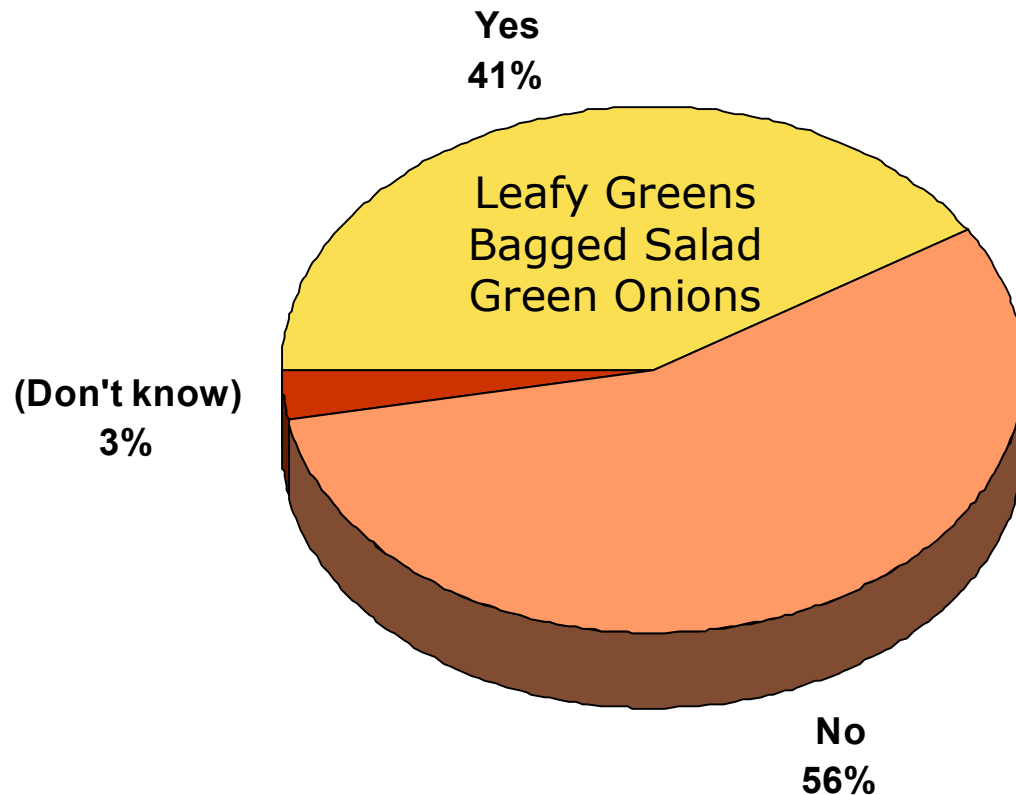
# Produce purchases up or down in past year? (March)



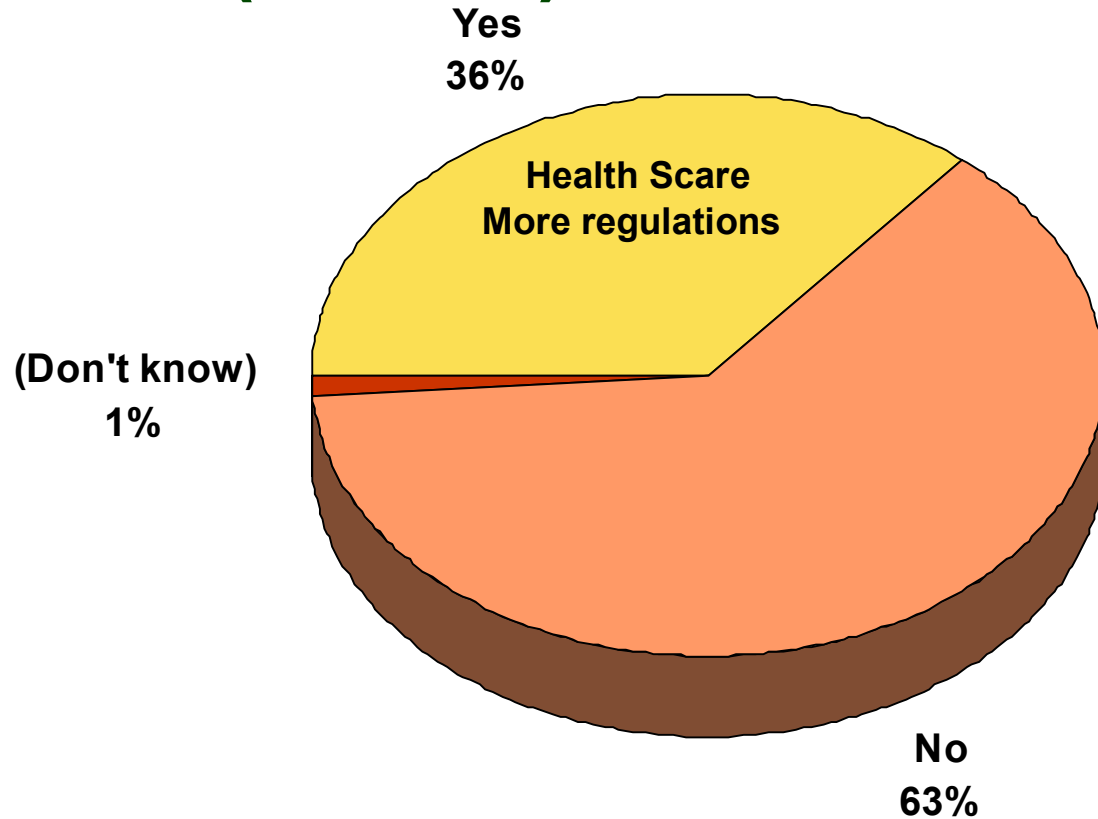
# Produce purchases up/down in coming year? (March)



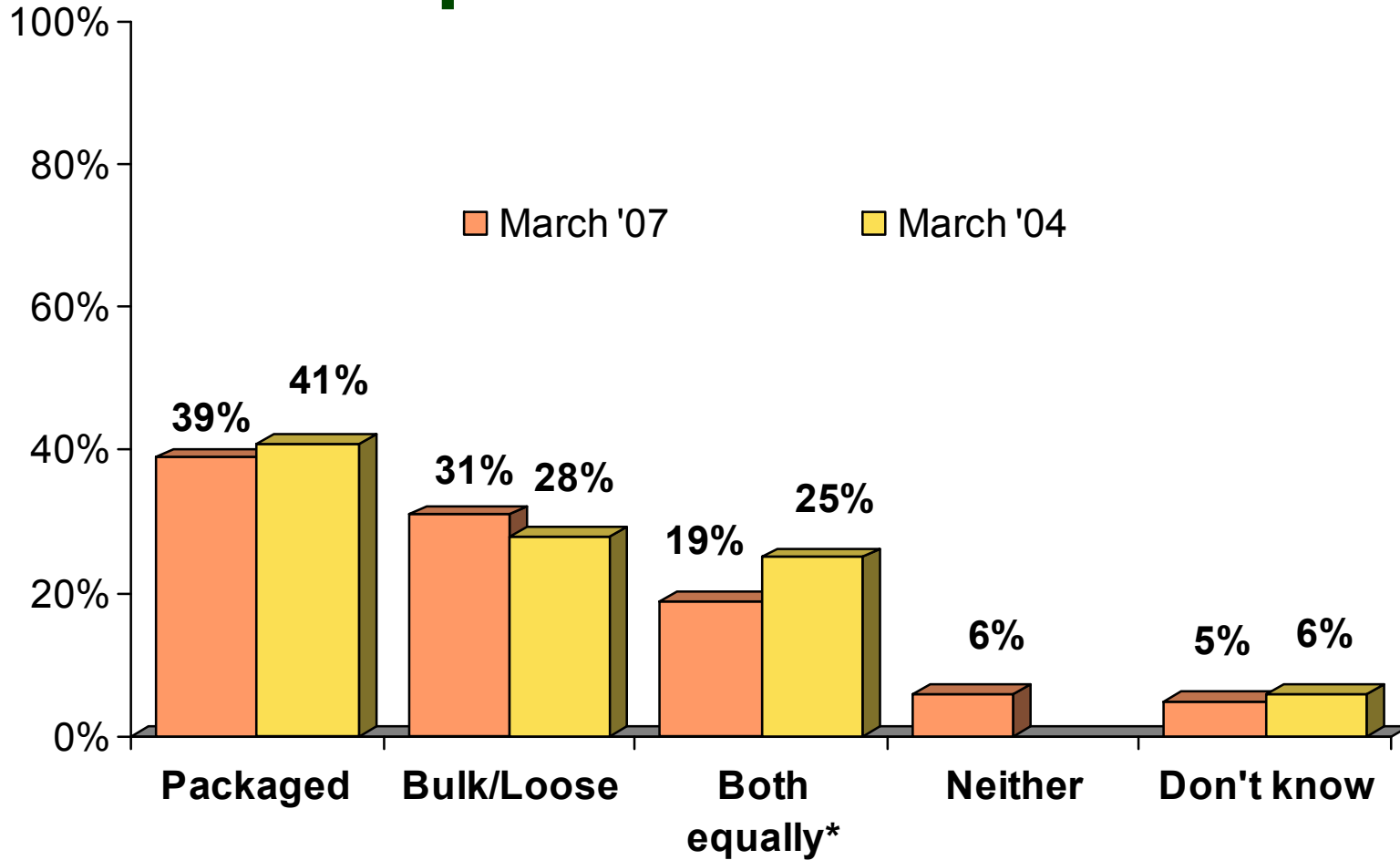
# Is there fresh produce you don't buy? (March)



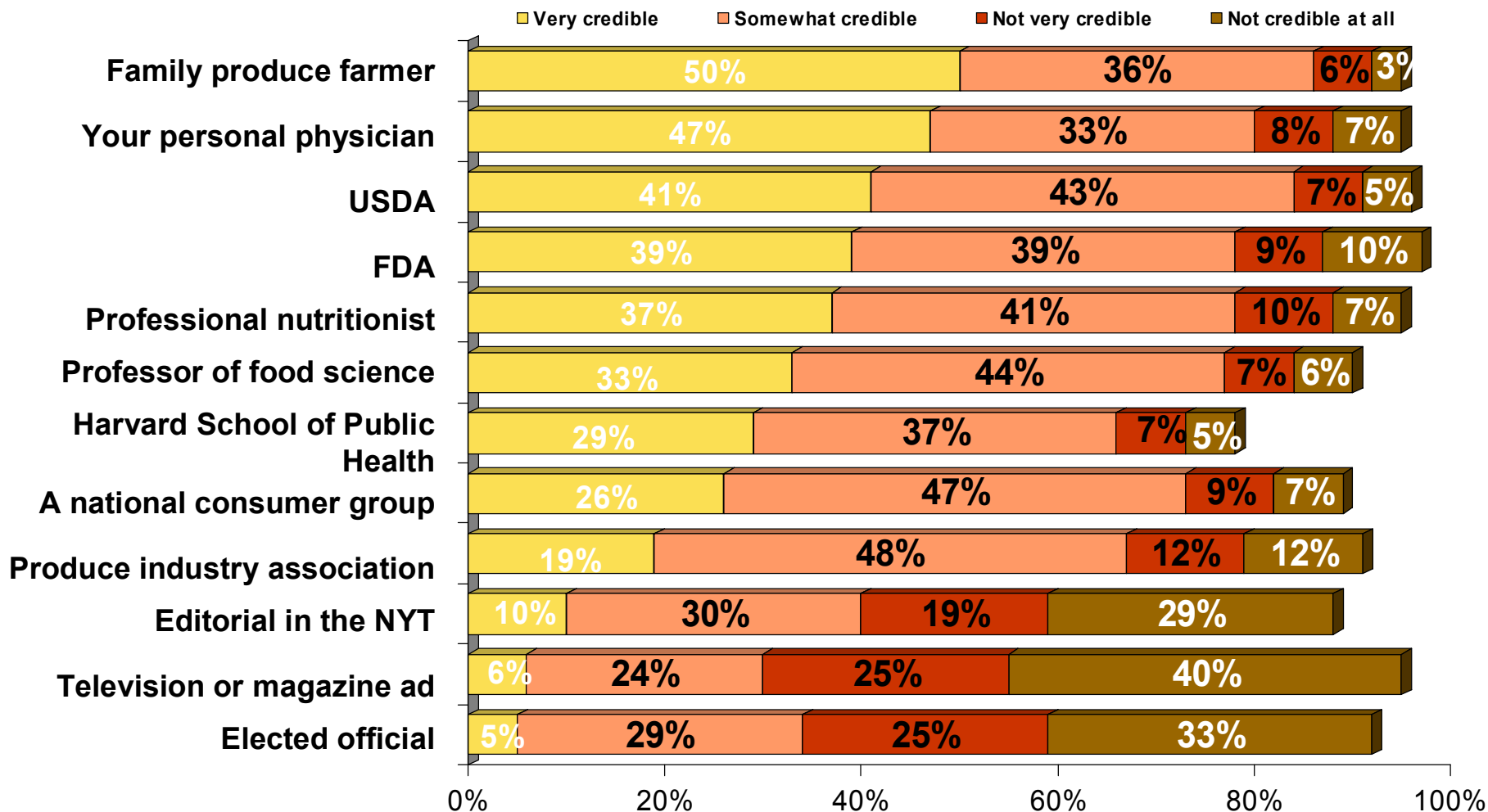
# Concerns about fresh leafy green produce? (March)



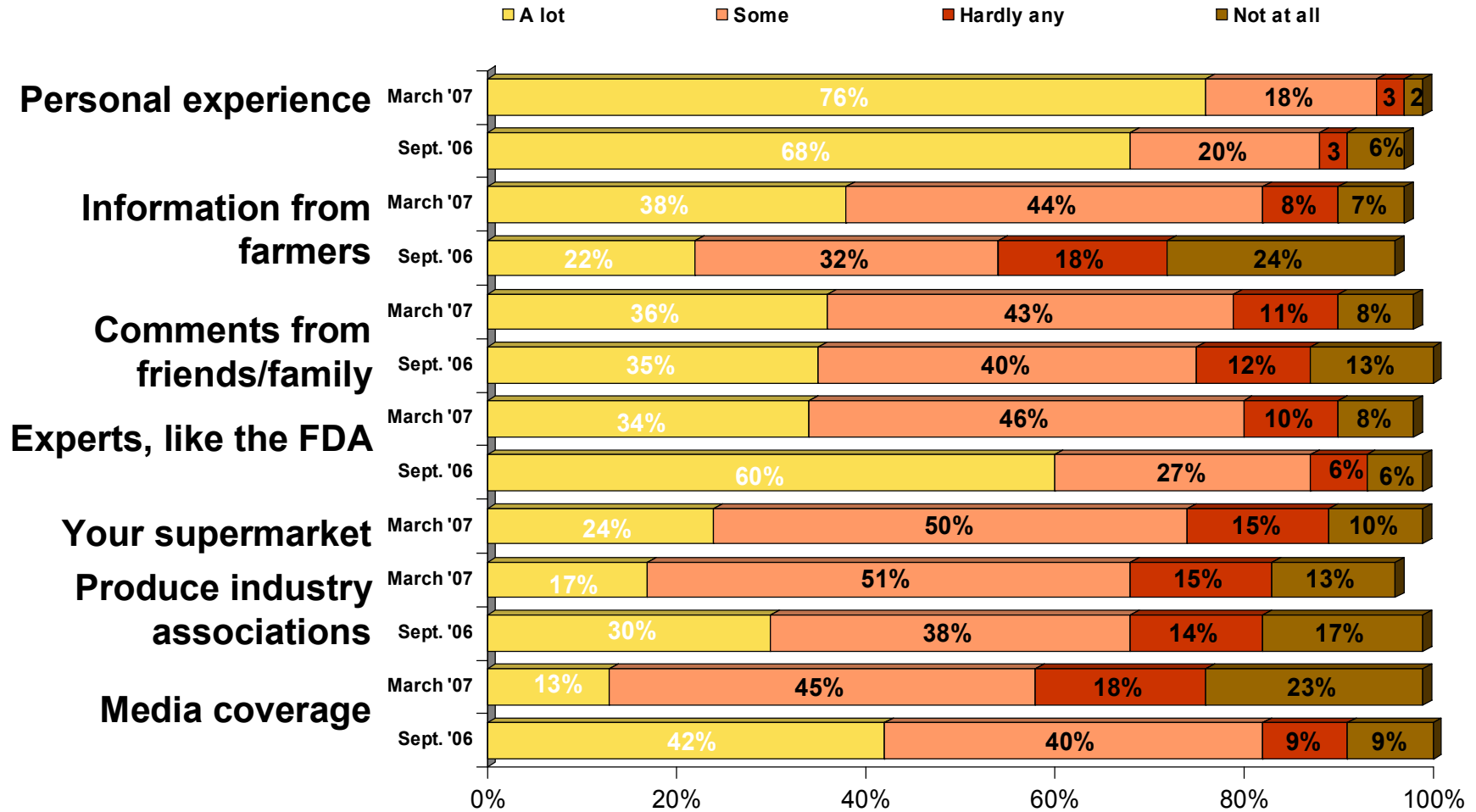
# Which is safer: packaged produce or bulk/loose produce?



# Credibility on Produce Safety (March)



# Who do you rely on?



# What could the produce industry do to increase your confidence?

Higher safety/sanitation standards	28%
Better testing/inspections	17
Prevent future outbreaks	6
Organic farming/no chemicals	5
Keep public informed	3
Ban imported produce	3
(Other)	3
(None/nothing)	4
(Don't know/refused)	****40***



# Rebuilding Confidence

## ❖ PHASE 1: React to Negative News Cycle

- Making sure our story is told
  - **Food safety did not start last September!**
- Anticipate flashpoints and prepare

## ❖ PHASE 2: Restore and Promote

- Restore **relationships with consumers, regulators, political leaders and the media**
- Promote **the positive attributes of fresh produce**



# Collaboration is Key

- ❖ **Alliance Communications Oversight Committee**
  - **Bruce Knobeloch, River Ranch, Chairman**
  - **Matt McInerney, Western Growers Association**
  - **Dennis Donohue, European Vegetable Specialities**
  - **David Krantz, California Farm Bureau**
  - **Amy Philpott, United Fresh Produce Association**
  - **Teresa Thorne, Marilyn Dolan, Alliance for Food and Farming**
  - **Joe Pezzini, Ocean Mist**
  - **Jim Bogart, Grower Shipper Association of Central California**
  - **Tim York, Markon**



# Telling our Story

- ❖ **Take pride in our traditions**
  - **The farmers' story**
  - **Focus on commitment to science based food safety systems**
    - **Not just what we do, part of who we are**
- ❖ **Showcase positive case studies**
  - **Focus on improvements/enhancements**



# Message Platform

## ❖ Values

- Impact of outbreak on victims
- Pride in who we are, what we do

## ❖ Urgency and Cooperation

- Individual/industry response
- Prepare to respond to challenges

## ❖ Confidence and Pride

- Every bite, every time



# Telling Our Story

- ❖ **Provide the industry with the right tools**
  - **Media training**
  - **Fact sheets on key issues**
  - **Case studies on our immediate response**
  - **Updates on consumer research**
- ❖ **Pro-active media strategies**
  - **Requesting media interviews**
  - **Letters to the Editor, Op-Eds**



# Rebuilding Consumer Confidence

- ❖ **Create a defined structure to manage media engagement and empower members to tell our story**
- ❖ **Create communicators network for rapid response**
- ❖ **Distribute spokesperson “tool kit”**
- ❖ **Create a media and member “online portal” that provides easy access to food safety materials**



# Food Safety



A Collective Responsibility

