

# Adding Value to Local Foods: Lessons from a Caribbean Survey

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# Background

- High dependency on imported foods.
- High health-care costs – changing lifestyles & dietary patterns.
- Limited information on the nutritional quality local (and some imported) food.
- High preference for imported foods.
- Little knowledge of consumer preferences.
- **Opportunities exist for locally produced foods:**
  - to create greater value and improve marketing;
  - to improve quality & safety and optimize nutrition potential.
- **However there is need to:**
  - Set realistic targets and adopt system approaches to improve the value proposition of local foods;
  - Build public private partnerships to support the process.



# Myths/Strategic Options?

**Production:** Can the Caribbean produce enough food? If yes, how and at what cost? Can this be achieved through collaboration?

**Targets:** Should the Caribbean set a target for local production or exports or both for fresh and processed foods? If so what should it be?

**Nutrition (and Safety):** Can the Caribbean improve the nutritional quality and safety of local foods / expand dietary choices? How can consumers be encouraged to re-prioritize preferences and spending choices?

**Non-tariff Barriers:** Can non-tariff barriers be used to protect local agriculture and support value addition? Would this be popular? How will it impact on food costs? Is the need to do this due to a lack of innovation?

**Customers:** How much is known about what Caribbean customers really want? Who prefers local foods and why and where are they located? How can options/choices for locally produced & processed foods be improved? What value added features are desired by consumers and what will attract their interest?



## Why - The Consumer Survey

**Purpose** - to gain insight into consumer purchases and preferences for specific locally available foods produced in the Caribbean and identify areas which could be pursued to encourage greater production, marketing and sales.



# Methodology

An **online survey** was conducted using the Caribbean Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Network (RIENet) platform targetting the 400 plus membership (supported by CTA/CCST-NIHERST)

The questionnaire consisted of three sections:

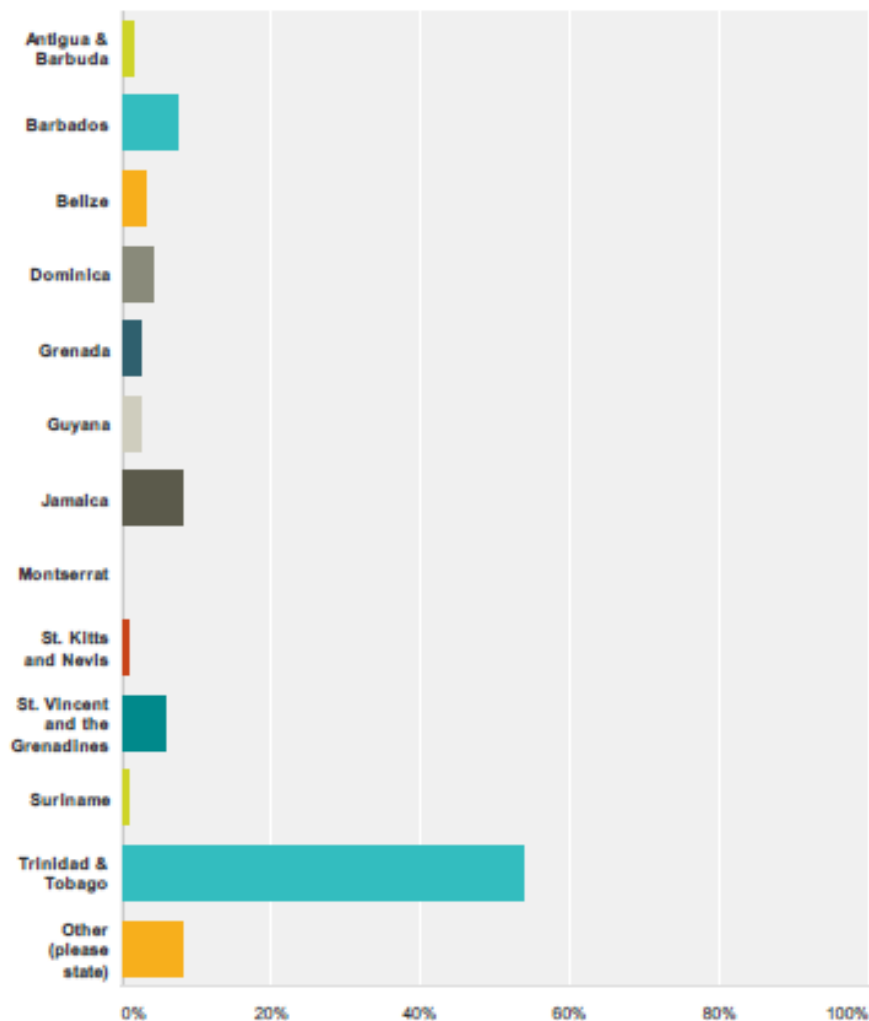
- **Section1** - Consumer demographics 'Your Profile' - six questions
- **Section 2** – Consumer preferences and perceptions of 'Locally-produced Root and Starchy Foods – eleven questions.
- **Section 3** - What needs to be done for 'Improving the Marketing and Value Propositions Associated with Locally-grown Produce and Derivatives' - seventeen questions

A total of **130 responses** were received of which **103** were fully completed (**25%** response rate)



# Section1: Consumer Profile

Q 1.3: Which is your home country?



## ***GENDER***

- 48% male – 52% female

## ***LIVING ARRANGEMENT***

- Mix of single, couples and families

## ***AGE GROUPS***

- 47% (20 – 39 years)
- 43% (40 – 59 years)
- 10% (60 years and over)

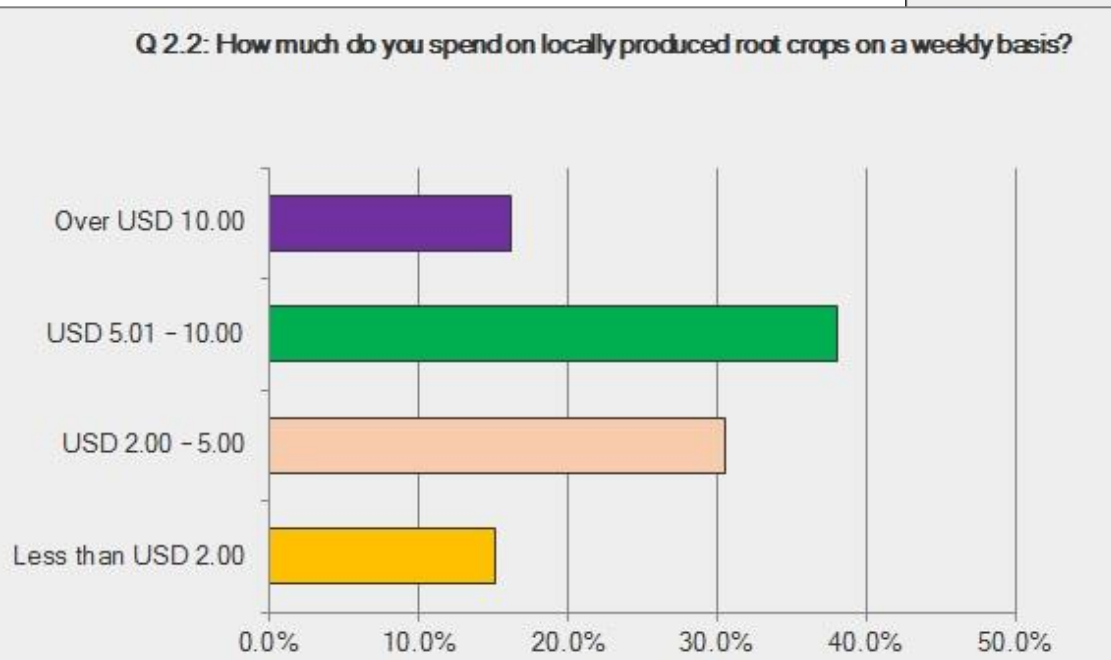
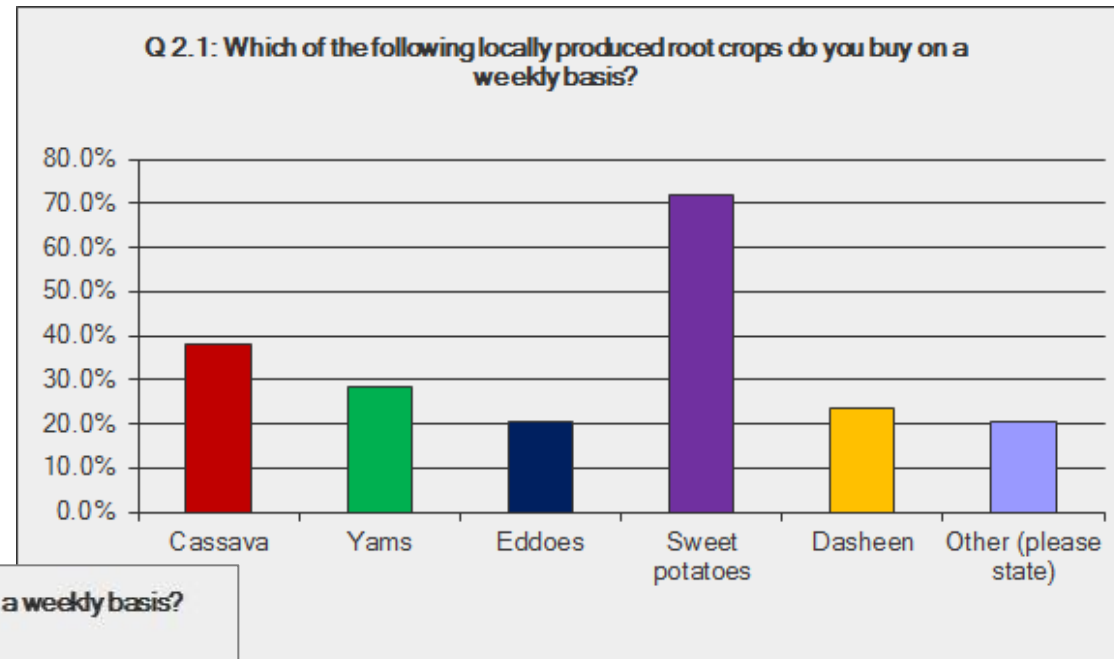
## ***HOUSEHOLD INCOME***

- 74% from mid – high income households
- 26% from lower income households



# Results: Consumer Preferences & Perceptions

**Preferred root crop – sweet potato (70%)**



**Average Spending  
– USD 5 – 10/week  
(40%)**

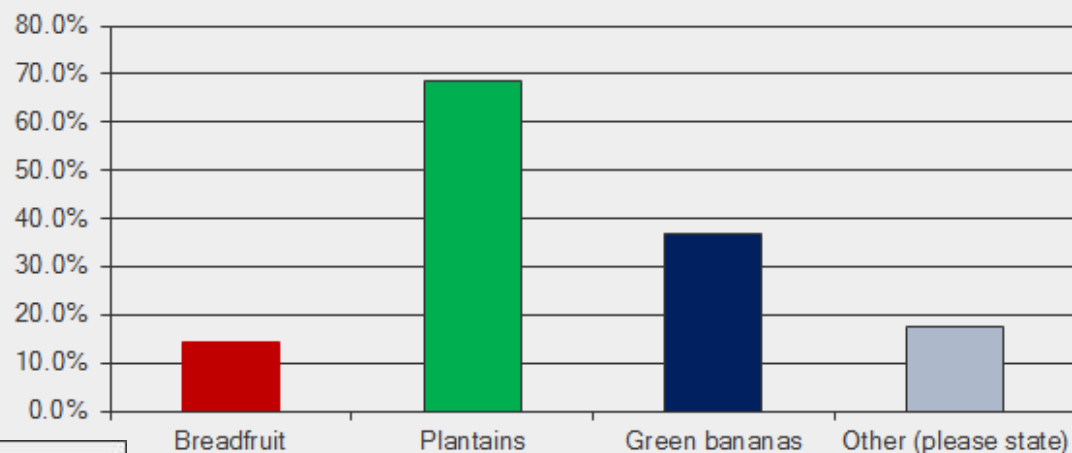




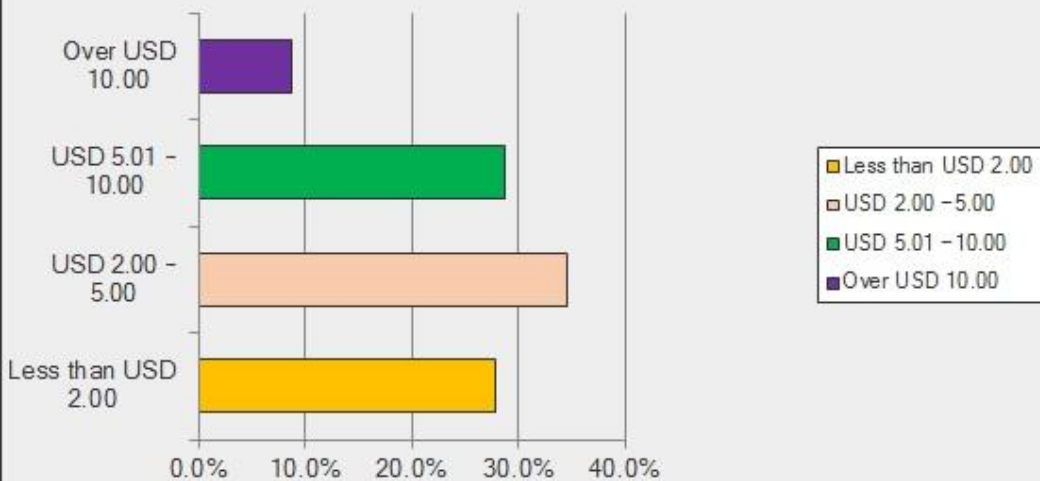
# Results: Consumer Preferences & Perceptions

Preferred starchy fruits –  
**plantain (70%)**

Q 2.3: Which of the following locally produced starchy foods do you buy on a weekly basis?



Q 2.4: How much do you spend on locally produced starchy foods on a weekly basis?



Average Spending – **USD**  
**2 – 5/week (35%)**

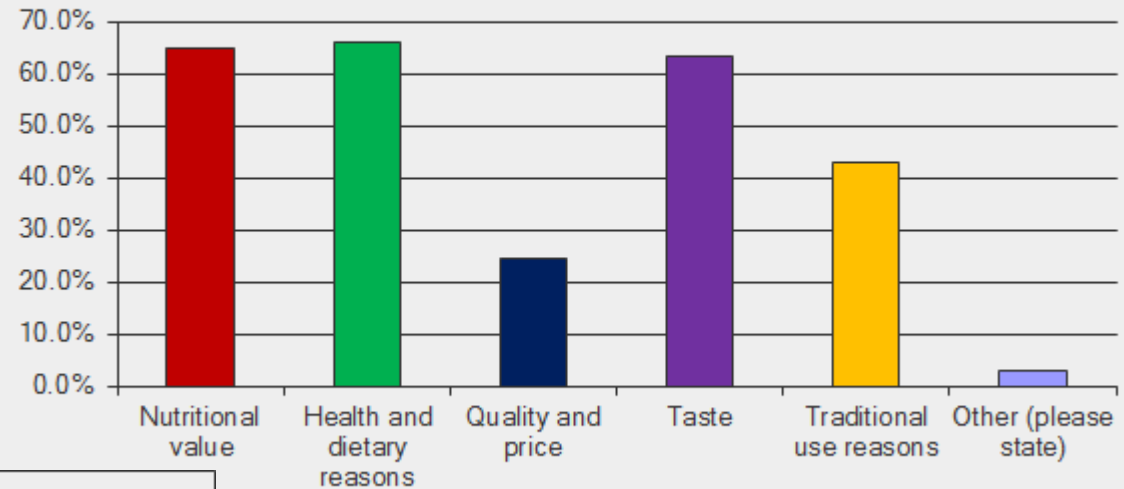




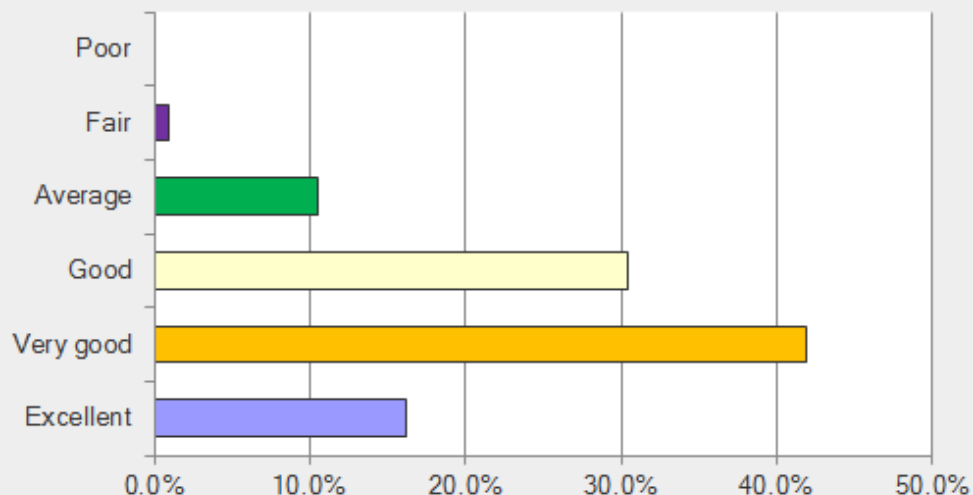
# Results: Consumer Preferences & Perceptions

Reasons for buying local? –  
**Nutrition, health & diet, taste**  
(>60%)

Q 2.5: Why do you choose to buy these locally grown root crops and starchy foods?



Q 2.6: How would you rate the locally produced root crops and starchy foods that you buy and eat generally in terms of quality?

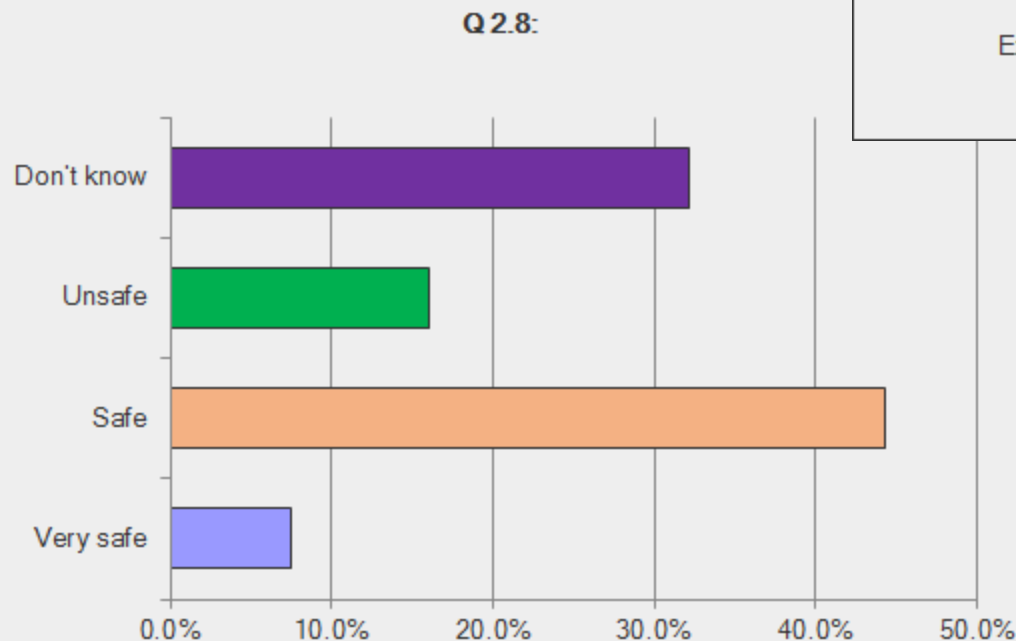
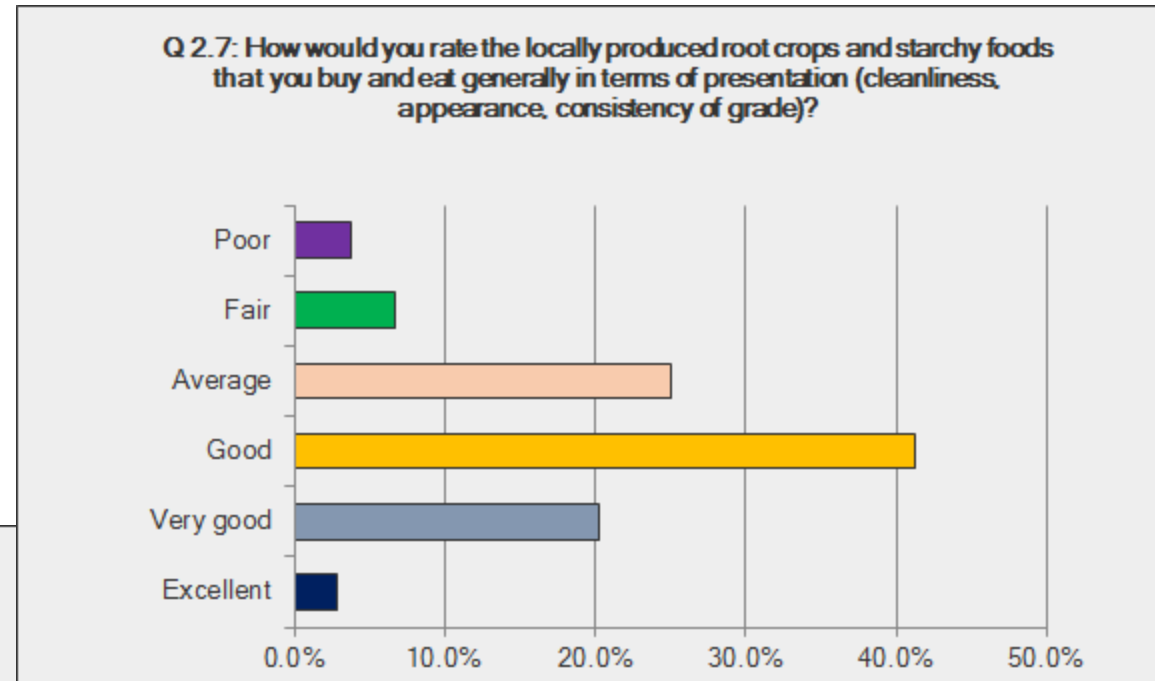


Quality rating for root crops  
and starchy fruits – **Good** –  
**Excellent** (>85%)



# Results: Consumer Preferences & Perceptions

Perception on way local produce is presented – **Good to excellent (65%)**



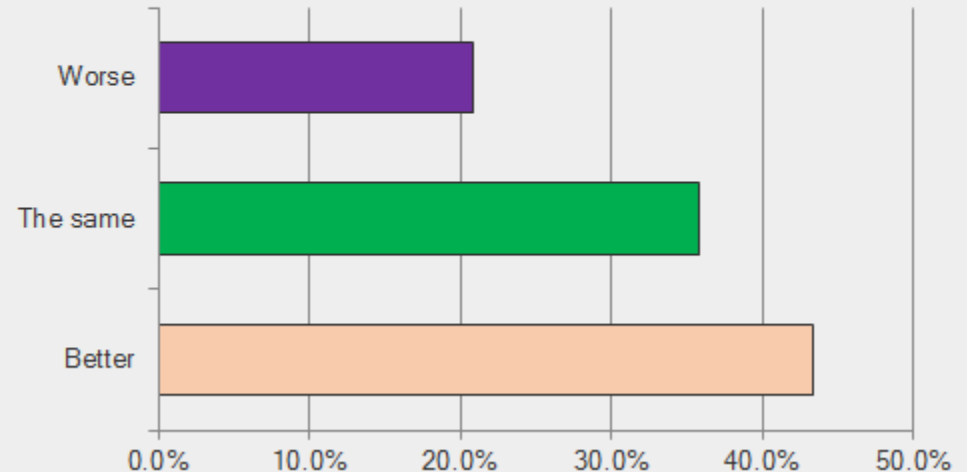
Perception on Safety – **Safe to very safe (50%)**



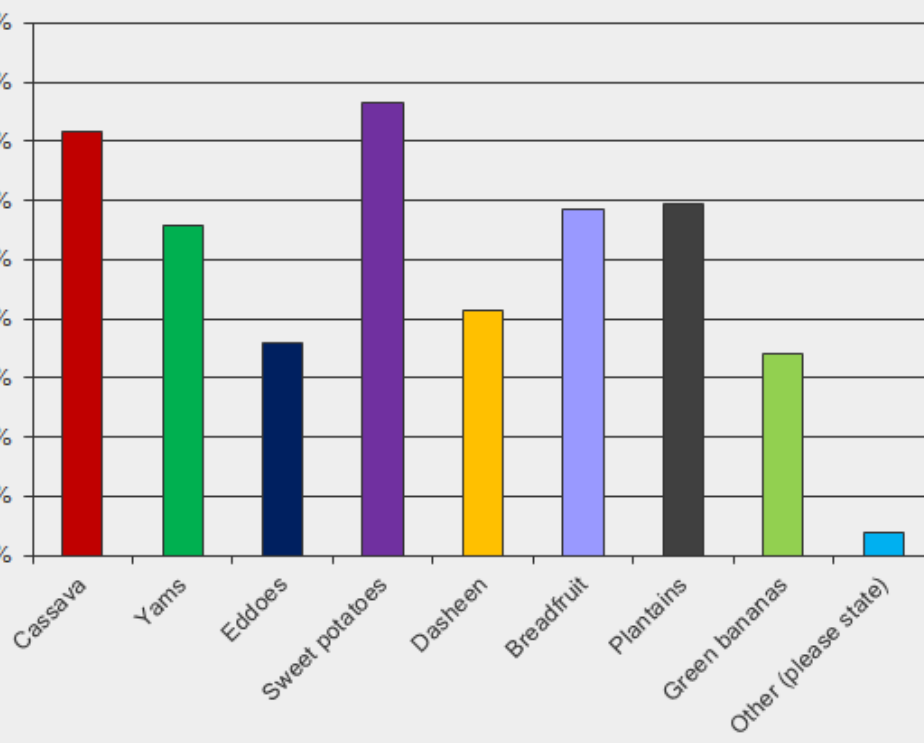
# Results: Consumer Preferences & Perceptions

Rating of Local vs imported fresh staples – **Better** (43%)

Q 2.9: How would you rate locally produced root crops and starchy foods overall compared to imported fresh staple foods e.g. Irish potatoes?



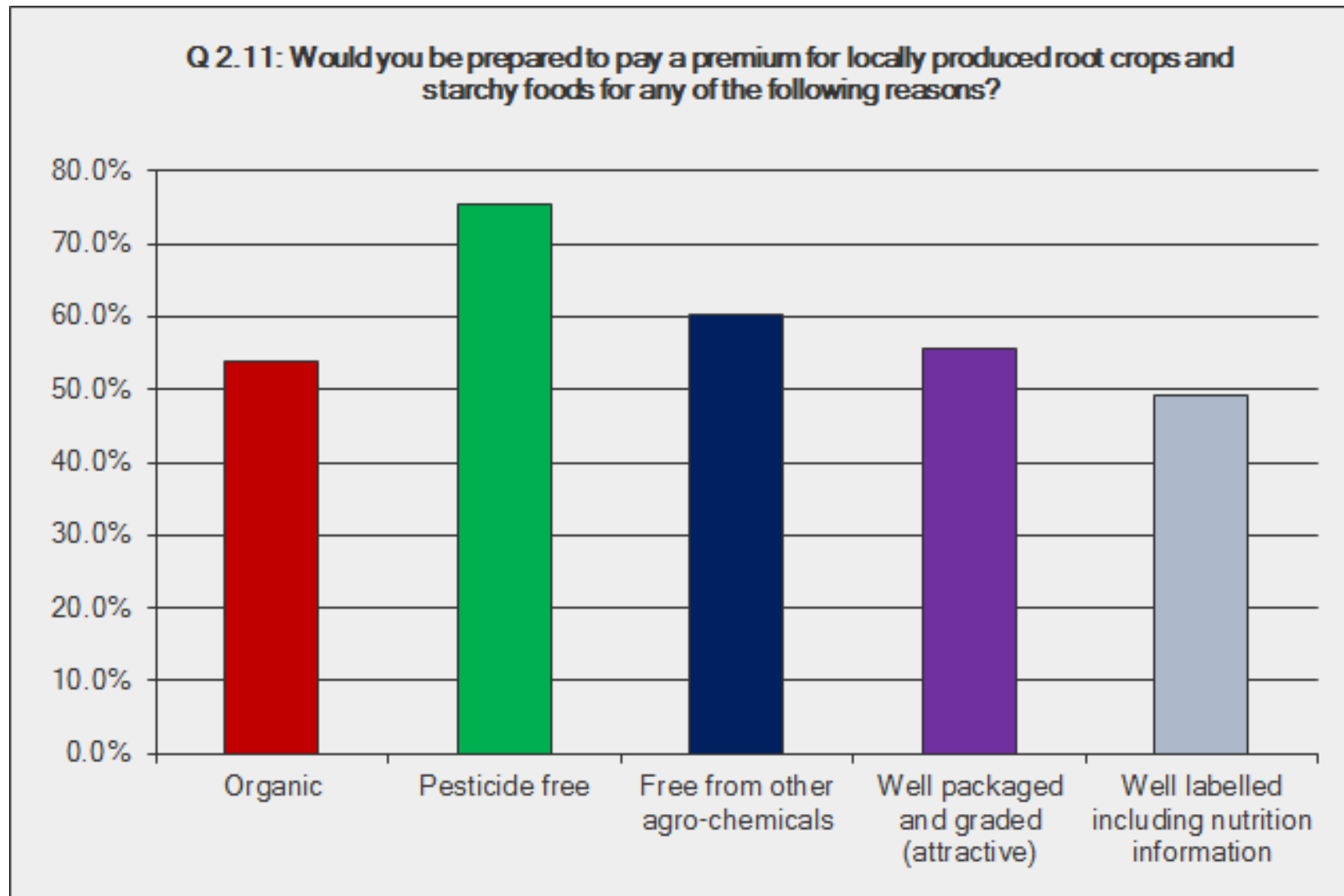
Q 2.10: Which of the following locally produced root crops and starchy foods do you feel offer an opportunity for Caribbean farmers to increase production? (You may select more than one answer)



Opportunities for farmers to increase production – **Sweet potatoes, cassava** (>70%)



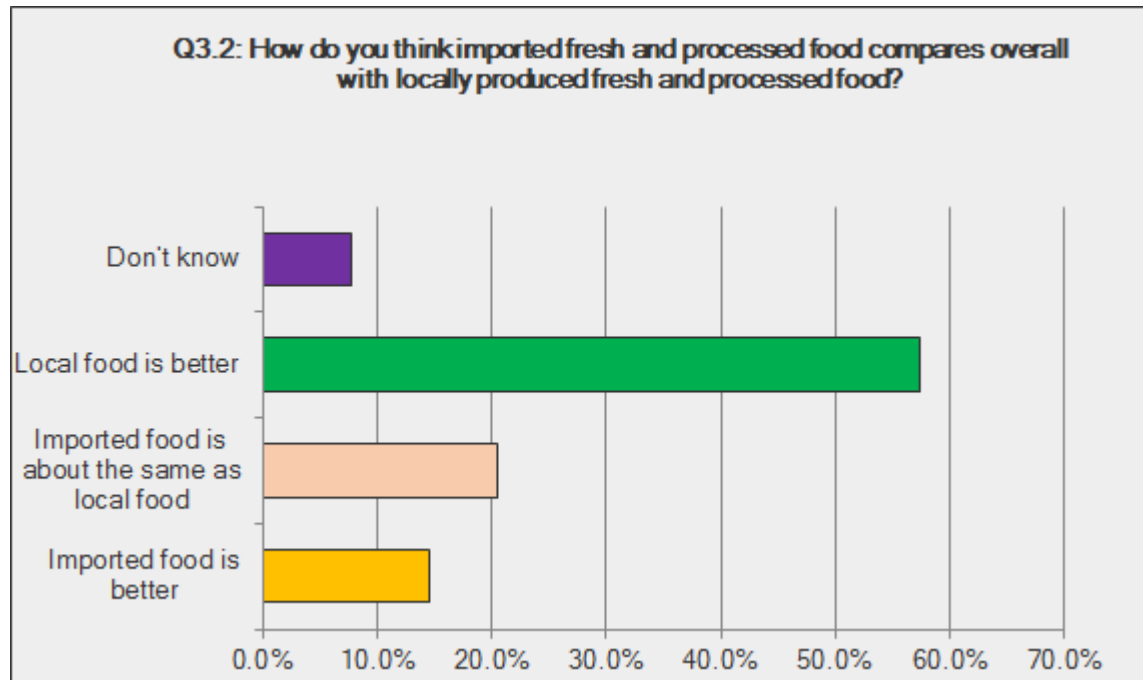
# Results: Consumer Preferences & Perceptions



Consumers **willing to pay** premium for – **Pesticide free (70%)**



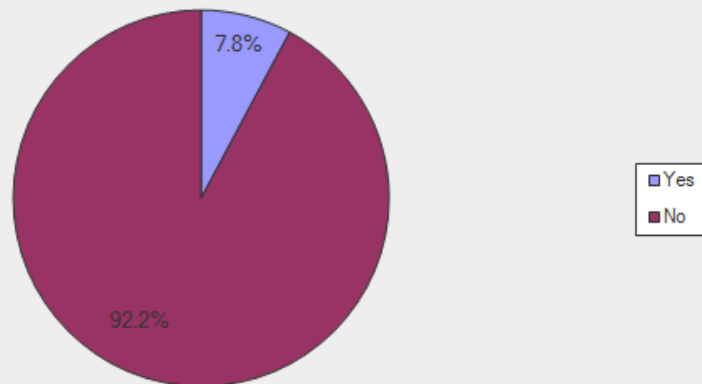
# Results – Local vs Imported



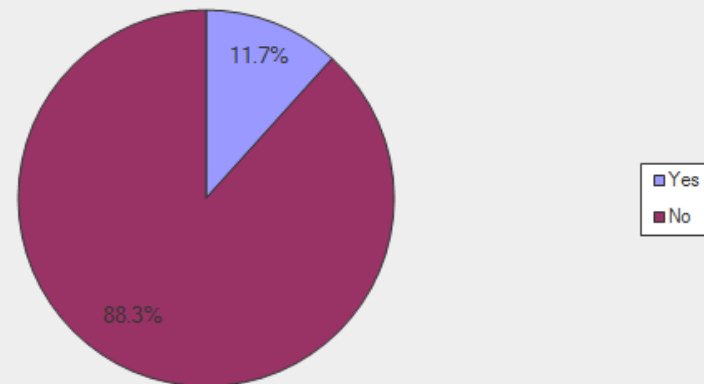
## Local

- Better – 58%
- but
- Not well Branded – 92%
- Not well Packaged – 89%

Q3.3: Is locally produced fresh produce branded and marketed as well as imported fresh produce?

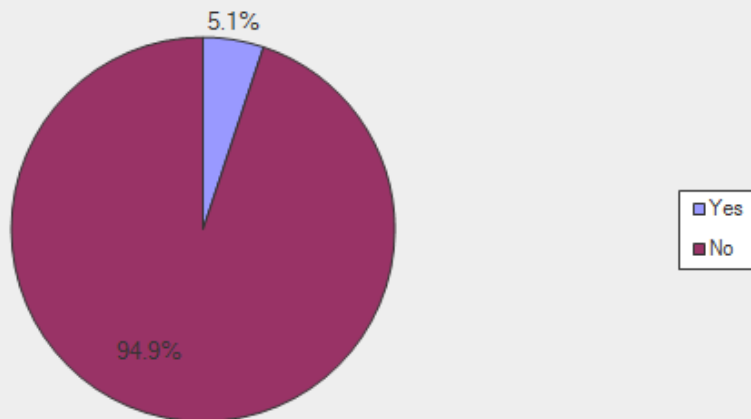


Q3.4: Is locally produced fresh produce packaged and presented as well as imported fresh produce?



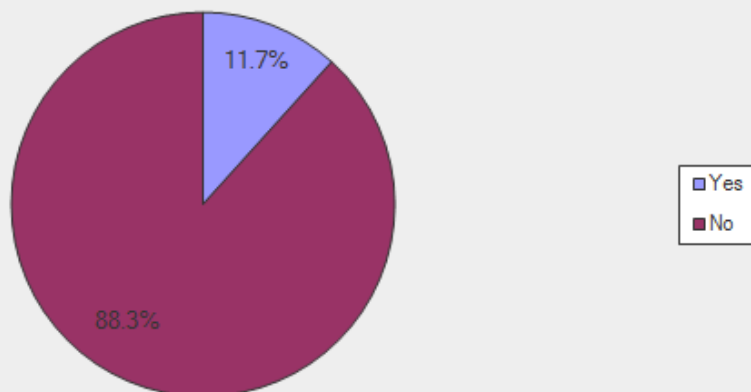
# Results – What needs to be done

Q 3.5: Do you think there is enough information about the nutritional value of locally grown produce and processed foods available to you as a consumer?



**Provide information on nutritional value**

Q 3.6: Do you feel confident with regard to the enforcement of health and safety standards as they relate to locally grown produce and processed foods offered to you as a consumer?

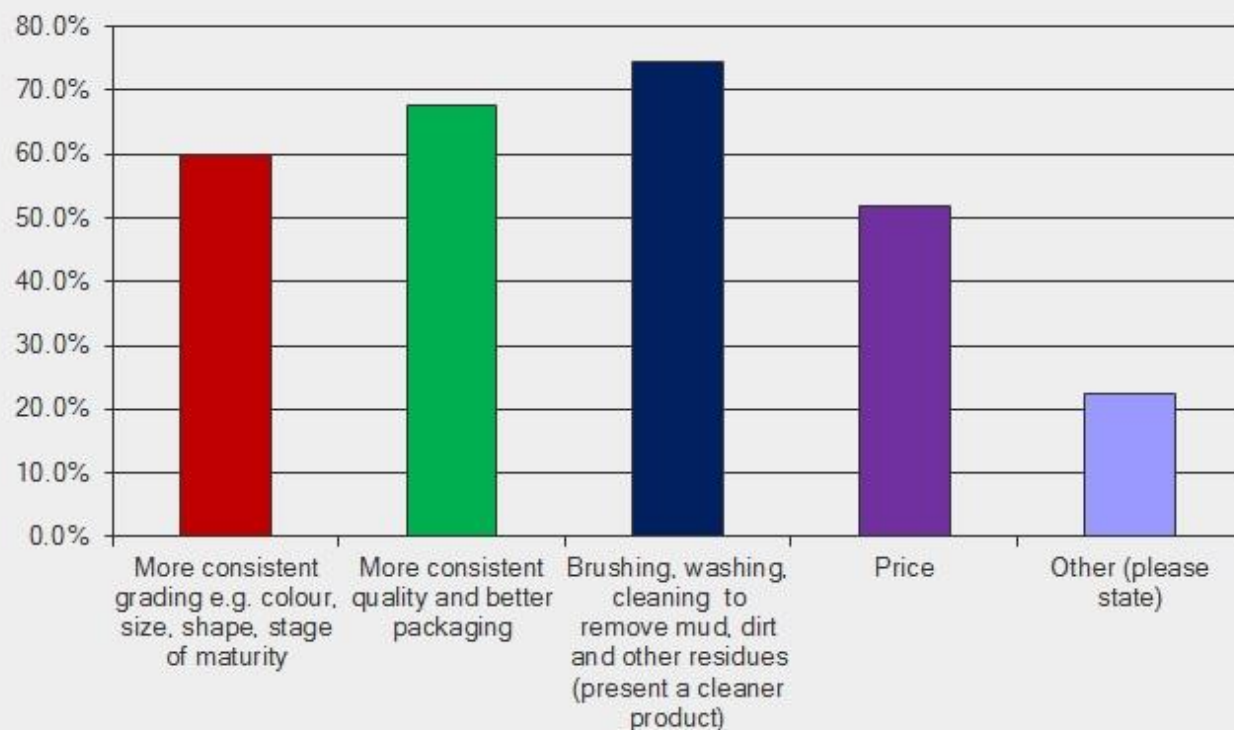


**Enforce health and safety standards**



# Results – What needs to be done

Q 3.9: What do you think needs to be done to make local fresh produce more competitive with imported fresh produce?



## What would attract buyers

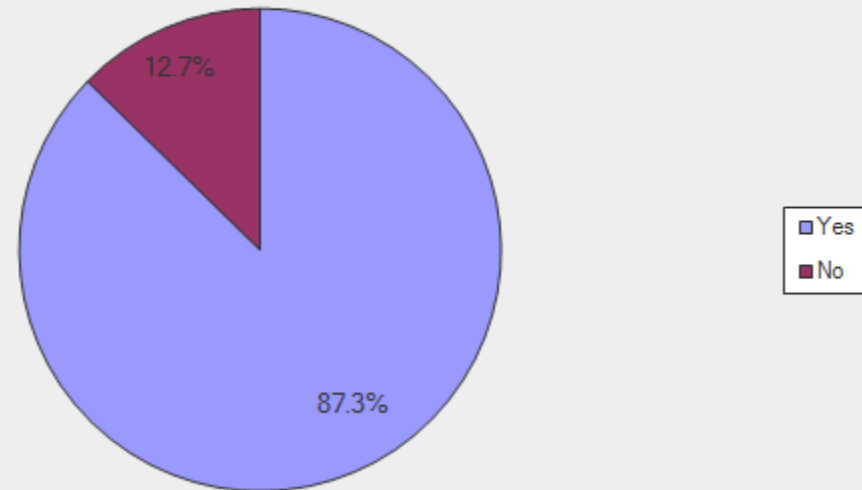
- *Cleaning, quality packaging, grading of produce*
- *Strict, consistent standards*
- *Nutritional information*
- *Food safety information*
- *Low chemical usage*



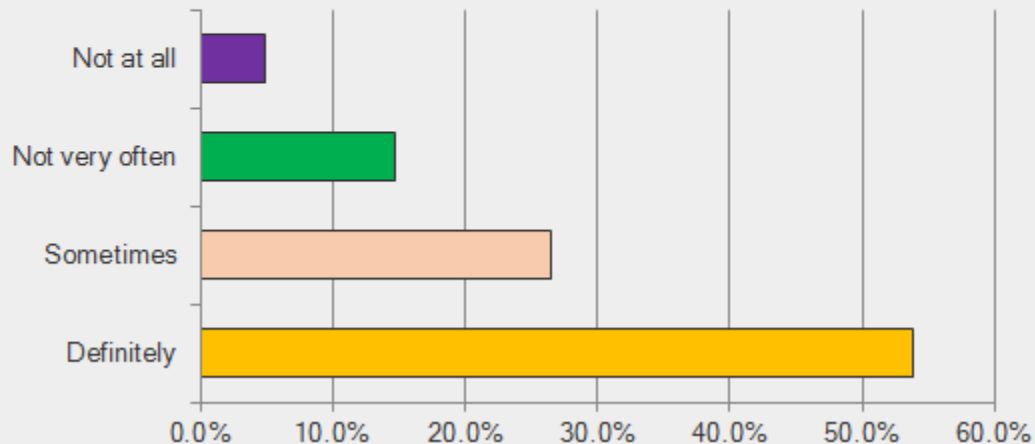
# Results – What needs to be done

**Promote health benefits of processed locally-produced root crops and starchy foods**

Q 3.11: Are you aware?



Q 3.12: Would you buy highly processed products derived from local fresh produce that offered nutritional and health benefits if they were presented and marketed in similar ways as imported processed products e.g. cassava bread or breadfruit flour pasta?

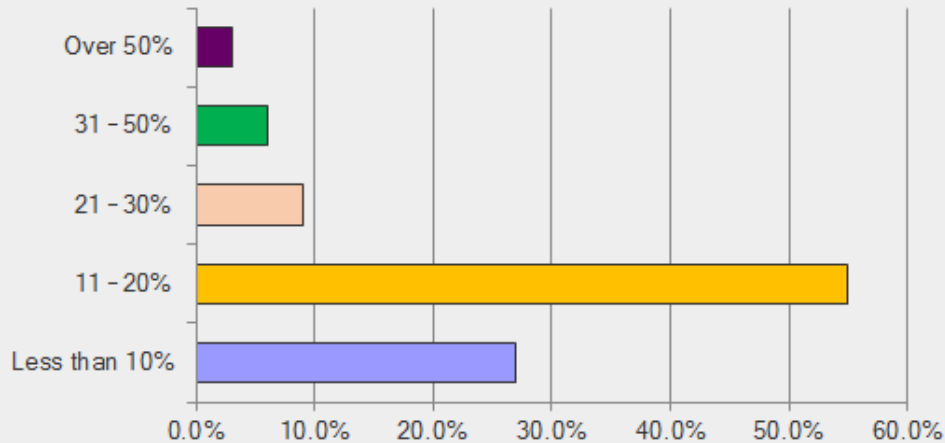


**Consumers willing to buy locally processed food? Definitely (>50%)**

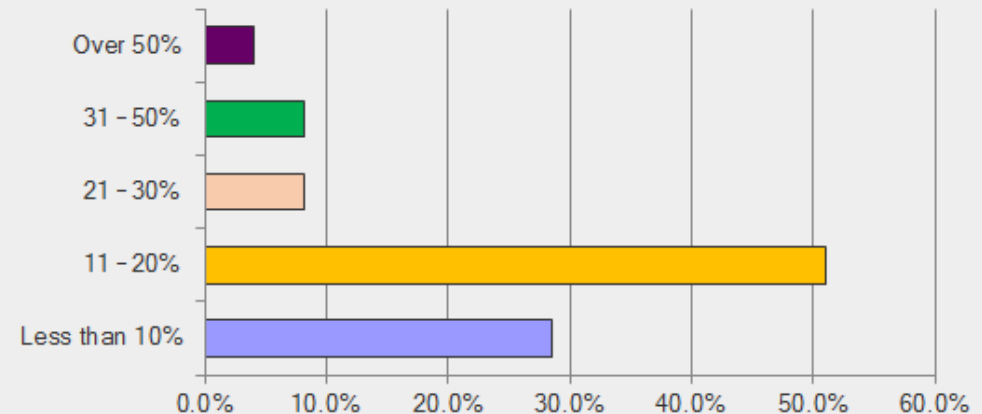


# Results – What needs to be done

Q 3.13: How much of a premium would you be prepared to pay for well-presented, healthy, safe, nutritional high quality fresh locally grown produce that improve your personal health and wellness?

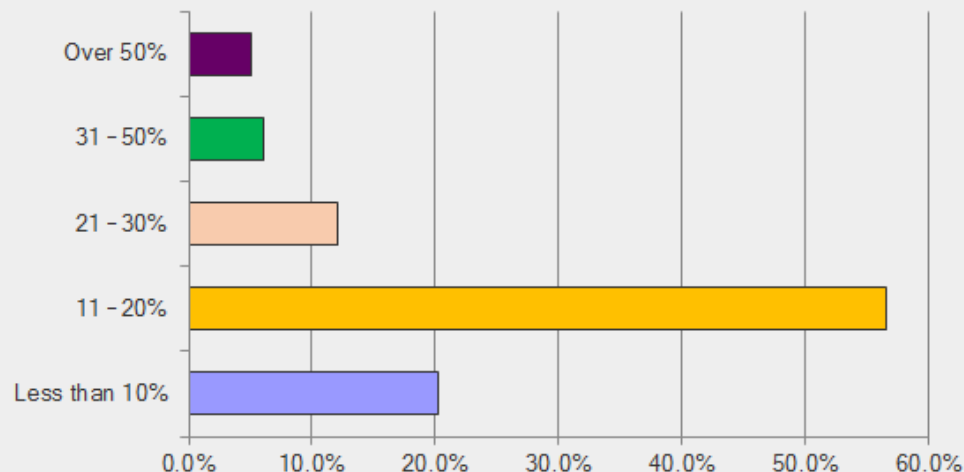


Q 3.14: How much of a premium would you be prepared to pay for well-presented, high quality, healthy, safe, nutritional, value-added processed products derived from locally grown produce that improve your personal health and wellness?

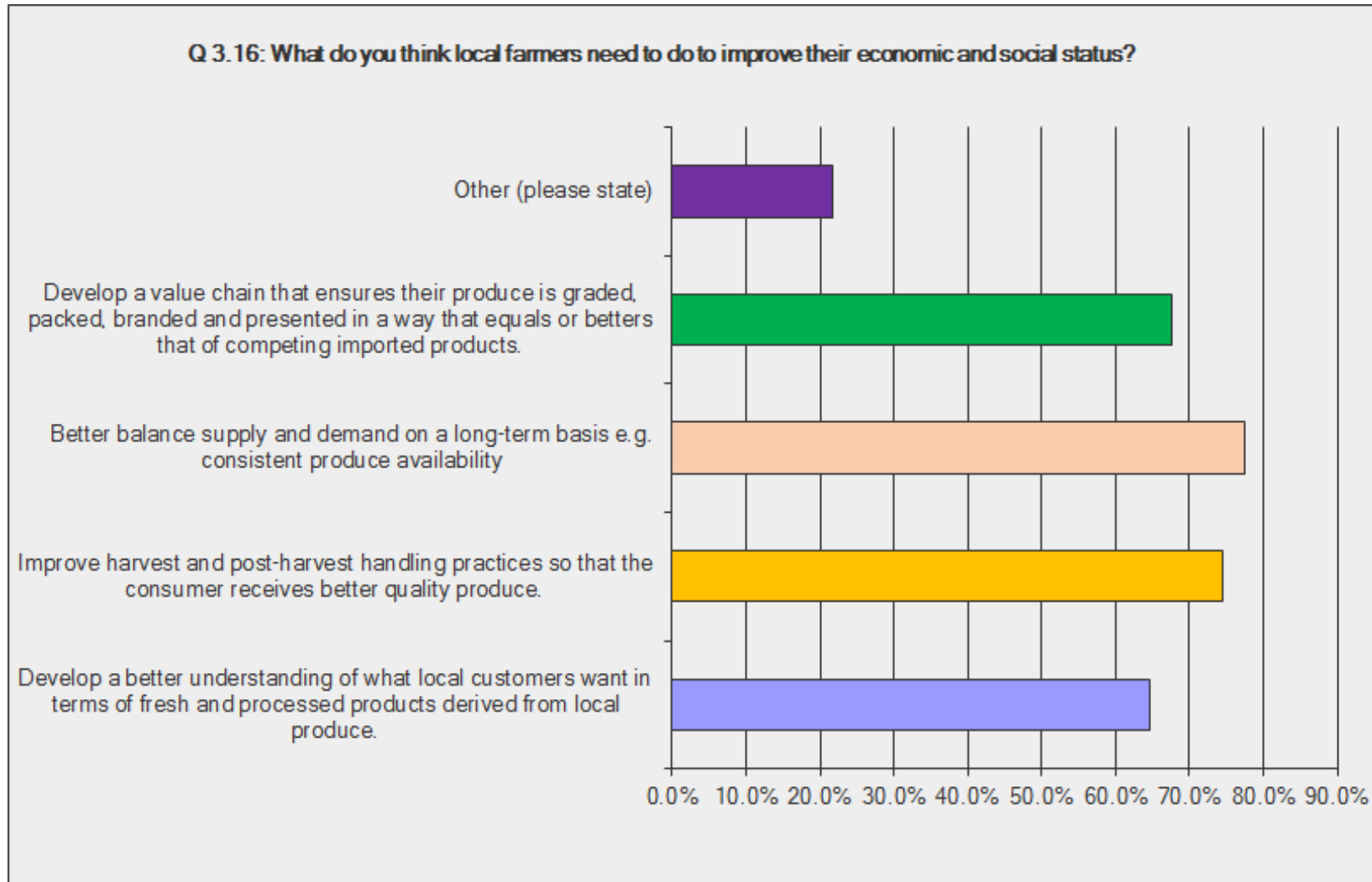


**11- 20% Consumers willing to pay a premium > 50% for well-presented, nutritious, fresh and processed foods**

Q 3.15: How much of a premium?



# Results – What needs to be done

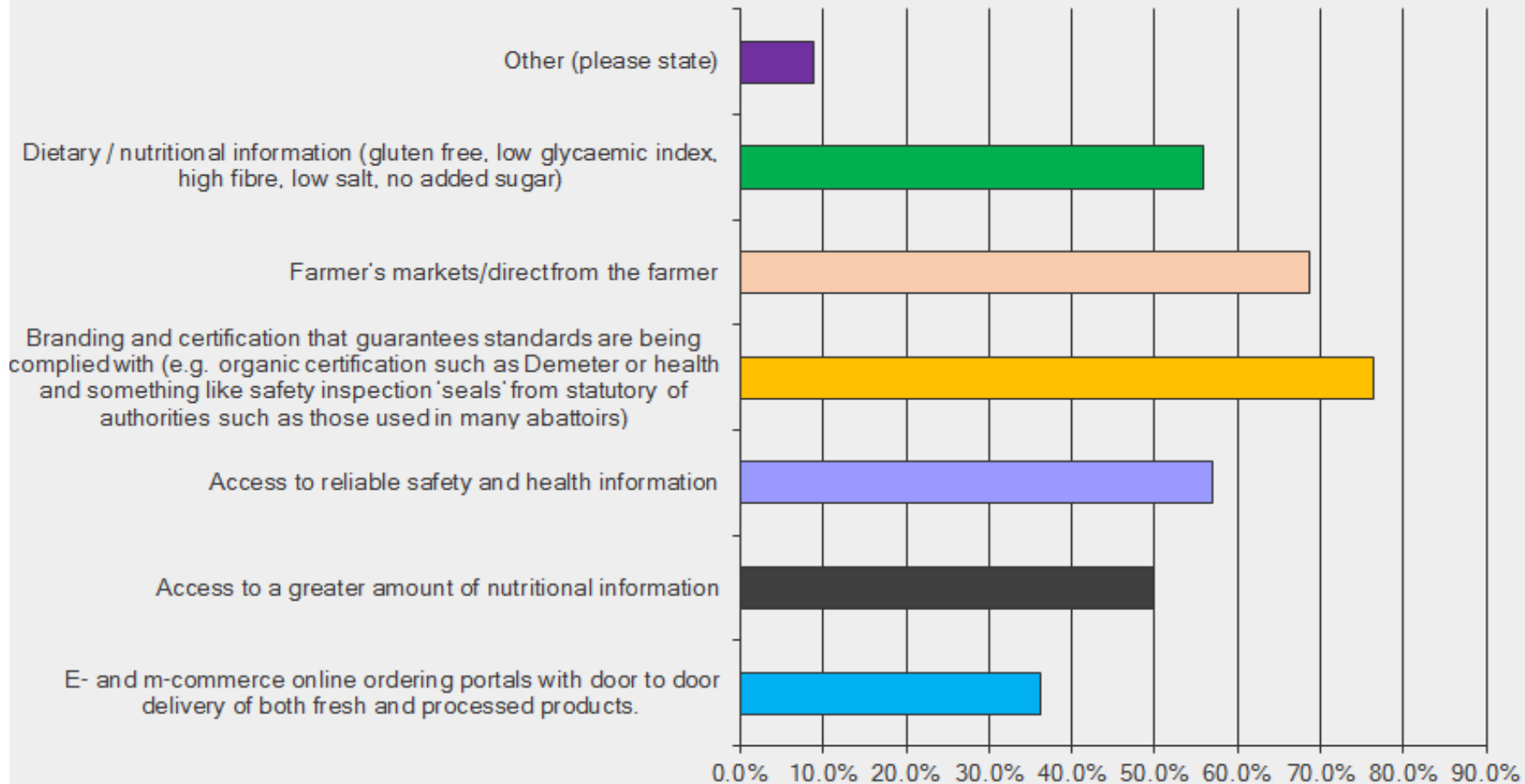


- Local farmers need to provide consistent quality - >75%
- Local farmers need to improve postharvest handling - 75%



# Results – What needs to be done

Q 3.17: What else would make it more attractive for you to buy locally grown produce and its processed derivatives in preference to imported products?



Consumers will buy more if produce is branded & certified (>75%)



# Conclusion

Caribbean consumers are interested in buying local produce and supporting agricultural and food and nutrition security goals – but!!

**Quality, safety and presentation are critical**

An example

