“Pill vs. Broccoli” – The Economics of Health Behavior and Vitamin Consumption

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The Economics of Health Behavior and Vitamin Consumption

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Introduction

- Public health challenges from aging and obesity boost diet-health issues and wellbeing
- Demand for foods with additional health benefits creates multi-billion opportunity for agri-food sector
- 71% of Canadians and 55% of Americans consume vitamin and mineral supplements (Balluz et al. 2000)
- Produce consumption has to increase by 138% to meet recommended intake of FDA 5-a-day program
- This increase would raise domestic output by 124% (Buzby and Wells 2007)

Results

- Most Canadian consumers are concerned about dietary change regarding vitamin and produce consumption
- The majority of respondents is concerned about their future well-being and health status
- About one third of respondents always checks health claims and nutritional fact panels

Discussion

- Research present profiles of North American consumers
- Heterogeneity of Canadian population confirmed
- Differences in profiles of NFP vs. HC users regarding income, education, household size, and dietary knowledge
- Everybody looks for labels but does not read them
- Willingness to pay for “health foods” limited
- Implications for development of appropriate public policy approaches

Objectives

- To determine consumption patterns of dietary supplements (vitamins, minerals) as substitutes for fresh fruits & vegetables among U.S. and Canadian consumers
- To identify the economic and demographic factors that influence the consumption of supplements and food products
- To estimate consumer profiles’ responsiveness to diet-health messaging and food marketing based on demographic and lifestyle characteristics

Outlook

- Multiple avenues for analysis and to extract further information
- Further project findings will be helpful to inform
  - Potential niche markets for small and medium-sized fruit and vegetable producers
  - Marketers of imported fresh produce