

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Chile

Post: Santiago

How Do Chileans Budget Their Food Expenses

Report Categories:

Agriculture in the News

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Report Highlights:

Organic foods beginning to catch on.

General Information:

The average Chilean household spends US\$55 each month on meat, fruit, vegetables and wine, according to a new study published on February, 2011. The study looked at spending habits during the first half of 2009 in Santiago, and extrapolated the figures for the rest of the country.

Meat was the most expensive outlay averaging US\$27.50 per month. Vegetables come in second in monthly spending, at US\$18.70. Costing less, vegetables were purchased much more frequently than meat. Beef and chicken were the most popular meats, and potatoes and tomatoes the most commonly purchased vegetables.

Fruit purchases were altogether less common than meat or vegetables purchases and averaged monthly spending of just US\$6.35 per month. The primary fruits consumed were bananas, apples, and peaches.

Wine came in last of the products considered, and was purchased 4.5 times by the average household over the six-month period studied.

In total, 38.4 percent of food considered in the study was purchased at outdoor markets or “ferias,” and 37.1% purchased in supermarkets. Butchers, local mini-markets, and specialty stores account for the remainder of food sales.

Purchasing habits varied across income levels. Most notably, highest income groups overwhelmingly concentrated their purchases in supermarkets, accounting for 80.1 percent of their total food expenses. Supermarket prices are significantly higher than those charged at the more traditional outdoor “ferias.”

This high-income bracket is likewise beginning to favor the organic food movement. Prices of organic produce can run up to 30 percent more expensive than their non-organic counterpart.

Exports of organic fruit and vegetables doubled 17,844 tons last year, and organic products available locally in Chile now include fruit, vegetables, dairy products, meat, and some cosmetics and clothing. (Check CI0031 Organic Sector Report dated 11/30/10, <http://gain.fas.usda.gov/Pages/Default.aspx>)

Gonzalo Santos, who runs La Chakra shop and restaurant specializes in organic produce, says their clientele is many women from high-income brackets.

“We also reach families of young professionals, foreigners and older people worried about their health,” says Andrea Tucek, director of the Organic Farmers Association of Tierra Viva, a shop in Providencia, Santiago.

SOURCE: LA TERCERA NEWSPAPER

