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Program:

EATING OUT AND OVEREATING

“Effects of ‘Fat Tax’ and Calorie Information on Restaurant Food Choices”

May 2, 2011
PROGRAM

Welcome and Introduction

BRIAN SMITH
NATIONAL C-FAR REPRESENTATIVE

Distinguished Speaker

DR. JAYSON LUSK
PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL AND APPLIED ECONOMICS
OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
STILLWATER, OKLAHOMA

Open Forum

Closing

BRIAN SMITH

NATIONAL C-FAR IS a nonprofit, nonpartisan, consensus-based and customer-led coalition that brings food, agriculture, nutrition, conservation and natural resource stakeholders together with the food and agriculture research and extension community, serving as a forum and a unified voice in support of sustaining and increasing public investment at the national level in food and agricultural research, extension and education. For additional information, go to www.ncfar.org; or contact Tom Van Arsdall, Executive Director at tom@vanarsdall.com.
ABSTRACT
This research determines the effect of numeric and symbolic calorie menu labeling relative to the effects of a “calorie tax” on food choice and caloric intake in a full-service restaurant. A 19-week field experiment was carried out in a full-service restaurant in which diners were randomly allocated to: 1) a control menu with no caloric information, 2) a menu with numeric caloric information, or 3) a menu with symbolic, stop-light caloric information. In the last seven weeks of the study, a “calorie tax” was implemented in which we increased (decreased) the price of higher (lower) calorie menu items. Results indicate that diners randomly allocated to menus with caloric information slightly reduced the total number of calories ordered, with the greatest reductions occurring from the symbolic menu in larger party sizes. Numeric information alone reduced the number of calories ordered by about 4.2% and symbolic information further reduced the number of calories ordered by 6.7% relative to the control. The “calorie tax” did not significantly affect the total number of calories ordered. Despite the relatively small effect on number of calories ordered, the economic value of the information provided by caloric labels was estimated to be between $3 and $4 per meal.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY
JAYSON LUSK, Ph.D., is Professor and Willard Sparks Endowed Chair in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Oklahoma State University. Lusk conducts research related to consumer behavior and decision making, food and livestock marketing and policy, and non-market valuation. His research has focused on questions related to what food attributes consumers want and are willing to pay for, how best to measure consumer preferences, and projecting the impacts of food policies and agribusiness decisions on consumer choice and welfare. Although Lusk has conducted extensive nationwide surveys on these topics, he is perhaps best known for using research methods that involve real food and real money to arrive at a more accurate depictions of what food consumers really do (as opposed to what they say they will do). Since 2001, Lusk has published over 115 articles in peer-reviewed academic journals, has won several published research awards, and has been invited to present his research at over 30 Universities in the U.S. and abroad. Since 2001, Lusk has published over 115 articles in peer-reviewed academic journals, has won several published research awards, and has served as associate editor for six academic journals. He has a forthcoming book on the topic of animal welfare with Oxford University Press entitled Compassion by the Pound: The Economics of Farm Animal Welfare. He has previously served on faculty at Purdue University and Mississippi State University. Dr. Lusk earned a Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics from Kansas State University in 2000 and a B.S. in Food Technology from Texas Tech University in 1997.