

Title            Defining and meeting consumer requirements  
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### **Abstract**

Success or failure of any food is determined by the consumer. Sophisticated consumers demand high-quality fruits and vegetables to support active and healthy lifestyles. In an increasingly competitive market successful distributors of fresh produce determine the requirements of these sophisticated consumers, consistently deliver items that meet those requirements, and effectively communicate their message to first-adopters and influential consumers. Consumer requirements encompass both sensory characteristics and extend to nutritional image, packaging preferences, safety considerations, and expected life. Consumers from different countries or regions require different characteristics. Within a given country or region different market segments exhibit varying preferences. Although it may be tempting to meet the needs of all consumers in a market, a better strategy identifies those characteristics important to a distinct segment. The distributor ships a brand unit meeting the needs of a particular segment in appropriate packaging. Quality specialists monitor handling conditions and critical characteristics at key points within the chain to ensure requirements are met at points of purchase and consumption. Marketing, promotion and merchandising information establishes image characteristics and directs members of the segment where to find branded items and warn away those outside the segment. First-adopters purchase the item when purchase quality and product descriptions on the package meet or exceed image expectations. Subsequent purchases occur if consumption quality meets or exceeds purchase and image expectations. Influential consumers stimulate purchases by less discerning consumers. Continued purchases and brand loyalty follow consistent delivery of consumption quality over time. Strict maintenance of quality specifications for the product as delivered to the consumer protects that brand unit within the segment. Alternate market channels for product not meeting specifications provide economic stability for distributors of high-quality brand units.