

Vineland welcomes new sensory panelists

Vineland's Consumer, Sensory & Market Insights creates impact for the horticulture industry by identifying opportunities to fill market gaps, expand market share and guide new product development.

Since 2009, Vineland's trained sensory panel has been an integral part of the research team, providing robust and reliable data on sensory properties of horticultural products. This information helps define product sensory spaces, identify new product opportunities and, in combination with consumer research, identify liking drivers and predict consumer preference.

Recruiting new panel members is essential in maintaining a specific minimum number of panelists to confidently carry out sensory methods such as descriptive analysis and difference tests. Eleven new panelists joined the group during a recent recruitment effort, bringing the panel total to 27 members.



Virtual meet-and-greet session for Vineland's sensory panel. New and existing panelists introduced themselves and as an ice breaker activity showcased their kitchen must-have item.

What makes a good sensory panelist? The individual has an above average sensory ability to detect differences and attributes in products, a good sensory memory, an ability to describe sensory properties and of course, a keen interest in horticulture.

New panelists participate in extensive training over a period of up to six weeks on specific skill development, including:

- Identification of basic tastes (sweet, acidic, salty, umami, bitter)
- Identification of aromas without visual cues (lemon, thyme, rose, caramel, green pepper, raspberry)
- Description of mouthfeel sensations (crispy versus crunchy textures)
- Description of complex products (describe visual characteristics of two rose cultivars, for example)

The panel is now fully staffed and will focus this summer on tomato evaluation followed by apple profiling this fall.

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