

BY MARY ELLEN KUHN





Food Science Salaries in the Spotlight

Earnings have been slow to rebound postrecession, but **demand is strong** for professionals with solid skill sets. IFT's exclusive new research delivers the latest information on **wages, benefits**, and how food scientists and technologists **feel about their jobs**.

The median salary of \$90,000 for food science professionals was flat in 2015—exactly the same median IFT's biennial salary survey showed for members in the United States* two years ago. But that doesn't mean that the outlook for food scientists isn't positive. For the 72% of 2015 survey respondents who reported receiving a pay raise within the past 12 months, the median increase was 3.4%. And those working in the science of food enjoy their jobs: 84% of respondents in the 2015 IFT Employment and Salary Survey said they would definitely or probably choose the profession again.

Compensation expert Kerry Chou, senior practice leader in the Scottsdale, Ariz.-based office of WorldatWork, a non-profit human resources association that surveys employers across a range of industries about planned and actual salary increases, says IFT's survey findings align with what he sees in the market overall. "The compensation climate has been pretty tepid [since the recession of 2009]," says Chou. "We've really improved unemployment; it's down to about 5%. Job openings are fairly high. So those are good news things. You would think that salaries would be increasing at a faster pace. [But] we're not seeing that."

Prerecession, annual salary increases averaged in the range of 3.5%–4%, but according to WorldatWork's recent survey, the average pay raise in 2015 was 3%. "Companies continue to be cautious since the recession," Chou observes. "Companies are keeping money under their mattresses so to speak."

Like Chou, Laurie Hyllberg, vice-president with Kinsa

*Note: Unless otherwise specified in this article, statistics cited apply to United States–based members of the Institute of Food Technologists.

Year	2013	2015
Number of Respondents	2,456	2,343
Percent Return	25	21
Men (%)	48	45
Women (%)	52	55
Men Under Age 30 (%)	35	26
Women Under Age 30 (%)	65	74
Highest Degree in Food Science/Technology	48	48
BS Degree (%)	38	42
MS Degree (%)	34	26
PhD Degree (%)	24	22
MBA (%)	NA	7
Employed in Industry* (%)	66	70
Employed in Education (%)	12	9
Employed in Government (%)	4	2
Median Salary (\$)	90,000	90,000

*Data for food/beverage processors and ingredient manufacturers/suppliers combined

Group, Franklin, Wis., a recruiting firm that specializes in the food and beverage industry, links the relatively flat compensation environment with a postrecession mindset among employers. "Salary figures were growing so rapidly in the late '90s and early 2000s, that I think it caused a bit of a bust in 2009, and it's been slower to recover in this last growth period than it has been in the past," says Hyllberg. "I think that's why the median hasn't changed drastically."

Chou also notes that IFT salary survey data showing a median raise of 3.4% in the past year isn't inconsistent with



Salaries in the Spotlight

Profiling the Participants

Median Age
38

Median Years in the Profession
15.1

Median Number of Employers to Date
2.6

Median Years With Current Employer
5.5

data indicating that the overall median salary has not increased from two years ago. The pool of respondents varies each year as employees retire or change roles and new employees are hired. So comparing one survey with the next isn't an apples-to-apples kind of process, he explains. (See Table 1 for a comparison of data highlights from the 2013 and 2015 surveys.)

The fact that the percentage of women who completed the survey—55%—was higher than in any prior year is another likely contributor to the overall flat salary figure because women's reported median salary of \$79,000 in 2015 was the same as in the 2013 survey although the median for men—\$105,000—was up 2.9%. (See Table 2 for details on salaries, bonuses, and earnings from stocks in 2015.)

With a salary gap of this size between males and females, perhaps it's not surprising that 45% of the women survey respondents said they did not

think that their opportunities for advancement and compensation in the profession were equal to men's. (See related story about women's careers and compensation on page 39.)

A Robust Job Market

Despite the fact that salary growth has been anemic, recruiters say that the job market was robust in 2015, and they expect a continuation of that in 2016. In fact, for midcareer food scientists with strong résumés, it's clearly a candidates' market, several recruiters told *Food Technology*.

"There are a lot of jobs out there right now," says Tim Oliver, a Conyers, Ga.-based senior partner with food industry recruitment firm OSI. According to Oliver, many Baby Boomers who hung onto their jobs for a while in the postrecession period are starting to retire, which is opening up new opportunities. He believes that's helping to nudge salaries up. "Within the past few months, companies finally seem willing to pay a little bit more," he notes.

"This is a candidates' market more than any time that I've seen in the past," says Cathleen Allen, a recruiting contractor for Sparks, Md.-based McCormick & Co., who has worked in the recruiting profession for two decades.

Hyllberg agrees. "If you're a top performer and you have skills in a particular product category or multiple product categories, you're in demand

and employers are seeking to attract you to their organization," she says. "I would definitely say it's candidate-driven right now."

Moira McGrath, president of OPUS International, a food science-focused executive search firm based in Deerfield Beach, Fla., adds that she's seeing opportunities across a broad cross section of the discipline. "It's more across the board this year. Some years it was more food safety-driven. This year we've seen [job opportunities in] just about everything from regulatory to product development to quality assurance to food safety."

According to McGrath, there's a shortage of qualified candidates with about 10 to 15 years of experience who are well-positioned to ascend the corporate ladder into a managerial role. "What's still missing is the young professional—that 30- to 40-year-old who is ready to move into a leadership position," says McGrath, who attributes the gap to the fact that food science graduates were in relatively short supply a decade or so ago. Flavorists, flavor chemists, and food scientists with expertise related to the Food Safety Modernization Act are in particularly high demand, according to recruiters interviewed for this article.

A Labor of Love

Those working in the science of food continue to have a positive perspective on their professional lives. Levels of job satisfaction

	Compensation (\$)		
	Men	Women	All Respondents
Salary	105,000	79,000	90,000
Cash Bonus	14,900	6,000	9,450
Stocks	20,000	9,000	15,000

Survey Methodology

The 2015 IFT Employment and Salary Survey, conducted this past September, drew a 21% response rate among U.S. members, 2,343 of whom responded to the survey. Survey emails were managed by a private consulting firm, which kept all responses confidential. The 2015 survey, like the one conducted in 2013, included some nonmembers in the United States as well as international participants (both members and nonmembers). A total of 3,328 individuals took the survey. Unless otherwise specified, the findings highlighted in this article apply to members based in the United States.

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Salaries in the Spotlight

Measuring Job Satisfaction

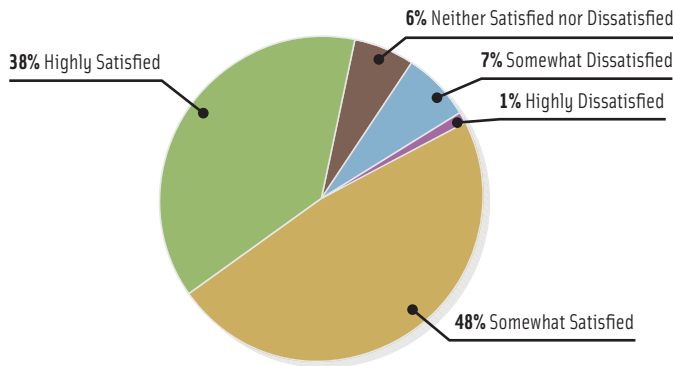


Figure 1. How would you rate your level of job satisfaction?

Sources of Job Satisfaction

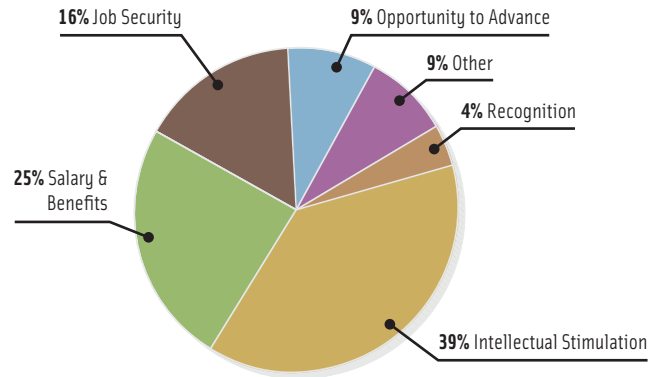


Figure 2. What factor contributes most positively to your job satisfaction? *

* Total does not equal 100% due to rounding.

identified in the 2015 survey were nearly identical to those reported two years earlier. The vast majority reported that they were either highly satisfied (38%) or somewhat satisfied (48%) with their jobs. As it did in 2013, intellectual stimulation led the list of factors that contribute to job satisfaction; it was cited by 39% of respondents in 2015,

followed by salary and benefits, noted by 25%. (See Figures 1 and 2 for breakouts on job satisfaction and the factors responsible for it.) Not surprisingly, there is a strong correlation between salary and degree of satisfaction, with the median salary for highly satisfied employees coming in at \$102,500 versus \$70,500 for those who described themselves

as highly dissatisfied. (See Table 3 for the rest of the details.)

Comments from survey respondents indicate that many find their professional lives to be meaningful. “I consider the field so vital to human existence,” said one respondent, adding that “it’s particularly satisfying to practice food science and technology, especially in a developing country, where there are a lot of postharvest challenges.” Other responses were more pragmatic but equally enthusiastic. “People will always need to eat, and as our population grows and market expectations change, companies will need food scientists to stay relevant and meaningful.” Many respondents said they enjoy the diverse challenges their jobs afford. “Food science is an ever-changing profession, and there are many areas to utilize various individual strengths,” said another. “With food science, there is always a challenge and improvement opportunity to keep one energized.”

This year’s survey asked participants if they would consider the field of food science and technology if they were currently preparing to enter the job market, and only 6% said they would not compared with 60% who definitely would consider

Table 3. Job Satisfaction and Salary	
Satisfaction Level	Median Salary (\$)
Highly Satisfied	102,500
Somewhat Satisfied	85,000
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	80,000
Somewhat Dissatisfied	70,683
Highly Dissatisfied	70,500

Table 4. Work Week and Salary	
Hours Worked per Week	Median Salary (\$)
0-25	55,000
26-35	77,000
36-40	72,659
41-45	82,000
46-50	101,000
51-55	110,000
56-60	120,000
More Than 60	121,250

Assessing Stress

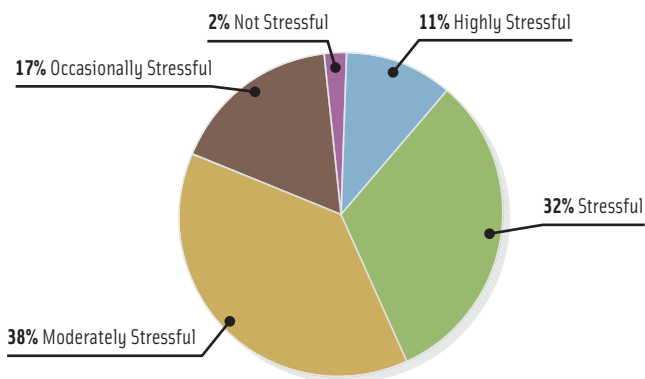


Figure 3. How stressful is your job?

it and 24% who probably would do so, leaving 10% who said they probably would not. Among those who said they would make a different career choice if given the opportunity to do so, many cited other scientific professions, including engineering, medicine, and pharmacy. Other frequently mentioned alternatives include sales, marketing, finance, and other areas of business.

Every job has its stressors, of course, and the science of food is no exception. Nearly one-third (32%) of respondents described their jobs as stressful, and 38% rated them as moderately stressful. Only 11% labeled them as highly stressful. (See Figure 3 for a full breakout.) There is a generally positive correlation between stress and salaries. Those who rated their jobs as stressful had a median salary of \$100,000 versus a median of \$63,000 for those who said their jobs were not stressful.

Participants in the survey ranked work-life balance as No. 1 on the list of job challenges; it was cited by 41% of respondents. Management support—or, probably more accurately, lack of support—came in second, noted by 17%. (Figure 4 provides more details on sources of stress.)

While it's often said that Millennials demand more work-life balance than older employees, particularly work-obsessed Baby Boomers, 29-year-old Bridget McClatchey, a food scientist who works at the Kraft Heinz R&D center in Glenview, Ill., believes that Millennials face some different challenges. "I think the work-life balance for people of my generation and younger is even more difficult ... because we have technology at our fingertips all the time," says McClatchey. "If you have your email synced to your phone, if you're always connected, then you feel like you can never disconnect or are never fully removed [from work]." To keep stress in check, she recommends finding a job at a company where the corporate culture matches up well with one's personal priorities for work-life balance.

The median workweek for survey respondents is 45 hours; 17% of respondents said they worked more than 50 hours a week. (Figure 5 shows how the workweek breaks out for respondents, and Table 4 shows median salaries by hours worked.)

Almost three-quarters (73%) of respondents said that their jobs have demanded new competencies. »»

Sources of Stress on the Job

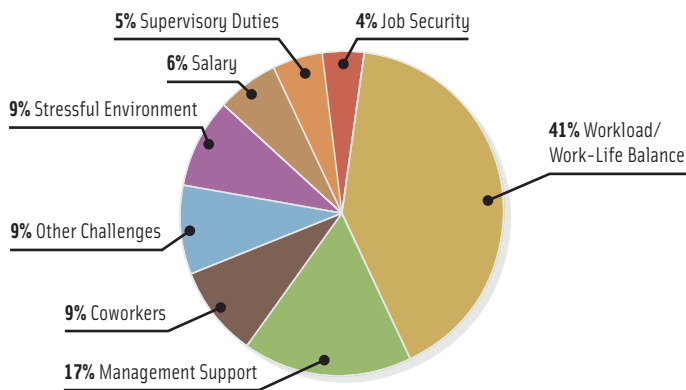


Figure 4. What is the biggest challenge you face on the job?

Learning More About Earnings

IFT's 2015 Employment and Salary Survey research yielded a wealth of facts and figures, and only select highlights appear in this article. To delve more deeply into the data, check out the 2015 IFT Employment and Salary Survey Report. It is available free of charge to IFT members and to nonmembers for \$99. For more information, or to download the report, go to ift.org/salaryreport.

Clocking in to the Job

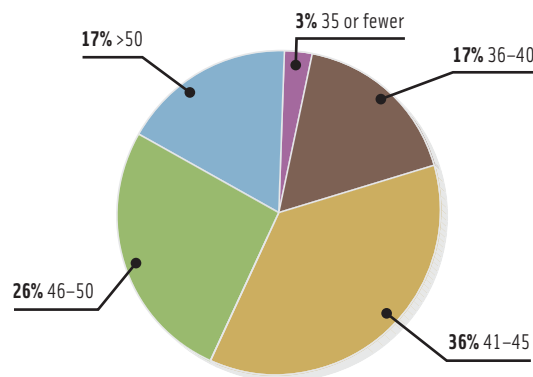


Figure 5. How many hours a week do you work? *

*Total does not equal 100% due to rounding.



Salaries in the Spotlight

The Benefits of Bonuses

It used to be that only an organization's most senior executives reaped the benefit of added income from bonuses awarded to recognize performance. Times have changed over the past two or three decades, however, and employees at all levels on the organizational chart now often are eligible for bonuses. In IFT's 2015 salary survey, 65% of respondents reported receiving a bonus.

"While base pay increases have been increasing but at a relatively slow level, bonuses and incentives remain very popular," says Kerry Chou, senior practice leader based in the Scottsdale, Ariz., office of WorldatWork. "One of the key reasons they remain so popular [is that] you give someone a bonus, and it's a onetime event. It's not baked into the pie. It doesn't go into their base pay. Next year, the company sets new objectives, and the employee has to re-earn the bonus."

Thus, bonuses are considered strong motivational tools for employees, and they have the added advantage of allowing companies to tie compensation spending to organizational performance. If earnings aren't strong for a given year, for example, a company can simply rein in spending on employee bonuses. Then if things pick up in the following year or the year after that, bonuses can be reinstated, creating what employers are likely to view as a win-win situation.



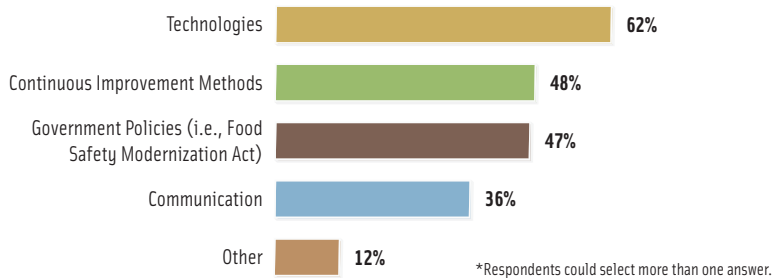
Asked about new skill requirements, survey respondents put those related to new technologies at the head of the list, followed by skills associated with continuous improvement methods, skills necessary because of new government policies (such as the Food Safety Modernization Act), and, finally, communication skills. (See Figure 6 for more details on how responses break out.) The new skills respondents specifically mentioned include everything from accounting, finance, and budget controls to culinary expertise. Leadership, management, and new product development knowledge were other competencies survey participants said they sought.

A Healthy Benefits Package

Health-care coverage is the benefit

Staying Up to Speed

Figure 6. In what areas have you required new competencies/skills? *



that is most important to employees (SHRM 2015a), and IFT's 2015 survey respondents said that their employers are delivering well on that front. For the majority of respondents, however, coverage costs more than it used to.

More than nine out of 10 survey respondents (93%) report that their employers provide health insurance—the same percentage as in the 2013 survey. On average, employers cover 68% of the cost of an employee's health insurance premium, and the employee pays the remaining 32%, which amounts to \$2,340 annually.

Seventy percent of survey respondents reported paying a greater percentage of their health insurance premiums, and 59% said

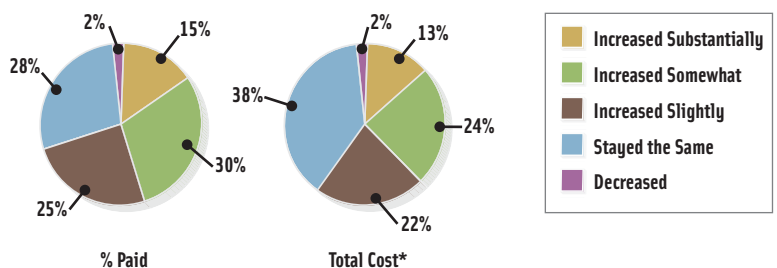
the total cost of insurance had increased. (See Figure 7 for more specifics.)

Other benefits survey respondents commonly receive are vacation time, cited by 91%, and dental insurance, noted by 86%—percentages similar to those reported in the 2013 survey. Benefits that are more common since 2013 include the ability to work at home, sick leave, vision insurance, and long-term disability programs.

Flexible work arrangements are important to employees of all ages, according to recruiters. Such flexibility is becoming an expectation for many, especially for those in the Millennial generation for whom staying connected via technology has been the norm for much of their

How Health Insurance Costs Are Changing

Figure 7. How has the percentage of the health insurance premium that you pay and the amount that you pay changed over the past 12 months?



* Total does not equal 100% due to rounding.

Employers and IFT

Data from the 2015 IFT salary survey show that employers are supportive of membership in IFT; 89% cover the cost of IFT membership dues. A substantial majority (70%) pay for travel expenses associated with attending the IFT annual event, and two-thirds (66%) provide time off to attend it. More than one-third (36%) pay for employees to attend IFT section meetings, and about the same number (35%) provide time off to attend the meetings.

lives. But older employees also value flexible work schedules; flexibility can be especially critical for members of the “sandwich generation,” who face the dual demands of caring for aging parents while staying actively involved in their children’s lives.

Slightly less than one-fifth (19%) of survey participants reported receiving a pension in 2015, down from nearly a third (32%) who had a pension just four years earlier in 2011. Retirement programs such as 401(k)s are increasingly common; 93% of 2015 survey respondents said they had a 401(k) program.

Table 6.

Age Distribution of Survey Participants

Age Range	%
20s	19
30s	24
40s	19
50s	24
60s	13
70s	1

Table 7.

Distribution of Degrees (Highest Earned)

Degree	Percentage of Men	Percentage of Women	Overall Percentage
PhD	29	15	22
Master's Degree	22	30	26
MBA	9	6	7
Bachelor's Degree	37	46	42
Other/None	2	3	3

*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

(See Table 5 for more details on benefits.)

Getting to Know the Survey Respondents

IFT’s 2015 survey paints a richly detailed picture of the profession. Here’s a look at some additional data highlights.

- Survey participants range in age from their 20s to their 70s, with the majority between ages 30 and 59. (See Table 6 for a detailed look at age distribution.)

- More than one-fifth (22%) of survey respondents have a doctorate; 26% have a master’s degree; 7%, an MBA; and 42%, a bachelor’s degree as their highest degree. (Table 7 shows the distribution of degrees earned for men, women, and both sexes combined.)

- The median salary for survey respondents whose highest degree is a bachelor’s degree is \$78,800; for those with a master’s degree, it is \$88,000; for a doctorate, \$110,000. Those respondents with an MBA earn the most—\$120,000.

- The median starting salary in 2015 was \$50,000, the same as in

Table 5.

Overview of Benefits Reported by Salary Survey Respondents—2013 and 2015

Benefit	% of Respondents Receiving Benefit	
	2013	2015
Health Insurance	93	93
Vacation	92	91
401(k)/Retirement Program	87	93
Dental Insurance	84	86
Association Membership Dues	71	72
Life Insurance	69	68
Vision Insurance	68	71
Disability Insurance, Short-Term	66	66
Sick Leave	64	66
Disability Insurance, Long-Term	62	64
Bonus/Performance Compensation	62	65
Flexible Spending Account	60	59
Maternity/Paternity/Family Leave	58	58
Tuition Reimbursement	51	50
Employee Assistance Program	45	47
Continuing Education Courses/Webinars	41	40
Reimbursement for Professional Certification/Recertification	41	43
Relocation Expenses	40	40
Ability to Work at Home	39	44
Fitness Facilities/Dues	38	39
Continuing Education Courses On-Site	36	35
Flex Time	35	34
Continuing Education Courses Off-Site	34	31
Pension	24	19
Severance Policy	18	20
Profit-Sharing	NA	18
Long-Term Care	15	15
Legal Assistance	15	17
Stock Options	NA	15
Retiree Health Insurance	10	9
Company Automobile	9	9
Retiree Dental Insurance	7	7
Auto Insurance	7	7
Sabbatical, Paid	6	7
Sabbatical, Unpaid	5	5
Child Care	3	3
Homeowner's Insurance	1	2



Salaries in the Spotlight

Table 8.

Food Science Salaries in Selected Global Markets (Converted to U.S. Currency)

Country	Median Salary, \$	Number of Respondents
Brazil	32,500	13
Canada	59,701	93
China	19,000	13
Mexico	25,750	38
New Zealand	75,327	10
Nigeria	16,711	23
Philippines	32,500	16
Spain	54,500	15
Taiwan	45,000	11
Thailand	31,000	12
United Kingdom	80,152	12

A Look at Wages Around the World

In 2015, for only the second time in its history, the IFT Employment and Salary Survey invited responses from food science professionals (members and nonmembers) from outside the United States. The response rates were not high enough to be statistically significant in many countries, but median salaries for countries in which the response rate was 10 or more can be found in Table 8. Currency exchange rates that prevailed at the time of the survey were used to convert salary data to U.S. dollars.

the percentage breakout of respondents by region.)

- The largest number of survey respondents (46%) work for food and beverage manufacturers/processors, followed by food ingredient manufacturers/suppliers, 25%; academic/educational institutions, 9%; consulting, 5%; and government, 2%.

- Nearly a third of respondents (31%) work for organizations with 5,000 or more employees; 29% work for organizations with 500–4,999 employees; 22% with organizations that employ 100–499; and 18% for employers with fewer than 100 people on staff.

Perspectives on Pay

So just how important is salary anyway? Certainly the figure on one's paycheck matters for all kinds of practical and psychological reasons, but it's not necessarily an employee's top priority. Compensation was No. 4 on a list of job satisfaction factors, behind respectful treatment of employees, trust between employees and senior management, and overall benefits, according to a recent study by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM 2015b).

Compensation expert Chou says the importance of salary to an employee tends to be strongly correlated with that employee's marketability. "Your average worker, if we were to ask them: 'How important is pay for you to stay at this company?' Pay is usually up there, but it might not be at the top of the list," says Chou. "What might be No. 1 is your relationship with your manager."

But, Chou continues, salary will very likely be far more important to an

the 2013 survey, and there was less of a gap between men's and women's starting salaries in 2015. Starting salaries for men were \$52,000 in 2015, down 5.5% from \$55,000 in 2013, while women's median starting salary of \$50,000 matched their 2013 median.

- Geographic location affects salary levels. Respondents in the West South Central region reported the highest median salaries, followed by the Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, and Mountain regions. Those in the other Pacific region excluding California, East South Central region, and New England did not fare as well in terms of salaries. (See Table 9 for a complete look at salaries by geographic region as well as

Table 9.

Salaries by Geographic Region

Region	% of Respondents	Median Salary (\$)
New England	4	85,000
Mid-Atlantic	14	94,000
South Atlantic	11	93,000
East South Central	3	84,740
West South Central	5	98,250
East North Central	27	90,000
West North Central	13	90,000
Mountain	5	92,300
Other Pacific	6	81,600
California	12	90,250

organization's top performers. "Pay is important to just about everybody," he says, "but it's particularly important to the highest performers. They're marketable. They're getting calls all the time. ... They have much more bargaining power."

Chou says that WorldatWork research shows that more than 90% of companies have a "pay for performance" program, which means that salary increases are based on merit, with the highest increases going to the highest performers. In 2015, according to research from employee benefits and compensation consulting firm Mercer, base pay increases for the highest performers averaged 4.8% versus 2.7% for those who performed at an average level and 0.2% for the lowest performers (Mercer 2015). **FT**

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Online Exclusive

Do This, Not That: Job Hunting Tips From the Experts

Get ideas and insights for improving the odds of a successful job hunt at ift.org/food-technology/current-issue.

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