

Strength2Food Webinar: Food Quality Labels: Do They Matter for Consumers? Empirical Results from a Pan-European Study and Policy Recommendations

Remaining Questions & Answers

1. Did you find a relationship between what consumers care about and label recognition? E.g., do those who care about organic food have better recognition/perception of the EU organic label?

Ans: We asked all those participants who stated that they recognize a label whether they take the respective label into account when doing their grocery shopping. We found that recognition is indeed a crucial step to purchasing decisions, as the majority (around 70%) of those recognizing a label also stated that they make use of the label at least sometimes when grocery shopping. This reveals the importance of improving consumer awareness regarding food quality labels, as a policy implication, in order to increase the market relevance of products promoted by those labels.

We did not investigate whether those who reveal a high preference for an attribute, e.g. organic, recognize and make use of the organic label to a greater extent than those who indicated that they do not pay so much attention to the organic attribute. This stems from the nature of how questions were asked. While we investigated attribute relevance in relation to specific products, e.g. cheese, labels were investigated at a general level.

2. Do the national labels carry the same level of requirement as the EU ones?

Ans: In our study, we investigated three national organic labels - French AB label, Serbian organic label and German BIO label. Regarding the latter, the standards are identical with the ones of the EU organic label, while the French AB label and Serbian national organic labels entail higher standards compared to EU regulations.

3. Do you think labels (beyond organic) should include a set of common (i.e. among the label) commitments to be better readable?

Ans: In order to increase consumer trust in labels, it would indeed be recommendable that the regulation standards behind the labels, and their certifying body, are clearly communicated, or at least more easily accessible to consumers interested in that kind of information. Furthermore, trust could be increased by enforcing a Third-Party Certification requirement. Presently, consumer understanding of what commitments lie behind each label (what they are guaranteeing) is generally poor.

4. Does the study include elements on the perception of the combination of 2 logos on the same product like AB and PGI or AB and PDO?

Ans: The research presented at the Webinar did not look at labels or logos referring to a specific product, but investigated whether consumers recognize and use a specific label, what they know about that label and how they perceive it. This information was collected from all respondents for a total of four labels. Thus, we could also investigate whether there is a correlation between perceptions of labels.

5. How can segmentation of consumers help in making labels more relevant?

Ans: With the example of cheese we investigated consumer segments, thus groups of consumers that are internally homogeneous, but where there are considerable differences between the identified groups. For example, in four out of the seven countries we could identify a group of consumers that have a high preference for country and region of origin. Information on the existence of those market segments and their characteristics allows segment-specific product differentiation. This also includes marketing campaigns for labels such as the PGI and the PDO which are tailored to those aforementioned segments. Eventually, this can help to increase the relevance of those labels in the agri-food market.

6. Would next research also include what consumers think about the elements of the labels? What does the label stand for?

Ans: Indeed, this is an important issue and one which we investigated in our study. Given the limited time of the Webinar we were not able to present this part of our analysis. Our results show that factual knowledge of what the labels actually stand for is poor, and this holds even for those being aware and making use of a specific label when doing their grocery shopping. Further information is in the [Deliverable, pp.63-67](#).

7. Have you planned to share this presentation with IFOAM?

Ans: The presentation is [online](#), and freely accessible for anyone interested in our research. Please feel free to disseminate it within your networks!

8. Did you analyse the impact of the local products? So the consumer perception of the short circuit products? (even if it doesn't exist a proper label for them)?

Ans: Although this aspect was not a primary focus of our two consumer online surveys, one of the themes we looked at was the relevance of short food supply chains across the different countries. Our findings indicate that short food supply chains are only of considerable importance in Serbia. They are of some, though minor, relevance in Hungary and to an even lesser extent in France, Germany and Italy. They seem to play hardly any role in the UK and Norway.