

EUROPE WIDE CONSUMER SURVEY



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METHODOLOGY

A representative on-line consumer survey was conducted as part of an overall goal of the Organic-PLUS project to involve citizens in discussions on the development of the organic and sustainable farming sector in Europe. The survey consisted of more than 15,000 respondents in seven countries (France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Poland, Spain, United Kingdom) capturing >70% of the population in the EU and Western Europe. The main aim of the survey was to gain more knowledge about citizens' concerns for contentious inputs and what issues they think are important to develop organic agriculture further. We also looked at how opinions differed between groups of consumers and across countries.

RESULTS

Opinions about the importance of improving organic food production relating to the Organic-PLUS contentious inputs and five other areas of concern from preceding focus groups are shown in Figure 1.

These results showed that citizens in general are concerned about contentious inputs and especially of the use of antibiotics and copper within organic agriculture.



They were also concerned about the use of plastic, especially as packaging for organic products in retail stores.



We found that consumers with a high frequency of organic food consumption were always more concerned than the average, and to a greater extent wanted to ban or have stricter regulations on the use of contentious inputs. Among other consumers a larger share of the respondents had no opinion about issues, but variable e.g. high on peat and low on plastic packaging.

IMPLICATIONS

The results imply that to maintain confidence in organic food among the most dedicated organic consumers, the use of potentially harmful inputs should be strictly regulated and/or phased out.

To attract a wider group of consumers, other measures could also be considered as reducing price differences between organic and conventional foods, improving access to information about organic food and making organic food more easy accessible.



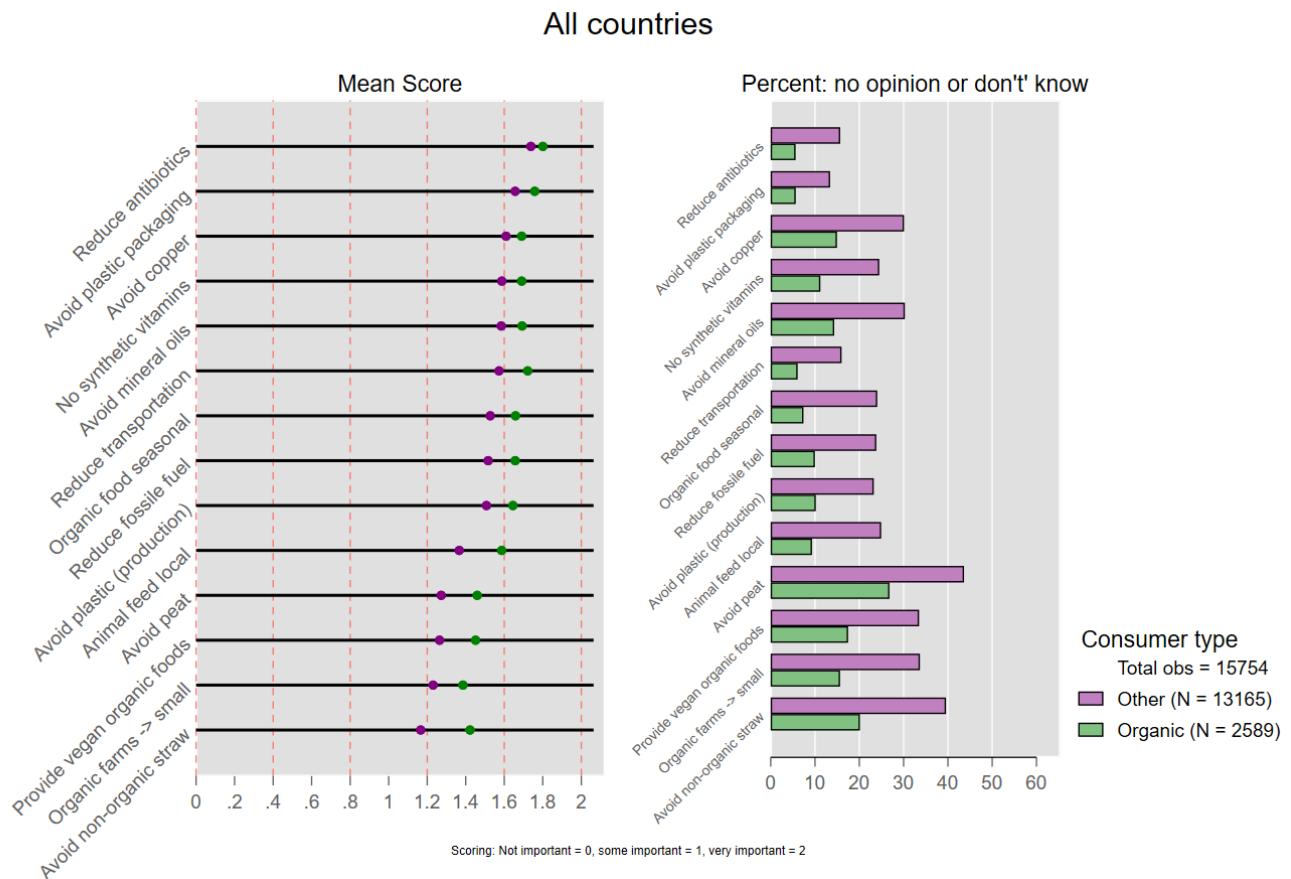


Figure 1. Question: "Organic food is produced according to high environmental and animal welfare standards. However, there may be room for stricter regulations of certain inputs and means of production in order to make organic farming more sustainable. Do you have any opinion on the importance of the following considerations in order to improve organic food production?"

Results: On a scale from *not important* (0) to *very important* (2) mean scores for all 7 European countries are shown with committed organic consumers (green) and other consumers (purple). Items with the highest ranking are shown at the top (left graph). The percentage of no opinion or don't know is also shown (graph to the right). So study a wider context, questions were asked regarding contentious inputs researched in Organic-PLUS (e.g. antibiotics, copper, plastic mulch), but also other issues consumers might have (e.g. transport, seasonality, farm size, local animal feed sourcing or fossil fuel use).

WEBSITES

www.improvingorganic.wordpress.com
www.organic-plus.net