Consumer motives and expectations regarding organic food consumption

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Focus-Balkans 2nd Open Seminar
Brussels, 23rd of September 2011
Outline

1. The organic market
2. The organic food consumer
3. Organic food consumption models
4. Consumer motives and expectations
5. Attitude-behaviour gap
6. Cultural differences
The organic market

• Worldwide growing (US$ 20 billion in 2002)
• 97% of consumer demand for organic food is concentrated in North America and Europe (Sahota, 2009; Aertsens et al., 2009)
• Annual growth rate of organic products in EU: 10-15% (OECD, 2011)
• Germany is the biggest organic food market in Europe (Schröck, 2011)
• Organic food market is still relatively small
  – Germany: 3.5% of the total food market
Percentage of households who reported consuming organic food by category, for selected countries

Source: Greening Household Behaviour, The Role of Public Policy, OECD 2011, Figure 6.1, Chapter 6, p. 123
Market shares of organic food in European countries in 2006

Source: Padel et al., 2008; Thogersen, 2010, p. 172
The organic food consumer

- Female
- Highly educated
- Higher income
- Age profiles vary between studies
- Families with children
- Living in metropolises
- Regional differences (East Germany, e.g.)
- Single households

Source: Schröck, 2011; Aertsens et al., 2009; Bellows et al., 2008; Shaw Hughner et al., 2007; Padel and Foster, 2005
The profile of a regular consumer of organic food (RCOF)

- For RCOFs “organic food consumption is part of a way of life. It results from an ideology, connected to a particular value system that affects personality measures, attitudes, and consumption behaviour…” (Schifferstein and Ophius, 1998, p. 119)
- Values identified (Shaw Hughner et al., 2007, p. 96)
  - Altruism (relationship with others)
  - Ecology (harmony with the universe and sustainable future)
  - Universalism (protection of welfare of all people and nature)
  - Benevolence (enhancing the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact)
  - Spirituality (inner-harmony and unity with nature)
  - Self-direction (independent thought and action)
Integrated framework on personal determinants of organic food consumption

Source: Aertsens et al., 2009, p. 1141
Means-end chain theory

• How to measure the means-end chain
  – Elicitation of the most important product attributes with the consumer
  – In-depth interview: laddering, which is intended to reveal how the consumer links product attributes to consequences and values
  – Derivation of a hierarchical value map (association networks of attributes, consequences and values)

Source: Zanoli and Naspetti, 2002
Hierarchical value map of positive and negative ladders of the regular organic consumer

Positive Ladder

Attributes: Taste, texture and odour

Consequences: Enjoy eating it

Values: Altruism and relationship with others

Well-being, happiness, inner harmony

Ecology, harmony with the universe and sustainable future

Lower environmental impact

Negative Ladder

Attributes: Expensive

Consequences: Elitarian, deters the purchase, lack of time

Negative impact on family budget

Healthy, nourishing, natural product

Inconvenient location of point-of-sale, not easily available

Source: Zanoli and Naspetti, 2002, p. 649
The role of health consciousness, ethical self-identity and food safety concern to predict attitude and intention

Source: Michalidou and Hassan, 2008, p. 165
Perceived attributes of organic products

Taste
Freshness
Quality
Food safety
Health
Environmental concerns
Animal welfare

Source: Bellows et al., 2008; Aarset et al., 2004
# Motives and deterrents of buying organic food

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promotors</th>
<th>Deterrents</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Health and nutritional concern</td>
<td>• High price premiums</td>
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<td>• Superior taste</td>
<td>• Lack of organic food availability, poor merchandising</td>
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<td>• Concern for the environment</td>
<td>• Scepticism of certification boards and organic labels</td>
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<td>• Food safety, lack of confidence in the conventional food industry</td>
<td>• Insufficient marketing</td>
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<td>• Concern over animal welfare</td>
<td>• Satisfaction with current food source</td>
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<td>• Support of local economy</td>
<td>• Sensory defects</td>
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<td>• More wholesome</td>
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<td>• Nostalgia</td>
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<td>• Fashionable/Curiosity</td>
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Motivation to buy organic food products

• Private benefits
  – Taste, health, convenience, and freshness

• Public benefits
  – Concern for the environment
Public vs. private motivation to consume organic food, OECD 10

Note: The y axis represents the average rank (5 highest, 1 lowest) – this rank question was only for people who consumed organic food.

Source: Greening Household Behaviour, The Role of Public Policy, OECD 2011, Figure 6.4, Chapter 6, p. 125
Motivations to consume more organic food products

Source: Greening Household Behaviour, The Role of Public Policy, OECD 2011, Figure 6.2, Chapter 6, p. 123
Expectations = understanding

• Understanding of “organic” differs from consumer to consumer
  – Green, ecological, environmental, natural, sustainable

• What does organic mean? Results of focus groups

• **France**: Natural, limited human intervention
• **Germany**: High welfare, Natural, Environmentally kind
• **Norway**: Characterized by confusion and ambivalence Natural
• **Spain**: Synonymous with ecological and natural Non-use of pesticides, Not environmentally damaging
• **UK**: Freedom from artificial inputs, Limiting environmental damage

Source: Aarset et al., 2004, p. 98
Attitude-behaviour gap

• Qualitative findings: consumers have a preference for organic food products

• Quantitative findings: Sizes of organic food markets
  – Germany: 3.5% of the total food market
Attitude towards organic vs. organic purchases

Respondents who believe organic food production methods are extremely or very important
(n=448, 38% sample)

Source: Bellows et al., 2008, p. 10
Summary and conclusion

• “… both research and policy in the area of sustainable consumption have an unfortunate individualistic and individualizing bias….” (Thogersen, 2010, p. 171)

Macro-economic determinants of organic food consumption

Source: Thogersen, 2010, p. 176