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Consumer perception of different organic certification schemes in five European countries

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Abstract

With the introduction of the new mandatory EU logo for organic food and farming the various existing organic certification schemes in the European market face a challenge: Producers and retailers might only continue to display the existing organic logos on product packages if the underlying certification schemes offer consumers an added value compared to the mandatory EU logo and its scheme. The present study aims to identify potential added values that organic certification schemes could incorporate to differentiate themselves from the mandatory EU logo. The study explores consumer awareness and perception of different organic certification schemes and the corresponding logos, about which little is known to date. The qualitative approach with focus group discussions in the five European countries Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Italy and United Kingdom revealed that consumer knowledge of organic certification schemes is generally low. In Italy and the United Kingdom, the great majority of participants was not aware of any differences between the schemes that were discussed. In the Czech Republic, Denmark and Germany, several participants preferred a particular organic certification scheme over others. The following aspects could be identified as potential added values for certification schemes to differentiate themselves from the EU logo and the underlying scheme: Stricter production standards, stricter control, domestic origin, and fair prices for farmers.

Keywords

Organic food, consumer perception, organic certification, organic logos