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# CONSUMERS AND FOOD

## AT FIRST GLANCE

The majority of consumers in Italy, Spain, France and Switzerland buy food in supermarkets. They like the concept of farmers' varieties and are willing to pay a price premium for foods from farmers' varieties.

Embedding crop diversity and networking for local high quality food systems

In the course of the EU funded multi actor project DIVERSIFOOD we investigated, how the networks involved in agrobiodiversity conservation and breeding could further develop their valorisation strategies. To develop marketing recommendations, qualitative information about existing valorisation strategies for agrobiodiversity was collected and quantified using a representative consumer survey in Spain, Italy, France and Switzerland.

### Results of the consumer survey

When it comes to buy food, supermarkets are essential, but also other purchase channels like local markets, speciality stores and farm shops play an important role (Fig. 1). Whereas local markets and speciality stores are significantly more important in France, Spain and Italy than in Switzerland, the opposite is true for farm shops.

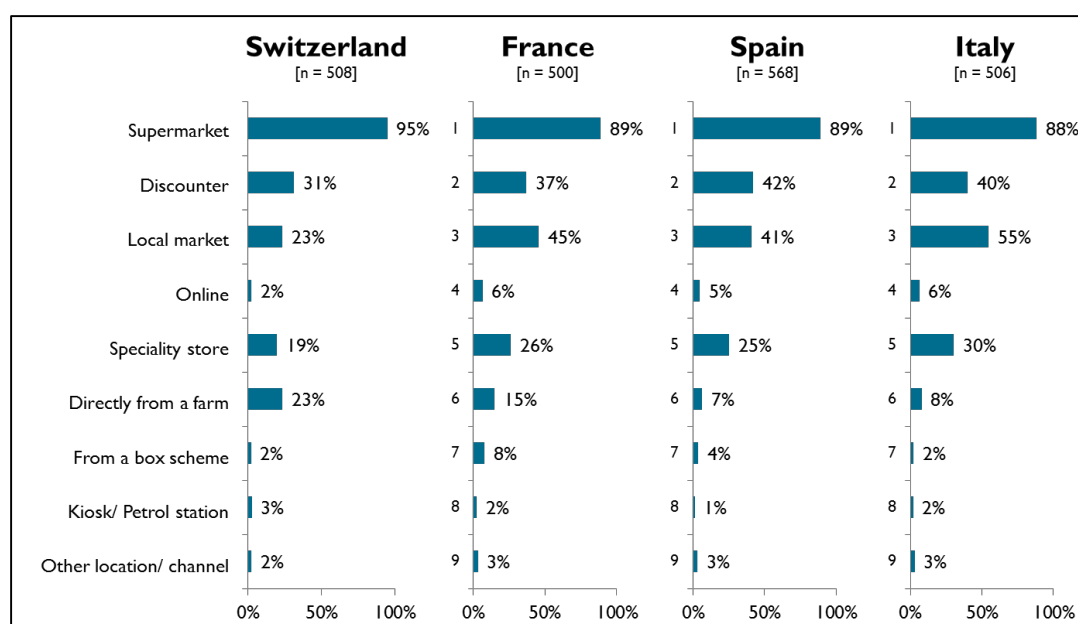


Figure 1: Answers to the question: In general, where do you buy food?

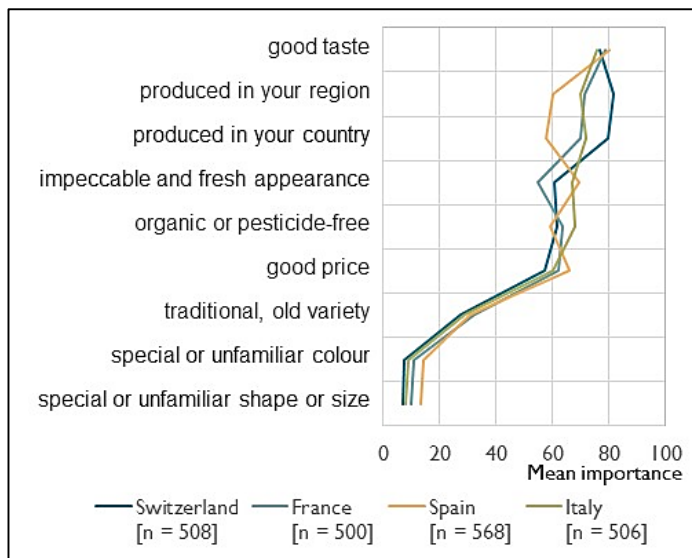


Figure 2 Importance of vegetable purchasing criteria based on a Maximum Difference Scaling choice task.

When consumers buy vegetables, the most important criteria are (1) good taste, (2) produced in your region, and (3) produced in your country (Fig 2). While the latter two are significantly more important in Switzerland, they are significantly less important in Spain.

The concept of farmers' varieties – i.e. “putting the breeding and multiplication of seeds back into the hands of farmers to develop more diverse, locally adapted, healthy and tasty products” – was very well received by consumers. They stated to like the concept as it would lead to (1) more diversity,

(2) more independence for farmers and (3) more tasty foods. They also stated to be willing to pay a price premium for tomatoes from farmers' varieties in a supermarket setting (Fig 3).

### Marketing recommendations

Based on these results, we recommend, that products from farmers' varieties should be marketed on a regional/national level – directly by the producer (farm shops, local markets, etc.) and/or speciality stores. The communication to consumers should focus on taste (diversity), regional or national provenance, diversity and independence for farmers.

Using intermediaries like supermarkets can also be a good strategy. They reach the majority of consumers and can therefore serve as an effective platform to raise consumer awareness for farmers' varieties and agrobiodiversity. However, a collaboration with large intermediaries should be carefully assessed. Firstly, their supply is linked to the production of high volumes of a product often in constant quality. Secondly, their values and attitudes towards agrobiodiversity might differ from the values and attitudes of producers. Clearly, large intermediaries profit from the collaboration with the networks. Therefore, special conditions should be negotiated, e.g. product availability only once a month, limited editions, special advertisement, risk sharing, product specific quality standards, fixed cost sharing etc.

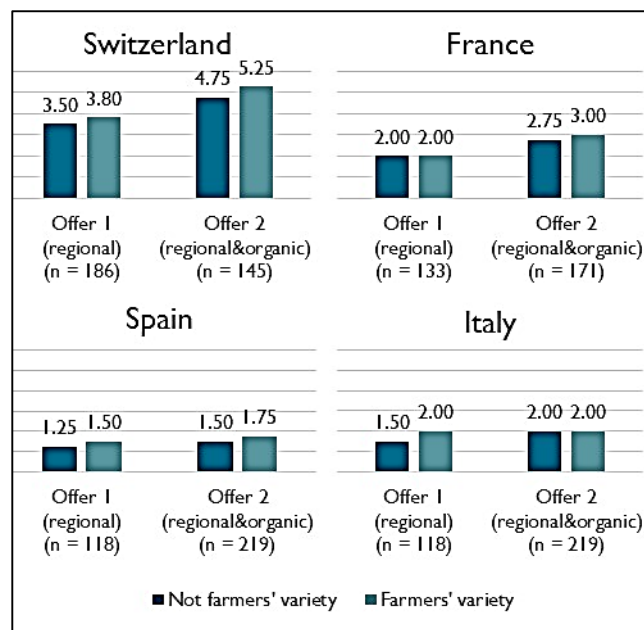


Figure 3: Willingness to pay a price premium for tomatoes from farmers' varieties from the region with or without organic label

**This Innovation Factsheet is the result of the collective work of DIVERSIFOOD partners, coordinated by Bernadette Oehen (FiBL) with the support of Claudia Meier (FiBL).**