

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR FROM MOLDOVA AREA TOWARDS ORGANIC FOOD

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Abstract

This study tried to get knowledge of consumer behavior from Moldova area, towards organic food products. It was performed on sample of 225 respondents and the data obtained from the survey were analyzed by SPSS version 20 program by chi-square test and correlation analysis. As a research method to quantitatively study used a questionnaire applied to their face to face by interviewers. The instrument used was a questionnaire consisting of 14 questions, including four sections: filter questions, consumer behavior, perception differences between organic and conventional foods (common) and demographic characteristics. The main points of purchase organic products are: domestic market, supermarket and health food stores. Of the following points of sale where the respondents consider that they can buy ECO food is 29.70% of domestic market responses, 24.90% of responses supermarket and health food store 21.40%. Based on the statistical analysis performed shows that 45.13% of respondents consume organic products several times a week. Regarding the recognition criteria of food ECO, 42.21% of the responses indicate label 33.17% believe organic products appearance and smell of 23.62% using the element of differentiation between organic and conventional products.

Key words: behavior, consumer, organic food

At the end of 2011, around the world had been more than 37 million certified organic hectares (IFOAM, 2012, FiBL, 2012). The largest grow of agricultural land was in Europe, where the area increased by 0.8 million hectares and is now at 10 million hectares (+ 9% compared with 2009), FiBL, 2012.

According to official data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Romania since 2011, has seen a noticeable increase of agricultural areas in organic system operated in Romania growth who is not accompanied by an explosion in consumption of organic products in our country. At the end of 2011, the area covered in organic system was 567,996.68 ha compared with 2006, the certified organic area was 135,799.0 ha, thus registering an increase of 4.18 times compared to 2006 and by 13% compared to 2010.

One major change of the new regulation concerns the labelling of organic food: The new regulation stipulates the introduction of a new mandatory EU logo for organic food (EC, 2007).

In the Central Eastern Europe, the high growth rates of the organic markets are in Poland, the Czech Republic and Romania (BioFach, 2012). Romania exported over 150,000 tons of organic

goods to the value of 150 million euros in 2012. Sales are to grow by another 20% in 2012, than in 2010 (BioFach, 2012, MADR, 2012).

In the analysis of consumer behavior should consider the following characteristics: who believe consumers (perception), what feel consumers (impression) and what they do (behavior) and what factors influences (environment); consumers are very different each other (Florescu, 2003; Munteanu, 2008); consumers acting emotionally rather than rationally and act differently in different time points, consumer behavior can be influenced, it can learn and can change and behavior attitudes (Stan, 2005) consumer behavior is dynamic, consumer behavior determines exchanges between participants marketing process (Bogers, 2004).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Aim of the study which was the basis this survey had in mind the analysis of current trends and needs on the organic products market in Romania and Republic of Moldova and especially about behavior towards these products

Research. The study was carried out on a sample of 225 individuals structured according to main criteria of demographics. As research

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methods used to study quantitative questionnaire applied through face to face by interviewers (Buiga, 2003). The instrument used was a questionnaire consisting of 14 questions and contacts including 4 sections: filter questions, consumer behavior, perceived differences between food and food ECO usual extent that the difference

between the notions of ECO, BIO, natural and organic product (Oppenheim, 1997; Green, 2005). We used quantitative survey questionnaire applied through face to face by interviewers during 15.12.2011 – 15.01.2012 (table 1).

Table 1

Stages of research for the organic products study

Research stage	Research period
Draft questionnaire design	01 – 10 December 2011
Pretest draft questionnaire	10-13 December 2011
Training operators and multiplication questionnaires	14 December 2011
Data collection in Romania	15 December 2011 – 15 January 2012
Data collection in Moldova	15 December 2011 – 15 January 2012
Creating the database	15 – 17 January 2012
Data analysis	17 – 25 January 2012
Drafting the report	25 - 27 January 2012

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Sample structure. Of the 225 respondents, 71.56% are from Iasi, 12.44% of Pascani, 11.11% in Moldova, and 4.98% from Targu Frumos. All respondents are resident in urban areas.

In terms of gender, the sample consists of 52.50% women and 47.50% men, which approaches the natural population structure in the area. Respondents have been selected in the age range 20-50 years, 24.50% part of segment 20-29 years, 36% of segment 30-39 years and 40-49 years 39.50% of the segment is considered as being active population of area, and the most of them the number of family members is greater than 3, and every family has at least one child.

In terms of the education level of 63.27% of people follow university studies or are graduate

studies, 25.66% follow high school and post-secondary and 9.73% have graduated from a vocational school or grades 9-10, knowing that Iasi is a college town and many graduates find a job in the county. Structure analysis according to monthly net income indicates that 26.91% came under 600 lei, 30.94% have income levels 601-1200 lei, 17.49% between 1201-1800 lei and 14.66% over 1800 lei, which is similar to the regionally structure.

Structure of organic food consumption.

The data presented in fig. 1 indicates that aspect of the products was referred as important criteria in 21.68% of responses, 17.55% in the price, 14.60% in the taste, 13.42% in the preservative content and producer in 12.09%.

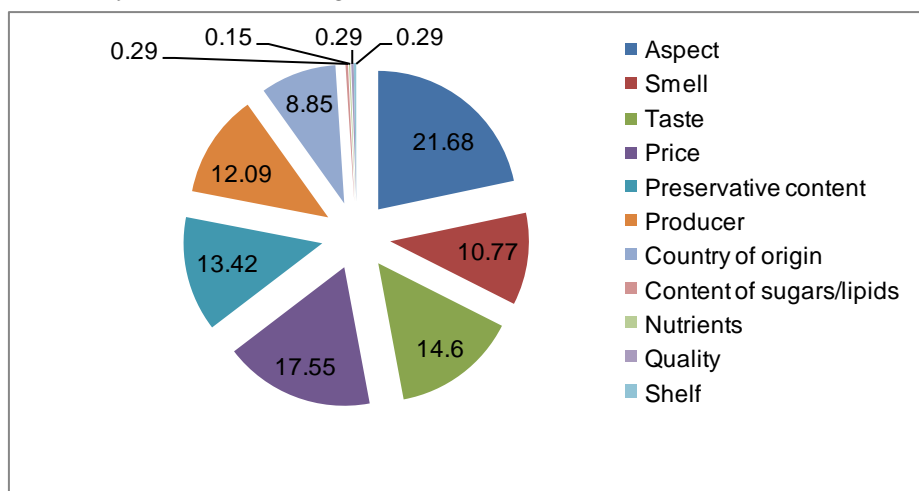


Fig. 1 Criteria for choosing organic products

Regarding to the questioned sample structure according to frequency of consumption,

we can say that 33.63% of respondents use certified organic products occasionally and 45.13%

more than once a week (28.32% 3-4 times a week and 16.81% daily). The most ECO food consumed (fig. 2) are fruits and vegetables (29.43% of the products), beverages and milk (23.77% of responses), basic products (sugar, flour, etc. - 20%

of responses) biscuits and cereals (10.38% of responses), responses that are similar to those in the international literature (Bogers, 2004; Radman, 2005).

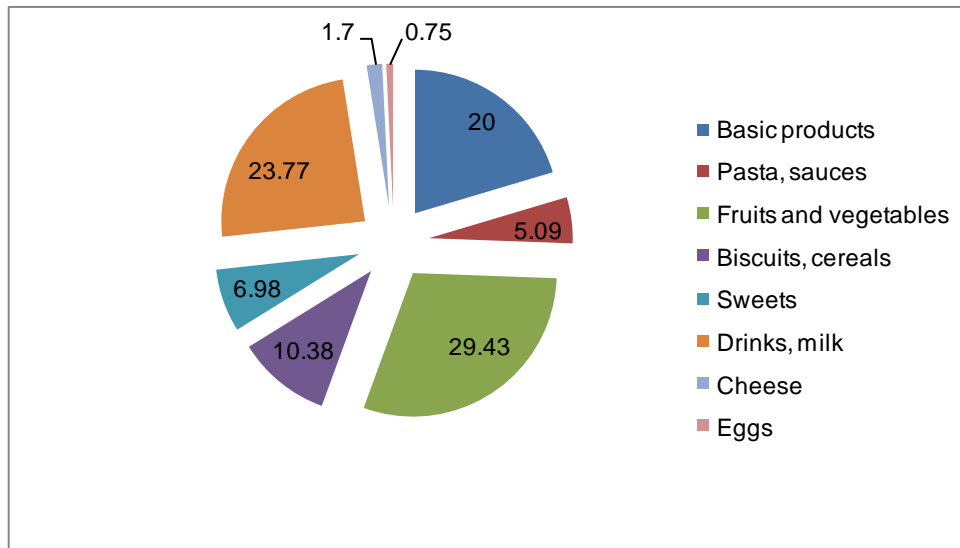


Fig. 2 Categories of organic products consumed

Regarding to frequency which consumers verify the authenticity of organic products, regardless of income and professional category can say that 24.89% of respondents said they check

ECO food they buy are very frequently or always, 35.11% sometimes check and only 11.56% seldom or never.

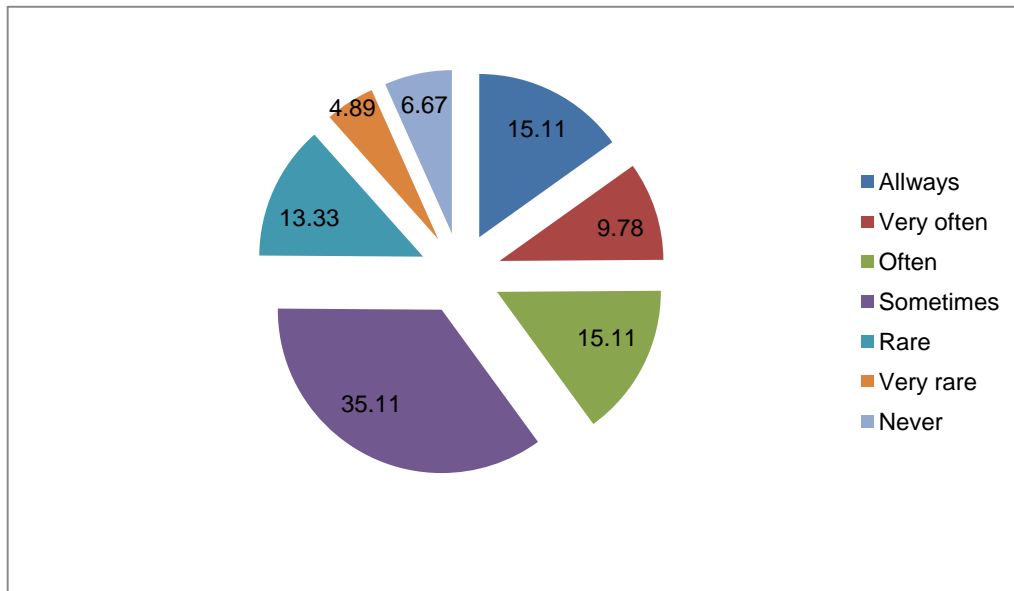


Fig. 3 – Frecventa verificarii logo-ului produselor alimentare ecologice

In recognition criteria regarding organic products, 42.21% of responses on identification elements label indicating ECO products, 33.17% aspect of the products and 23.62% smell data

which is confirmed by the international literature, the percentage of those who use label as a criterion for recognition is over 50% (Stolz, 2011).

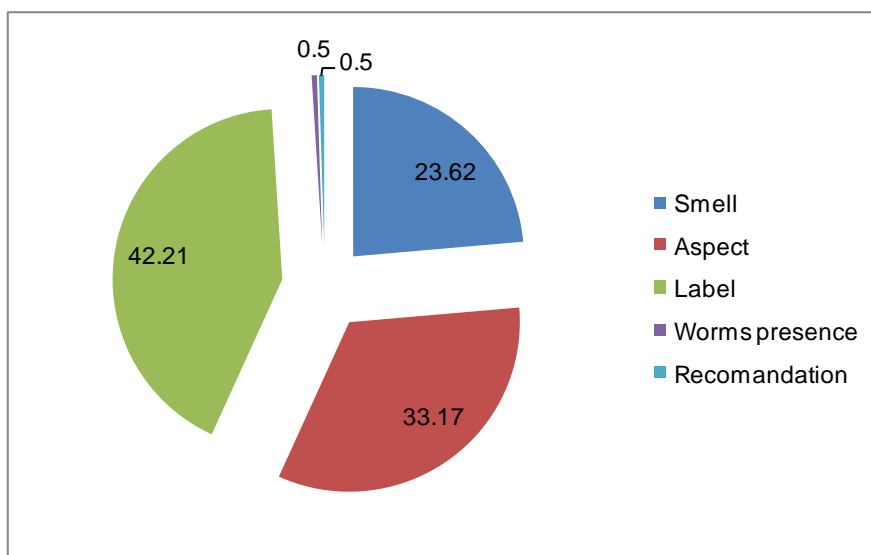


Fig. 4 – Criteria for recognition of organic products

Of the following points of sale where the respondents consider that they can buy ECO food is 29.70% of domestic market responses, 24.90% of responses supermarket and 21.40% natural shops.

CONCLUSIONS

In the terms of consumption frequency of organic products, 45.13% of respondents consume ECO more than once a week. The most types of ECO food consumed are fruits and vegetables, beverages, dairy and basic products. Approximately a quarter of respondents always check if products purchased are ECO. About 70% of people use the label as part of verification. The main points of purchase ECO products are: domestic market, supermarket and natural stores.

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