

CONSUMERS AND THE TRANSITION TO SUSTAINABLE FOOD. 10 TAKEAWAYS

01



Perception

Consumers tend to underestimate the impact of their *own* food habits on the environment. Yet, half of them think that overall food production and consumption has at least as big an impact as car use.

02



Influence

Over half of consumers say that sustainability concerns have some (42.6%) or a lot of influence (16.6%) on their eating habits.

03



Barriers

Price, lack of knowledge, unclear information, and limited choice of sustainable options are what most consumers say prevent them from eating more sustainably.

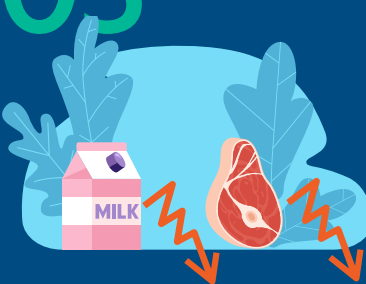
04



Willingness to change

Two thirds of consumers are open to changing their eating habits for the environment. Wasting less food at home and buying seasonal fruit and vegetables has broad consumer support.

05



Meat and dairy

Just over 40% of consumers say they have either stopped eating or have cut down on red meat for environmental reasons. Over 1 in 3 are currently unwilling to eat less red meat. As for dairy, only 1 in 5 are willing to reduce consumption.

06



Alternative proteins

Consumers have little appetite for insects and lab-grown meat but are more likely to consider plant-based 'burgers' (if made without GMOs) and traditional vegetarian foods (e.g. stews with beans and other pulses).

07



Labelling

Most consumers (57%) want sustainability information to be compulsory on labels. Regarding the use of 'burger', 'sausage' and other meat-sounding names for plant-based foodstuffs, most consumers see either no problem with it (26.2%), or believe it should be okay (42.4%) so long as the products are clearly labelled as vegetarian or vegan.

08



Prices

Spending more on sustainable food is a challenge for consumers. At the same time, only 1 in 4 agree that the least sustainable foodstuffs should be taxed more.

09



Government role

Most consumers feel that their government should do more to encourage food sustainability both at production and consumption levels.

10



EU leadership

Consumers want the EU to stick to its ambition on food sustainability, regardless of how other world countries are faring.

BEUC'S QUICK TAKE

Our survey shows some encouraging trends regarding consumer willingness to adopt more sustainable food habits. But it does not match the shift experts say is needed.

Focus on consumer choice and individual responsibility alone will be insufficient to significantly change food habits. The food environment (i.e. all factors which shape consumer choices, such as pricing, availability, and marketing) must change too.

For that we need strong action at various levels (regulators, food producers, retailers, etc.).

OUR SURVEY IN 4 QUESTIONS

What?

Consumer attitudes on sustainable food

Who?

About 11,000 representative consumers

Where?

11 European countries

When?

November 2019

Read our full report:

bit.ly/1BiteAtATime



This publication is part of an activity which has received funding under an operating grant from the European Union's Consumer Programme (2014-2020).