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Miomir JOVANOVIĆ, Miljan JOKSIMOVIĆ,
Ljiljana KAŠĆELAN and Aleksandra DESPOTOVIĆ [1]

CONSUMER ATTITUDES TO ORGANIC FOODS: EVIDENCE FROM MONTENEGRIN MARKET

SUMMARY

This paper examines the general attitude of consumers towards organic agriculture products. A polling questionnaire with questions on consumer attitudes on organic food based on Likert scale was used for the purpose of analysing the attitudinal structure of respondents. The results obtained were analysed and statistically processed using the descriptive statistics methods as well as SPSS program. The respondents' attitude is that organic food implies no risk to human health. At the same time, consumers do not have a defined attitude on whether organic food production risks are higher than its benefits. The respondents are of the opinion that domestic organic food price is high and that it is more expensive than conventionally produced food. Furthermore, in opinion of 48.6% of respondents, imported organic food is cheaper than organic food from domestic producers. More than 50% of respondents are of the opinion that domestic producers do not have a wide range of organic products and 73.6% of respondents state that domestic producers do not produce sufficient quantities of organic food that would meet the demand of consumers. Although respondents agree that the supply of organic products is not sufficient, 81.4% are not ready to pay - in their view - high price of organic products. On average, consumers agree with the attitude that further promotion effort is needed as well as larger areas under organic farming (90% of consumers). With a high interest in consumption of products grown in line with organic farming principles, the number of respondents who fully agree that they would like to engage in organic food production is significant (41.4%).

Keywords: *Preferences, Attitudes, Consumer, Organic foods, Likert-scale*

INTRODUCTION

Organic food production combines traditional and innovative food production methods with modem marketing principles. Organic production of foods is not the only, but it is the most far-reaching of currently applied measures to increase the sustainability of food production (Thøgersen, J., 2009). Demand

[1]Miomir Jovanović, Miljan Joksimović, Aleksandra DESPOTOVIĆ (corresponding author: alexd@t-com.me), Biotechnical Faculty, Department for Agro-Economic Research, University of Montenegro, MIhaila Lalića 1, 81000 Podgorica, MONTENEGRO, Ljiljana Kašćelan Faculty of Economics, Podgorica, MONTENEGRO

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for organic food has increased considerably over the past decade or so, particularly in West European Countries. Denmark stands out as the country with the highest increase in demand of these products per capita worldwide (Wier, M., and Calvery, C., 2002). However, share of organic products consumption in overall food consumption still remains at a relatively low level (Wier, M., Mette, 2003).

Numerous researches have been conducted worldwide as regards stances and motives of consumers towards organic products. Aspects from which attitudes of consumers towards organic products can be viewed are numerous. Apart from economic factors, the health aspect is also quite important. According to Padel, S., & Foster, C., (2005) most consumers associate organic at first with vegeTables and fruit and a healthy diet with organic products. Organic food buyers considered themselves more responsible for their own health and were more likely to undertake preventive health action than the general population. Organic food consumption is part of a way of life (Schifferstein, H., and Peter AM Oude Ophuis, 1998). Food consumption in most developed countries has attained a saturation point in quantity terms, and consumer food choices are broader than in the past. In this saturated market environment, distribution channels, marketing activities, diversification strategies, and food quality are increasingly important. In addition, consumers have become more concerned about the nutrition, health, and quality of food they eat (Gil et al., 2000). Greek consumers seem to be informed about environmental and health issues. They seek information about the nutritional value of food and demand more products free from chemical residues (Tsakiridou, E., Boutsouki, C., Zotos, Y., & Mattas, K., 2008).

The organic and broader food industries must better understand the variety of motivations, perceptions, and attitudes consumers hold regarding organic foods and their consumption if their own long-term interests, as well as those of other of food marketing, are to be best served (Hughner, R., et al. 2007). Croatian consumers consider organically-grown products as very healthy, of good quality and tasty. However, these products are perceived as rather expensive and of questionable appearance (Radman, M., 2005). Consumers' attitudes towards health and environmental benefits provided by organic foods are the most important factors explaining, both, the intention to purchase and the final decision. Finally, income and organic knowledge positively influences the final decision to buy organic food products (Gracia, A., & de Magistris, T., 2013). Surveys on consumer attitudes toward organic products show different results among countries. In the United Kingdom, it has been established that a small part of the population has only the slight notion of what organic agriculture is (4% have never heard of organic production) and support the assertion that citizens in the United Kingdom connect organic products more with human health and nutrition and less with environmental factors (Beharrell, B., & MacFie, J. H., 1991). Food familiarity aspect was negatively associated with organic food purchases. Females and young people buy organic foods on a regular basis, as do the more politically liberal and moderately religious (Onyango, B. M., Hallman, W. K., & Bellows, A. C., 2007).

Montenegrin organic food market is still emerging. Although the volume of organic production in Montenegro is still at a quite modest level, it is realistic to expect the upward trend, judging by the number of producers entered into the Register of Organic Agricultural Production Entities. The increase of area in plant production is noTable (around 420 hectares), with field and vegeTable crops almost equally represented. The area from which organic medicinal herbs are collected is above 143,400 hectares, while only three producers are engaged in organic livestock farming. For the time being, domestic produces are able to "find" the buyers and market the food produced in Montenegro. Most of organic food is delivered to hotels and restaurants. It is also marketed in health food stores and partly through grocery markets. In general, organic farming provides significant opportunities for further economic and rural development of Montenegro (Jovanović., M, Despotović, A., 2012). However, taking into account the overall consumption of agricultural-food products in Montenegro, import of agricultural-food products had a more dynamic growth than export (Jovanović, M and Despotović, A., 2014). The situation in Montenegro is generally characterised by continuous lack of co-operation between food producers and tourism industry in particular, which could be improved at the level of the regulator (state) and producers (Jovanović, M., 2004). Income is the dominant variable in consumer behavior and income growth necessarily brings changes of consumption structure and consumption level (Jovanovic, M., 2016). The objective of this research was to determine consumer attitudes for organic foods in Montenegro.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Questionnaire surveys were conducted in 2015. The survey was implemented in the municipalities: Podgorica, Nikšić, Kolašin, Mojkovac, Pljevlja, Berane and Bar. A polling questionnaire was used with questions on consumer attitudes on organic farming and organic food. It was designed as a two-part questionnaire: the first part consists of a set of questions concerning the health aspect of organic food production and consumption, while the second part includes questions concerning the economic aspect of consumers to organic farming products.

Likert scale was used for analysing the attitudinal structure of respondents (Vagias, Wade M., 2006), in order to determine the extent of agreement or disagreement of respondents with an assertion on a continuum from absolutely positive to absolutely negative attitude towards the topic of research interest. On the assessment scale, the respondent presented stances concerning, primarily, agreement. In our case, the answers offered are divided into five attitudes: 1. Strongly agree, 2. Agree, 3, Neither agree nor disagree, 4. Disagree and 5. Strongly disagree. The survey was conducted in December 2015. It was carried out by trained survey takers. The survey included students respondents above 18 years of age. On a sample N=140 respondents, metric properties of the scale were assessed. The scale reliability is high. Results obtained were analysed and statistically processed using the descriptive statistics methods and *SPSS* program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The obtained results of the survey concerning the consumer attitude on health safety of organic food consumption show as statistically significant a group of respondents of 42.9% who strongly agree with the assertion that organic food implies no **risk to human health**. Furthermore, 42.1% of respondents agree with the assertion that organic food implies no risk to human health (Table 1- Q1). Analysis of the median value measured shows that 85% of the population polled has a positive attitude as regards health safety of organic food consumption which makes them a statistically significant category (Table 2 - Q1).

As regards the previously defined assertion on health aspect of organic food consumption, attitudes are strongly divided with regard to consumers' attitude concerning the **organic food production risks.** Review of the values of the results obtained shows as two statistically non-significant categories consumers who strongly agree, only 6.4% and consumers that strongly disagree 11.4%. Namely, 82.1% of respondents have almost equally divided opinion and among them the statistically significant group within the disagree category is that **organic food production risks are higher than benefits** of 32.1% (Table 1- Q 2). Values of statistical analysis of arithmetic mean and median in this particular case show that consumers actually do not have a formed opinion on whether the organic food production risks are higher than benefits. However, the most frequently given answers were that consumers disagree with the assertion, which substantiates the modus value (Table 2 - Q 2).

Whether organic food consumption is just a **fashion trend**, is a question that gave quite divided opinions. Of the total population surveyed, statistically significant groups are consumers that disagree that organic food consumption is a fashion trend – 32.9%, while 27.1% agree with the assertion (Table 1- Q3). However, taking into account the descriptive statistics values, the median value practically shows that, on average, consumers do not have specific attitude towards this assertion. Furthermore, the modus value shows that consumers most frequently responded that they disagree with the stance that organic food consumption is a fashion trend (Table 2- Q 3).

Of the total number of respondents, 65.7% of consumers stated their view that they strongly agree or agree with the stance that **organic food is genetically modified**, while 34.3% of respondents are undecided or disagree with the assertion. Thus, consumers who agree with the assertion that organic food is genetically modified, form quite a significant group (Table 1- Q4). Values of the statistically processed results obtained show that on average and at the highest frequency consumers gave the response that they agree with the offered assertion that organically produced food is genetically modified (Table 2 - Q4).

Table 1. Questions and answers according to Likert-scale

	QUESTION (Q)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Frequency
1.	Consumer attitudes on whether organic food implies risk to human health	**60**	**59**	**8**	**10**	**3**	**140**
		42.9	42.1	5.7	7.1	2.1	100%
2.	Consumer attitude on whether organic food production risks are higher than benefits	**9**	**39**	**31**	**45**	**16**	**140**
		6.4	27.9	22.1	32.1	11.4	100%
3.	Consuming organic food as a fashion trend	**27**	**38**	**23**	**46**	**6**	**140**
		19.3	27.1	16.4	32.9	4.3	100%
4.	Is organic food genetically modified	**35**	**57**	**33**	**13**	**2**	**140**
		25.0	40.7	23.6	9.3	1.4	100%
5.	Organic food is not treated with chemical products	**40**	**59**	**22**	**13**	**6**	**140**
		28.6	42.1	15.7	9.3	4.3	100%
6.	Mineral fertilizers are not used in organic food production	**35**	**41**	**34**	**26**	**4**	**140**
		25.0	29.3	24.3	18.6	2.9	100%
7.	Organic food has more nutritive elements than conventionally produced food	**51**	**51**	**28**	**10**	**-**	**140**
		36.4	36.4	20.0	7.1	-	100%
8.	Should the share of organic food in sales facilities be higher	**80**	**44**	**9**	**5**	**2**	**140**
		57.1	31.4	6.4	3.6	1.4	100%
9.	Is the price of organic food in Montenegro high	**65**	**34**	**18**	**16**	**7**	**140**
		46.4	24.3	12.9	11.4	5.0	100%
10.	Is the quality of imported organic food higher than that of organic food produced by domestic producers	**4**	**10**	**31**	**41**	**54**	**140**
		2.9	7.1	22.1	29.3	38.6	100%
11.	Is organically produced food more expensive than conventionally produced food	**66**	**42**	**10**	**13**	**9**	**140**
		47.1	30.0	7.1	9.3	6.4	100%
12.	Organic food from imports is cheaper than the organic food of domestic consumers	**18**	**50**	**39**	**27**	**6**	**140**
		12.9	35.7	27.9	19.3	4.3	100%

13.	Domestic producers do not have a wide range of organic products	**28**	**74**	**18**	**12**	**8**	**140**
		20.0	52.9	12.9	8.6	5.7	100%
14.	Domestic producers do not produce sufficient quantities of food to meet the needs of consumers in Montenegro	**42**	**61**	**20**	**14**	**3**	**140**
		30.0	43.6	14.3	10.0	2.1	100%
15.	Consumers are not ready to pay the high price of organic products in sales facilities	**50**	**64**	**11**	**9**	**6**	**140**
		35.7	45.7	7.9	6.4	4.3	100%
16.	Organic products need to be promoted more	**67**	**59**	**12**	**1**	**1**	**140**
		47.9	42.1	8.6	0.7	0.7	100%
17.	Larger agricultural area should be under organic farming	**81**	**45**	**8**	**4**	**2**	**140**
		57.9	32.1	5.7	2.9	1.4	100%
18.	Does Montenegro have good conditions for organic food production?	**86**	**37**	**12**	**4**	**1**	**140**
		61.4	26.4	8.6	2.9	0.7	100%
19.	Would you like to engage in organic food production	**58**	**40**	**23**	**12**	**7**	**140**
		41.4	28.6	16.4	8.6	5.0	100%

Source: own calculation

The tabular overview below shows that the whole of 70.7% of consumers strongly agree or agree with the assertion that **organic food is treated with organic products** (Table 1- Q 5). Overall, the most significant and most frequent consumer group consists of consumers with the attitude of agreeing that organically produced food is not treated with chemical products, which is shown by the descriptive statistics values measured (Table 2- Q5).

Attitudes as regards **use of mineral fertilizers** in organic food production are positive among more than 50% of consumers; 29.3% of respondents agree with the assertion, while 25% strongly agree. However, almost half of the respondents does not share this view on the assertion, as the whole of 45.7% are undecided or disagree with the assertion (Table 1- Q6). Results obtained support the group of consumers agreeing with the assertion, which was also the most frequently selected response in this case. The whole of 72.9% of respondents strongly agree or agree with the assertion that organic food has **more nutritive elements** than conventionally produced food. The remaining 27.1% of respondents are undecided. In this case, there were no disagreements with the assertion (Table 1- Q7). Since respondents' attitudes have been evenly distributed along the responses offered – agree or strongly agree - the median value has not been confirmed. On average, respondents agree with the assertion that organic food has more nutritive elements than conventionally produced food (Table 2 - Q 7). Consumers' attitudes as regards **availability** of organic products in sales facilities are in a statistically significant percentage positive and confirmatory with 88.6%. The most frequent responses in this case were strongly agree with the assertion given (Table 1- Q8).

Results of this survey and respondents attitudes show that **organic food price** in Montenegro is high. Thus, 46.4% of respondents strongly agree with the assertion on high price of organic food while 24.3% stated that they agree with the assertion (Table 1- Q9). In the majority of repetitions, respondents stated they agreed with the assertion, while on average, statistically significant group was formed of respondents that strongly agree with the assertion.

Since in overview of results obtained above attitudes were focused on agreement with the assertion, the assertion analysing the view of respondents on the **quality of organically produced** food by domestic producers and organically produced products from imports are opposite. The whole of 38.6% of respondents strongly disagrees with the assertion, while 51.4% of respondents either disagrees or are undecided (Table 1- Q10). On average, respondents replied that they disagreed with the assertion; however, the most frequent responses were given in the group of overall disagreement with the assertion.

In respondents view, more than 50% have the perception that **organic food is more expensive than conventionally produced food**; 47.1% strongly agrees with the assertion, while 30% agrees (Table 1- Q11).

Respondents whose attitude is also statistically significant most frequently responded that they strongly agree with the given assertion.

Organic **food from imports** is cheaper than organic food of domestic producers in opinion of 48.6% of respondents, while 23.6% disagree with this attitude, with a significant number of undecided (Table 1- Q12).

Respondents who are undecided as regards this assertion also gave the highest number of such responses, while respondents who agree with the assertion form a statistically significant group.

More than 50% of respondents agree that domestic producers do not have a wide **range of organic products**. This is confirmed also by the attitude of consumers who strongly agree with the assertion - 20% (Table 1- Q13).

Along with the higher frequency of responses that agree with the assertion, on average, respondents shared the same opinion. Producers in Montenegro do not produce **organic food quantities** that would meet the demand of consumers is the attitude of 73.6% of respondents; 14.3% are undecided and 10% disagree with the assertion (Table 1- Q14).

However, on average consumers agree that organic food production in Montenegrin market is not sufficient to meet the domestic needs. Although consumers agree that sales facilities in Montenegro do not have sufficient quantity of organic products in their supply, 81.4% of them **are not ready to pay - in their view - high price of organically produced products** (Table 1- Q15). Values of both median and modus confirm that they agree with the assertion given and in most cases the responses were such (Table 2- Q15). Consumers opinion that organic products need to be **promoted more** is prevailing, which is confirmed by attitudes of 90% of respondents (Table 1- Q16). On average, consumers agree with the stance that they need to be promoted more, while in majority of cases they strongly agree with the assertion. Consumers agree that prices of organically produced products are high and that the products need to be promoted more, they also believe that **larger agricultural area** should be under organic farming – 90% of respondents (Table 1- Q17). In this particular case, the stance is accepted both on average and in the highest number of repetitions. This analysis is confirmed also by the stance Montenegro has good **conditions for organic food production**. The percentage of respondents who strongly agree is 61.4% and those who agree 26.4% (Table 1- Q18). Statistical analysis elements show strong agreement with the assertion. Considering the interest in consumption of organically produced products, a very significant number of respondents strongly agree that they **would like to engage in organic food production** – 41.4% of them. However, the share of undecided is not small – 16.4% (Table 1- Q19).

Tables 2 and 2a. Descriptive statistics

	Q1	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	**Q5**	**Q6**	**Q7**	**Q8**	**Q9**	**Q10**
Mean	1.41	3.08	2.56	1.96	1.90	2.20	1.61	1.04	1.88	3,91
Std. Error of Mean	.117	.108	.129	.112	.121	.126	.114	.110	.116	,098
Std. Deviation	1.383	1.281	1.528	1.322	1.436	1.490	1.344	1.305	1.375	1,162
Variance	1.912	1.641	2.334	1.747	2.062	2.219	1.807	1.704	1.892	1,351

	Q11	**Q12**	**Q13**	**Q14**	**Q15**	**Q16**	**Q17**	**Q18**	**Q19**
Mean	1,51	2,54	2,07	1,81	1,62	1,16	1,00	,94	1,66
Std. Error of Mean	,138	,109	,113	,117	,120	,100	,108	,107	,134
Std. Deviation	1,638	1,294	1,339	1,383	1,422	1,185	1,275	1,265	1,586
Variance	2,683	1,675	1,793	1,912	2,021	1,404	1,626	1,600	2,515

Respondents agree with the assertion in most cases, and also, on average, they provided similar answers. Analysis of the results obtained implies also the examination of correlation between certain questions. In difference to examination of correlation between a larger number of questions, for example, questions No. 1 and 7, or 18 and 19, significant correlation was not established, while between questions 8 (*The share of organic food in sales facilities should be higher*) and 12 (*Organic food from imports is cheaper than organic food of domestic producers*), the correlation was confirmed and was .298** (Table 3-5).

Table 3: Correlations between 1 and 7

		Question _1	Question _7
Question _1	Pearson Correlation	1	-,072
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,397
	N	140	140
Question _7	Pearson Correlation	-,072	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,397	
	N	140	140

Table 4: Correlations between 8 and 12

		Question _8	Question _12
Question _12	Pearson Correlation	,298**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	140	140
Question _8	Pearson Correlation	1	,298**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	140	140
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Table 5: Correlations between 18 and 19

		Question _18	Question _19
Question _18	Pearson Correlation	1	-,036
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,670
	N	140	140
Question _19	Pearson Correlation	-,036	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,670	
	N	140	140

CONCLUSIONS

Analysis – examination of consumer attitudes towards products from organic agriculture has not been done before using Likert scale and *SPSS* program. The objective of this paper was to determine the attitude of consumers towards these products both from the health and the economic aspects. The results obtained show a positive attitude towards health safety of organic food consumption by 85% of the population included in the survey, which makes them a statistically significant category (Padel, S., & Foster, C., 2005). Values of statistical analysis of arithmetic mean and median in this particular case show that consumers actually do not have a defined attitude on whether organic food production risks are higher than benefits. Taking into account the values of descriptive statistics, the median value practically shows that on average, consumers do not have a defined attitude on this assertion. Also, modus value shows that consumers most frequently responded that they disagreed with the assertion that organic food consumption is a fashion trend (Schifferstein, H., and Peter AM Oude Ophuis, 1998; Gil et al., 2000; Tsakiridou, E. et al., 2008).

Values of results obtained from statistical processing show that on average and most frequently consumers responded that they agreed with the assertion that organically produced food is not treated with chemical means, which is shown by descriptive statistics values measured. On average, respondents agree with the assertion that, compared to the conventional food production principle, organic food contains more nutritive elements. The attitude of respondents regarding the share of organically produced products in sales facilities is positive and confirmatory in a statistically significant percentage (88.6%). The most frequently given response in this case was strongly agree with the assertion.

Results of this survey and attitude of respondents show that the price of organic food in Montenegro is high. Thus, 46.4% of respondents strongly agree with the assertion on high prices of organic food, while 24.3% stated that they agree (Radman, M., 2005). Since in overview of results obtained above attitudes were focused on agreement with the assertion, the assertion analysing the view of respondents on the quality of organically produced food by domestic producers and organically produced products from imports are opposite. Namely, 38.6% of respondents strongly disagree with the assertion while 51.4% of respondents either disagree or are undecided. The view of more than 50% of respondents is the perception that organic food is more expensive than conventionally produced food. The total of 47.1% strongly agrees with such a stance while 30% agrees.

Organic food from imports is cheaper than organic food produced by domestic producers in opinion of 48.6%, while 23.6% disagrees with this assertion and a significant share of respondents is undecided.

More than 50% of respondents agree that producers do not have a wide range of organic products. Producers in Montenegro do not produce organic food in quantities that would meet the demand of consumers is an attitude shared by 73.6% of respondents; 14.3% are undecided while 10% disagrees with the assertion.

Although consumers agree that quantities of organic products in supply in sales facilities in Montenegro are not sufficient, 81.4% of them are not ready to pay what in their view is a high price of organically produced products (Gracia, A., & de Magistris, T., 2013).

On average, consumers agree with the assertion that the organic products need to be promoted more, while they most frequently strongly agree with the assertion (Beharrell, B., & MacFie, J. H., 1991). Since consumers agree that the prices of organically produced products are high and should be promoted more, they also consider that larger agricultural area should be under organic crops – this view is shared by 90% of consumers. This analysis is confirmed by the attitude that Montenegro has good conditions for organic food production. With this attitude 61.4% of respondents fully agree, 26.4% agree. Considering the interest in consumption of products produced in line with the organic production principles, a significant number of respondents strongly agree that they would like to engage in organic food production – 41.4%. However, the share of undecided on this issue is not small (16.4%).

Determining consumer attitudes under the circumstances of an increasing overall supply of these products is aimed at ensuring better positioning of domestic consumers based on better understanding of organic products consumers. In major and traditional organic-making countries consumption of organic products is fairly predicTable as it is mainly driven by designations of origin. In emerging markets, the commercial strategies are, for the most part, based on certain specificities and are quite interesting for surveys.

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