

Associate Professor Maria Grzybek, PhD, Professor at the University of Rzeszów¹

Department of Marketing and Entrepreneurship
Faculty of Economics
University of Rzeszów

Selected Aspects of the Behaviour of People who Buy Organic Food as Illustrated by the Opinions of Respondents from the Podkarpackie Voivodeship

INTRODUCTION

In the current market circumstances of the second decade of the 21st century, the available food products are characterised by a broad and comprehensive selection of foodstuffs. In addition to conventional food, in this market segment we can find so-called novel foods [Jeżewska-Zychowicz, 2008, p. 35], represented by functional, convenience and organic foods. This situation proves that producers and retailers want the food market to grow and provide the ever more demanding and conscious consumers with a considerable selection of food products.

The authors of definitions in the field of consumer behaviour on the market highlight the issue of choosing products and decision-making by consumers. For example, A. Burgiel states that the market behaviour of consumers includes activities connected with choices, which result in the purchase of specific goods. These are, therefore, mental processes that take place before the purchase, as well as activities associated with the very act of purchasing [Burgiel, 2010, p. 44]. E. Kieźel addresses the behaviour of consumers in a broader spectrum, highlighting the significance of conditions of this process.

The author accentuates that under given social, cultural and economic conditions the behaviour of consumers constitutes a coherent set of activities, actions and conduct associated with making choices in respect of satisfying one's needs [Kieźel, 2000, p. 58].

This study focuses on organic foods and determinants that stimulate the demand for such foods in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship. It is also worth highlight-

¹ Ul. Ćwiklińskiej 2, 35-601 Rzeszów, tel. 17 872 16 15; e-mail: marketing@univ.rzeszow.pl

ing that the organic foods market is among the fastest growing segments of the global retail food market [Richards, 2011, p. 322]. Also in Poland this market is characterised by dynamic growth [Gutkowska, Żakowska-Biemans, 2002, p. 60], reaching 30% per annum [*Ramowy Plan...*, 2014, p. 11]. This phenomenon can be also observed in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, where since 2000 the number of organic food producers and the condition of processing plants [Raporty... (http)], as well as the number of retail outlets offering this kind of goods [Rolnictwo... (http)] have been on the rise year after year.

Organic foods include high-quality products [Łuczka-Bakuła, 2007, p. 33] that are tasty whole foods, characterised by balanced nutrient content, necessary in a well-balanced human diet. These foods do not contain any harmful food chemicals or chemical pollutants. They are made based on produce from farms utilising only natural production methods, both in the field of fertilisation and plant protection [Dolina, 2013, p. 5]. These foodstuffs have certificates confirming their origin from farms that meet the conditions and criteria of organic production [Jeznach, 2007, p. 151], which is inspected every year and systematically controlled by authorised bodies. The growing consumer interest in organic foods, and, as a result, the development of this market segment – resulting from the increasing demand for organic products – is associated with a drop in consumer trust in foods produced using intensive methods. Furthermore, the purity of the environment, from which organic foods originate [Dżugan, 2014, p. 41], their freshness, primordality and rich nutrient content [Kozak, 2012, p. 34] constitute undeniable advantages promoting the popularisation of healthy dietary habits and taking care of the food safety of humankind.

The purpose of this study, in respect of the residents of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, was to identify the meaning and awareness of eating organic products, and also to specify the factors conditioning the purchase of this kind of goods. The research problem was analysed on the basis of primary sources of information. This information was obtained from empirical research carried out in 2014. The research involved the use of a poll questionnaire, by way of a direct survey².

People living in five communes of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship participated in the polling (Grodzisko Dolne, Korczyn, Lubaczów, Łańcut and Tyczyn). The respondents (a total of 500) were selected based on the rules of quota non-random sampling. The inductive-deductive method was employed to interpret the results.

THE RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS ON THE SIGNIFICANCE AND CONSCIOUSNESS, AND PREFERRED CHARACTERISTICS OF ORGANIC FOODS

The behaviour of consumers on the market is characterised by three stages in the order from: purchasing, owning (consuming) to disposing [Burgiel, 2010,

² The surveys were carried out by students of the Faculty of Economics, who pursued their theses under the guidance of the author.

p. 44]. Purchasing, whose effect is owning a given product, is not only the goal of every consumer, as it guarantees the satisfaction of their needs [Rudnicki, 2012, p. 11], but is also important to the development of every product and market segment.

The surveyed consumers' opinions on the significance of purchasing organic foods and their conscious behaviour and preferences influencing their choices are presented in table 1.

Table 1. The significance of buying organic products for the surveyed consumers and their behaviour while buying (in %)

Specification	The significance of buying		Behaviour while buying		
	organic products				
	opinions		consciously		
	positive	negative	buy	prefer	
product characteristics				local origin	
Total	83.0	17.0	47.0	23.0	30.0
Gender					
– women	87.5	12.5	48.3	19.6	32.1
– men	77.3	22.7	45.6	27.2	27.2
Age (years)					
– 18–25	80.9	19.1	50.0	21.4	28.6
– 26–35	79.3	20.7	41.4	27.6	31.0
– 36–60	85.7	14.3	35.7	35.7	28.6
– more than 60	93.3	6.7	68.7	6.3	25.0
Education					
– primary	75.0	25.0	25.0	–	75.0
– vocational	77.4	22.6	48.4	22.6	29.0
– secondary	89.2	10.8	51.4	18.9	29.7
– higher	100.0	–	37.5	37.5	25.0
Number of people in the family					
– 1	88.2	11.8	35.3	35.3	29.4
– 2	82.8	17.2	55.2	13.8	31.0
– 3–5	82.6	17.4	39.1	28.3	32.6
– 6 and more	75.0	25.0	12.5	–	87.5
Monthly net income per capita (PLN)					
– up to 600	78.6	21.4	21.4	14.3	64.3
– 601–1000	87.2	12.8	33.3	23.1	43.6
– 1001–1500	76.0	24.0	52.0	20.0	28.0
– 1501–2000	84.6	15.4	30.8	38.4	30.8
– more than 2000	88.9	11.1	44.4	22.2	33.4

Source: author's own calculations on the basis of surveys.

Among all the respondents dominated those (83%) for whom purchasing organic products was an important matter. 87% of women shared this opinion, while in the case of men, this number was 10.2 percentage points lower. When it came to the respondents age, it turned out that the importance of buying organic foods grew with age. The difference between the youngest and oldest generations equalled 12.4 percentage points in favour of the latter. The phenomenon presented in the analysed group of consumers from the Podkarpackie Voivodeship was analogous to the results of research by M. Grzybowska-Brzezińska [2007, p. 162], in which the author also demonstrated that the oldest group of people was the most interested in organic foods. In terms of education, a growth in the number of statements presenting the importance of buying organic foods was observed together with the improvement of one's educational status. The difference between those with primary education and people with higher education amounted to as many as 25 percentage points, with the latter constituting a larger group. In terms of family size, it turned out that single-person families attached the highest importance (over 88%) to buying organic products. These products were a bit less important for two-person families and families with three to five members (nearly 83% each). The percentage of positive answers in families with 6 and more members was the lowest (75%) when compared to the aforementioned family groups. When it came to the respondents' answers in relation to net monthly income per family member, there was no evident correlation that would indicate that growing incomes correspond to the growing importance of buying organic foods. At the same time, the difference in opinions on the significance of buying organic foods between individuals with the lowest income per capita and those earning the most equalled 10.3 percentage points in favour of the latter.

47% of respondents were fully convinced of their choice to buy organic foods. The share of women in this process was slightly (by 2.7%) higher than the share of men. Conscious decisions to purchase organic foods were made primarily in the oldest group (nearly 69%). The lowest indicator was observed in the group of people aged 36–60, and amounted to nearly 36%. When it came to education, the group that stood out the most were individuals with secondary education, 51% of which stated that their demand for organic foods was a conscious decision. The lowest percentage (25%) was observed in people with primary education. In respect of different family sizes, it turned out that buyers from two-person families who were confident of the rightness of their choice made up the largest group (55%), while when it came to respondents from families with six and more members, this was the case only for 12.5% of them. With regard to the level of income per family member, the share of individuals in the group earning PLN 1001–1500 who consciously purchased organic foods,

amounted to as many as 52%. The lowest indicator was observed among consumers with the lowest income, and concerned 21% of them. In terms of their market behaviour, the surveyed consumers attached significance primarily to the characteristics of organic products and their local origin. While men equally appreciated the characteristics and local origin of products, women attached more importance to origin than to the characteristics of products. This is proved by the difference between statements given by women, amounting to 12.5 percentage points in favour of the local origin of products. A diversified percentage of answers in this respect was also observed in other criteria. While product characteristics were more important in the eyes of individuals aged 36–60, people with higher education, single-person families, and those in which income per capita was in the PLN 1501–2000 range, local origin was important for people representing the respective groups in all other categories. The highest share, however, was observed among consumers aged 26–35, with primary education, from families with 6 and more members, and buyers earning the least.

THE DETERMINANTS OF PURCHASING ORGANIC FOODS
AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE ACCORDING TO RESPONDENTS
FROM THE PODKARPACKIE VOIVODESHIP

The characteristics of organic foods that triggered interest in this kind of food and stimulated demand for them among the consumers in Podkarpackie, are hierarchised in table 2 from the highest to the lowest percentage of opinions.

Based on tabular data, it should be stated that the factors regarded by consumers as essential to the purchase of organic foods were diverse. This proves that there are differences in the way consumers perceive qualitative, health-related and marketing characteristics of organic products. Consumers who regarded quality as the main demand-generating factor in respect of this kind of goods, made up the largest percentage of the surveyed population. They constituted 34.5% of all respondents. Another group in terms of number (more than 27%) included those for whom the main determinant of effective demand was safe food. This factor, as important for the consumers, was also identified in research by E. Niedzielski [2008, p. 281]. The conviction that organic foods have a positive impact on human health was the most important characteristic for more than 23% of the surveyed consumers in Podkarpackie. This characteristic was also indicated by the group of consumers from Warsaw and neighbouring regions surveyed by M. Jeżewska-Zychowicz [2008, p. 40]. The percentage of respondents from the Podkarpackie Voivodeship for whom the purchase of organic products was mainly factored by the price (nearly 9%) and promotion of these goods (6%) was much lower.

Table 2. Factors determining the purchase of organic foods by the surveyed consumers (in %)

Specification	The determinants of purchasing organic foods				
	high quality	safe food	health benefits	price	promotion
Total	34.5	27.4	23.2	8.9	6.0
Gender					
– women	31.3	33.3	21.1	6.7	7.6
– men	38.5	20.5	25.6	11.5	3.9
Age (years)					
– 18–25	38.0	25.4	19.7	9.9	7.0
– 26–35	31.1	31.3	26.7	8.9	2.0
– 36–60	37.5	29.1	20.8	4.2	8.4
– more than 60	28.6	25.0	28.6	10.7	7.1
Education					
– primary	25.0	25.0	33.0	8.3	8.7
– vocational	28.8	25.0	23.1	13.5	9.6
– secondary	31.3	32.8	26.6	3.1	6.2
– higher	50.0	22.5	15.0	12.5	-
Number of people in the family					
– 1	34.6	15.4	34.6	7.7	7.7
– 2	35.7	26.1	14.3	16.7	7.2
– 3–5	37.3	30.2	22.9	7.2	2.4
– 6 and more	17.6	35.4	29.4	17.6	-
Monthly net income per capita (PLN)					
– up to 600	20.8	37.5	29.2	12.5	-
– 601–1000	34.7	30.6	22.7	8.0	4.0
– 1001–1500	27.5	22.5	25.0	15.0	10.0
– 1501–2000	70.6	11.8	11.8	5.8	-
– more than 2000	33.4	25.0	25.0	8.3	8.3

Source: author's own calculations on the basis of surveys.

When starting to analyse in detail the significance of the individual determinants of purchasing organic foods, one should note that, in respect of quality, the highest indicators were observed among men, the youngest consumers, buyers with higher education, people from families with 3–5 members, and respondents with incomes amounting to PLN 1501–2000 per capita. The safety of organic foods was indicated mostly by women, consumers aged 36–60, people with secondary education, individuals from the biggest families and those representing the highest income per family member. The beneficial effect on human health turned out to be the most important characteristic for men rather than for women (a 4.5 percentage points difference), people aged 60 or older, individuals representing

primary education, people forming single-person families and consumers with the lowest income per family member. The next two factors included in the marketing mix, i.e. the price and promotion, despite having relatively much less supporters, were for them the most important characteristic when buying organic foods. As it turned out, the price was more important for men than for women. It was also a significant factor for the oldest group of respondents due to meagre pensions, as well as for consumers with vocational education, people from the biggest families, and respondents with incomes ranging from PLN 1001 to PLN 1500. The promotion of organic foods was a driver for 3.7 percentage points more women than men, especially for people aged 36–60, consumers with vocational education, people forming single-person families, and individuals with incomes ranging from PLN 1001 to PLN 1500 per family member. At the same time, the promotion of the goods in question in the surveyed group was not taken into account by consumers with higher education, people from the biggest families, buyers with the lowest incomes and individuals with incomes ranging from PLN 1501 to PLN 2000 *per capita*.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis of the empirical material we can gather that the share of consumers for whom buying organic foods was important, was relatively high. The market behaviour of these buyers was rational, since they consciously made their choices related to purchasing organic foods, and preferred their characteristics and local origin. The respondents specified five main determinants that stimulated their effective demand. Advocates of high-quality organic foods made up the most numerous group. The second most-numerous group included consumers paying special attention to safe food, and third place in this regard fell to those who found the positive impact of these goods on health the most important. Among the respondents there were also individuals for whom the price of goods was the most important, as well as consumers paying attention especially to promotion. The level of these factors was greatly varied by demographic-and-social and economic criteria. The scale of positive opinions on the importance of buying organic products, conscious market behaviour, as well as the types of factors taken into account by the respondents while buying organic foods, prove that the surveyed group of consumers from the Podkarpackie Voivodship was interested in organic food consumption.

REFERENCES

- Burgiel A., 2010, *Potrzeby i zachowania konsumpcyjne oraz ich determinanty – podstawowe pojęcia* [in:] *Konsument i jego zachowania na rynku europejskim*, ed. E. Kieźel, PWE, Warszawa.

- Dolina Ekologicznej Żywności Klaster, 2013, *Program Operacyjny Rozwój Polski Wschodniej 2007–2013*, IUNG, EU European Regional Development Fund.
- Dżugan M., 2014, *Czy wiemy co jemy*, „Gazeta Uniwersytecka”, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, No. 3.
- Grzybowska-Brzezińska M., 2007, *The preferences of ecological food consumer*, “Polish Journal of Natural Sciences”, Supplement, No 4.
- Raporty o rolnictwie ekologicznym w Polsce, <http://www.ijhar-s.gov.pl/raporty-i-analzy.html> (dostęp: 30.03.2015 r.).
- Rolnictwo ekologiczne na Podkarpaciu, <http://podrb.pl/rolnictwo-ekologiczne/1403-rolnictwo-ekologiczne-na-podkarpaciu.html> (dostęp: 30.03.2015 r.).
- Gutkowska K., Żakowska-Biemans S., 2002, *Diagnoza rozwoju rynku żywności ekologicznej w Polsce i krajach Unii Europejskiej*, Roczniki Naukowe SERiA, Vol. IV, Issue 3, Warszawa–Poznań–Bydgoszcz.
- Jeznach M., 2007, *Podstawy marketingu żywności*, Wyd. SGGW, Warszawa.
- Jeżewska-Zychowicz M., 2008, *Wpływ innowacyjności konsumentów na ich zachowania na rynku nowej żywności*, „Handel Wewnętrzny”, March – April.
- Kieźel E., 2000, *Zachowania konsumpcyjne konsumentów i gospodarstw domowych [in:] Rynkowe zachowania konsumentów*, ed. E. Kieźel, Wyd. Akademii Ekonomicznej w Katowicach, Katowice.
- Kozak M., 2012, *Różnicowanie działalności rolniczej i około rolniczej jako szansa na rozwój gospodarstw rolnych*, Wyd. SWISS Contribution, Błażowa.
- Łuczka-Bakuła W., 2007, *Rynek żywności ekologicznej: wyznaczniki i uwarunkowania rozwoju*, PWE, Warszawa.
- Niedzielski E., 2008, *Uwarunkowania rozwoju rynku żywności ekologicznej*, Roczniki Naukowe SERiA, Vol. X, Issue 4, Warszawa–Poznań–Lublin.
- Ramowy Plan Działania dla Żywności i Rolnictwa Ekologicznego w Polsce na lata 2014–2020*, 2014, Ministerstwo Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi (1.08.2014), Warszawa.
- Richards T.J., 2011, *The economics of organic food system: discussion*. Am. J. Agric Econ. is the property of Agric, Appl. Econ. Assoc, 94(2). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ajae/aar107>
- Rudnicki L., 2012, *Zachowania konsumentów na rynku*, Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne, Warszawa.

Summary

This study presents the opinions of 500 respondents residing in 5 communes in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship on the significance and consciousness of buying, and the preferred characteristics of organic foods. The vast majority (83%) of respondents attached great importance to purchasing organic foods. The market behaviour of these consumers was rational, since they consciously made their choices related to purchasing organic foods and preferred their characteristics and local origin. The types of the most important factors taken into account by the surveyed consumers in relation to the effective demand for organic foods were also specified. Advocates of high-quality organic foods made up the most numerous group, i.e. more than one-third of all the surveyed subjects. Second most numerous group included consumers paying special attention to safe food (27%). For more than 23% of the surveyed population, the positive effect of organic

foods on health was the most important. Therefore, they made up the third most-numerous group. A relatively lower percentage of the surveyed individuals concerned those consumers who paid attention mainly to the price and promotion of the products in question. Those interested in prices comprised nearly 9%, and in promotion – only 6%. At the same time, it is worth highlighting that the level of these factors was greatly diversified in terms of the adopted demographic and social criteria (gender, age, education, number of people in the family) and in respect of net income per family member. The scale of positive opinions on the importance of the purchased organic products, conscious market behaviour, as well as the types of factors taken into account by the respondents while buying organic foods, proved that the surveyed group of consumers from the Podkarpackie Voivodeship was interested in organic food consumption and purchasing this kind of goods.

Keywords: organic products, organic-foods consumption

Wybrane aspekty zachowań nabywców żywności ekologicznej w opinii respondentów z województwa podkarpackiego

Streszczenie

W opracowaniu zaprezentowano opinie 500 respondentów – mieszkańców 5 gmin województwa podkarpackiego – na temat znaczenia i świadomości nabywania oraz preferowanych cech ekologicznych produktów spożywczych. Wśród opiniodawców dominowali ci (83%), dla których zakup żywnościowych artykułów ekologicznych stanowi ważne znaczenie. Racjonalne były zachowania rynkowe tych konsumentów, gdyż świadomie dokonywali oni zakupów ekoproductów żywnościowych, jak też preferowali ich cechy oraz lokalne pochodzenie badanych artykułów spożywczych. Określono także rodzaj najważniejszych czynników branych przez badanych konsumentów pod uwagę przy popycie efektywnym na spożywcze produkty ekologiczne. Najwięcej, bo ponad jedną trzecią ogółu badanych stanowili zwolennicy wysokiej jakości żywnościowych produktów ekologicznych. Na drugim miejscu, z udziałem 27%, znaleźli się konsumenci zwracający szczególną uwagę na bezpieczną żywność. Dla ponad 23% badanej zbiorowości najistotniejszy był korzystny wpływ ekoproductów spożywczych na zdrowie, w związku z czym ci konsumenci zajęli trzecią pozycję. Relatywnie niższy odsetek badanych dotyczył tych konsumentów, którzy przy zakupie omawianych artykułów zwracali uwagę przede wszystkim na ich cenę oraz promocję. Ceną zainteresowanych było zwłaszcza niecałe 9% respondentów, promocją natomiast zaledwie 6%. Równocześnie należy podkreślić, że poziom kształtowania się tych czynników był znacznie zróżnicowany według przyjętych kryteriów demograficzno-społecznych (płeć, wiek, wykształcenie, liczba osób w rodzinie), jak też w odniesieniu do poziomu dochodu netto przypadającego na jednego członka rodziny. Skala pozytywnych opinii na temat ważności nabywanych ekoproductów spożywczych, świadome zachowania rynkowe, jak też rodzaj czynników branych pod uwagę przy zakupie ekologicznych produktów spożywczych świadczą o tym, że badana grupa konsumentów z woj. podkarpackiego jest zainteresowana konsumpcją i zaopatrywaniem się w ekożywność.

Słowa kluczowe: produkty ekologiczne, konsumpcja ekologicznych produktów żywnościowych

JEL: M31, D12, L15