



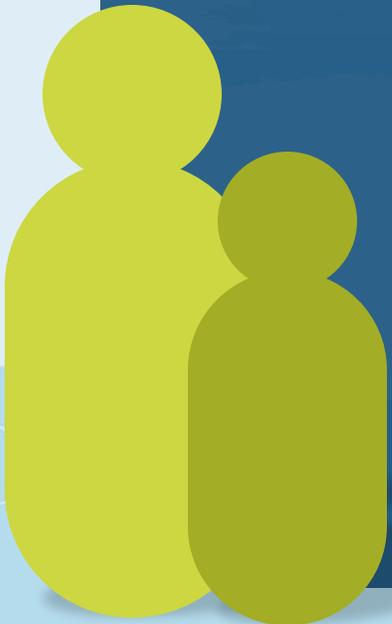
BEUC The European
Consumer
Organisation

The Consumer Voice in Europe

Sustainability of food and agriculture: the consumer perspective

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15th February 2024 – DG AGRI Technical Workshop on Sustainability



CONSUMER ATTITUDES TO SUSTAINABILITY



TABLE 28 – What comes to your mind when thinking about “sustainable” food?

	Belgium Resp % (Base: Count 748)	Italy Resp % (Base: Count 697)	Portugal Resp % (Base: Count 673)	Spain Resp % (Base: Count 725)	Austria Resp % (Base: Count 685)	Germany Resp % (Base: Count 729)	Greece Resp % (Base: Count 766)	Lithuania Resp % (Base: Count 696)	Netherlands Resp % (Base: Count 652)	Slovakia Resp % (Base: Count 719)	Slovenia Resp % (Base: Count 678)	Total Column Response % (Base: Count)
Low environmental impact	44.4%	61.4%	58.0%	60.7%	57.5%	54.6%	48.5%	42.3%	43.2%	30.3%	33.1%	48.6%
Use of pesticides and GMOs to be avoided	28.9%	40.2%	49.5%	45.5%	55.7%	49.3%	48.5%	38.3%	40.7%	40.1%	32.3%	42.6%
Local supply chains	46.2%	34.0%	21.7%	24.6%	59.3%	52.6%	10.4%	20.7%	32.0%	26.0%	49.2%	34.1%
Minimally processed, traditional	27.3%	22.7%	37.5%	21.7%	10.1%	10.4%	36.0%	37.0%	29.4%	18.5%	24.5%	25.0%
Availability and affordability of food	19.8%	14.3%	19.2%	18.7%	17.7%	16.4%	21.0%	19.1%	15.1%	45.8%	31.4%	21.7%
Healthy	20.3%	16.5%	27.6%	17.7%	13.7%	12.9%	25.6%	33.4%	15.9%	28.7%	21.5%	21.3%
Fair revenue for farmers	30.5%	20.7%	18.5%	21.4%	26.8%	27.3%	12.3%	7.8%	33.8%	19.7%	14.8%	21.2%
High animal welfare standards	17.7%	20.5%	19.1%	18.8%	28.2%	32.9%	22.3%	17.9%	29.3%	12.6%	8.2%	20.6%
Economic growth in the agri-food sector	8.7%	13.4%	6.8%	11.3%	3.9%	5.0%	8.2%	7.2%	11.0%	14.7%	16.1%	9.6%
Total	243.8%	243.6%	257.8%	240.2%	272.9%	261.3%	232.7%	223.7%	250.5%	236.3%	231.0%	244.7%

Base: full sample weighted – S-7
MULTIPLE RESPONSE ANSWER

Most prevalent answer / 2° most prevalent answer / 3° most prevalent answer

Source:
BEUC, 2020

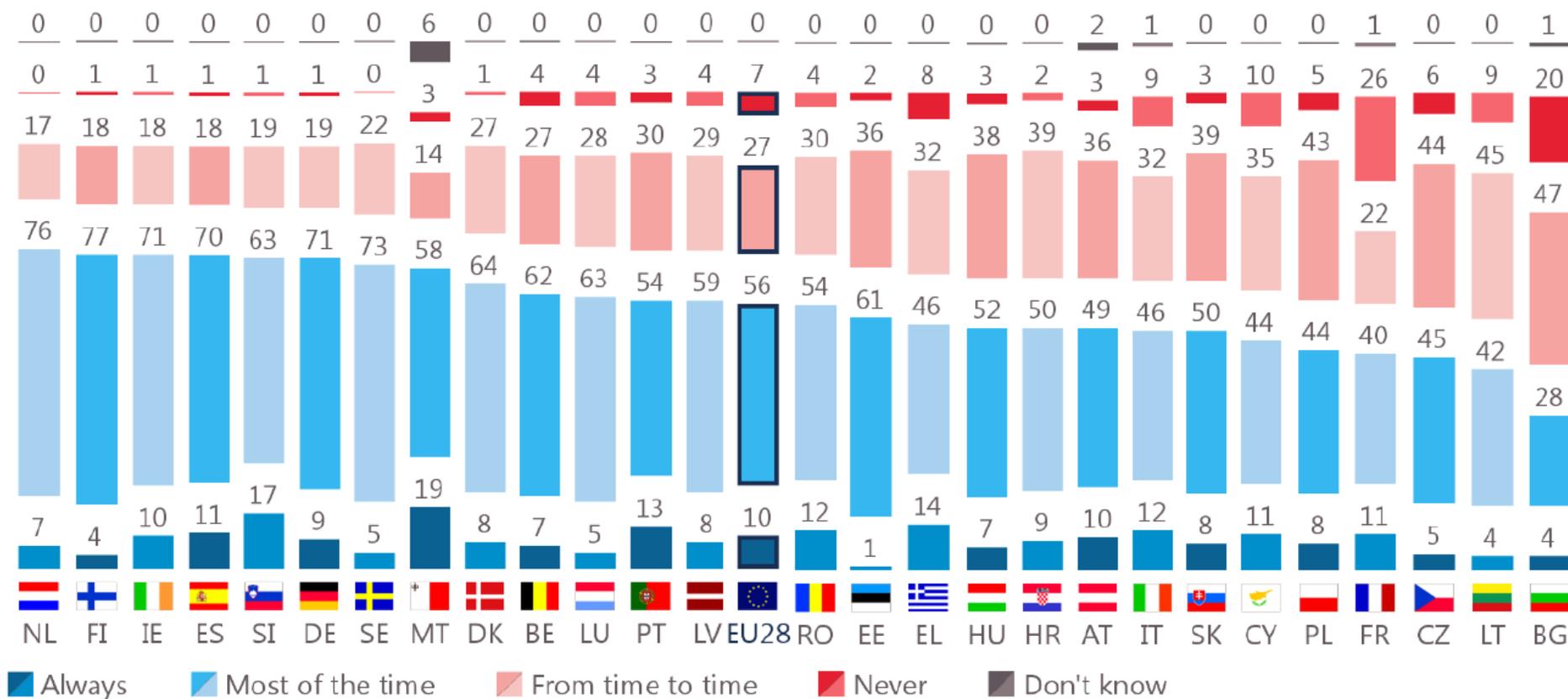
CONSUMERS TEND TO UNDERESTIMATE THE IMPACT OF THEIR EATING HABITS

- Slightly over 10% agree that what they eat has a negative impact on the environment (BEUC, 2020).
- Most Europeans (but replies vary by country) say that they eat a healthy and sustainable diet most of the time (56%) or always (10%) (Special Eurobarometer 501, 2020).
- Over half of consumers say that sustainability influences their eating habits (BEUC, 2020).
- Yet they prioritize taste, food safety and cost (Special Eurobarometer 501, 2020).



Source: Special Eurobarometer 501. Making our food fit for the future – Citizens' expectations, 2020

QB6 Would you say that personally, you eat a healthy and sustainable diet... (%)



WILLINGNESS TO CHANGE ... BUT SOME CHALLENGING STEPS



BARRIERS TO SUSTAINABLE EATING



PRICE, AVAILABILITY, KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION

- ✓ Only 19% of Europeans say they have changed their diets to incorporate more sustainable food (Special Eurobarometer, Attitudes of European citizens towards the environment, 2020).
- ✓ Price, lack of knowledge, the difficulty to identify sustainable food options as well as their limited availability are the main perceived barriers (BEUC, 2020).
- ✓ Making healthy and sustainable food more affordable (49%) and available where they usually shop (45%) would help Europeans most in adopting a healthy and sustainable diet – before information/labelling (41%) and education (29%) (Special Eurobarometer 501, 2020).

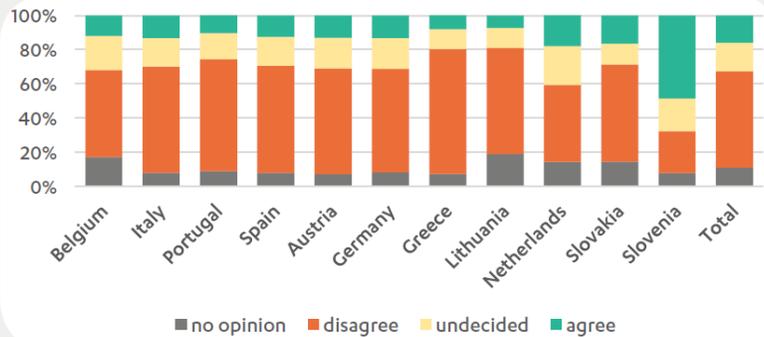


WHO SHOULD PLAY A ROLE?

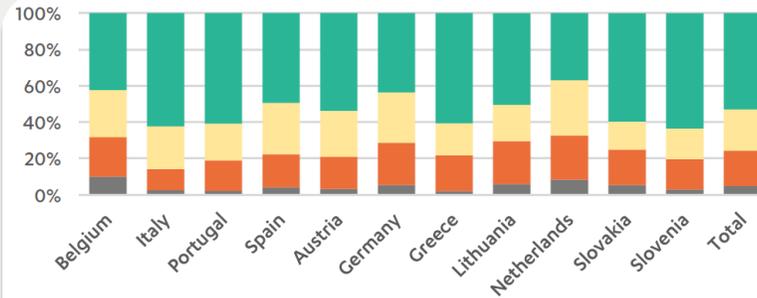


SUSTAINABILITY AS A SOCIETAL CHALLENGE

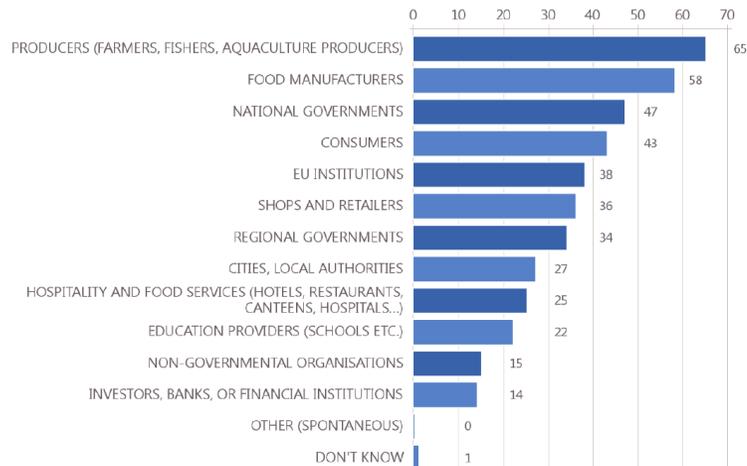
THE GOVERNMENT IS DOING ENOUGH IN ENCOURAGING/PROMOTING FOOD SUSTAINABILITY



FARMERS SHOULD BE GIVEN INCENTIVES (E.G. THROUGH SUBSIDIES) TO PRODUCE FOOD MORE SUSTAINABLY

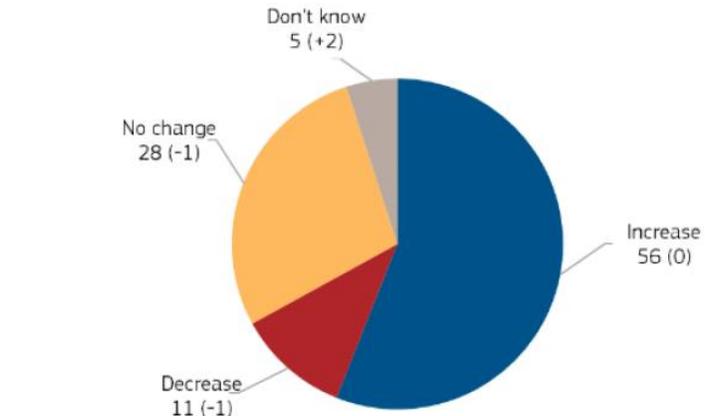


QB5 According to you, which actors from the list below have a role to play in making our food systems sustainable? (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE) (% - EU)



Base: all respondents (n.= 27,237)

QA11 And over the next 10 years, would you like to see an increase, decrease or no change in EU financial support to farmers? (% - EU)



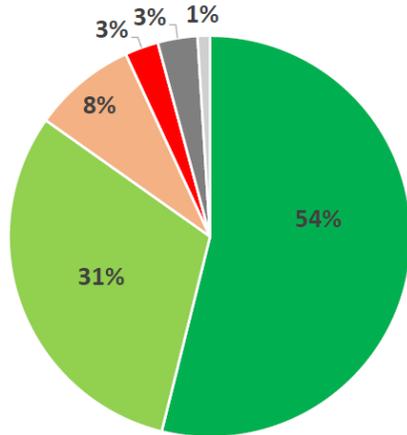
(Feb.-Mar. 2022 / Aug.-Sep. 2020)

HAVE FARMERS' PROTESTS CHANGED CONSUMERS EXPECTATIONS?

The case of France

LA CRISE AGRICOLE

Soutenez-vous le mouvement de contestation initié par les agriculteurs ?



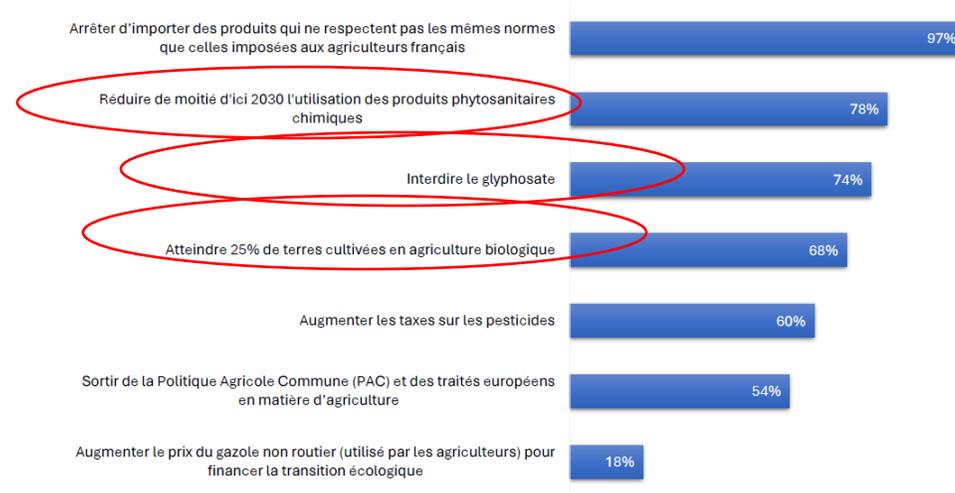
■ Oui, tout à fait ■ Oui, plutôt ■ Non, plutôt pas
 ■ Non, pas du tout ■ Vous n'avez pas d'opinion ■ Vous n'en avez pas entendu parler

Sondage réalisé du 25 au 27 janvier 2024 sur un échantillon de 1414 personnes, représentatif de la population française



LA CRISE AGRICOLE

A propos des propositions suivantes diriez-vous que vous êtes tout à fait d'accord, plutôt d'accord, plutôt en désaccord, tout à fait en désaccord, ou sans opinion ?



Sondage réalisé du 25 au 27 janvier 2024 sur un échantillon de 1414 personnes, représentatif de la population française

WHAT ROLE FOR LABELS?



CONSUMERS NEED CLEAR AND TRUSTWORTHY INFORMATION

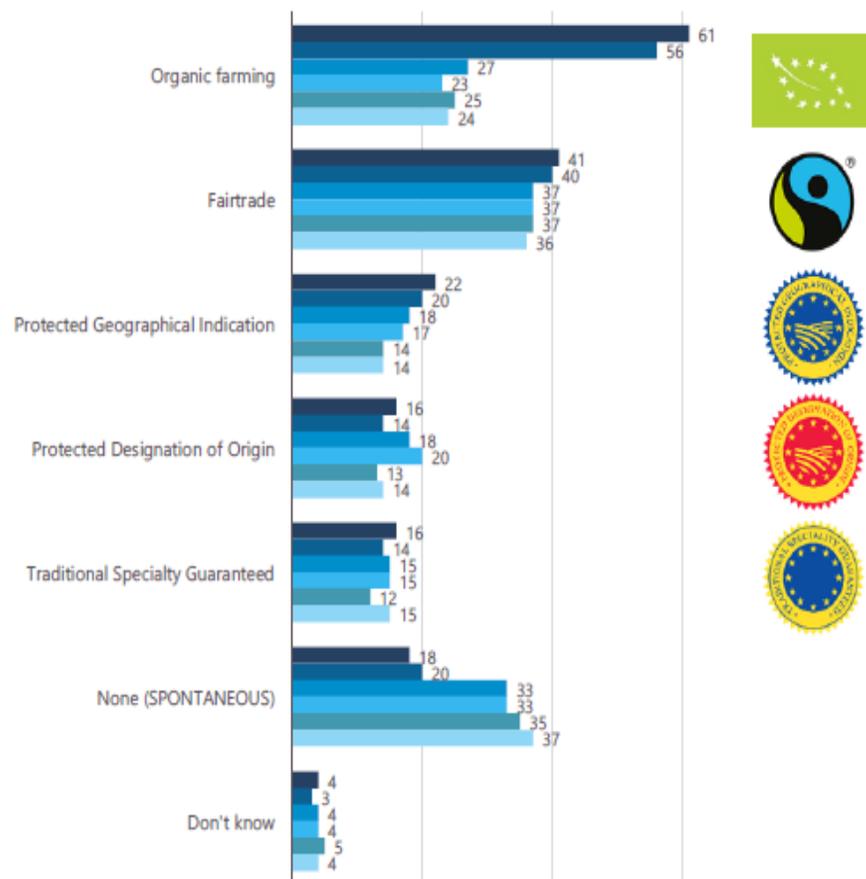
- 67% of consumers would use information on the sustainability of food ... (EIT Food, 2023).
- ... but they also feel there are too many labels and logos (EIT Food, 2023 & BEUC, 2023).
- Consumers trust public authorities more than companies when it comes to labelling & claims (BEUC, 2023).
- Avoid plethora of new initiatives (public and/or private)
- **Need for a harmonised, mandatory EU food sustainability label?**



BEWARE THE LABELLING 'JUNGLE'

QA13 Which of the logos are you aware of? (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)
(% - EU)

■ Feb.-Mar. 2022 ■ Aug.-Sep. 2020 ■ Dec. 2017 ■ Oct. 2015 ■ Nov.-Dec. 2013 ■ Mar. 2012



CONCLUDING REMARKS

- The direction of travel is clear; business-as-usual not an option.
- Discussion should not be on *whether* or *why*, but on **HOW**.
- Consumers increasingly expect food to be produced sustainably and are willing to change the way they eat, but they need a hand.
- The role of food environments: we need to collectively **design ways to 'unburden' the consumer and make sustainable, healthy food an easy and affordable choice** – so that demand for healthy and sustainable food drives/matches supply.



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Thank you for your attention

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