



The Consumer Voice in Europe

The consumer view on food innovation

DG SANTE Conference on
Innovation in Food – EXPO Milan

Milan, Italy

10th October 2015

Food *innovation* – What's in it for consumers?



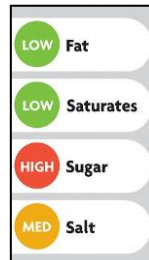
Novel foods ('exotic' products, functional ingredients, etc.)



Reformulation



New modes of grocery shopping



Per 25g:

586kJ
140 kcal

7%*

Per 100g:

2343 kJ / 560 kcal



Consumer information



New technologies (GMOs, nanotechnologies, animal cloning)

Innovation for whom? – Consumers' expectations

- **SAFETY** (independently assessed by a trusted authority)
- CONVENIENCE (e.g. easy to prepare; resealable package; longer shelf life)
- HEALTHINESS (e.g. reduced fat/salt/sugar levels without compromising taste)
- NATURALNESS (no 'E-numbers' and chemicals)
 - 72% Europeans very or fairly worried about pesticides in food*
 - 66% very or fairly worried about additives and flavourings in food*
 - Source: [Special Eurobarometer 354](#) on food-related risks, November 2010*
- SUSTAINABILITY (e.g. better for the environment or animal welfare ... but still affordable; less food waste)

Innovations that worked ... or not

"Beauty" yoghurt



GM food



Innovative Packaging



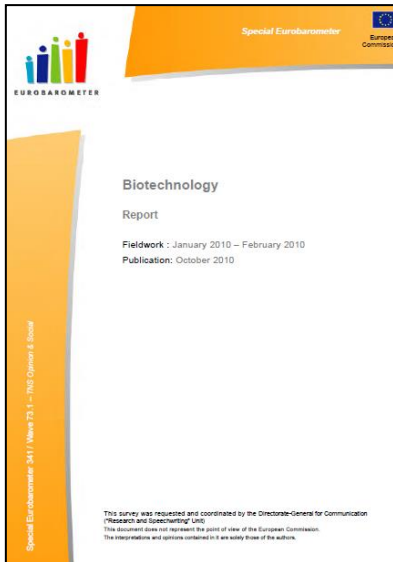
Omega-3 enriched eggs



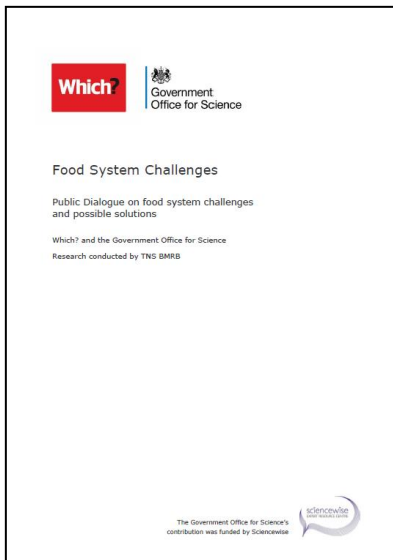
No new food/ingredient should reach consumers' plates unless proven safe

- **Thorough safety risk assessment** by the European Food Safety Authority followed by EU-level **pre-market authorisation**
- **“No data, no market”**. EU food legislation puts the onus on industry to prove its products/ingredients are safe.
e.g. recent withdrawal of five flavouring authorisations after industry missed legal deadline to provide requested toxicity data to EFSA.
- **Precautionary Principle** to ensure a high level of consumer protection in case science is inconclusive on safety.
e.g. food applications of nanotechnologies

Are EU consumers innovation-averse?



- 2010 Eurobarometer on biotechnology
***Europeans' attitude** towards animal cloning, nanotechnology and genetic engineering*
- Consumers feel they **lack information** on these technologies. They are **unsure of safety & environmental risks** and **do not perceive clear benefits** for themselves or their families.
- Acceptance of biotechnology for *food* applications generally lower than for other types of applications
e.g. new drug developments



- Which?/UK Government Office for Science's research [Food System Challenges](#)
Consumers prefer solutions that are low-tech, natural or focused on behaviour change. Hi-tech solutions not rejected out of hand but need for independent safety evaluation, clear benefits and absence of low-tech alternatives which would be publicly acceptable and achieve similar outcomes.

Innovation that has advantages and benefits for consumers ...

- Demonstrated technological need: preserving nutritional quality, enhancing shelf life, facilitating production processes, etc.
 - *the case of fruit waxes and sweeteners*
- Consumers' acceptance of innovation is influenced by **perceived benefits** for themselves



- *Nano-sensor to detect meat spoilage vs. "interactive" drinks containing nanocapsules that can change colour and flavour*

and/or society



- *Algae and insects as alternative, more sustainable protein sources?*

... and does not mislead them

- “Glued” meat

labelled as "formed meat" if sold prepacked ... but what if sold in restaurants?

- Flavourings used to replace quality ingredients

e.g. flavourings used to make up for tiny fruit amounts in a yoghurt; concentrated dairy flavours replacing butter

[illegible]

Test-Achats, 2013

- Preservatives (sulphites) used to make minced meat look fresher

OCU and DECO, 2015

Estudio

22 MUESTRAS A EXAMEN

La carne picada está bajo sospecha desde la crisis de la carne Caballo y, además, muchos de nuestros socios se quejaron que habitualmente se les iba fuerte que sus carne se quedaba firme y no se guisaba. Muchos de ellos pensaban que era un aditivo de carne de caballo que se les había dado de comer, así se corrobora en la carne que se les había dado de comer, así se corrobora en la carne que se les había dado de comer.

recorta, hemos examinado 22 envases entre carne picada y preparadas de carne picada, comprobamos los principales aditivos que se les había dado de comer y los principales aditivos que se les había dado de comer.

[illegible]

Consumentenbond, 2011

[illegible]

Not so “clean” labels

- **72%** of households **willing to pay more** for naturally-produced foods

*Source: KAMPFFMEYER Food Innovation GmbH.
Clean Label [Study](#) 2012.*

- **“Processing aids”**: not on the label!

*e.g. produce washes that make fruit salad looks fresh for longer ...without consumers knowing;
food enzymes used in bread claiming to be ‘free from additives’*

- **“Functional” ingredients**: no E-number ... but only used to serve a technological function (and save money?)

*e.g. potato proteins providing volume and texture to gluten-free bakery products;
colouring foodstuffs;
citrus pulp used in meat preparations to retain water*



Source: [Article](#) published in The Guardian in Feb 2015

fiber. Our customers use products to improve profit margins, quality, nutrition, and label declarations.

 helps accomplish these objectives by tightly binding moisture to:

- improve quality and yields
- partially replacing oil, fat, eggs and meat to reduce costs
- replacing less label friendly ingredients to improve label declarations.

Transparency in food innovation

- **Engage** with consumers on benefits ... and risks! of new technologies
- **Respect** consumers' low acceptance of certain technologies/products
 - “Educating” consumers too often synonymous of forcing them to accept food they don't want
 - Consider alternatives
 - e.g. chemical decontamination of meat vs. rapid surface chilling*
 - Allow for informed choices via labelling
 - e.g. GM, nano, cloning labelling*
- **Acknowledge** consumers' voice and take it into account



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