

Does the label say it all

Natural Food

Background

1. Organic production is an overall system of farm management and food production that aims at sustainable agriculture, high- quality products and the use of processes that do not harm the environment, human, plant or animal welfare.
- Bulgaria is one of the most potential nations in agricultural areas that can be cultivated organic, because of the water purity and earth fertility.
- Organic agriculture in Bulgaria is developing rapidly. In 2016, the number of bio producers grew by 18% and organic area increased by 37%, accounting for 3.2% of Bulgaria's total production area.

Healthy nutrition

Bio foods are often associated with health and diet products and are still not easily differentiated from natural, eco, healthy, green, sustainable, fair-trade and sometimes even from home-made foods. The actual definition- those that have been traditionally and sustainably produced without the use of chemical products or being genetically modified.

KEY PRINCIPLES



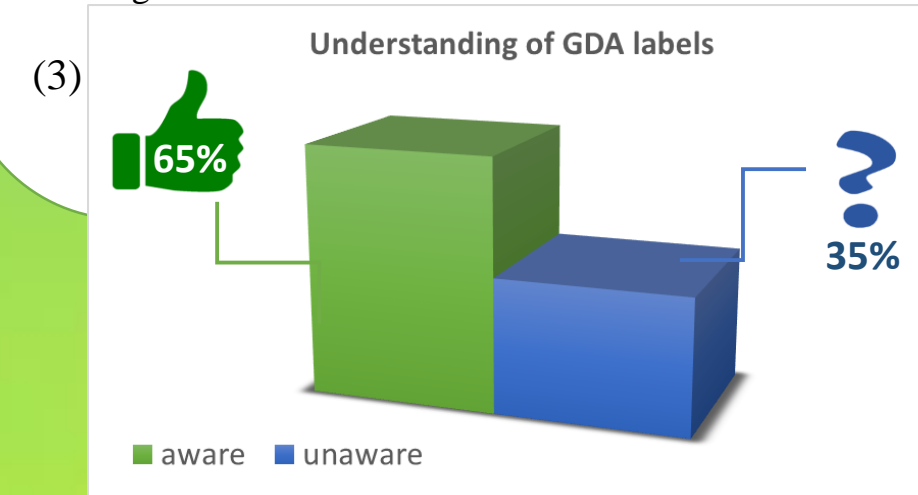
3. Survey- Consumers' behavior in stores

After all the tempting advertisements and the actual need to purchase some food, we find ourselves in the supermarket.

Observation:

- EU-funded research project Eufic (N=17300) on people's intentions of buying food and the impact of labels;
- The survey was conducted in retail stores that included consumer observations, in-store interviews, and in-home questionnaires.

The results showed that more than 65% of the European respondents could correctly use GDA to identify the healthier option between two products (3). However, less than half of respondents (35%) understood that GDA refers to a serving rather than 100 g/ml of food.



Source: Eufic research project

Labelling of organic produce



EU organic farming logo

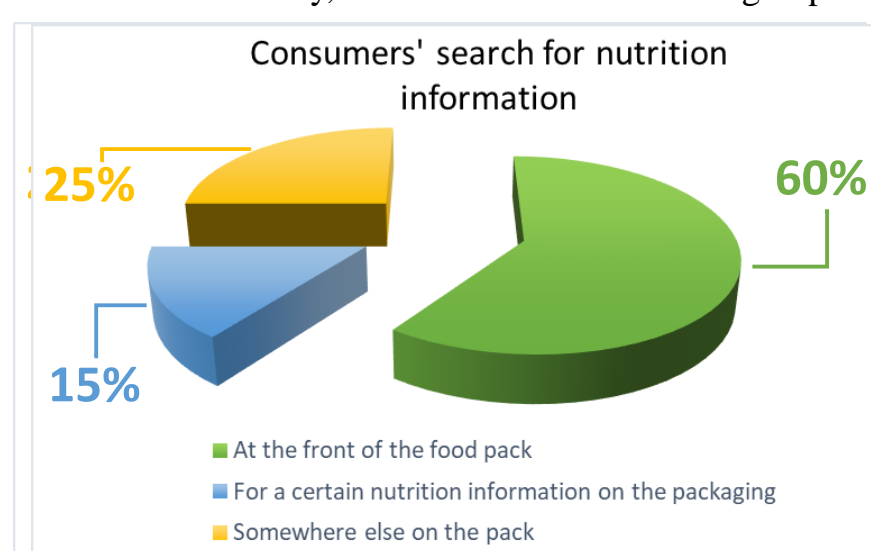
-if at least
95%
of the food ingredients are bio

Exports and imports:

Most of the organic products (about 90 %) are exported to Central and Western European countries, North America, and Japan.

Honey is the top organic export product, according to NGOs- reportedly, Bulgaria is 4th in Europe by exports. However, imported organic products dominate with over 70 to 80% market share.

Moreover, regarding the way, respondents were making a choice what to buy, we can divide them into 3 groups.



Source: Eufic research project

Analysis:

Most people from the statistical excerpt are able to use nutrition information when prompted, but few actually look for it spontaneously when shopping. Furthermore, they usually make their purchase decision based on the front-of-pack label.

Conclusion: Yes, the label says it all! Starting up with information about the way the product is made- ecologically or conventionally, country of origin and does it cover the EU organic requirements. Also the list of ingredients and "use by date" information. The statistical data from both surveys show people's interest in bioproducts, but also their intention to buy non-organic groceries. Consumers are influenced by a multitude of factors other than the nutritional value when choosing foods – for instance: habit and price.

Our food choice has the potential to impact not only our health but also the environment. By deciding to buy food that has less packaging, has not traveled vast distances and has been produced in a sustainable way, we can help reduce our footprint. So taking all the analysis into consideration we suggest: read, before you eat!

Stay evergreen, eat clean!

The idea of this poster is in contribution to the health concern and label understanding of the so-called "bio" products. **The aim** is to follow the lifecycle of organic food on the Bulgarian market- from production and packaging to disposal. Ending up on the consumer's preference and decision- making.

Organic in a plastic bag

2. Before being transported, the food should be well-packaged. However, until we eat "organic" in a plastic bag, we live in a plastic world, trying to convince ourselves that it's healthy and eco-friendly. When in fact it is not exactly that way:
- plastic absorbs the health benefits of the food;
 - main pollutant.
- Did you know that:
- o When organic food travels long distances to market (food miles), it creates pollution that may offset any positive effects of organic farming. However, buying local food helps reduce the environmental costs associated with food miles;

Sustainable food practices

- o Consume traditional and local food- for example- Bulgarian yogurt (kiselo mlyako):
 - the healthiest of all dairy;
 - it contains Lactobacillus bulgaricus bacteria- probiotic food, known for at least 4000 years;
- also rose petal jam, rose water (contains vitamin A, B, C, and D) and many more.



- o Read labels carefully and avoid foods with additives in them:
 - Emulsifiers- a substance that stabilizes an emulsion, in particular a food additive, used to stabilize processed foods. To avoid- Lecithin (E322). Mono and diglycerides of fatty acids (E471), Phosphatide (E442).

Label information

Front-of-pack nutrition labeling shows a summary of the nutrition information of the product, such as:

- Guideline Daily Amounts (GDA)- the amounts of key nutritional requirements per portion;
- color-coded system- use colors to indicate whether the nutrient content and sometimes also the energy content of a food product

is high, medium, or low per 100 g/ml.:

- "expiry date";
- EU logo.

However, the **back of the package** consists of further information:

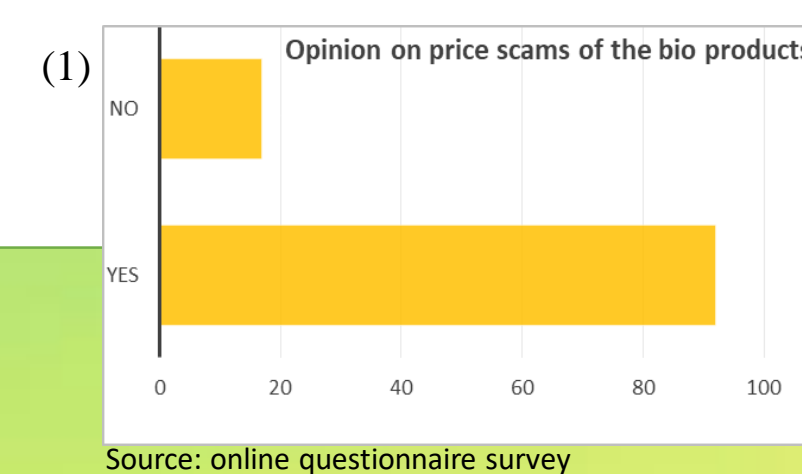
- Nutrition facts;
- country of origin or place of provenance;
- net quantity of the food, and more.

4. Sample survey (Consumers' behavior towards healthy food)

Statistical observation:

After a non-representative survey, which our team conducted upon Bulgarians in their twenties (N=109), the results display that 92% of the respondents believe that the higher prices of bioproducts are the result of marketing scams (1).

The follow-up question (2) had the purpose to see whether people would prefer organic products over junk food in a condition of equal price and weight. The results appear to be in favor of the bioproducts, but they refer only to this particular statistical excerpt, not to the Bulgarians as a whole.



Source: online questionnaire survey

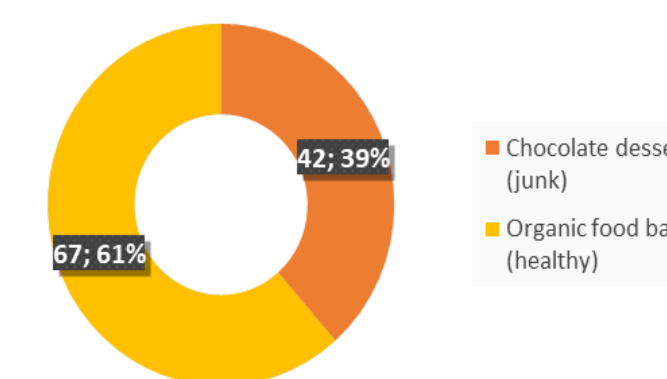
Statistical analysis:

On one hand, we assume that the reason for those results might be because the majority of young people are mainly students without a stable income. The high prices of bioproducts drive them away even though they are the healthier choice.

On the other hand, there is a lot of skepticism in Bulgaria regarding the way organic products are produced and nurtured. That's why some would prefer not to purchase them.

Price over quality in this case.

(2) Personal choice of surveyed individuals



Source: online questionnaire survey

References: <https://www.eufic.org/en/>
https://ec.europa.eu/info/index_en
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/portal/en>
<http://www.nsi.bg/en/content/4215/agriculture>
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