

Could Animal-welfare and Health Claims Boost the Demand for Organic Meat?



The Challenge

The future of organic agriculture will ultimately depend on consumer demand. The last three decades have therefore witnessed a considerable increase in attempts to identify the determinants of organic food consumption and whether they compete with other ethical food products such as local foods, animal-friendly foods, healthier foods and “Free-from” foods. This study assessed the extent to which ‘animal welfare’ and ‘health’ claims impacted demand for, and competitive power, of organic foods.

Policy Implication

Consumers are unlikely to choose organic bacon on appearance alone. Labelling could reduce the negative effect of organic bacon’s appearance when compared to conventional bacon. Emphasising the sustainability as well as animal welfare and nutrition could substantially increase demand for organic products. Producers who exploit these advantages are likely to improve the competitiveness of their product.



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Research

Researchers conducted an economic experiment with 120 meat eaters to measure their willingness to pay (WTP) for three different products – conventional bacon, animal-friendly (“Freedom Food”) bacon and organic bacon – both before and after providing them with different information over four rounds.

Results

1. With no information, consumers are willing to pay more for Freedom Food bacon and conventional bacon.
2. Labelling the type of bacon product increased WTP for Freedom Food and organic bacon but decreased WTP for conventional bacon.
3. Providing consumers with information on animal welfare decreased WTP for conventional and freedom food bacon but increased WTP for organic bacon.
4. Nutritional information increased WTP for conventional and organic bacon and decreased WTP for Freedom Food bacon. Organic bacon labels on nutrition and animal welfare were complimentary which resulted in an increased WTP.

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Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Contact

Contact: Faical Akaichi

Email: faical.akaichi@sruc.ac.uk

Research group: Land Economy, Environment and Society

Address: SRUC, Peter Wilson Building, Edinburgh, EH9 3JG.

About

The Land Economy, Environment and Society (LEES) Research Group is one of the largest groupings of economists and social scientists working in the rural, agricultural and land based sectors in the UK. Our vision is to be recognised as one of the leading centres for agricultural and wider rural economic and social research globally, benefiting the land use sector, the environment and rural communities.

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