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Study about some environmental factors that determine people's food choices in 16 different countries

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Abstract

In the ambit of the multinational project EATMOT undertaken in 16 countries (Argentina, Brazil, Croatia, Egypt, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and United States of America) a study was undertaken to evaluate the motivations for food choices as influenced by variables linked to sustainability. In this way aspects related with minimization of transportation and storage of food products, minimization of package or use of eco-materials, respect for animal's rights and policies of recovery of food surplus were studied. The food sector is a very important one and greatly contributes to the pressure over the ecosystems, either because a great amount of food is produced, many times in intensive regimens, to feed humans on earth or because those foods are nowadays traded all over the world, contributing for the increase of the ecological footprint, and most especially if the transportation requires refrigeration systems. Hence, nowadays consumers may be aware of these problems and condition some of their food choices to these aspects. The research was undertaken by means of a questionnaire survey on nearly 12 thousand participants, from the 16 countries cited above.

Briefly, the results indicated that, in general the concerns with environment and sustainability are important for most of the participants. Specifically, 55.2% preferably choose foods from the season and 49.15 prefer to buy local foods. About half of the participants (50.4%) opt for foods that comply with sustainable processing and packaging and the minimal usage of packaging is important to 49.1%. While a great majority, 70.7% try to avoid food waste at home, when it comes to frequenting restaurants that do not have a recovery policy of food surplus the percentage is much lower, only 18.6%. The animal's rights are a conditioning factor for food choice for about half of the participants, 49.8%. Still, it was observed that many of the participants did not manifest their opinion, with a percentage varying between 17.2 and 46.7%. These findings are important to understand the level of commitment of the general population around the world with sustainability factors determining their food choices and on the other hand show that there is still an important part of the population that do not take care about sustainability aspects when buying or consuming food, which something that we do several times everyday and year after year.

Keywords

food choice; sustainable packaging; sustainable agriculture; food waste

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