

EFSA Scientific Colloquium N° 26:

Risk Benefit Assessment of combined exposure to Nutrients and Contaminants through food

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# **The influence of trust and perceptions of risks and benefits of consumption of food:**

*Needs from a consumer point of view in relation to dietary advice*

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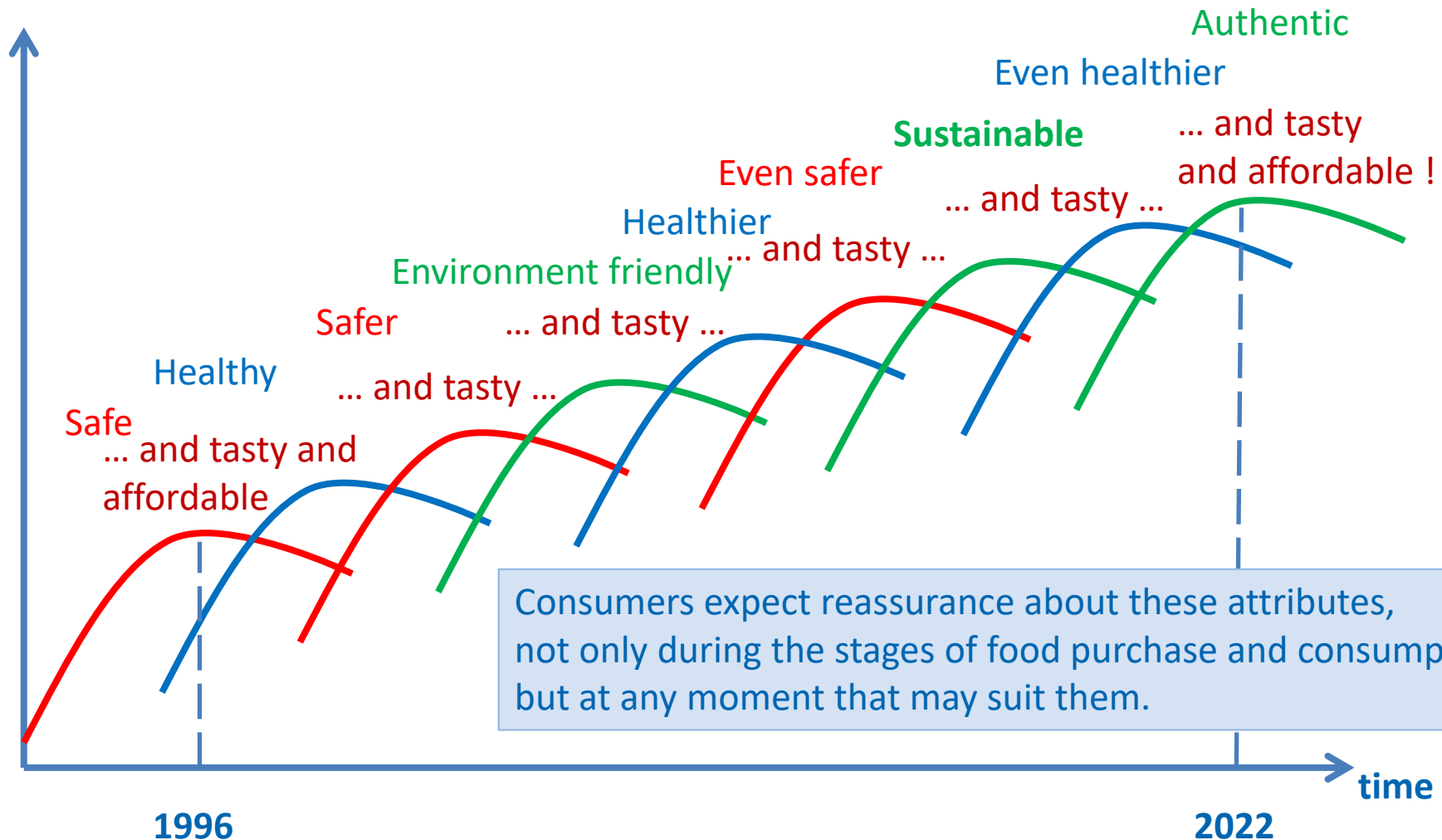
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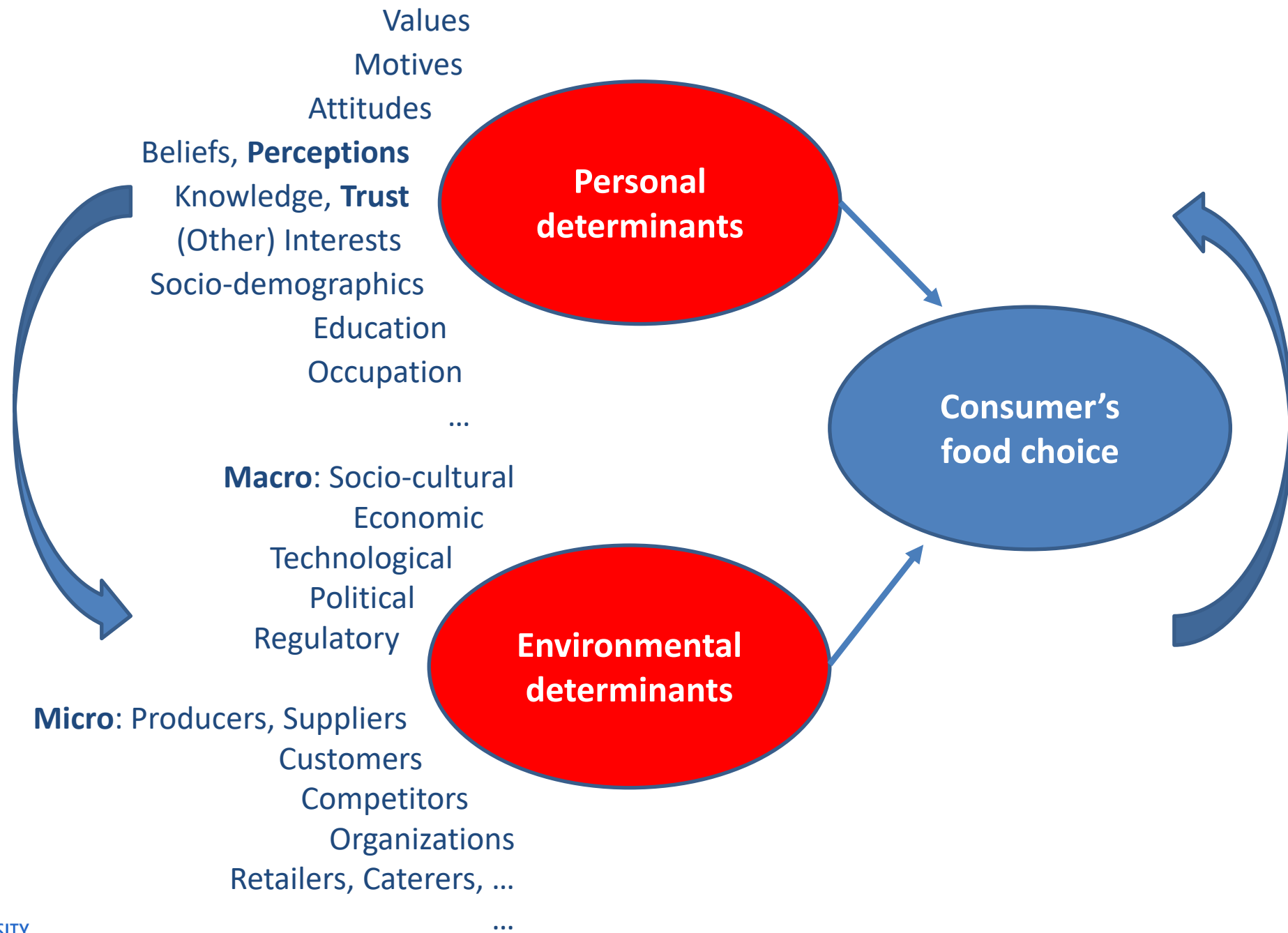


# Context and Contents

- Growing expectations from food production and food products
- A multitude of factors shape consumer's food choice
- The power of negative publicity shaping risk perceptions
- Response strategies and policy expectations when facing uncertainty or risk
- The potential of social vs. traditional media in risk benefit communication

## Expectations from food production and food products



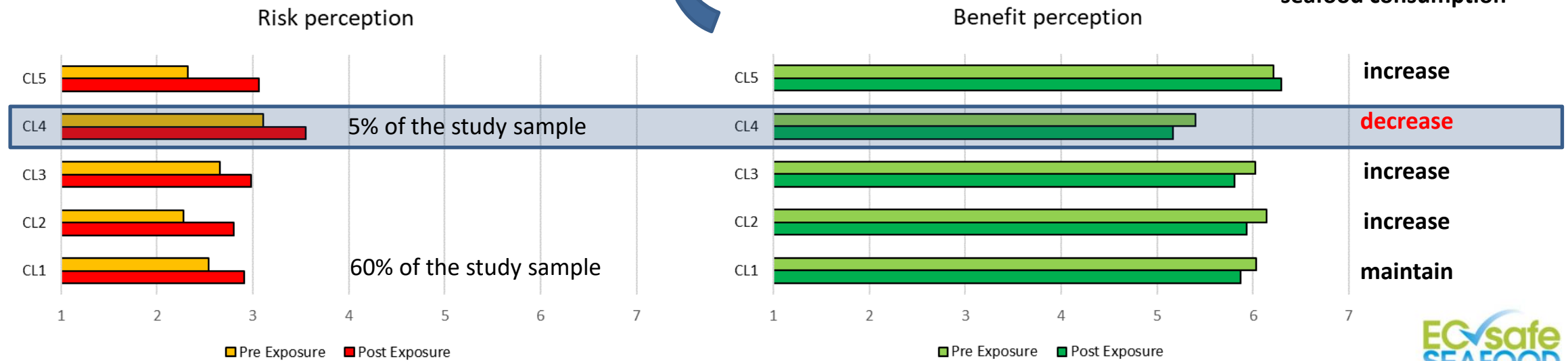


# Consumer response to health risk-benefit information regarding seafood consumption (n=986, BE, PT)

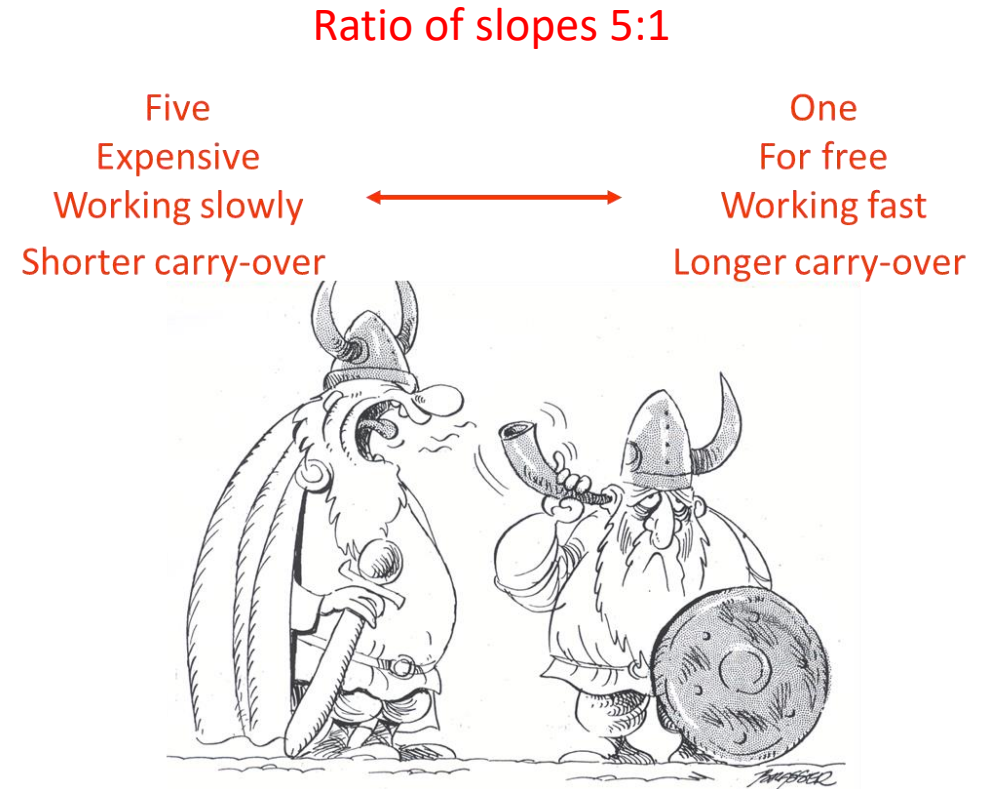
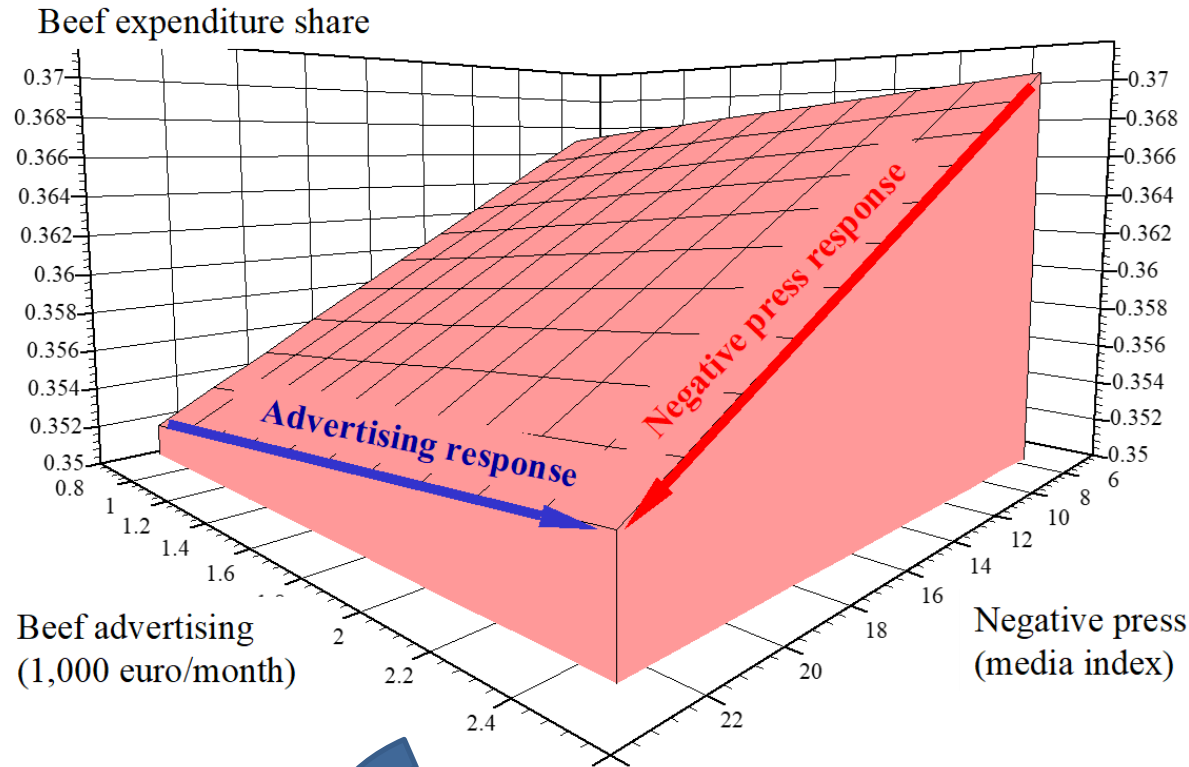
## Message 1 – Eco-label

Omega-3 fatty acids, selenium, iodine and vitamin D have a beneficial impact on human health. Fish and marine products are important natural sources of omega-3 fatty acids, selenium, iodine and vitamin D in the human diet. Fish and marine products are also sources of dioxins, mercury, marine biotoxins and endocrine disruptors in the human diet. Dioxins, mercury, marine biotoxins and endocrine disruptors have an unfavourable impact on human health. Consumption of two portions of fish or seafood per week, of which at least one portion is fatty fish, contributes to a safe and healthy diet. However, stocks of wild fish are not adequate to meet the nutrient demands of the growing world population. Furthermore, there is an increasing threat of species depletion and habitat destruction. Therefore, it is recommended to buy/eat seafood with an eco-label, e.g. MSC, ASC, POPA or FoS label. These labels guarantee sustainable practices.

... The findings of this study also indicate that a large majority of these participants are not scared off because of the provided information regarding the health risks and, consequently, they seem to be able to cope with the balanced information. This finding is consistent with the result that a balanced message including both risks and benefits from seafood consumption may not significantly change the behavioural intention regarding fish consumption frequency, despite an eventual worsening of the perception of seafood safety, for example (Verbeke et al., 2008). ...



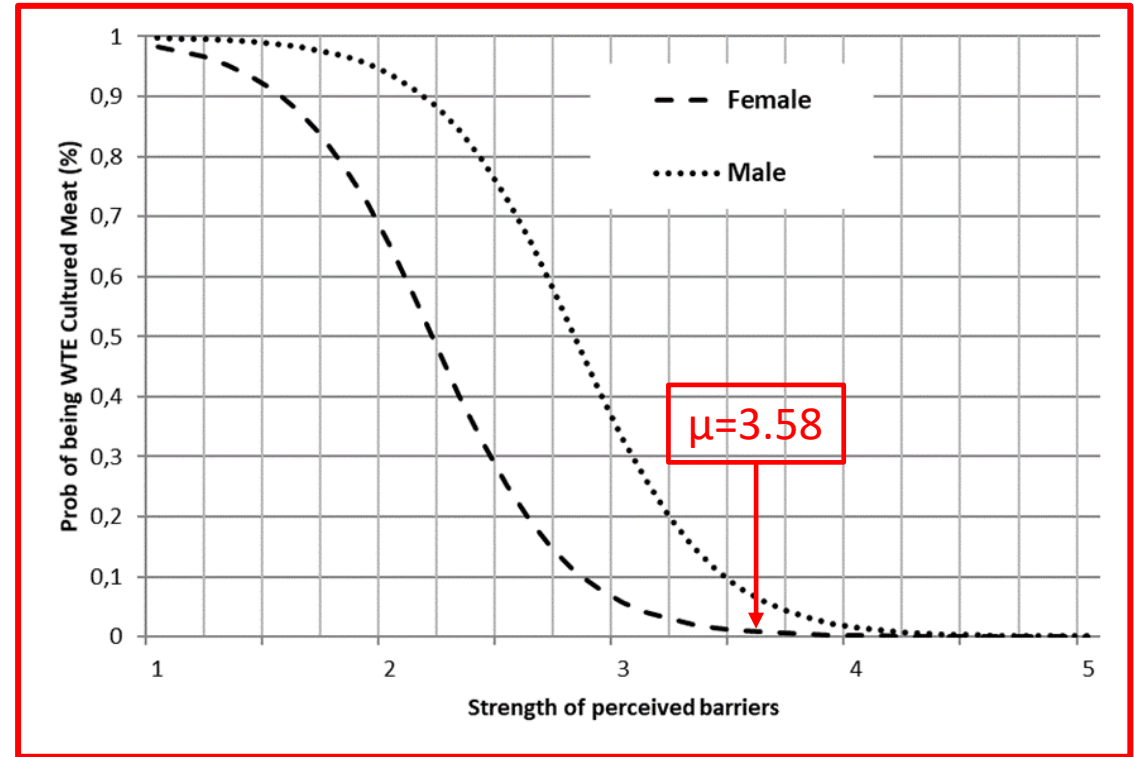
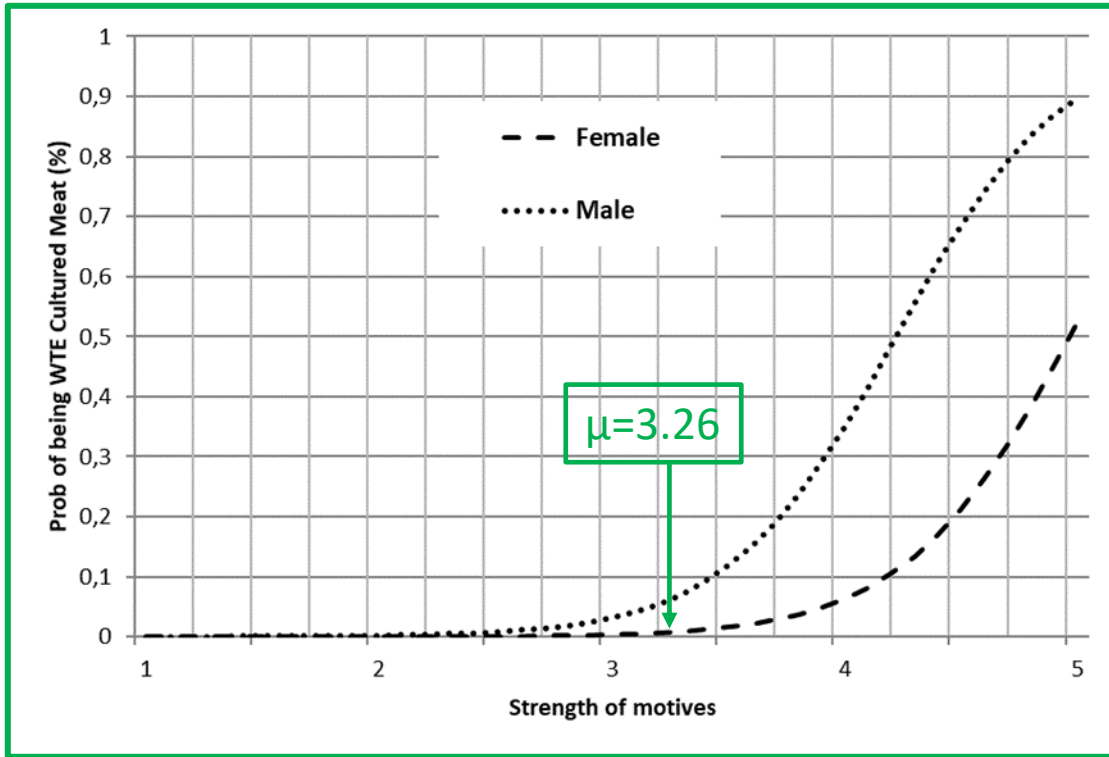
# Power of mass media negative publicity vs. positive news through generic advertising



General Food Law Regulation 178/2002 incl. establishment of



Perceived barriers emerge as being twice as powerful in shaping consumers' willingness to eat cultured meat as compared to motives (n=398, BE, 2013)



Animal welfare  
Food security  
Environmental sustainability

OR=16.3

Ratio of 2:1

OR=0.03  
1/OR=33.3

Not natural  
Not real  
No trust

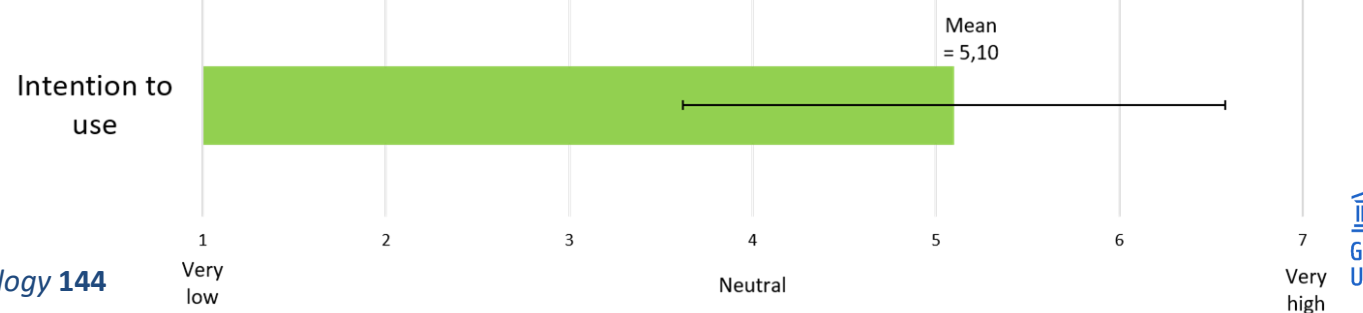
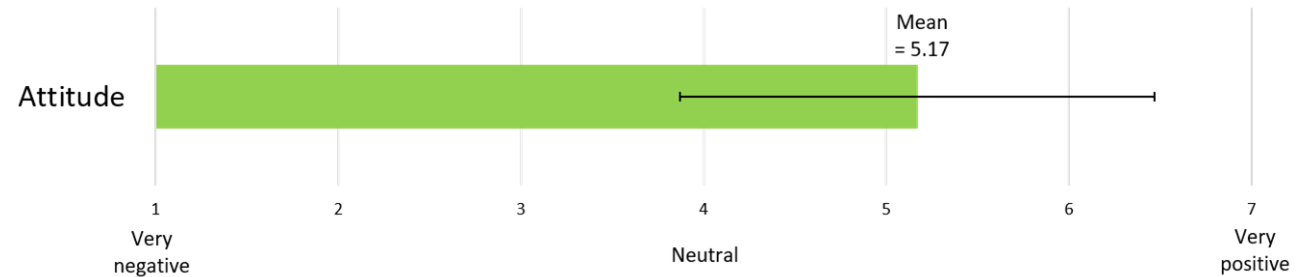
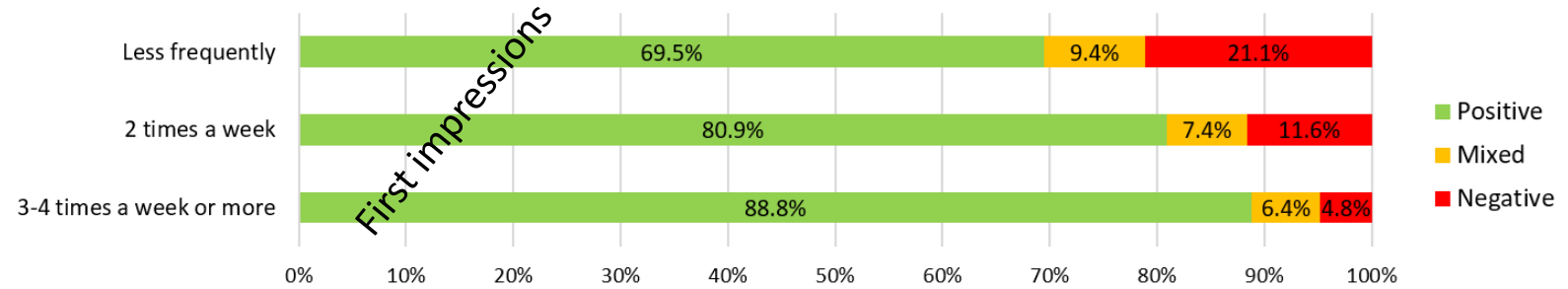
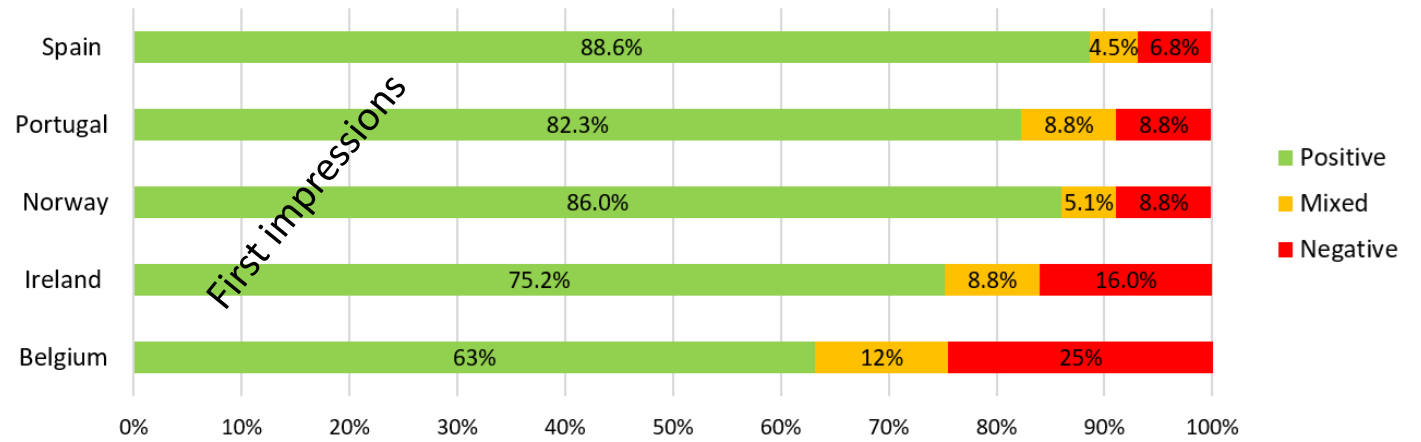
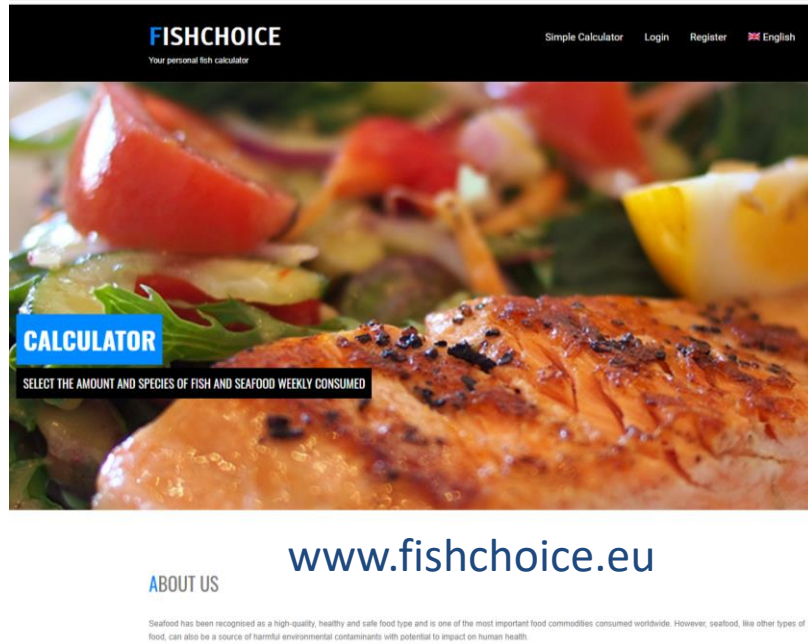
## More information on food labels ?



- Metaphor for “information overload yielding uncertainty”
- Best response strategy for consumers to make a decision ?
  - Ignore the information – **Easy, convenient, low involvement**
  - Process information systematically – **Requires a high degree of involvement**
  - Seek and use heuristics (easy decision rules; e.g. brands, quality labels) – **Success**
  - Avoid and search for an alternative route – **Switch to more trusted substitutes**



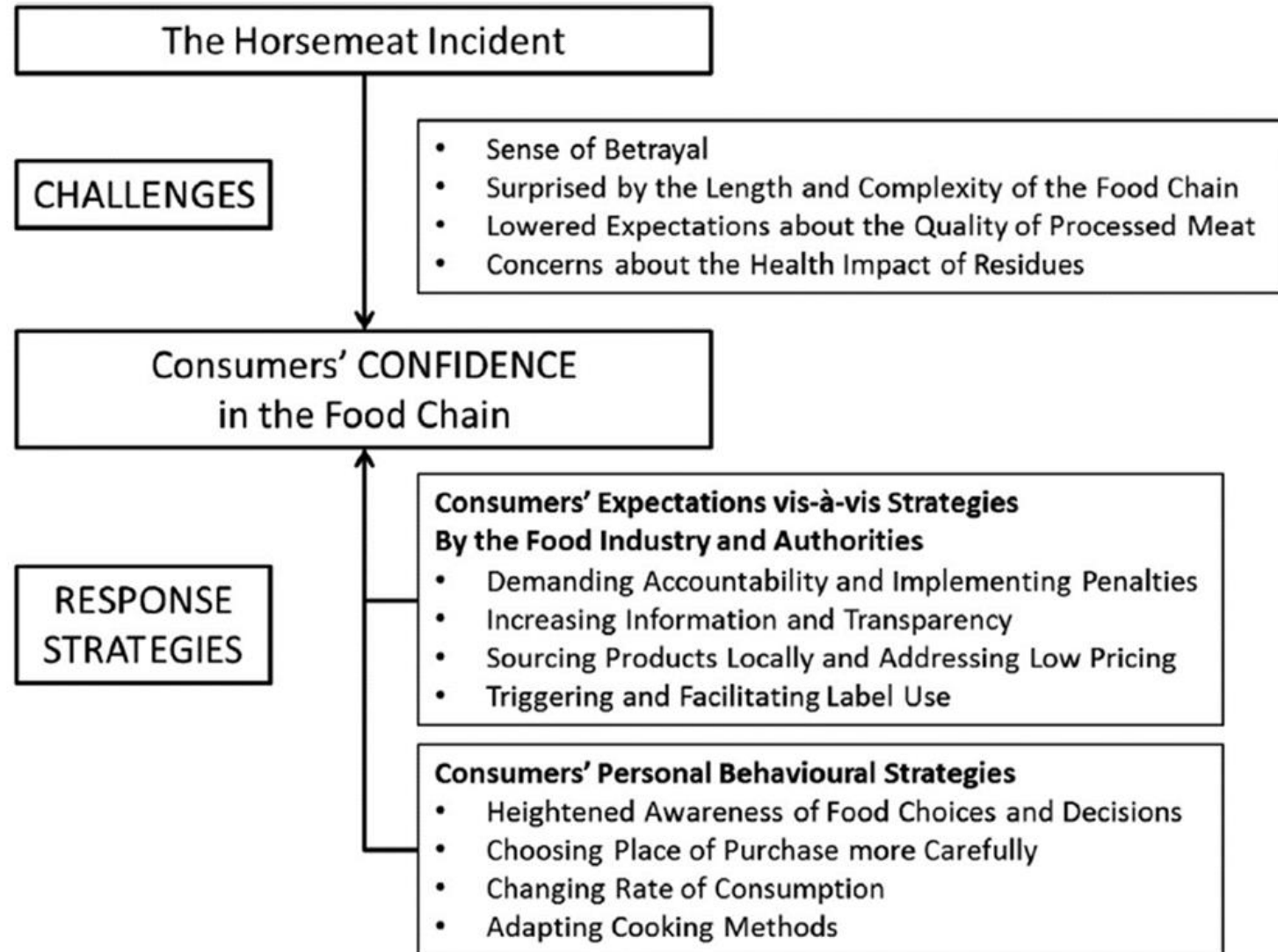
# Consumers' acceptance of an online tool with personalised risk-benefit information about seafood (n=703, NO, BE, IRL, PT, SP, 2016)



# Consumers' confidence, reflections and response strategies following the 2013 horsemeat incident

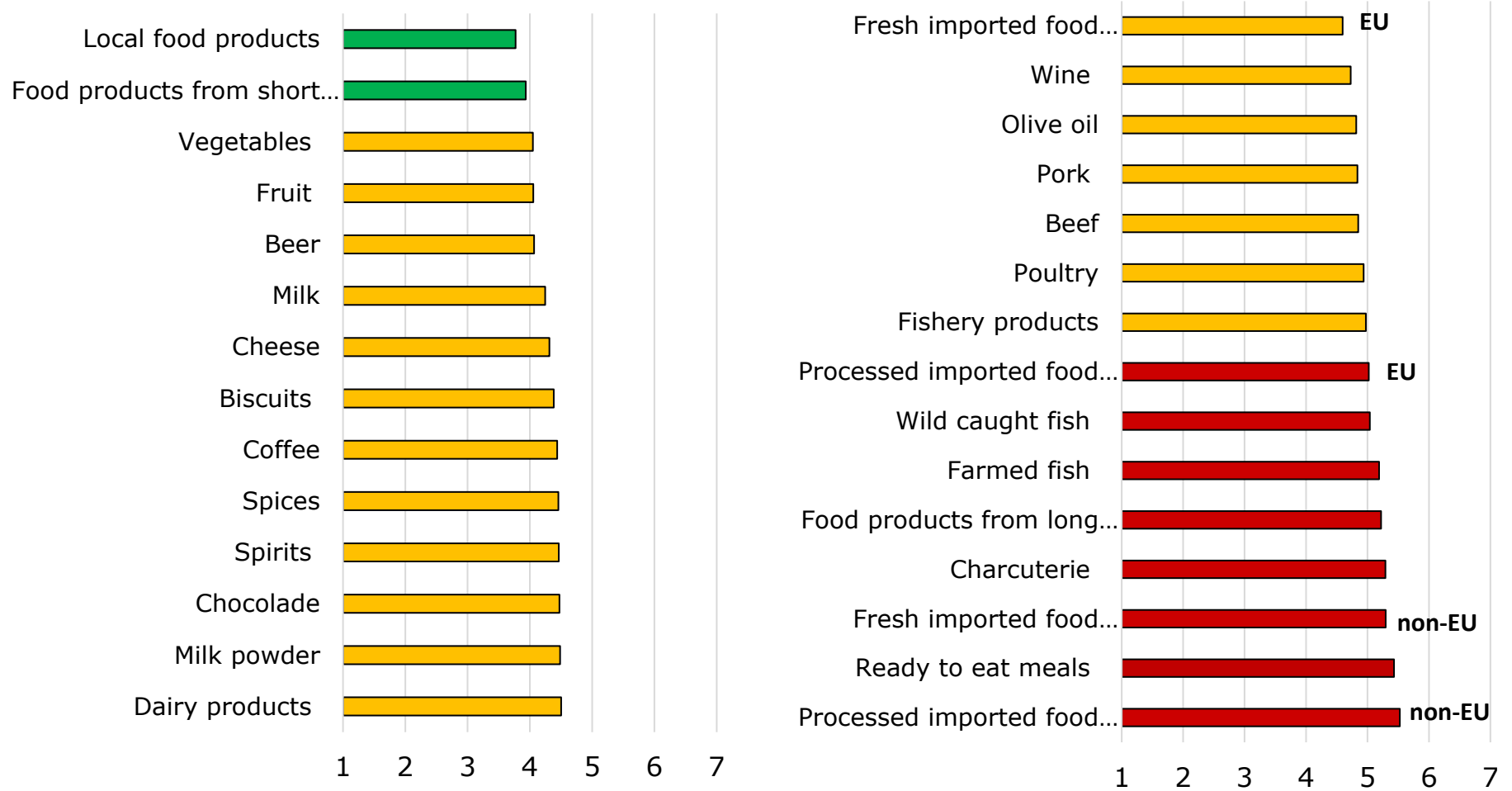
(n=61, UK, IRL, 2013)

Qualitative study using VIZZATA™ online deliberation tool within the frame of FOODRISC



# Consumers' perceived sensitivity of foods to adulteration or fraud

(n=474, BE, 2017-2018)



# Consumers' personal response strategies

(n=474, BE, 2017-2018)

## Because of fraud issues in the past or issues with the integrity of food products ...



# Consumers' expected policy response strategies

(n=474, BE, 2017-2018)

**Because of fraud issues in the past or issues with the integrity of food product, I think that...**



# The potential of social vs. traditional media



Trends in Food Science & Technology 30 (2013) 84–91



## Viewpoint

### The use of social media in food risk and benefit communication

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Áine McConnon<sup>b</sup>, Adrian Moss<sup>c</sup>,  
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#### Introduction

The last thirty years have witnessed growing attention to the question of how best to communicate risk and benefit in relation to food (Renn, 2008). The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) defines the ultimate goal of risk communication as: “to assist stakeholders, consumers and the general public in understanding the rationale behind a risk-based decision, so that they may arrive at a balanced judgement that reflects the factual evidence about the matter at hand in relation to their own interests and values” (EFSA, 2012: p. 4). Good communication practice seeks to bridge the divides between scientific experts, policy-makers, health practitioners, industry marketers, and consumers (Barnett *et al.*, 2011). However, it cannot be taken for granted that a target audience will pay attention to information intended for it (Verbeke, 2005). Effective communication requires clear identification and thorough understanding of the target audience’s needs and appropriate management of the information provision so that it optimally addresses particular needs and interests.

Much research has been done to examine the determi-

Discussed the emergence of new social media, its current application in the food sector in general, and with respect to food risk/benefit communication in specific.

Identified key challenges to successfully incorporate social media in future food risk/benefit communication strategies.



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Food Policy

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/foodpol](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/foodpol)

## Social media as a useful tool in food risk and benefit communication? A strategic orientation approach



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### ABSTRACT

Although considerable progress has been made in understanding the determinants of risk perception and in identifying the necessary components of effective food risk and benefit communication, this has not been matched with the development of efficient and appropriate communication tools. Little work has been done examining the implications of the explosion of new media and web technologies, which may offer potential for improving food risk and benefit communication. First, this study examines the views of stakeholders ( $n = 38$ ) and experts ( $n = 33$ ) in the food domain on the potential use of these emerging media for food risk/benefit communication. Based on in-depth interviews in six European countries (Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Spain and The Netherlands), strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of social media in food risk and benefit communication were identified. Second, a Strategic Orientation Round (SOR) was used to evaluate the relative importance of the SWOT components according to stakeholders ( $n = 10$ ) and experts ( $n = 13$ ). Results show that both stakeholders and experts confirm a future role of social media in food risk and benefit communication. Strengths as speed, accessibility and interaction make social media an interesting tool in crisis communication or issue awareness raising. Weaknesses as the lack of a filter, low trust, the risk of information overload and a communica-

Identified and evaluated the relative importance of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) facing social media in food risk and benefit communication.

Based on depth interviews and a Strategic Orientation Round with stakeholders and experts in six EU countries.



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Contents lists available at SciVerse ScienceDirect

Food Control

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/foodcont](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/foodcont)

## Consumer interest in receiving information through social media about the risks of pesticide residues

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Incidental information acquisition  
Information sufficiency  
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Purposeful information seeking  
Social media

### ABSTRACT

A consumer segmentation approach was used to determine consumer interest in using social media to obtain information concerning the risks of pesticide residues on vegetables. A total of 497 Flemish consumers participated in an online survey in March 2012 to assess interest in social media applications like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, forums and blogs, and Wikipedia as channels for receiving information about pesticide residues from official bodies. The participants were segmented in four clusters depending on their level of information sufficiency and level of interest in social media applications: "very satisfied; interested" (24%), "not satisfied; very interested" (28%), "not satisfied; some interest" (25%) and "satisfied; little interest" (23%). The segments with higher levels of satisfaction displayed higher trust in oneself and in public bodies to deal with the risks of pesticide residues and also contained relatively more males. Differences in information sufficiency between the segments were associated with different methods of information acquisition, i.e. by purposeful information seeking or by incidental information acquisition. The segments with higher interest in social media displayed higher familiarity and higher appreciation for the opportunities of social media. These segments also contained relatively younger participants. Popular channels like Facebook and Twitter scored low in terms of perceived usefulness.

Identified and profiled four segments of consumers based on their interest in using social media to obtain information about the risks of pesticide residues.

Speed and accessibility emerged as the main assets of social media, whereas lack of trustworthiness emerged as main perceived barrier.





## Seeking information about food-related risks: The contribution of social media



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Channel use

Segmentation

Food risk

Online resources

Traditional media

Risk Information Seeking and Processing model

### ABSTRACT

In the current information landscape, there are numerous channels for consumers to find information on issues pertaining to food safety. The rise in popularity of social media makes communicators question the extent to which resources should be allocated to these channels in order to reach new segments or audiences which are hard to reach through more traditional dissemination channels. A segmentation approach was used to identify groups of consumers based on their inclination to use different channels to seek information about food-related risks, including traditional media, online media and social media. In the wake of the 2011 *Escherichia coli* contamination crisis, the study focused on a bacterial contamination of fresh vegetables. Results were obtained through an online survey among 1264 participants from eight European countries in September 2012. Four segments were identified: 'a high cross-channel inclination' (24%), 'an established channel inclination' (31%), 'a moderate cross-channel inclination' (26%) and 'a low cross-channel inclination' (19%). Results show that social media can act as a complementary information channel for a particular segment, but that it is not a substitute for traditional or online media. Individuals who showed an inclination to use social media in conjunction with other channels considered it more important to be well informed, were more motivated to find additional information, were more sensitive to risks in general and perceived the likelihood of a food incident in the future to be larger. This

Identified and profiled four segments of consumers based on their inclination to use traditional, online and social media to seek information about food-related risks.

Concluded that social media is not a substitute for traditional or online media, but a complementary channel for a particular consumer segment.

People who are:

- keen on being well-informed
- more motivated to seek information
- more sensitive to risks in general
- perceiving a higher likelihood of food safety incidents

## Conclusions – Take home messages

1. Consumers have increasingly high expectations related to food
2. A multitude of factors shape their food choice decisions
3. Can deal with risk benefit information and are not necessarily scared off
4. Real safety risks vs. technological risks and unfamiliarity
5. Diversity of possible response strategies when facing uncertainty or risk
6. High and diverse expectations as concerns policy responses to risk
7. Social media as complementary to traditional media for specific consumer groups

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consumption of food:**

*Needs from a consumer point of view in relation to dietary advice*

**THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION  
QUESTIONS ARE WELCOME**

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