

Use and conceptions of GI- and organic labels among citizens in seven European countries. What role does sustainability play?

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Context and research questions

Political context

- *“Geographical indications can play an important role in terms of sustainability, including in the circular economy, thereby enhancing their heritage value and thus strengthening their role within the framework of national and regional policies with a view to meeting the objectives of the European Green Deal” (EU, 2024)*
- Food Quality Schemes and food policies: a way of empowering *“(…) consumers to make healthy, and sustainable food choices” (Amilien et al. 2022)*

Topics and questions

- *“How do different actors understand, practice, and adapt the nexus of place-based specificity **and sustainability qualities** in GIs, and what consequences does this dynamic bring?” (Hegnes, 2023)*
 - How will including sustainability help or disadvantage GIs in the marketplace?
 - Do we risk a state of label cannibalization if sustainability is more explicitly pronounced as a dimension of GI products?
 - What role may citizens consumers have in strengthening GIs as a marketing and policy tool?

Citizens use and conceptions of GIs – recent research

Strength2Food, Horizon 2020, grant agreement No [678024]

- **Hartmann et al. 2019:** Food quality scheme (FQS) products are not well known by consumers, who often do not understand or pay attention to the label
- **Amilien et al. 2022:** *“FQS rarely played a role in the everyday routinised practices of our participants. (...) little knowledge among the informants about the logos and limited interest in GI labels, despite their interest in the quality of food products and the values underpinning FQS.”*
- *“We observed that FQS were generally absent, or remained in the background at best, in our participants’ everyday planning.”*
- *“During the walkaround tours in grocery stores, we noticed participants hardly used these labels as visible cues that guided their purchases. Private labels owned by retailers and food manufacturers were often better known than FQS and deemed both sufficient and reliable.”* (Amilien et al., 2022)

Organic-PLUS, Horizon 2020, grant agreement No [774340]

- **Vittersø et al., 2024:** Indirect quality aspects (credence attributes) less important although variation across Europe.
- **Vittersø et al., 2019:** Variation in use of organic and other quality labels.
- **Vittersø et al., 2019:** Recognition and potential confusion of different quality labels.

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- **Vittersø et al., forthcoming:** Retailers promotion of similar products and own brands in direct competition with GI products
- Consumers unaware of GI labels, yet buying locally GI products (heritage foods)

To what extent do you take the following labels into account when you do your grocery shopping?

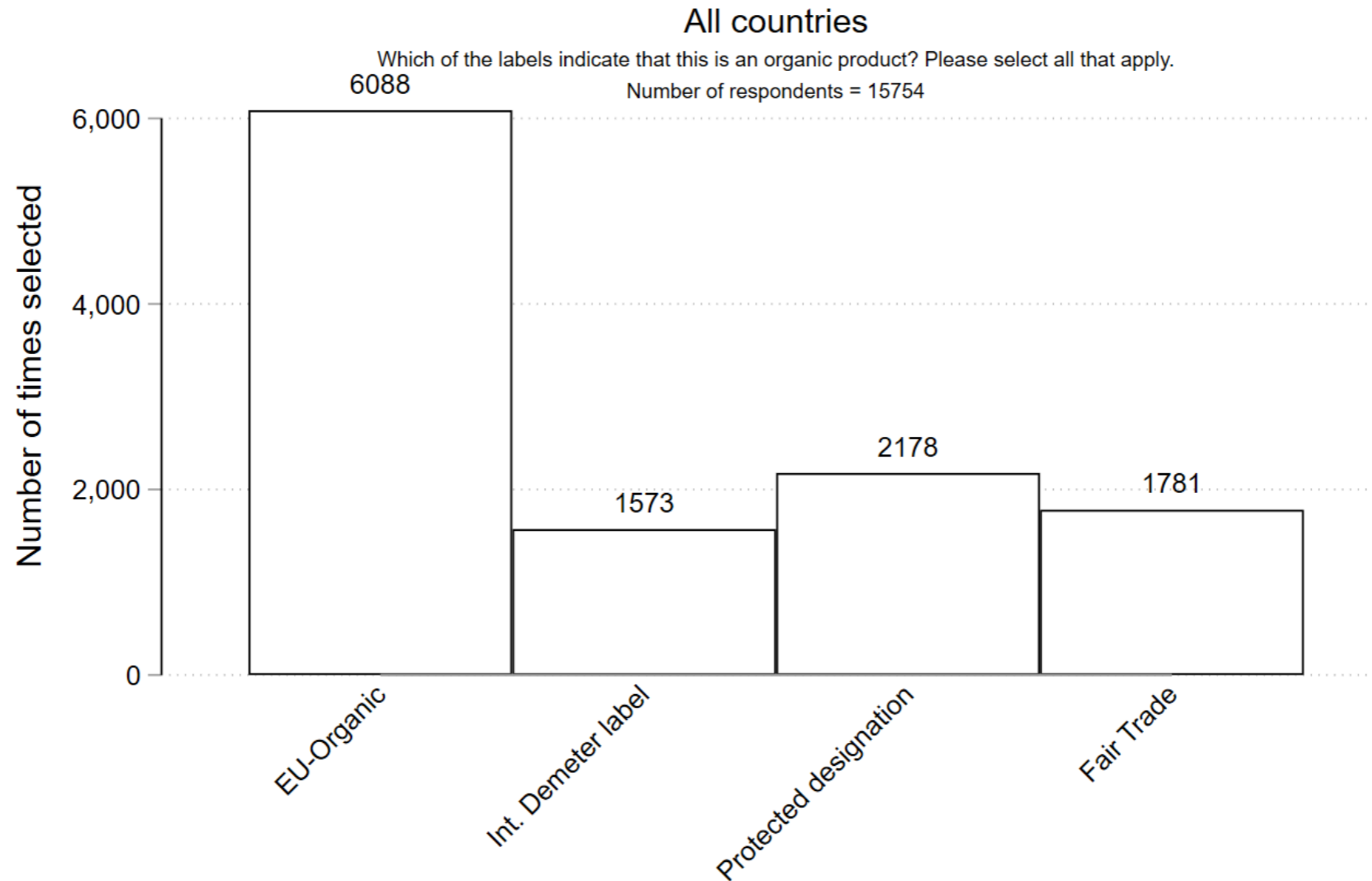


	Country							
	Norway	France	UK	Spain	Poland	Italy	Germany	Total
Never/almost never	45	25	33	24	29	21	39	31
Sometimes	10	33	13	32	32	29	17	24
Almost every time / every time	4	27	14	26	16	36	12	19
Don't recognize label / do not know	41	14	39	19	23	14	32	26
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	2072	2302	2285	2242	2255	2261	2302	15719

Table: Product labels can be an important source of information when shopping for food. To what extent do you take the following labels into account when you do your grocery shopping?

Source: Vittersø et al., 2019.

Which of the labels indicate that this is an organic product?



Discussion

Emphasis on sustainability dimensions of GIs adding a quality dimension?

More complexity challenge for communication and fear of label cannibalization

Retailers' role as gatekeepers:

- compete on price less on quality
- promoting own brands rather than GI products enhance the problem of invisibility, confusion and label cannibalization

Citizens consumers:

- Citizens consumers not aware of the role FQS play in facilitating quality- and sustainability dimensions (Amilien et al., 2022)
- Need for facilitation of self-reflexivity among citizens – knowledge and competencies converted into meaning through engagement in “*planned activities*” (Amilien et al., 2022)

Conclusion

Focusing on synergies between the GI label as a marketing tool and other arenas for marketing of GIs, such as direct sales, may strengthen the awareness, engagement and use of GI products.

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