

THE RECOGNITION OF THE EU ORGANIC LABEL AMONG THE HUNGARIAN CONSUMERS

LILI JANTYIK, ÁRON TÖRÖK

Corvinus University of Budapest, Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development 1093 Budapest Fővám tér 8., Hungary
aron.torok@uni-corvinus.hu

The organic label of the European Union was introduced in 1991 and tries to promote the organic production and to draw consumers' attention on the labelled products.

The production of organic agricultural products and foods have gained a high importance in several countries, especially in Austria and Sweden, where the 21% and 17% of the total cultivated lands is for organic, while the number of involved farmers is also very high, 20.976 and 5.709, respectively. According to IFOAM, in 2016 Hungary was far behind the EU average with 2% of organic land and 1.971 farmers (the average of the EU28 is 6% and 9.583 producers).

The market share of the organic products was between 8-10% in Denmark, Sweden, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Austria, while the highest per capita organic consumption was measured in Switzerland (274,3 EUR/year/capita). The organic consumption in Hungary is still in its infancy, in 2016 the per capita value was only 3 EUR/year, while the EU average was 53,7 EUR.

The abovementioned datasets clearly show that in Hungary the organic production is much higher than the consumption, the majority of the Hungarian organic products are exported to Western-European markets. On the other hand, in the supply of the international food chains the number of organic products is increasing and the supply consists of imported products, the majority of them labelled with the EU organic label.

The aim of this paper is to measure the recognition of the EU organic label among the Hungarian consumers. Therefore, results of previous consumer surveys conducted by the Eurobarometer are compared by the results of our survey. As part of a H2020 research project an online consumer survey (n=1.019) was implemented during the second half of 2017.

Results show that among the European food quality labels the organic label is one of the most recognized ones in Hungary, but its average awareness is still very low: less than every fourth Hungarian consumer knows what this label is for, on average. On the other hand, this low recognition could be explained by the fact, that the EU label is not very self-explanatory, and parallel with the community system the national systems with their own labels in every member states – also in Hungary – coexist.