



Consumer trends

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Introduction:

Social changes are determined by many and varied factors, but surely among those that have most influenced recent changes would be:

- **New technologies:** They are everywhere and have changed our way of communicating and informing ourselves, directly impacting our consumption habits.
- **Globalization and immigration:** With economic growth there are two types of phenomena, the arrival of people from other countries to fill certain jobs and, on the other, this same growth increases foreign business activity, generating the need to travel, and with it, greater exposure to foreign cultures.
- **New forms of family organization:** Single-parent families, individual households, independent youth or couples without children (“Dinks”: Double income no kids) are some of them. And with them comes the change of habits with a higher percentage of meals away from home or pre-cooked meals.
- **Longer life expectancy.** Today people between 65-75 have greater purchasing power as they have freed themselves from financial burdens and more free time. Allowing them to travel or dedicate their time to committed activities and in turn developing new consumption habits, some of them focused on a healthier life.
- **Economic and health crisis:** 2008-2009 economic crises had an impact on consumers decisions. Since then, consumers are more critical of their decisions; they look at and compare the quality of what they buy, and they trust less in brand messages. COVID-19 pandemic has also influenced consumer trends, and nobody knows if changes produced will be for short or long time.

In developed countries, these social changes determine consumer trends at the same time that they allow the economic development of other countries that in turn will also change their consumer trends, although not in exactly the same way.

Food consumer trends in EU

Europeans consume large quantities of animal products per capita. Protein of animal origin covers over 58% of the total protein intake of European diets and EU27 per capita consumption is more than twice the world average, though still less than in North America. In 2020, each European consumed 69.5 kilograms of meat annually. Since 2011, there have been significant drops in meat consumption in several EU countries and this decline is accompanied by a shift in the consumer

basket with a decrease in beef consumption and an ongoing replacement of pig meat by poultry meat. This trend is not shared by other developed countries, such as the USA where the consumption of animal protein does not decline or developing countries such as China where it continues to grow despite the recent health crisis but looking for a much more traditional product profile looking for more secure products.

With more and better-informed consumers food is increasingly the focus of discussion for many different reasons: increased rates of childhood obesity due to excessive sugar intake, a growing obsession with a healthy diet, sustainability in animal production, the regulation of new protein sources with insects or artificial meat on the head, etc. All these concerns have generated an increase in groups with particular eating behaviours: vegans, vegetarians or flexitarians (consumers who reduce their meat intake); at the same time that the demand for products classified as organic has increased. These new trends will grow in the future. Thus, for example, more than 8% of the young population in countries such as Germany, France or Italy consider themselves vegetarian or vegan.

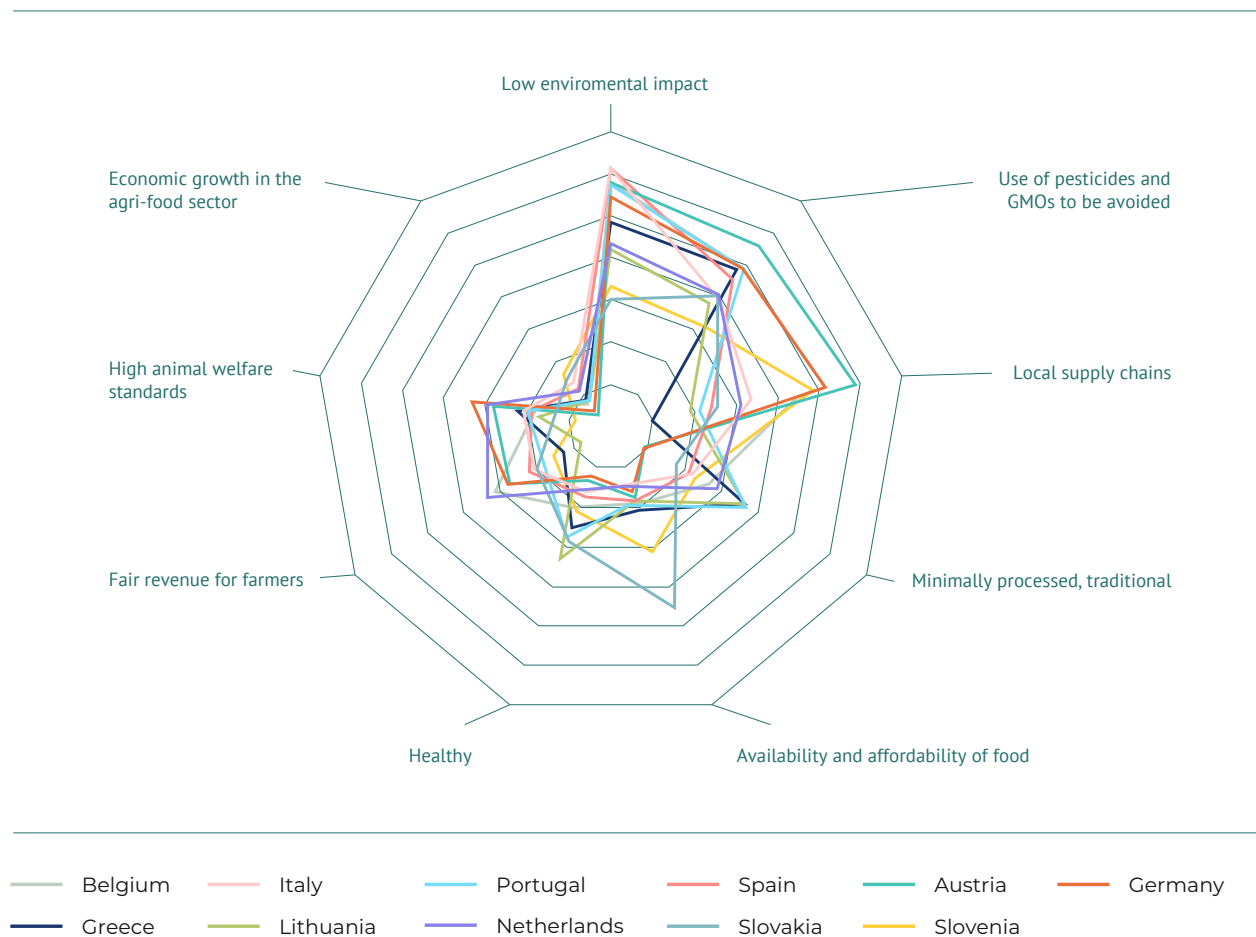
What are the motivations that lead consumers to stop or reduce the consumption of protein of animal origin? The main reason for reducing meat consumption according to some studies is the negative effects that meat consumption can have on health (40%), followed by animal welfare (17%), price and the negative effects that its production has on the environment. Some studies forecast for the EU an additional 17% drop in meat consumption by 2030. In fact, according to the World Health Organization, a healthy diet is “limited in meat (if eaten), especially red meat and processed meat products” and according to the World Cancer Research Fund the total consumption of red meat per year should not go over 36 Kg/capita/year (700 g red meat/week).

These forecasts could fall short if the motivation to stop eating meat for other reasons such as sustainability increases. A recent study carried out by the European Consumers Organization with the purpose to understand better attitudes towards sustainable food and the extent to which consumers realize the impact that their food choices have on the environment finds out that an average of 41.6% of consumers say they have either stopped (6.2%) or reduced (35.4%) their red meat consumption due to environmental concerns. Curiously, when they were asked what a sustainable diet meant to them, their interpretation mixed concepts: environmentally friendly, without GMO's and pesticides and

locally produced. When sustainability of meat production with the environment is the problem, increasing organic production does not seem to make much sense and just the consumer disorientation in the understanding of the meaning would partly explain the sustained increase in organic production in Europe.

For sustainable food production, the annual per capita red meat intake should not exceed 10.2 Kg. and if we consider the total meat consumption goes up to 31.3 Kg. according to the EAT-Lancet Commission. These meat consumptions represent approximately half of current consumption in Europe, which evidently makes it very clear that the decreasing trend will continue.

What comes to your mind when thinking about 'sustainable food'



The European Consumer Organization. One bite at a time: consumers and the transition to sustainable food. Analysis of a survey of European consumers on attitudes towards sustainable food. June 2020

What can the producer sector do?

Working from the meat sector and after knowing the opinion of the consumer about meat, it does not seem that the work of informing the consumer in those aspects that concern them has been carried out properly and this is perhaps the area that in the immediate future must be addressed. The transmission of information is an important part, but there is another one still more and that is to improve those aspects that concern, because surely there is still much that can be done. Usually, when products can demonstrate strong social and / or environmental credentials, more consumers will be willing to pay for them, and this is a job for the producer sector to do.

But one cannot be innocent and not think that the different organizations will not continue pressing to achieve their objectives using any opportunity that the sector presents to them, as the report of the European Consumer Organization makes clear when it says: “For those consumers for whom the recommendation to cut down on red meat due to environmental concerns does not resonate sufficiently, making the case for reducing red meat consumption for health or animal welfare reasons might be more effective”. In the face of these attitudes, we can only be extremely diligent in the exercise of our responsibilities and fully transparent in their communication, but without forgetting that the consumer when buying never forgets the cost and therefore, compliance with what is considered basic it should not entail an extra cost.

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