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IMPORTANCE OF ORGANIC FARMING CERTIFICATION FOR CONSUMERS

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Purpose: The aim of the study is to assess the importance of organic farming certification for consumers and their behaviour on the market for certified organic food products.
Design/methodology/approach: A survey was conducted using a proprietary online and physical questionnaire on a group of 240 respondents from the Pomeranian and Masovian Voivodeships. The results were subjected to statistical analysis using the chi-square test and comparison of structure indicators.
Findings: It was found that the majority of respondents had not encountered the organic farming certificate on food products and do not pay attention to it when shopping. Less than half of respondents buy certified organic food products. Although the majority of respondents believe that food products with the organic farming certificate are of higher quality, the vast majority of respondents are not able to pay a higher price for such products. Gender, age, and level of education are the characteristics that differentiate respondents' answers on organic farming certificates on food products.
Research limitations/implications: The study was accompanied by limitations related to access to respondents and the research area – the study was a pilot. Further research may concern consumers' knowledge of the requirements that an organic certified food product must meet, as well as the difficulties and barriers perceived by the organic food producers.
Social implications: Increased consumer knowledge on and awareness of organic farming certifications of food products can increase the competitiveness of such products, despite the identified barrier to consumption of these products, which is their price. Increasing the consumption of certified organic food can enhance public health and increase the market share of these foods.
Originality/value: The originality of the article results from the assessment carried out on the importance of food products with an organic farming certificate and barriers to the sale of this type of products. The addressees of the article are organic food producers, consumers, environmental organisations, and government agencies.
Keywords: organic farming, Euro-leaf, consumers.
Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, the discussion of issue of destruction and pollution of the environment and food, which is low in quality and heavily chemically modified, and therefore has a negative impact on health, becomes more and more popular. The issue of organic production is very important for the future of humanity and the Earth. Organic farming might take of the environment, food, and health, so that future generations will not have to worry about these problems. In times of poor food quality and insufficient education on the issue, this is an important topic for consumers.

Currently, organic farming is defined as a comprehensive system of food production and appropriate farm management that combines the best practices for the surrounding environment, an appropriate degree of biodiversity, protection of natural resources and the use of high standards related to animal welfare (Regulation (EU) 2018/848). Therefore, the production of organic food performs many functions such as providing an organic commodity on the markets and acting for the benefit of society and the public good, since it has an impact on animal welfare, environmental protection, and development of rural agricultural areas (Łuczka-Bakuła, 2007; Sambor, 2020; Zieliński, 2020).

Currently, organic production in agriculture is regulated in Poland by the European Union regulations, as well as by national laws including attached implementing regulations. The main EU legislation, which from 1 January 2022 regulates organic production and labelling of organic products, is Regulation (EU) 2018/848 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 (together with a number of delegated and implementing regulations). This regulation establishes the objectives and principles of all stages of production, preparation, distribution, and control of organic farming products, as well as the use of indications relating to organic production on labels and in advertisements (Regulation (EU) 2018/848; Sambor, 2020; Sazońska, 2022). Meanwhile the Polish basic legal act in this area is the Act of 23 June 2022 on organic farming and production. It specifies the tasks and competence of authorities and organisational units in the field of organic production and matters to the extent not regulated in the provisions of Regulation (EU) 2018/848 (Ustawa o rolnictwie..., 2022).

All food products that the vendors wish to sell as organic within the European Union should bear the "Euro-leaf" logo, the certification body number, and the place of production of the raw materials that are ingredients of a particular product. The logo gives EU organic products a consistent visual identity. It makes it easier for consumers to recognise organic products and helps farmers to market them across the EU (EC, 2024). The EU organic production logo is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. EU organic logo.

Source: (EC, 2024).

The organic production logo can only be used on products that have undergone organic production certification by an authorised certification body or control authority. This means that it is obligatory for these products to comply with demanding conditions concerning production, processing, storage, and transport methods. In addition, the products must have at least 95 percent organic ingredients in their composition, and the remaining 5 percent must meet special conditions (Regulation (EU) 2018/848).

In Poland, organic production and certification bodies are supervised by the Main Inspectorate of Agricultural and Food Quality Inspection (MAFQI), which also cooperates closely with the Office of Competition and Consumer Protection, the Veterinary Inspection, and the State Inspectorate for Plant Protection and Seeds Service (Miecznikowska-Jerzak, 2022; Ustawa o rolnictwie…, 2022). In organic farming, the MAFQI and the certification bodies constitute a control and certification system, the functioning of which is a basic guarantee for the consumer that the products on the market have been produced in accordance with the applicable regulations on agriculture (GIJHARS, 2023). Currently, there are thirteen authorised certification bodies in place to verify whether an operator is operating in accordance with the organic production rules contained in Regulation (EU) 2018/848 (IJHARS, 2024).

The organic food market is growing all over the world, but the highest growth rate is observed in Europe. This is due to higher demand for organic food, which can be attributed to growing environmental and health awareness, as well as an increase in the purchasing power of European consumers (Pawlewicz, 2019; Wrzaszcz, 2023). The results of the research showed significant regional differences in both total and per capita retail sales of organic food on the EU market. Retail sales of organic food are higher in countries with higher GDP and higher household consumption per capita. Sales and consumption of organic food are highest in Germany, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Switzerland (Pawlewicz, 2019). In Poland, despite noticeable decreases in the number of organic producers and agricultural areas in recent years, a clear increase in its value was noted on the market, namely in 2021 it almost doubled compared to 2015 (Koalicja na rzecz BIO, 2021). However, previous research results indicate that the consumption of organic food and the knowledge of organic signs in Poland is still at a fairly low level (Chudzian, Chatys, 2014; Wilczyńska, 2015; Hermaniuk, 2018; Witek, 2015; Kułyk, Michałowska, 2018). Questions arise as to the current awareness and behaviour of consumers towards products with an organic farming certificate, whether consumers are able

to pay a higher price for food products with an organic farming certificate and whether they see it as synonymous with quality. The aim of the study is to assess the importance of organic farming certification for respondents and their behaviour on the market of certified organic food products depending on gender, age, and education level.

2. Methods

The research was conducted using a survey questionnaire constructed for the study. It contained twelve substantive questions and three questions relating to the criteria characterising the study group. The survey took place in 2024 in the Pomeranian and Mazovian Voivodeships. The survey was conducted using a questionnaire in both online and physical form. 253 questionnaires were returned, out of which 240 were complete, which were analysed. The questionnaire was validated on a group of 12 respondents, and as a result the questions were slightly modified.

The study used proportional selection. The characteristics of the study group are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.
The characteristics of the study group

Feature	Category	N	%
Gender	women	122	50,8%
	men	118	49,2%
Age [years]	18-29	60	25,0%
	30-49	60	25,0%
	50-65	62	25,8%
	65 and above	58	24,2%
Education	primary	10	4,2%
	secondary	108	45,0%
	higher	122	50,8%

Source: own research.

Of the 240 adults whose responses were analysed, 122 were female and 118 were male. There were 60 respondents in the 18-29 and 30-49 age brackets, 62 in the 50-65 age bracket, and 58 in the 65 and above age bracket. In contrast, the survey was dominated by respondents with secondary (108 people) and higher education (122 people). Only 10 respondents with primary education took part in the survey.

The numerical material obtained from the survey was subjected to statistical analysis using the Statistica 13.3 package. A chi-square test of independence was used (Stanisz, 2006). The aim of the test was to verify the hypotheses about the dependence of respondents' responses to the questions on their gender, age, and education level. Due to the low number of respondents with primary education (10 respondents), this category was combined with the "secondary education" category. Moreover, due to the low number of respondents aged 65 and above

purchasing certified organic food products (4 people), this age category was omitted from the testing. The verification was performed at the significance level = 0.05, based on the test probability value "p".

3. Results

The first questions asked about the respondents' exposure to the "Euro-leaf" logo on food products, as well as familiarity with and perception of the logo on food products. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.
Summary of respondents' answers regarding attitudes towards certified organic products – percentage of indications and results of the chi-square test

Feature	Category	1			2			3		
		Yes [%]	No [%]	X^2	Yes [%]	No [%]	X^2	Yes [%]	No [%]	X^2
	total	33,3	66,7	–	47,5	52,5	–	22,5	77,5	–
Gender	women	41,0	59,0	0,011*	49,2	50,8	0,596	33,6	66,4	<0,001*
	men	25,4	74,6		45,8	54,2		11,0	89,0	
Age [years]	18-29	63,3	36,7	<0,001*	60,0	40,0	0,198	10,0	90,0	<0,001*
	30-49	33,3	66,7		53,3	46,7		21,7	78,3	
	50-65	29,0	71,0		48,4	51,6		48,4	51,6	
Education	secondary	28,0	72,0	0,101	33,9	66,1	<0,001*	18,6	81,4	0,265
	higher	38,5	61,5		60,7	39,3		26,2	73,8	

Questions: 1. Have you encountered organic farming certification on food products?, 2. Are you able to recognise the organic farming label?, 3. Do you pay attention to organic farming certification when shopping for food products?

* means that the tested relationship is significant at the level $\alpha = 0.05$ ($p < 0.05$).

Source: own research.

The survey found that the majority of respondents had not encountered the EU organic farming certificate on food products (66.7%). Women encountered it almost twice as often (41%) as men (25.4%). As age increases, the percentage of people who have encountered organic farming certificate on food products decreases (63.3% of respondents under the age of 29, 33.3% of respondents aged 30-49, and 29% of respondents aged 50-65).

Almost every second respondent (47.5%) declares that they are able to correctly identify the organic farming mark. Taking gender and age into account, familiarity with the "Euro-leaf" sign is at a similar level. Respondents with higher education are much more likely to declare familiarity with the "Euro-leaf" (60.7%) than people with lower education (33.9%).

The majority of the surveyed group (77.5%) do not pay attention to the organic farming certificate on food products when shopping. Men are much less likely to pay attention to it (11.0%) than women (33.6%). As age increases, the percentage of respondents who pay attention to organic farming certificates when shopping for food products increases (10% of

respondents under the age of 29, 21.7% of respondents aged 30-49, and 48.4% of respondents aged 50-65). The level of education is not a differentiating feature here.

Respondents were then asked how often they buy certified organic food products (Table 2). One in two consumers (50%) does not buy certified organic food products at all. A higher percentage of women than men buy (with varying frequency) certified organic food products (total: 64% women, 35.6% men). As age increases, the percentage of people who buy these products often and occasionally increases (cumulatively: 10% of respondents under the age of 29, 25% of respondents aged 30-49, and 51.6% of respondents aged 50-65), and the percentage of people who do not buy them at all decreases (55% of respondents under the age of 29, 45% of respondents aged 30-49, and about 10% of respondents aged 50-65). These results are in line with respondents' declarations about seeing the "Euro-leaf" label on products. A higher percentage of respondents with higher education buy (with varying frequency) certified organic food products (around 60%; while for respondents with lower education it's around 40%).

Table 2.
The results of the analysis of responses to the question regarding the frequency of purchase of food products with organic farming certification – percentage of indications and results of the chi-square test

Feature	Category	Often [%]	Sometimes [%]	Rarely [%]	Not at all [%]	X^2
	total	4,2	18,3	27,5	50,0	–
Gender	women	8,2	25,4	30,3	36,1	0,007*
	men	0,0	11,0	24,6	64,4	
Age [years]	18-29	0,0	10,0	35,0	55,0	<0,001*
	30-49	3,3	21,7	30,0	45,0	
	50-65	12,9	38,7	38,7	9,7	
Education	secondary	0,9	15,3	22,9	61,0	<0,001*
	higher	7,4	21,3	32,0	39,3	

* means that the tested relationship is significant at the level $\alpha = 0,05$ ($p < 0,05$).

Source: own research.

Respondents were also asked what type of certified organic food products they buy. The most frequently selected product category was eggs (70.8%). Other types of products frequently mentioned by respondents were fruit and vegetables (62.9%), milk and dairy products (53.3%), cereal products (48.3%), and fruit and vegetable products (40.4%). In contrast, respondents are less likely to buy certified teas and coffees (24.2%), meat and fish (20.8%), fats (16.3%), and spirits (12.9%).

Respondents were then asked to what extent organic farming certification determines their decision to purchase a food product (Table 3). No respondent identified organic farming certification as a very important factor that influences their decision to buy a food product. For more than half of the consumers surveyed (55.8%), the organic farming certificate is not a determinant for the purchase of a product. In contrast, gender, age, and education are the characteristics that differentiate the percentage of people for whom organic certification determines the purchase of the product. In total, around 65% of women declare that this

certificate is relevant to varying degrees, while only around 22% of men indicated these response categories. In addition, a total of around 37% of respondents aged up to 29, 43.3% of respondents aged 30-49, and as many as around 90% of respondents over 50 declare that the certificate is important to them to varying degrees. Taking into account the level of education, the organic farming certification is of varying importance for a total of about 52.5% of respondents with higher education, and only for about 35.5% of respondents with lower education.

Table 3.
The results of the analysis of responses to the question on the extent to which organic farming certification determines the respondents' decision to purchase a food product – percentage of indications and results of the chi-square test

Feature	Category	Not important at all [%]	Not very important [%]	Important [%]	X^2
	total	55,8	30,0	14,2	–
Gender	women	34,4	45,9	19,7	<0,001*
	men	78,0	13,6	8,5	
Age [years]	18-29	63,3	30,0	6,7	<0,001*
	30-49	56,7	30,0	13,3	
	50-65	11,3	53,2	35,5	
Education	secondary	64,4	28,0	7,6	0,008*
	higher	47,5	32,0	20,5	

* means that the tested relationship is significant at the level $\alpha = 0,05$ ($p < 0,05$).

Source: own research.

A question was also asked about the possibility of paying a higher price for food products with an organic farming certificate (Table 4).

Table 4.
Results of the analysis of responses to the question regarding the possibility of paying a higher price for certified organic food products – percentage of indications and results of the chi-square test

Feature	Category	Yes [%]	No [%]	X^2
	total	25,0	75,0	–
Gender	women	32,8	67,2	0,022*
	men	17,0	83,1	
Age [years]	18-29	13,3	86,7	<0,001*
	30-49	20,0	80,0	
	50-65	64,5	35,5	
Education	secondary	17,8	82,2	0,034*
	higher	32,0	68,0	

* means that the tested relationship is significant at the level $\alpha = 0,05$ ($p < 0,05$).

Source: own research.

Three out of four respondents (75%) said they are not able to pay a higher price for food products with organic farming certification. Women accept a higher price for these to a greater extent than men (about 33% of women, 17% of men). Similarly, respondents with higher education are more accepting of paying a higher price (32% positive responses, compared to 17.8% of respondents with lower education). Furthermore, as age increases, the proportion of

people who accept a higher price for certified organic food products increases (13.3% of respondents under 29 years, 20% of respondents aged 30-49 years, and about 64.5% of respondents aged 50-65 years).

Respondents were asked whether, in their opinion, food products certified as organic were safer for the body than products without such certification (Table 5).

Table 5.
Results of the analysis of responses to the question on respondents' opinion on the safety of food products in certified organic farming – percentage of indications and results of the chi-square test

Feature	Category	Definitely yes [%]	They are the same level of safe [%]	X^2
	total	30,8	69,2	–
Gender	women	42,6	57,4	<0,001*
	men	18,6	81,4	
Age [years]	18-29	20,0	80,0	<0,001*
	30-49	21,7	78,3	
	50-65	62,9	37,1	
Education	secondary	23,7	76,3	0,038*
	higher	37,7	62,3	

* means that the tested relationship is significant at the level $\alpha = 0,05$ ($p < 0,05$).

Source: own research.

None of the respondents agreed with the statement that certified organic products are less safe than those without certification. The majority of the group surveyed (69.2%) believes that organic food products are as safe for the human body as products without such certification. Women believe to a higher degree than men that food products certified as organic are significantly safer (42.6% of women, 18.6% of men). Similarly, those aged 50-65 feel the same way, to a greater extent than the other respondents (62.9% of indications; while for the younger respondents it was 20-21.7% of indications). Respondents with higher education are also more likely to consider food products certified as organic to be significantly safer (approximately 37.7% of indications, compared to 23.7% of respondents with lower education).

In addition, respondents expressed an opinion on whether the organic farming certificate is the same for them as ensuring high quality of the food product (Table 6). More than half of the surveyed group (54.2%) agreed with the statement that organic farming certification is the same as ensuring a high quality food product. Women agree with this opinion to a greater extent than men (total: about 80% women, about 48% men). Similarly, those aged 50-65 agree with it to a greater extent than other respondents (total: 80% of indications, around 45% of indications for younger respondents). Respondents with higher education are much more likely to believe that an organic farming certificate confirms the high quality of a food product than those with a lower education (around 90% of indications, compared to 36.4% of respondents with lower education).

Table 6.
Results of the analysis of responses to the question on respondents' opinion on whether organic farming certification is the same as ensuring a high quality food product – percentage of indications and results of the chi-square test

Feature	Category	I fully agree [%]	I mostly agree [%]	It is hard to say [%]	X^2
	total	9,2	54,2	34,2	–
Gender	women	13,1	65,6	16,4	<0,001*
	men	5,1	42,4	52,5	
Age [years]	18-29	6,7	40,0	50,0	0,002*
	30-49	10,0	33,3	56,7	
	50-65	19,4	61,3	12,9	
Education	secondary	5,9	30,5	58,5	<0,001*
	higher	12,3	77,1	10,7	

* means that the tested relationship is significant at the level $\alpha = 0,05$ ($p < 0,05$).
Due to the low number of indications, two categories were omitted: I rather disagree (n = 6) and I strongly disagree (n = 0).

Source: own research.

Respondents also expressed an opinion on whether products with organic farming certification have greater sensory appeal than products without such certification (Table 7).

Table 7.
Results of the analysis of responses to the question on respondents' opinion on whether products certified as organic have greater sensory appeal than products without such certification – percentage of indications and results of the chi-square test

Feature	Category	I fully agree [%]	I mostly agree [%]	It is hard to say [%]	X^2
	total	6,7	15,8	71,7	–
Gender	women	6,6	21,3	60,7	0,025*
	men	6,8	10,2	83,1	
Age [years]	18-29	3,3	6,7	80,0	0,007*
	30-49	6,7	20,0	73,3	
	50-65	16,1	19,4	51,6	
Education	secondary	4,2	8,5	78,8	0,041*
	higher	9,0	23,0	64,8	

* means that the tested relationship is significant at the level $\alpha = 0,05$ ($p < 0,05$).
Due to the low number of indications, two categories were omitted: I rather disagree (n = 10) and I strongly disagree (n = 4).

Source: own research.

An overwhelming number of respondents surveyed (71.7%) were unable to say whether products with organic farming certification had greater sensory appeal than products without such certification. Women agree to a higher degree than men about the greater sensory appeal of certified organic products (total: 27.9% women, 17% men). Those aged 50-65 agree with this opinion to the biggest extent, and those below 29 - to the least extent (in total: over 50 - over 35% of indications, 30-49 - around 27% of indications, the youngest - 10% of indications). For respondents with higher education, products with organic farming certification are characterised by greater sensory appeal to a greater extent than for people with secondary education (in total: about 32% of indications; for respondents with lower education – 13%).

In addition, respondents were asked what is or could be the reason for choosing organic products. For the majority of the group surveyed, the most important reason for choosing such products is the health aspect (88.3%). Environmental factors (41.3%) and the desire to support the organic farming sector (31.7%) are also important. The factors that have the least impact on the respondents' decision to choose a certified organic food product are the current fashion (3.8%) and economic aspects (2.1%). None of the characteristics differentiate respondents' statements on this topic.

Finally, the respondents were asked where they get their knowledge of organic farming from. The most popular source of information on organic farming among the entire study group is television (65.4%) and the least popular is scientific sources (8.3%). In addition, respondents get their knowledge from friends (49.2%), the press and the Internet (40% each), as well as from school or university and the radio (15.4% each). It should be noted that the main characteristics differentiating respondents' answers were age and education level. The group that stands out in terms of acquiring knowledge from acquaintances are those aged 30-49 (more than 83% of respondents, as compared to less than 40% of other categories). Age is also a characteristic that differentiates the percentage of people who derive their knowledge of organic farming from the Internet, television, press, and school or university. In turn, the level of education is a characteristic that differentiates the percentage of respondents who derive their knowledge from television and the press. More respondents with higher education say they get their knowledge from the press (51%, compared to only 29% of respondents with lower education). In contrast, respondents with lower education are more likely to use TV as a source of information (75%, as compared to only 51% of respondents with higher education).

4. Discussion

The results obtained regarding respondents' attitudes towards the organic farming certificate and the products labelled with it are in line with previous research results on this topic. The study shows that only 33.3% of the respondents have come across the organic farming certificate, 47.5% declare that they are able to correctly recognise the organic farming label, but the majority of the surveyed group (77.5%) do not pay attention to this certificate when shopping for food products. Earlier findings by Nestorowicz (2017) confirm that only 24.7% of respondents said they had seen an EU organic food label before. Of the group of people who had seen the "Euro-leaf" logo before, one in five respondents could not explain its meaning, and a further 23% of people explained its meaning incorrectly. The results of a study by Cichocka and Oleniuch (2017) also confirmed the low level of familiarity with quality labels. Only 19.3% of respondents stated that they had seen the "Euro-leaf" logo on the product. In contrast, the results of Wilczyńska's (2015) study among young consumers indicated that

38% of them identified the organic food label, and that women had better knowledge of the labels than men. The better familiarity of younger people with the EU organic farming logo compared to the entire survey sample is also confirmed by the results of Bryła's (2018) study. Nevertheless, based on the results of Błazik and Śmieja's (2019) survey, it can be concluded that the organic farming logo is the most recognisable organic food label among other organic product labels (27% of respondents).

The survey shows that half of the respondents (50%) do not buy certified organic food products at all. An upward trend was observed, with Wilczyńska's (2015) findings indicating that as many as over 77% of respondents did not buy certified food. The findings of Błazik and Śmieja (2019) also confirm that organic products are not often chosen by respondents. Of the organic products, the consumers questioned most often chose fresh fruit (40% of respondents) and vegetables (around 39% of respondents). Dairy products, breads, juices, and eggs were also very popular. The conducted research shows that the most frequently chosen category of products were eggs (70.8%), while fruit and vegetables were also frequently chosen products (62.9%).

According to the survey, up to 75% of respondents are not able to pay a higher price for certified organic food products. As the results of the study by Kułyk and Michałowska (2018) indicate, the main barrier to the development of organic products is, among other things, the high price. This is also confirmed by the results of a study by Barłowska, Wolanciuk and Idec (2017) – the most significant factor limiting the purchase of organic food was the high price, since as many as 75% of consumers surveyed could not afford to buy "eco-food" more often. The BIO Coalition's 2021 report shows that although the organic food market has been growing rapidly over the past few years, with the value of the organic food market in 2021 reaching PLN 1.36 billion, this amount nevertheless represents only 0.5% of the value of the entire food market in Poland. Annually, each Pole spends an average of PLN 36 on organic food. Compared to the EU average of PLN 342, this indicator seems very low (Koalicja na rzecz BIO, 2021; Pieczyrak, 2024). The results of individual studies (Willer, Schaack, Lernoud, 2019; Trávníček, Willer, Schaack 2021; Wrzaszcz, 2022, 2023; Nowak, Kobiałka, 2024) confirm the small share of the organic food market in Poland.

The conducted research shows that for the majority of respondents, the most important reason for certified organic food products is the health aspect (88.3%). Environmental factors (41.3%) and the desire to support the organic farming sector (31.7%) are also important. This is confirmed by the results of a study by Barłowska, Wolanciuk and Idec (2017), according to which the most common reason for purchasing organic food was concern for one's own health, as well as that of family members. Consumers surveyed cited higher health values, a more beneficial impact on the environment, and helping farmers as reasons for purchasing organic food.

5. Summary

On the basis of the research results obtained and the discussion held, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The majority of respondents have not encountered the organic farming certificate on food products and do not pay attention to it when shopping.
2. Half of the respondents do not buy certified organic food products at all.
3. Although the majority of respondents believe that food products with the organic farming certificate are of higher quality, the vast majority of respondents are not able to pay a higher price for such products.
4. Gender is a differentiating characteristic in respondents' answers about organic farming certificates on food products. Women are much more likely than men to pay attention to certified organic food products and to buy them. Moreover, more women declare that this certification is an important factor for them when buying a product, and decide to pay a higher price for a food product with such certification. In addition, women are more likely than men to equate certified organic food products with greater safety and higher quality.
5. Age is a differentiating characteristic in respondents' answers about organic farming certification of food products. Admittedly, as age increases, the proportion of people who had encountered the organic farming certificate on food products decreases, while among these respondents the proportion who pay attention to organic farming certificates when shopping and buy food products with the "Euro-leaf" logo increases, as well as accepting a higher price for such products.
6. The level of education is a differentiating characteristic of respondents' answers about organic farming certificates on food products. Those with higher education are much more likely to declare knowledge of the "Euro-leaf" and to buy products labelled with it than those with lower education. More people with higher education declare that organic farming certification is an important factor influencing the purchase of a food product. In addition, those with higher education are more accepting of a higher price for certified organic food products, as well as identifying such products with greater safety and higher quality, than those with lower education.

Consumers' familiarity with the labels that appear on food products, including the organic farming certificate, plays an important role. If consumers are not familiar with the labels used on packaging, it will be difficult for them to recognise which labels are credible, and which are merely persuasive, and this in turn will lead to a situation where they either do not take such labels into consideration at all or make their decisions on the basis of erroneous considerations - labels that are not backed up by certification, reliable independent audits, etc. (Nestorowicz, 2017).

The results obtained allow recommendations to be made for intensified action to raise consumer awareness of the organic farming certificate and, more broadly, of the labels found on products relating to organic food. This can include actions taken by a variety of interested parties, ranging from organic food producers themselves, through organic food producer organisations and ecological organisations, to the state government and government agencies. Increasing consumer awareness can increase sales of certified organic food products, despite the identified barrier to consumption of these products, which is price. Increasing the consumption of certified organic food can enhance public health and the development of this market.

The survey was accompanied by limitations mainly related to access to respondents, low numbers of respondents, and a narrowed survey area. The study carried out was a pilot study, therefore this justifies the need for further research, which will be carried out on a larger scale and will address consumer awareness of the details of the certification processes and the requirements that a food product with organic farming certification must meet. The direction of further research can also address the actions taken by organic food producers and the difficulties and barriers they perceive.

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