

System of Date Labelling of Food from Polish Consumers' Perspective

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Abstract

The relationship between food waste and date labelling is still not enough understood. Unreasonable throwing away of edible overdue "best before" labelled foods contributes to growing mass of wasted food and to inefficient use of land, water, labour, and energy, as well to unnecessary emission of greenhouse gases. Confusion and misunderstanding of the shelf-life dates therefore can have indirect impact on environment. The aim of the present study was to examine how food consumers in Poland perceive the ease of dealing with shelf-life dates under UE regulations. A quantitative survey was conducted using the face-to-face interview method among consumers declaring the systematic purchase of foods. The selection of the research sample (n = 1,145) was carried out by the quota method which met the demand for maintaining the relative representativeness of the research population. The results showed that 94% of Polish consumers used to check the dates, the most of them take care about "use by" or "best before" dates during purchase and before consumption. 40% claimed that it happened to them that they have problems with finding the information, with only 20% declaring any problems with reading the dates. 40% of Polish consumers were not able to correctly interpret the 'best before' date. Respondents had also problems with food handling adequate to the type of shelf-life labelling ("use by" vs "best before"). Diagnosed problems highlighted the scale of the labelling-related problem in the global context of food waste and the need of constant education.

Keywords: Date labelling, food waste, use by, best before, shelf life

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