

Make responsible consumption happen Responsible interaction in the food chain – observations from a practitioner

As a private market research and marketing consulting agency, Ecozept is working for 20 years in sustainable food supply chains, having realized some 300 projects. We reflect upon our work in B2C marketing and in public catering and shed some light on the COVID-19 effects.

Content:

1. Ecozept: who we are, what we do
2. Consumer marketing - the responsible way
3. Public catering – who is responsible?
4. The Covid-19 – crisis and its effects in responsible food chains

Abstract:

Our experience from projects in the domain of **sustainable B2C marketing** (local and/ or organic) is that consumers have to be taken into account as complex consumer-citizens, acting responsibly in reshaping the food and agriculture sector. Consumers face important and contradictory responsibilities when purchasing food, they feel the tension of cognitive dissonance when arbitrating between “the right product” and the “affordable product”, in a complex world where food is not the only everyday problem to deal with. Our approach is to reassure about the right choice and to diversify as much as possible, considering not only different persons, but as well different situations of purchase and consumption. Diversification is the way to consumer satisfaction and to a maximum of added value.

When it comes to responsible action in **public catering**, we have at first to consider the different stakeholders. A lot of people have a say in public catering, but policy deciders hold overwhelming power in the decision-making process. Policy objectives are often far from the practical realities. Success in sustainable public catering projects depends on 2 factors: (1) motivated stakeholders from within the catering facility and (2) efficient logistics. Logistics are efficient when there are big quantities of sustainable raw material in little time, at few places, regularly and plannable. To meet these preconditions, the introduction-strategy of sustainable ingredients has to be volume-oriented and pragmatic.

Covid-19 has deeply affected the food system. Ecozept did 2 studies about the effects in the organic food sector. We learned that planned vertical cooperation in supply chains is paramount: those processors or distributors/retailers who have organised supply systems, can handle the crisis resiliently. Those who don't have structured supply until now, learned the lesson and are now catching up, changing their purchasing habits from “spot market” to “partnership”. The crisis accelerated tendencies as well that were existing before: the shorting of supply chains (pressure on intermediaries), the organic food consumption as a whole and closer linkage to consumers.

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Co-organizers

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[Burkhard Schaer]
 [Ecozept], [Germany/France]
 Forum Origin, Diversity and Territories
 [Workshop n°1], [Session n°3]



The mid- and long-term effects of the Covid-19-catastrophe are hard to evaluate. At Ecozept we believe that food consumption will have a different status in everyday life, in the future. Food purchase, and eating, will turn further away from a physical necessity and routine occupation towards a meaningful act in everyday life, gathering more attention and creating more value (at least relatively). **A panoply of new opportunities for sustainable diversification arises.** Quite some of the “opportunities” might become sheer “necessities” - as the climate-crisis is impending.



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