

Literature review WP 4

Finland

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Review report

1. SUMMARY OF THE MOST RELEVANT RESULTS

In 1995 Finland joined the European Union and at the same time mandatory labelling of the origin of food products was removed. According to the research (Tainio 1995) consumers desire that the labelling of origin should be mandatory. However, if the origin of food is not available, consumers use the label of origin, the name of the producer, or the name of the product as the cue for origin. Tainio's research confirms from the consumers' point of view the usefulness of voluntary labelling when mandatory labelling is not required.

Finnish consumers emphasised the indication of a product's place of origin (Fraselle and Lacoste 1998). Consumers are very familiar with the Finnish labels of origin. These three labels are the label "Food from Finland", "Pure Domestic" -label and the "Uniquely Finnish" -label. The Food from Finland -label is already known by the 91% of Finnish consumers and the Pure Domestic -label is known by 77% of consumers. The Uniquely Finnish -label is the least known label of origin in Finland. 41% of consumers recognise this label. The labelling of the origin of food signals most of all the higher quality and safety. The most of the respondents consider the origin labelled products as higher quality and safer than without label (Alkuperämerkit 2000).

The issue of the origin of the product is pertinent foremost at the national level (Söderlund 1998). Most consumers agree that the Finnish origin is a positive feature of the product and in many cases this also affects directly the purchase decision. Locality or regionality are of importance only for the niche segment of consumers. About 18% of the consumers spontaneously mentioned speciality foods, traditional crafts and rural tourism as examples of regional quality products. These were mentioned usually by the consumers, who were somewhat older, better educated and at higher levels of the professional hierarchy. Consumer practices in relation to regional quality products are most of all characterised by the occasional nature of consumption.

2. LIST OF PUBLICATIONS, MARKETING STUDIES AND SCIENTIFIC PAPERS

2.1. Books

2001

Kola, J. (ed.)

Elintarviketuotannon turvallisuuden ja tuotannon ekonomiaa.

University of Helsinki. Department of Economics and Management. Reports No.13. Agricultural Policy. 99 pages. Finland. [Food Quality and Safety and Production Ethics in Economic Research: Introduction to Research Themes and Approaches.]

2000

Forbrukernes krav til fødevarermerkning og vare information. En pan-nordisk undersøgelse af forbrugeradfærd og holdningen til fødevarermerkning.

Nordic Council of Ministers. Temanord 2001:501. [Consumers' needs concerning food labels and information. Pan-nordic research]

Available: http://www.norden.org/pub/velfaerd/konsument/sk/TN01_501.asp?lang=6

Abstract:

The Nordic research about the consumer behaviour and attitudes towards food labelling illustrates that more information is needed. Consumers wish that mandatory labelling covers with a country of origin (86% of respondents), the date of preparation (81% of respondents) and nutritional labelling (79% of respondents). This report is based on 1,323 respondents from the Nordic countries and therefore it is the most extensive study on food policy area in Nordic countries.

Viinisalo, M. & Leskinen, J. 2000.

Turvallista ruokaa pelloilta pöytään: kuluttajienlaatukäsitykset ja -odotukset asiantuntijankemysten ja tutkimusten pohjalta.

National Consumer Research Centre. Publications 4/2000. 39 pages. Helsinki. Finland. [Safety Throughout the Food Chain – Consumers' and Experts' Conceptions and Expectations Concerning Food Quality].

1998

Fraselle, N. & Lacoste, A. - C.

Enquête sur les besoins actuels des consommateurs en matière d'Etiquetage des denrées alimentaires.

European Research Centre on Consumer Policy in Belgium, in Europe and at the International Level. Université Catholique de Louvain, Faculté de Droit, Belgique.

Järvelä, K.

Kuluttajien käsitykset lihasta ja liha-alasta: laadullinen tutkimus.

National Consumer Research Centre. Publications No 14. 123 pages. Helsinki. Finland. [Consumers Views about Meat and Meat sector – A Qualitative Study]

1996

A Pan-EU Survey on Consumer Attitudes to Food, Nutrition and Health. 1996.

Institute of European Food Studies. Report Number Two. Influences on Food Choice and Sources of Information on Healthy Eating. Trinity College. Dublin 2. Ireland.

1993

Mehl, K. & Haverinen, T.

Kotimaisuuden vaikutus vihannesäilykkeen valintaanmyymälässä: kotimainen tunnettu tuotemerkki vastaan ulkomaintuntematon tuotemerkki.

Pyhäjärvi Institute. Publications No 7. 20 pages. Eura. Finland. [The Effect of Domestic Origin on Consumers' Food Choice in Buying Situation: Domestic Known Brand against Foreign Unknown Brand]

2.2. Book Sections, Theses, Unpublished Research Reports

2001

Latvala, T. 2001.

Kuluttajien tietotarpeet elintarvikkeidenturvallisuudesta ja laadusta: tapaustutkimus naudanlihasta.

University of Helsinki. Department of Economics and Management. Reports No.13. Agricultural Policy, p. 27-67. Helsinki. Finland. [Need for Consumer Information on Food Safety and Quality: Case Study of Beef]

2000

Alkuperämerkit

Finfood and Kotimaiset kasvikset.

Vantaa. Finland. [The Finnish Labels of Origin]

Abstract:

The aim of this study is to find out familiarity of the Finnish origin labelled products and the market image of these products concerning quality and safety. According to this research consumers are very familiar with the Finnish labels of origin in food products. The Food from Finland –label is already known by 91% of Finnish consumers and the Pure Domestic –label is known by 77% of consumers. The most of the respondents consider the origin labelled products as higher quality and safer than the food products without the label. This research covers with the current labels of origin in Finland.

1999

Pohjalainen, L.

Lihankulutusta ohjaavat tekijät 1998. Liha-alan tiedotus ry.

Elintarviketieto Oy. Espoo. Finland. [The Factors Affecting the Consumption of Meat in 1998.]

1998

Jokela, M.

Kotimaisuuden merkitys kuluttajille elintarvikkeen ostossa.

University of Helsinki, Department of Economics and Management. Marketing. No 313. Helsinki. Finland. [The Meaning of Domestic Origin in Buying Situation].

La sécurité des produits alimentaires.

La Commission Européenne. Direction Générale XXIV. Politique des Consommateurs. Eurobarometre 49. [Food Safety]
Available: http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/health_consumer/library/surveys/eb49_en.html

Abstract:

The survey focuses on six main issues: food safety in general, the factors which determine safety, safety and the retail outlets, sources of information on food safety, labelling and information concerning the products themselves. As regards labels, younger people are less likely to read them than their elders, mainly due to lack of interest. Labels remain a good source of information, six out of ten consumers claiming to regularly read them. Finnish consumers emphasised the indication of a product's place of origin.

Lindström, L.

Ulkomaalaistenkuluttajien suhtautuminen suomalaisiin elintarvikkeisiin -näkökulma ruoan sosiologiaan.

University of Helsinki. Department of Economics and Management. Food Policy. EE No 15. 97 pages. Helsinki. Finland.
[Attitudes of Foreign Consumers towards Finnish Food Products – from the Sociological Viewpoint]

Söderlund, Anu

Regional Images and the Promotion of Quality Products and Services in the Lagging Regions of the European Union.

Consumer survey results and analysis : Finland. RIPPLE (FAIR3 CT961827). Working Paper 9. 36 pages. University of Helsinki. Seinäjoki Institute for Rural Research and Training. Seinäjoki. Finland.

Available: <http://ripple.econ.upatras.gr>.

Abstract:

The aim of this consumer survey was to identify the social, psychological and economic factors influencing consumer behaviour as regards the products and services of regions lagging behind in development in Finland; in this case South-Ostrobotnia and Northern Savo. The survey aimed at clarifying consumer perceptions and images of the study regions, as well as gaining insights into the effects of local culture on consumer behaviour. The issue of the origin of the product is pertinent foremost at a national level. The most consumers agree that the Finnish origin is a positive feature of the product and in many cases this also affects directly the purchase decision. Locality or regionality are of importance only for the niche segment of consumers. About 18 % of the consumers spontaneously mentioned speciality foods, traditional crafts and rural tourism as examples of regional quality products. These were mentioned usually by the consumers who were somewhat older, better educated and found at higher levels of the professional hierarchy. Consumer practices in relation regional quality product are most of all characterised by the occasional nature of consumption. Even if this study did not aimed at identifying consumers' perception towards the specific labels of origin, it produced extensive perspective towards the meaning of regionality to consumers.

Suomalaisentyön liitto

Tuotteiden valintaperusteet. Suomen kilpailukyky. Suomalaisen työn liitto.

October 1998. Helsinki. Finland. [The Basis of Choice in Product]

Tainio, Riitta

Kuluttajien luottamus elintarvikkeisiin.

The Finnish Consumers' Association. 6/1998. 21 pages. Helsinki. Finland. [Consumers Trust on Food Products].

Taloustutkimus

Hyvän laadun sisältö elintarvikkeissa.

Taloustutkimus Oy. November 1998. Helsinki. Finland. [Meaning of Good Quality in Food Products].

1997

Pohjalainen, L.

Elintarvikkeiden arvostus, valintakriteerit ja ruoan kotimaisuudenmerkitys. Tutkimus kotitalouksista, suurkeittiöistä, päivittäistavara-kaupoista ja lehdistöstä.

Hyvää Suomesta –projekti. Elintarviketiето Oy. Espoo. Finland. [Valuation of Food Products, Choice Criteria and the Meaning of Domestic Origin].

Taloustutkimus

Elintarvikkeiden ostoperusteet. Suomalaisen työn liitto. Taloustutkimus Oy.

Telebus 23/97. Helsinki. Finland. [Reasons of Food Choice].

1996

Raivio, K. 1996.

Suomalaisen kuluttajan sitoutuminen kotimaiseen elintarvikkeeseen.

University of Helsinki. Department of Economics and Management. Marketing. No 276. Helsinki. Finland. [Commitment of Finnish Consumers to the Domestic Food Products].

1995

Tainio, Riitta

Elintarvikkeiden alkuperän merkitys kuluttajille.

The Finnish Consumers' Association 12/1995. 19 pages. Helsinki. Finland. [The Meaning of the Origin in Food Products]

Abstract:

After the year 1995 Finland accessed to the European Union and mandatory labelling of the origin of food products changed to be based on voluntary labelling. According to this research consumers desire that the labelling of origin should be mandatory. However if the origin of food is not available, consumers use the label of origin (HyvŠŠ Suomesta), the name of the producer or the name of the product as the cue from origin. This research confirms from the consumers' point of view the usefulness of voluntary labelling when mandatory labelling is not required.

Discussion report

1. NEED FOR NEW RESEARCH

Nowadays the concept of food quality has been broadened to cover in addition to eating quality, like taste, also the quality characteristics which are connected with the production process itself. In Finland many studies that have been conducted lately, indicate the domestic origin of the food product generally refers to the safety aspect of food quality. (Taloustutkimus 1998, Järvelä 1998, Viinisalo and Leskinen 2000). These new dimensions of food quality are difficult to estimate for consumers before buying and even after consumption and therefore the origin of the food products have been emphasised by consumers. For consumers the origin labelled products provides one tool for judging which products are safer and higher quality (Alkuperämerkit 2000).

From the consumers' viewpoint the meaning of the origin labelled products is twofold. At the national level the meaning of origin generally highlights the safety aspect of food products. There are two labels which indicate the Finnish origin: the Food from Finland –label (for processed and packaged food) and the Pure Domestic –label (for vegetables). Consumers are very familiar with these Finnish labels of origin. The Food from Finland –label is already known by 91% of Finnish consumers, and the Pure Domestic –label is known by 77% of consumers. The most of the respondents consider the origin labelled products as of higher quality and better safety than those products without label (Alkuperämerkit 2000).

Consumers perceive that regionality refers to the special quality of food products. Söderlund (1998) examined the meaning of regionality to consumers. 18% of the consumers spontaneously mentioned speciality foods, traditional crafts and rural tourism as examples of regional quality products. Regionality is signalled to consumers by means of the label "Uniquely Finnish". This label clearly indicates the regional aspect of the product. 41 % of consumers recognise this label.

These studies show that consumers are interested in the origin of food, but the meaning of the origin is more important at the national level than regional or local level. This is one reason why there are not so many PDO/PGI products in Finland. Under the EU regulation 2081/92 one Finnish label has been accepted. It is obvious that consumers are not very familiar with these official PDO/PGI -labels. The meaning of regionality or locality is of importance only for the niche segment of consumers. Consumer practices in relation to regional quality products are most of all characterised by the occasional nature of consumption. In Finland the need for scientific, theory-based research is evident. In order to gain more understanding of the broader concept of quality multidisciplinary approaches are needed.

2. POLICY RELATED ISSUES

In Finland the public policy is aiming at a comprehensive, well-defined quality concept and actual practices, which cover the entire food chain, from the field to the fork, from the plough to the plate. It is a common policy goal in the Finnish society, and it is enhanced by legislation and several policy instruments.

The Finnish food chain, after a careful examination of its situation and inherent strengths and opportunities in the 1990s, has selected a dual approach in its quality strategy: (1) the preservation of the quality level in terms of uncompromising safety, and (2) the development of consumer-orientated quality. The means for the development and confirmation of the quality level are the uniform quality systems, which cover the entire food chain and are based on international standards (e.g. ISO).

As a whole, the question whether there is, or whether we could or want to develop, a so-called official and common European quality concept is important. Its importance is especially growing in relation to the WTO negotiations, in which the EU wants to emphasise quality and safety of food and agricultural commodities. In terms of policy, we are not only depending on, or analysing, agricultural, food and consumer policies, but we have to pay a growing attention to international trade policy and trade liberalisation also with respect to OLPs, their true contents and future position and role in the European food, agricultural and rural economies.

