

What do consumers expect from organic food?

Prof. Dr. Katrin Zander

“Residues in organic production –
sufficient indicators for fraud?”
Conference of the Anti-Fraud-Initiative
Brussels, 9.2.2023



What to expect

- Setting the frame – ethical consumption
- Why do consumers buy organic?
- Why do they not buy organic?
- How to increase trust?

Sustainability is „en vogue“!

local, animal welfare,
sustainable, organic,
seasonal, vegan,
vegetarian

NACHHALTIGE ERNÄHRUNG UMLAND-ERZEUGNISSE
**Bei Obst und Gemüse liegt Regionalität
im Trend**



NACHHALTIGE ERNÄHRUNG TIERVERZEHR

**Fleischkonsum wird zu einer Frage der
Haltung**



GESUNDHEIT UMWELT

**Bio-Produkte werden aus Sorge um
Umwelt gekauft**

Changing societal values

Increasing societal welfare

- „Everything used to be better“
- Back to nature
- Living in the countryside
- Non material values with increasing relevance
- Change over time (environment, animal welfare)
- Criticism of modern agricultural production (and globalisation)

- Consumers with increasing expectations regarding process qualities
- Sustainability as additional quality criteria
- **Ethical Consumerism**

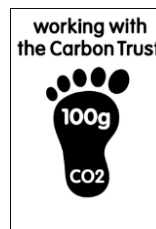
Ethical consumerism – aspects

- Environmental protection
- Healthiness
- No pesticide and antibiotic residues
- Naturalness
- No GMO
- Local production
- Climate impact
- Animal welfare



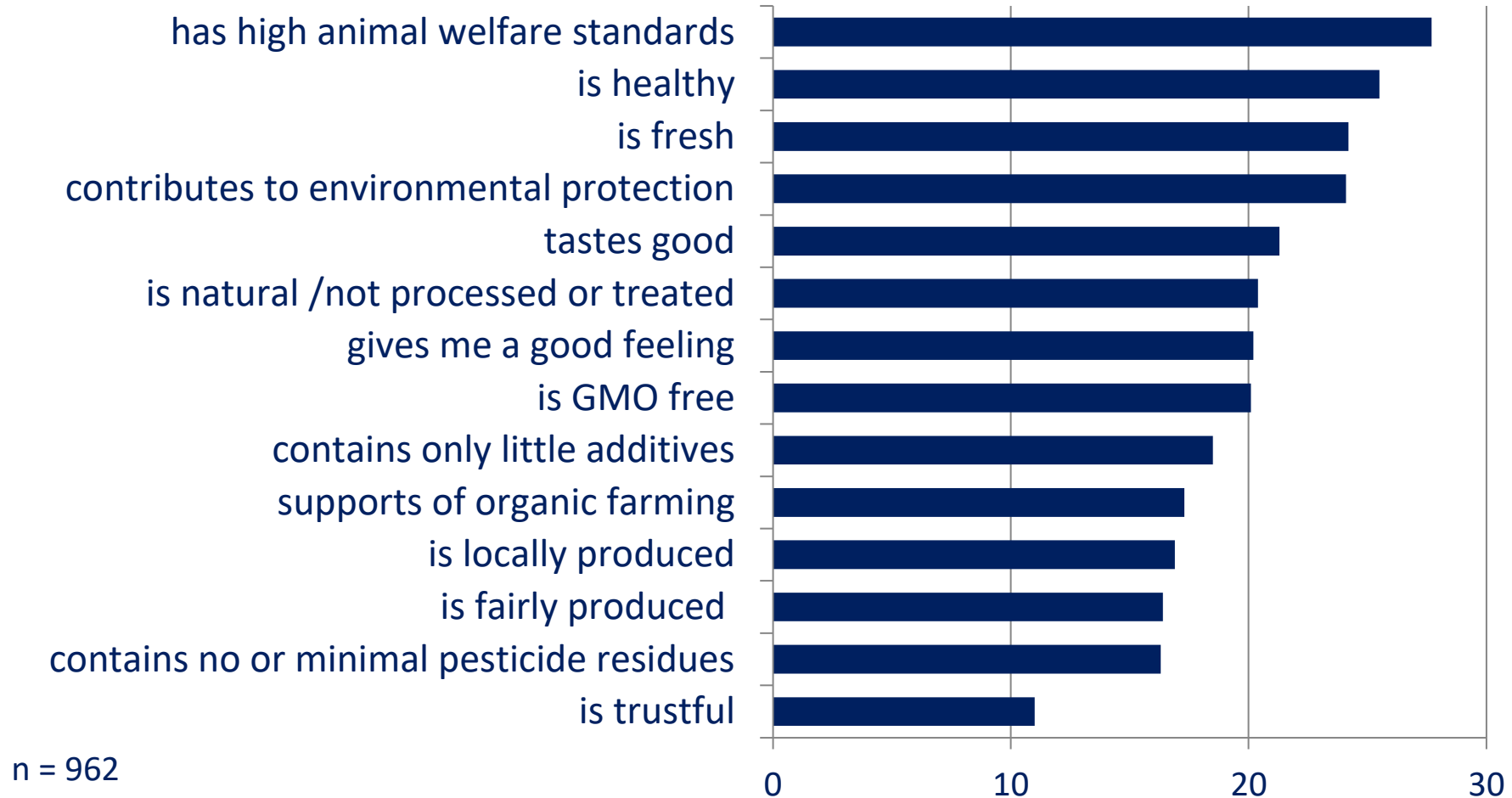
„Ethical“ consumption

- Animal welfare products
- Local food
- Sustainable products (agriculture, aquaculture)
- Climate friendly food
- Organic products



Why buying organic food?

I buy organic food because it...



Consumption of organic food gives a good feeling

„I am feeling better as human being, it gives me the feeling of having acted positively as to save the world“

„Organic food for me means 100% natural ingredients without any additives “

„Particularly, I appreciate that organic producers resign from using pesticides and that animals are getting really good feed “

Organic food - Pros

- Sustainable and environmentally friendly production
- More natural and fresher and less additives
→ healthier
- No GMO
- No or less pesticides
- Better animal welfare
- Good feeling / conscience

Altruistic and hedonistic buying motives for organic food

Altruistic

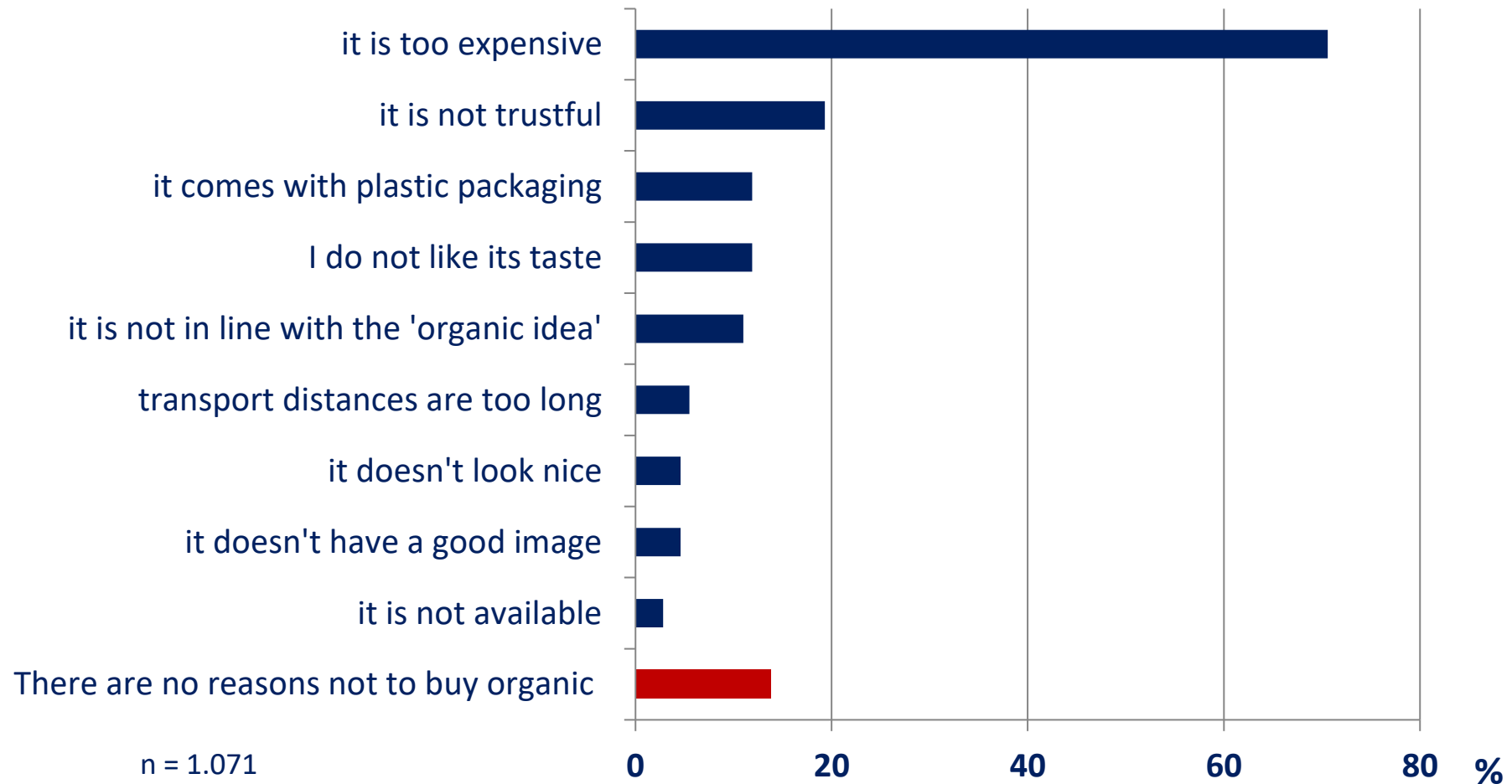
- Sustainable production
- Environmental protection
- Animal welfare
- Local production
- Naturalness
- GMO free
- Low use of pesticides
- Less ingredients/no additives

Hedonic/egoistic

- Health
- Taste
- Less residues
(pesticides, fertilizers, antibiotics, additives)

What are the barriers of organic food consumption ?

I do not buy organic food because ...



Organic is not any better

„I think, organic has become an effective marketing strategy, in fact it's only about making money“

„Plastic and organic should not go hand in hand.“

„Food that travels around half the world cannot be organic “

Organic food - Contrasts

- Little trust in organic labelling
- Organic as profitable trend
- High prices which are not justified by higher product quality
- Sustainability questioned

Why European consumers do NOT buy organic products ?

- **Low knowledge of organic production and certification system**
- Consumers' expectations on organic product properties differ from real world
- Limited availability of organic food (comfort, convenience)
- Limited availability of information / information overload, confusion
- Budget constraints
- Low trust in certification and labelling

Consumer knowledge about organic farming

Organic food...	% correct answers
Is grown without the use of chemicals.	82
May be grown from genetically modified seeds.*	62
Is processed without artificial additives.	72
Is subject to a third-party system of control and certification.	64
Is produced on small family farms.*	59
Is produced locally.*	49
Cannot be imported from overseas.*	52
Is produced by methods protecting the environment.	67

Question: The following statements refer to the legal definition of organic food products. To the best of your knowledge, please indicate whether they are true or false.

* These aspects are not part of the legal definition regarding organic farming.

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Consumer expectation of organic food - extremes

- Everything is better
- Small farms, picture book
- Diverse production



- A lot of fraud

Limited knowledge of food production regarding

- Farming practices
- Product origin
- Processing methods
- Certification

→ Lack of trust

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- Low trust in certification and labelling
- One stop shopping
- Product range
- Local origin
- Huge differences between EU countries



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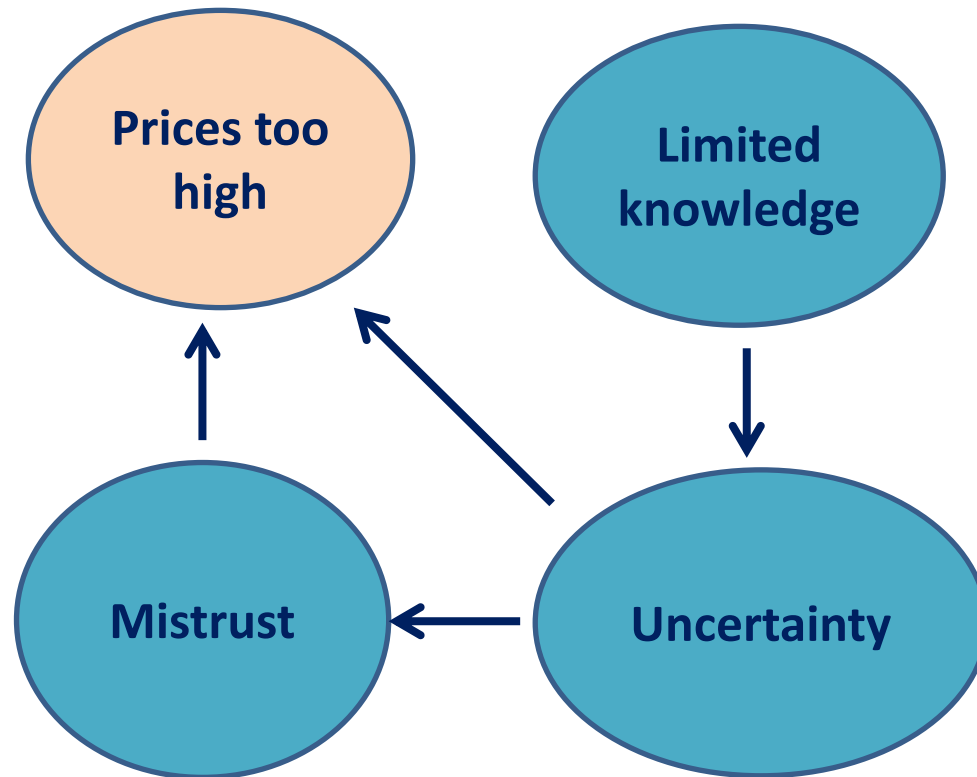
DE-ÖKO-013
EU/Non-EU Agriculture



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- **Budget constraints, price perception**
- Low trust in certification and labelling

Budget constraints – price perception



- Limited knowledge, uncertainties and mistrust are closely related
- Reduction of price acceptance
- Value for money?

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Consumer questions

- **Is it really organic?**
- **Can I trust? Is it worth paying more?**
- **Is organic in line with my expectations?**

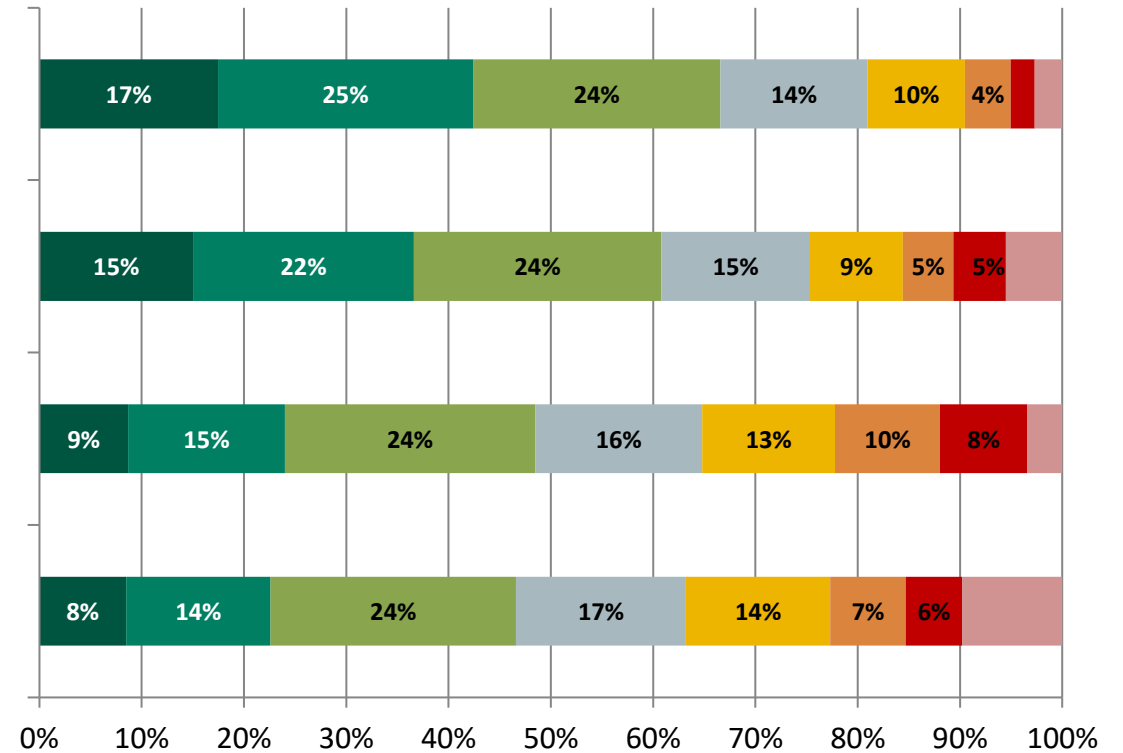
Low trust in organic food

I trust in that organic farmers and processors are sufficiently controlled.

There are so many products with organic labels, they cannot all be organic.

'Organic' is just a marketing trick, it's just about making money.

I believe rules organic food has to comply with are sufficient.



n = 1.071

I totally agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 I do not agree at all I don't know

Brümmer/Zander (2020): JuBio - Einstellungen junger Erwachsener zu Bio-Lebensmitteln: eine Online Mixed-Methods-Studie. <https://orgprints.org/id/eprint/37784/>

Trust in organic products and certification

In terms of organic products I do have a good feeling.

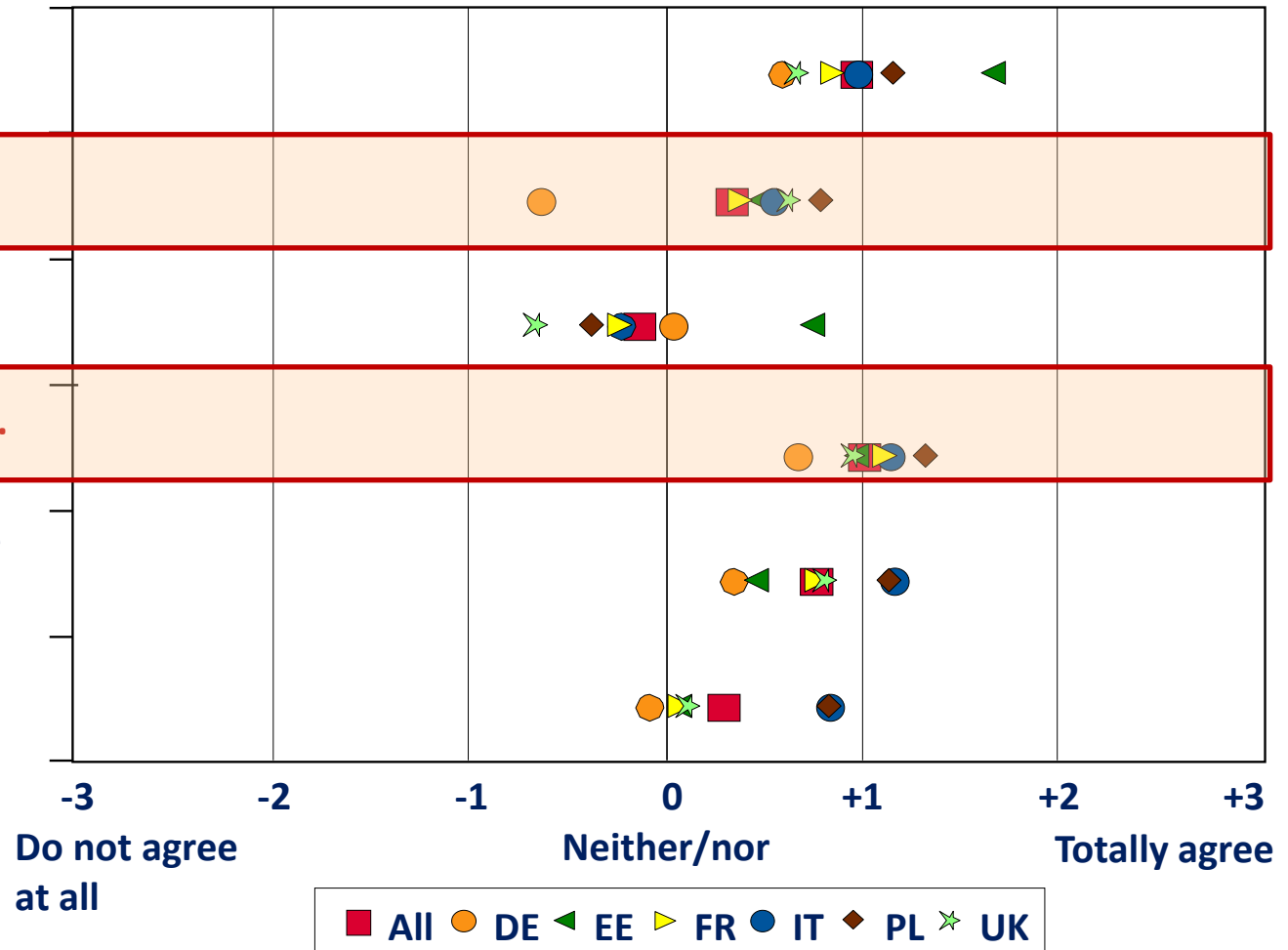
I am sure that products sold as organic really are organic products.

Organic is only about marketing.

Organic products fulfil strong standards.

The EU organic logo guarantees that the products are really organic.

I have great trust in the control system behind an EU-wide organic logo.



Question: Please indicate to which extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.
(7-point Likert scale, +3 = total agreement; 0 = neutral; -3 = total disagreement)

Source: Zander and Zanoli (2013): Consumer perception on organic farming labelling. Chapter 10. In: Sanders, J. (Ed.) Evaluation of the EU legislation on organic farming (Nr. AGRI-2012-EVAL-02), Braunschweig.

Too expensive and low trust are interrelated

$$\text{(Perceived) Price} \leq \text{(Perceived) Benefit}$$

- Consumers' willingness to pay (WTP) depends on expected additional value
- Low trust reduces perceived benefit → Reduction of WTP
- High trust/security → high WTP is possible
- Good examples from direct selling, e.g. on-farm

→ Emotional attachment

→ Good communication

→ **Higher WTP**



Knowledge and trust

→ Lack of trust

- Uncertainty about getting value for money
- Reduced willingness to pay and price acceptance
- Price is not an absolute barrier but one factor in the complex decision making process

- Limited knowledge
- Low interest in organic
- Low willingness to buy organic food

- Better knowledge → more trust → higher WTP

What do we need to increase consumer trust?

- Consumers buy organic due to altruistic and egoistic/hedonic motives
- Consumers appreciate the process quality
- Lack of knowledge and trust as a barrier for organic food consumption

Additional communication and information is needed

- Organic standards (added value)
- Certification system
- Organic label
- Indication of origin

Who should be in charge of communication activities?

- Organic sector
- Governments / EU

Many thanks for your attention

Prof. Dr. Katrin Zander
Agricultural and Food Marketing
University of Kassel
k.zander@uni-kassel.de

