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By Carl Collen

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Consumers prioritise food safety



DNV GL's global ViewPoint survey finds consumers are more concerned about food safety and health than environmental considerations

Consumers are significantly more concerned about food safety than environmental considerations, according to certification body DNV GL's [ViewPoint survey](#).

A total of 4,500 consumers from across the globe were asked about their food purchasing habits, with the results indicating a strong preference for factors impacting the individual consumer.

According to DNV GL, food safety (55 per cent of respondents) and health issues (53 per cent) are regarded more important than wider external factors, such as environment (38 per cent) and social aspects (35 per cent).

Wider issues such as the environment or social aspects, with the exception of waste and recycling, tend to be of less interest when consumers decide what to buy.

While there are geographical differences, often influenced by local legislation,

context or recent scandals, there seems to be less interest in issues such as reduced greenhouse gas emissions (10 per cent), human rights (13 per cent) and animal welfare (16 per cent).

"Food safety is still top of the agenda for consumers," said Joy Franks-Laing, global food and beverage manager at DNV GL Business Assurance. "However, the survey results seem to indicate that while food and beverage manufacturers and retailers may have invested considerably in protecting consumers, they are not 100 per cent convinced that all products are safe to consume."

The group said that the survey highlighted a clear trust gap; unbranded packaged food (69 per cent) did not carry the same weight of trust as branded goods (85 per cent).

However, there were indications that digital solutions – such as QR codes that show the individual history of a product – may offer a means to build trust.

Only 19 per cent of consumers use QR codes on packaging regularly but this would rise to 65 per cent if it was perceived to offer insight into a product's origin and verification of food safety standards being met.

Consumers are even willing to pay more for products that they trust. If the product information is verified or if the product or manufacturer is certified to a food safety standard, 69 per cent are willing to pay more.

Food safety certification is quite common at the manufacturer level. The survey suggests that there is a huge upside for the food industry in improving communication to consumers on food safety and other product characteristics.

"Blockchain-enabled digital assurance solutions such as DNV GL's My Story helps companies track and share the true story behind its product," Franks-Laing added. "Access to product characteristics

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is instant through an engaging QR code label on the packaging. Letting consumer explore proof of food safety, origin and authenticity, for example, taking the mystery out of the product's history, building consumer trust and confidence on the spot.”

The survey was conducted in March 2020 using the CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing) methodology, and it involved 4,500 consumers across 15 countries in Europe, North America, South America and Asia.

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