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The character of demand in mature organic food markets: Great Britain and Denmark compared

Mette Wier ^a ... Katrin Millock ^c

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Abstract

We investigate the organic food market in two selected European countries, Great Britain and Denmark, identifying main differences and similarities. We focus particularly on consumer perceptions and priorities, labelling schemes, and sales channels as a basis for assessing market stability and prospects for future growth. We employ a unique set of household panel data that includes information on stated values and concerns as well as registered purchasing behaviour. Most organic food on both markets is produced and processed by large-scale industrialised units and distributed through mainstream sales channels, consumer confidence being sustained at present by organic labelling schemes that appear to function well. However, a parallel market, based on the supply of goods through various direct sales channels to heavy users, prevails. We find that organic food purchase decisions are primarily motivated by "private good" attributes such as

freshness, taste and health benefits, attributes that may be perceived as being compatible with modern production and sales structure. Mature markets for organic foods nevertheless appear to be vulnerable to consumer dissatisfaction, particularly among heavy users of organic food products.



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Keywords

Organic foods; Valued product attributes; Consumer perceptions; Attitudes and behaviour; Labelling; Sales channels

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