



Consumers' familiarity with and attitudes towards food quality certifications for rice and vegetables in Vietnam



Nguyen H.D. My ^{a, b}, Pieter Rutsaert ^c, Ellen J. Van Loo ^a, Wim Verbeke ^{a, *}

^a Department of Agricultural Economics, Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium

^b Faculty of Economics and Development Studies, University of Economics, Hue University, Hue City, Vietnam

^c International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), DAPO Box 7777, Metro Manila, Philippines

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 30 December 2016

Received in revised form

20 May 2017

Accepted 8 June 2017

Available online 10 June 2017

Keywords:

Attitude
Certification
Consumer
Food
Quality
Rice
Safety
Vegetables
Vietnam

ABSTRACT

This study investigates consumers' attitudes towards, and familiarity with, food quality certification in selected urban areas in the South of Vietnam. Cross-sectional data were collected by means of a consumer survey ($n = 500$). Consumers' awareness of food quality-related terms was relatively low. Less than half the participants claimed to understand the meaning of good agricultural practices (GAP), organic food and sustainability. Consumers' familiarity with food quality certification (Vietnamese Good Agricultural Practices (VietGAP), Global Good Agricultural Practices (GLOBALG.A.P.), organic, and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP)) was also low. Familiarity with food quality certification was positively associated with general attitude and food choice motives, namely food safety concern, perceived importance of healthy eating, and perceived importance of environmental consequences relating to food purchase. Food safety concern and perceived importance of environmental consequences were positively associated with consumers' attitudes towards safe vegetables, as well as high quality rice. Perceived importance of healthy eating was positively related to attitude towards high quality rice. Findings suggest that food safety aspects of safe vegetables and high quality rice should be emphasized during policy and marketing activities for food quality certification. Additionally, an increase in the perceived importance of environmental consequences relating to quality food purchase should be encouraged to enhance positive consumer attitudes towards quality food. Efforts to improve public awareness and knowledge of food quality certification and sustainable agricultural practices in developing countries such as Vietnam are highly recommended.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

1.1. Study background

Attention to food quality and safety is increasing in developing countries (Aung & Chang, 2014; Grunert, Loose, Zhou, & Tinggaard, 2015; Jia & Jukes, 2013) driven by economic development, urbanization, increased out-of-home food options, and changes in consumption patterns for cereals, vegetables, fish, meat and dairy foods (Kearney, 2010). Furthermore, there is an increasing interest in environmentally friendly production in developing and emerging countries (Tait, Saunders, Guenther, & Rutherford, 2016;

Thøgersen, Zhou, & Huang, 2016). These trends have been strengthened by various factors, including the incidence of food safety crises, potential food risks from chemical use in food production and related risk communication or the lack thereof (Frewer et al., 2016; Lehtinen, 2017, pp. 150–174; Nougadère et al., 2014; Reisch, Eberle, & Lorek, 2013; Van Boxtael et al., 2013).

In Vietnam, food quality and safety have received increasing attention throughout the food supply chain. In the upstream supply chain, food safety issues are reported at the farm level, such as poor cultivation practices, the overuse and misuse of pesticides in agriculture (Buu, 2015; Hoi, Mol, & Oosterveer, 2013; Hong, 2016; Wertheim-Heck & Spaargaren, 2016) and the use of contaminated water, fertilizer and soil (Chau et al., 2014). At the next stage, unsafe post-harvest procedures are observed, such as using contaminated washing water (Ha et al., 2008) and poor food processing practices, such as the improper use of food additives (Le et al., 2017).

In the downstream supply chain, there are issues relating to the

* Corresponding author. Ghent University, Department of Agricultural Economics, Coupure links 653, B-9000, Ghent, Belgium.

E-mail address: Wim.Verbeke@UGent.be (W. Verbeke).

unclear origin of food products, poor handling practices and unhygienic operating conditions, e.g. among street vendors who occupy a very important place in food provisioning in Vietnam (Samapundo, Thanh, Xhaferi, & Devlieghere, 2016). As a consequence, food contamination (Chau et al., 2014; Ha et al., 2008) and food poisoning (Anh, 2015; Hong, 2016; VietnamNews, 2015) are a regular occurrence and cause serious problems. In the context of rising food safety-related incidents in Vietnam, it is important to investigate consumers' perceptions in relation to the health and food safety aspects of food quality.

In addition to food safety concerns, the environmental sustainability aspect of food production and consumption is emerging in Vietnam as in many other places (New Zealand Trade & Enterprise, 2014; Van Loo, Hoefkens, & Verbeke, 2017). The Vietnamese Mekong Delta (MKD) in South Vietnam has been known as the primary rice-producing area, as well as an important fruit- and vegetable-supply region for the country. The MKD is currently considered to be vulnerable to climate change and is facing severe environmental challenges due to the improper use of chemicals in agricultural activities (Berg & Tam, 2012; Dang, Li, Nuberg, & Bruwer, 2014). Consequently, it is important to obtain more sustainable farming practices for food production such as rice production in the MKD (Berg, Söderholm, Söderholm, & Tam, 2017). It is therefore relevant to investigate consumers' eco-friendly motives when purchasing quality food.

Finally, there is a growing interest in studies regarding food quality and safety standards in developing countries (Kirezieva et al., 2015; Sonntag, Theuvsen, Kersting, & Otter, 2016; Wongprawmas & Canavari, 2017). In the Vietnamese food market, there are different types of food quality certification and labels such as: Vietnamese Good Agricultural Practices (VietGAP), Global Good Agricultural Practices (GLOBALG.A.P.), organic, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) (Appendix A). The VietGAP and GLOBALG.A.P. certifications differentiate themselves from organic by allowing the proper use of chemicals in farming practices (Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Development (MARD), 2008). VietGAP is a national food quality and safety standard, issued in 2008 by the MARD following Decision No. 84/2008/QĐ-BNN and Decision No. 99/2008/QĐ-BNN. GLOBALG.A.P., formerly named Euro-Retailer Produce Working Group for Good Agricultural Practices (EurepG.A.P.), is a farm management practice standard, originally developed by European retailers. It is now the world's most widely applied farm certification scheme (GLOBALG.A.P., 2017). While GLOBALG.A.P. and VietGAP certified food can be found in large Vietnamese supermarkets, organic food is still limited to a niche market in Vietnam and is focused mainly in the metropolitan areas.

The current uncontrollable growth and lack of effective regulatory mechanisms for various food labels in the Vietnamese food market calls for an efficient management system for food quality certification and labelling in the country. Understanding consumers' familiarity with food quality labels is therefore relevant to provide insights into effective marketing strategies for such certification schemes and labels in Vietnam.

1.2. Study scope and objectives

The focus of our paper is on quality certification schemes, some of which place most emphasis on safety-related quality aspects (e.g., HACCP), while others have a broader emphasis than just safety-related aspects (e.g., VietGAP). Hence, in this paper, safety is one component of quality, which in itself is a broader and more encompassing concept.

This study focuses on consumers' familiarity with quality food and their food choice motives relating to health, food safety

concerns and eco-friendly aspects. Familiarity refers to "the number of product-related experiences that have been accumulated by the consumer" (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987, p. 411; Jacoby, Troutman, Kuss, & Mazursky, 1986) and plays a key role in consumer preference formation and decision making. Previous studies found positive associations between consumers' attitudes and environmentally friendly food choice motives (Smith & Paladino, 2010; Voon, Ngui, & Agrawal, 2011; Yadav & Pathak, 2016), health conscious food choice motives (Michaelidou & Hassan, 2008; Voon et al., 2011; Yadav & Pathak, 2016), and food safety concern motives (Hsu, Chang, & Lin, 2016; Michaelidou & Hassan, 2008). Food safety concern has a positive influence on the WTP for safe vegetables in Vietnam (Mergenthaler, Weinberger, & Qaim, 2009).

While it has been reported that Vietnamese consumers may have adequate levels of food safety knowledge (Samapundo et al., 2016), possible uncertainty about food quality and safety is one of the main barriers that consumers face in matching food choices to preferences (Verbeke, 2005). This study focuses on urban consumers as these consumers are strongly concerned about food-related issues and show increased demand for quality-labelled food in the context of Vietnam's fast economic growth and urbanization (Mergenthaler et al., 2009; Wang, Moustier, & Loc, 2014). Rice and vegetables were selected because they are the most common daily foods for Vietnamese consumers. Laillou et al. (2012) reported that rice consumption in Vietnam amounted to more than 300g/person/day. Additionally, Vietnam has one of the highest levels of per capita vegetable consumption in the world, with an average of 290g/person/day (Wertheim-Heck, Vellema, & Spaargaren, 2015).

There is an increasing interest in studies relating to food quality in Asia, as little is known about consumers' attitudes and behaviour towards food quality in this part of the world. Vietnam is the world's third-largest rice exporter (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2014), thus, rice production in the country makes an important contribution to global food security (Shrestha, Deb, & Bui, 2016). It is therefore important to conduct consumer studies in Vietnam to provide insights for value chain actors and policymakers to sharpen their marketing strategies for quality foods including rice. Since few studies have investigated consumers' attitudes towards food quality labels in the context of developing countries, such as Vietnam, this study seeks to address this knowledge gap by exploring how Vietnamese consumers think and behave in relation to food quality certification.

The specific objectives of this study are (1) to investigate consumers' familiarity with, attitudes towards, and possible food choice motives related to quality-certified foods based in Vietnam; (2) to analyse how food choice motives affect attitudes towards quality-certified food. Based on the results of the study, implications for marketing strategies for food quality labels in Vietnam are provided.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Data collection

This study is based on a survey questionnaire that was developed following literature review, discussion with experts and related stakeholders, such as local consumers, authorities, retailers and traders in Vietnam. The questionnaire was translated from English into Vietnamese by professional translators. Pilot tests were conducted to verify the clarity of the questions and terms used. During June–July 2015, a total sample of 500 consumers completed the survey, equally distributed across two main urban areas in the South of Vietnam, Can Tho and Ho Chi Minh cities.

All participants were recruited at the entrance to local markets

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5767136>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5767136>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)