



Review

Consumers' attitudes and behaviour towards safe food in China: A review

Rongduo Liu^{a,b}, Zuzanna Pieniak^{a,*}, Wim Verbeke^a^a Department of Agricultural Economics, Ghent University, Coupure links 653, 9000 Gent, Belgium^b Department of Finance, China Women's University, Yuhui Donglu 1, Chaoyang district, Beijing 100101, China

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 4 September 2012

Received in revised form

19 December 2012

Accepted 21 January 2013

Keywords:

China

Consumer

Safe food

Review

ABSTRACT

Frequent food safety incidents have increased Chinese consumers' concerns about food quality and safety. This has resulted in an expansion of the safe food market, a segment that includes hazard free, green and organic food. This paper evaluates Chinese consumers' decision-making processes in relation to safe food. It specifically focuses on consumers' use of and trust in information about safe food and their knowledge, attitudes and behaviour towards safe food. The findings show that Chinese consumers have a high awareness of safe food but limited knowledge about the concept of safe food, low recognition of the relevant labels and limited ability to identify safe food. Despite limited knowledge about safe food, Chinese consumers generally hold positive attitudes towards it, particularly with regard to its safety, quality, nutrition and taste. They are willing to pay more for safe food products. The implications of this review for the food industry, food policy decision makers and future scientific research are discussed.

© 2013 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Contents

1. Introduction	93
2. Selection of relevant studies	94
3. Use of and trust in information about safe food	95
4. Consumers' awareness and knowledge about safe food	99
4.1. High levels of awareness about safe food	99
4.2. Low knowledge about safe food	99
5. Consumer attitudes towards safe food	99
5.1. The perceived benefits of safe food	99
5.2. The perceived barriers to safe food	100
6. Behavioural intentions towards safe food	100
7. Purchasing behaviour towards safe food	100
8. Determinants of safe food consumption	101
8.1. Personal factors	101
8.2. Economic factors	101
8.3. Socio-cultural factors	101
8.4. Marketing factors	101
9. Conclusions	102
References	102

1. Introduction

This review focuses on Chinese consumers' behaviour towards safe food. Safe food in this paper refers to hazard free, green and

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +32 9 264 59 20; fax: +32 9 264 62 46.

E-mail addresses: rongduo.liu@ugent.be (R. Liu), zuzanna.pieniak@ugent.be (Z. Pieniak), wim.verbeke@ugent.be (W. Verbeke).

organic food, all three of which are legally defined in China. *Hazard free food*, is characterised as being of good quality, nutritious and safe: harmful or toxic residues, such as fertilizers, pesticides, heavy metals, and nitrates are controlled within limits set by national standards (Huang, Wu, Rong, You, & Jiang, 1999). While the emphasis of the concept of hazard free food is on the residue content, the concept of *organic food* relates to crop cultivation. In the organic food production process, artificially synthesized fertilizers, pesticides, growth regulators, livestock and poultry feed additives and genetically engineered technology are prohibited (Jia, Liu, Wang, & Liu, 2002). The concept of *green food* is based on concepts of environmental protection and sustainable development. From the choice of materials to production every stage of the green food production process must meet specified standards of environment protection (Zhang et al., 2002). According to different production standards, green food is classified into two levels: A and AA. The production criteria and requirements of AA green food are similar to those for organic food (Qin, Li, & Qin, 2003).

There are differences in the standards used to define hazard free, green and organic food, in terms of production area, production regulation, processing, packaging, and especially the usage of production materials (Jia et al., 2002). The criteria for organic food are the strictest, followed by those for green food and hazard free food, so the safety ranking of the three kinds of food gradually increases from hazard free food, green food to organic food (Gao & Zhang, 2002). Detailed descriptions of the three kinds of safe food together with their logos are shown in Table 1.

These three kinds of food have been widely used in Chinese academic studies as representative of safe food (Jiang, 2004; Luo, 2010; Wang & Wei, 2006; Zhou, 2004; Zhou, 2005; Zhou, Huo, & Peng, 2004). In some studies they are also called safe agricultural products (Ma & Qin, 2009; Yang & Li, 2005; Zhang, 2010). To remain consistent within this paper, we use the term safe food as a unified concept that includes hazard free, green and organic food.

Due to the improved living standards and the frequent occurrence of food safety scares, Chinese consumers are increasingly concerned about food quality and safety (Cheng, Zhou, & Yin, 2009; Zeng, Xia, & Huang, 2007; Zhou & Zhuo, 2010). These growing concerns have increased demand for safe food and contributed to the development of the safe food market in China. The expansion of the safe food market has also been strongly supported by China's central government. The policy of "developing hazard free

agricultural products, green food and organic agricultural products" has consecutively appeared in China's No.1 Central Document every year between 2004 and 2010, illustrating the government's intention and determination to develop safe food.

Product development and marketing strategies are led by consumers' beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. Thus, from a marketing perspective it is relevant to explore Chinese consumers' behaviour towards safe food. Research into Chinese consumer's behaviour towards safe food is still at a relatively early stage, and this review provides a comprehensive overview of this growing stream of literature. It specifically evaluates consumer decision-making processes (Engel, Miniard, & Blackwell, 1995), focussing on consumers' use of and trust in information about safe food, their awareness and knowledge, attitudes, behavioural intentions, purchasing behaviour and the determinants of safe food consumption. The main conclusions and implications are presented at the end of the paper.

2. Selection of relevant studies

This review is based on published English and Chinese language articles. The Chinese language papers were selected from the CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) database. CNKI is the biggest Chinese literature database, including Chinese academic journal articles, doctoral and master's dissertations, conference articles and other types of documents. The English language papers were mainly selected from the ISI Web of Knowledge and Google Scholar. The following key words were used to identify the relevant articles: China and [{consumption} or {consumer} or {consumer behaviour} or {cognition} or {attitude} or {information} or {willingness to purchase} or {purchase intention} or {willingness to pay} or {purchase behaviour}] and [{food consumption} or {food safety} or {food security} or {agricultural food} or {safe food} or {green food} or {organic food} or {hazard free food}] and combinations thereof.

The articles were chosen for review according to the following criteria: (1) the study focused on food and consumer behaviour, (2) the study was conducted in urban areas in China, (3) the study provided insights and information about consumer awareness and knowledge, attitudes, intentions, willingness to pay or behaviour related to, hazard free, green or organic food, (4) the study was published in academic journals included in CNKI, (5) the full-text article was available for review. Following these criteria, 69

Table 1
Description of hazard free food, green food and organic food.

	Hazard free food	Green food	Organic food
Food certificated label			
Certificate authority (Yin, Wu, Du, & Chen, 2010)	The center for Agri-food Quality and Safety, Ministry of Agriculture of PRC	China Green Food Development Center, Ministry of Agriculture of PRC	China Organic Food Certification Center, Ministry of Agriculture of PRC; China Organic Food Development Centre, Ministry of Environmental Protection of PRC
Validity of certificated label	3 years	3 years	1 year
Operation year (Qin et al., 2003)	2001	1990	1994
Main difference (Jia, Liu, Wang, & Liu, 2002; Qin et al., 2003)	Controlled and limited use of synthesized fertilizer, pesticide, growth regulator, livestock and poultry feed additive and gene engineering technology; no use of pesticide with high toxicity and high residue	Controlled and limited use of synthesized fertilizer, pesticide, growth regulator, livestock and poultry feed additive and gene engineering technology (for A level green food)	No use of artificially synthesized fertilizer, pesticide, growth regulator, livestock and poultry feed additive and gene engineering technology (for organic food and AA level green food)

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6392477>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6392477>

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