

An Investigation into the Impact of Brexit on Consumer Perception of Trust in the Food Industry

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Abstract : This ongoing project investigates the impact of Brexit on consumer perceptions of trust in the food industry. Brexit has significantly impacted the food industry, triggering a paradigm shift in the movement of food/agricultural produce, regulations, and cross-border collaborations between Great Britain, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland. In a world where the dynamics have shifted because of regulatory changes that impact trade and the free movement of foods and agricultural produce between these three countries, monitoring and controlling every stage of the food supply chain have become challenging, increasing the potential for food fraud and food safety incidents. As consumers play a pivotal role in shaping the market, understanding any shifts in trust post-Brexit enables them to navigate the market with confidence and awareness. This study aims to explore the complexities of consumer perceptions, focusing on trust as a cornerstone of consumer confidence in the post-Brexit food landscape. The objectives include comparing trust in official controls pre- and post-Brexit, determining consumer awareness of food fraud, and devising recommendations that reflect the evidence from this primary research regarding consumer trust in food authenticity post-Brexit. The research design follows an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach, incorporating qualitative methods such as focus groups and structured interviews, along with quantitative research through a large-scale survey. Participants from UCD and Ulster University campuses, comprising academic and non-academic staff, students, and researchers, will provide insights into the impact of Brexit on consumer trust. Preliminary findings from focus groups and interviews highlight changes in labelling, reduced quantity and quality of foods in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, fewer food choices, and increased food prices since Brexit. The study aims to further investigate and quantify these impacts through a comprehensive large-scale survey involving participants from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The results will inform official controls and consumer-facing messaging contributing valuable insights to navigate the evolving post-Brexit food landscape.

Keywords : Brexit, consumer trust, food fraud, food authenticity, food safety, food industry

Conference Title : ICFFAS 2025 : International Conference on Food Fraud and Alert Systems

Conference Location : Miami, United States

Conference Dates : March 11-12, 2025