

Label Survey in Romania: A Study on How Consumers Use Food Labeling

Authors : Gabriela Iordachescu, Mariana Cretu Stuparu, Mirela Praisler, Camelia Busila, Doina Voinescu, Camelia Vizireanu

Abstract : The aim of the study was to evaluate the consumers' degree of confidence in food labeling, how they use and understand the label and respectively food labeling elements. The label is a bridge between producers, suppliers, and consumers. It has to offer enough information in terms of public health and food safety, statement of ingredients, nutritional information, warnings and advisory statements, producing date and shelf-life, instructions for storage and preparation (if required). The survey was conducted on 500 consumers group in Romania, aged 15+, males and females, from urban and rural areas and with different graduation levels. The questionnaire was distributed face to face and online. It had single or multiple choices questions and label images for the efficiency and best understanding of the question. The law 1169/2011 applied to food products from 13 of December 2016 improved and adapted the requirements for labeling in a clear manner. The questions were divided on following topics: interest and general trust in labeling, use and understanding of label elements, understanding of the ingredient list and safety information, nutrition information, advisory statements, serving sizes, best before/use by meanings, intelligent labeling, and demographic data. Three choice selection exercises were also included. In this case, the consumers had to choose between two similar products and evaluate which label element is most important in product choice. The data were analysed using MINITAB 17 and PCA analysis. Most of the respondents trust the food label, taking into account some elements especially when they buy the first time the product. They usually check the sugar content and type of sugar, saturated fat and use the mandatory label elements and nutrition information panel. Also, the consumers pay attention to advisory statements, especially if one of the items is relevant to them or the family. Intelligent labeling is a challenging option. In addition, the paper underlines that the consumer is more careful and selective with the food consumption and the label is the main helper for these.

Keywords : consumers, food safety information, labeling, labeling nutritional information

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