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Young Polish consumers on the organic food market

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Abstract: In this paper the authors show how organic food is perceived by Polish young consumers as well as the frequency with which it is purchased by them. The article also identifies the major reasons why young Polish consumers decide to buy organic food and the factors that limit them in purchasing such food products (both in terms of quantity and frequency of purchase). While preparing this study, the authors referred to literature in the field of ecology, consumer behaviour marketing and data obtained from the primary research conducted by the authors in the time period February-March 2014 by means of an auditorium survey based on a sample of 617 respondents (young Polish consumers).

Keywords: organic food, young Polish consumers
JEL codes: D12, Q01, Q13

1. Introduction

Socio-economic development of modern societies affects multidirectional changes in consumption determined by the emerging new trends, not always positive from the point of view of long-term interest of society and the environment in which they live. One of such trends is consumerism, defined as the excessive consumption of goods and services that is not justified by real human needs and neglecting ecological, social and individual costs (Cudowska-Sojko, 2012: 19). It necessitates continuous growth of production, and, thereby, increases the demand for natural resources. At the same time it results in an increase in waste leading to environmental degradation. The opposite of the further development of this trend is the emergence of new trends in consumption. They are reflected, among other things, by downscaling the number of

goods consumed and the increase in consumption of products produced in accordance with the environmental requirements. (See, for instance, trends known as conscious consumption, sustainable consumption, eco-consumption, deconsumption, collaborative consumption, ethical consumption, etc.). In response to these new trends, offers of the growing number of manufacturers and retailers already include products referred to as socially responsible products, eco-friendly products, or ecological products (this group includes also organic food considered thoroughly in the present paper). Extending the current market offer of these new products is an expression of companies' adaptation to the new reality in which ecological issues and responsible business become increasingly important. Both their presence on the market and the sales realised are conducive to perpetuating many new (pro-ecological and socially responsible) attitudes and consumer behaviours. Poland's social and economic conditions, however, are not yet conducive to making Polish consumers' behaviours embedded in the scope of the above-mentioned trends in consumption to a level similar to that observed in many other European countries. Despite this (as shown by abundant fragmentary research conducted in this area) a lot of Polish citizens, whenever possible, adapt consumption patterns growing out of these trends, including those associated with the purchase and consumption of organic food (Baranowska-Skimina, 2014; Badanie świadomości i zachowań ekologicznych mieszkańców Polski 2011, 2012, 2013).

The research objective of this article is to identify the behaviour on the Polish organic food market undertaken by young consumers which was measured within the primary research described in more detail in a further section of the work. In terms of its implementation, the authors identify the following: the frequency of purchasing organic food by these persons, the most important causes impacting the choice and the factors that are for young consumers significant barriers in terms of its purchase and consumption. The obtained data are also confronted with the answers given by respondents allowing thus the determination of their perceptions of organic food and the identification of the way in which its perception translates into the frequency of purchase decisions.

2. Organic food and conventional food

According to the most common approach, organic food (also known as ecological food or eco-food) can be understood as food produced in accordance with the standards of organic farming (Orboi, 2013: 201). This type of agriculture is defined as ‘a system of sustainable management of plant and animal production within a farm, based on the application of substances of the biological and mineral origin that have not been processed technologically. The basic principle is to reject the use of chemical substances in agricultural, veterinary and food production processes (Denisowski, 2012: 6).’

Organic food is produced in farms or in food processing companies that are certified to produce and to label it as an ecological product (these farms conform to the standards described in the relevant legal regulations defining also the conditions and the manner in which organic food ought to be produced).

Organic food certification placed on organic food products is proof that it has been manufactured in full conformity with the principles of organic farming. After a two-year transitional period concerning EU labelling rules, since 01 July 2012 it has been mandatory for packaged organic food produced in the European Union to bear the official EU organic logo of ‘Euro-leaf’ (in the case of unpackaged or imported products, the logo is not mandatory)¹. The logo is increasingly accompanied by various private, regional or national logos.

Often the concept of organic food is equated (or used interchangeably) with terms like ‘healthy food’ or ‘natural product’. It should be noted, however, that they are not synonymous terms. Only the concept of organic food means that it is certified. Other names are terms created for marketing purposes (i.e., to draw consumers’ attention). In reality, however, labelling food products with such names, does not mean that these products meet specific standards related to the production of organic food.

The considered organic food is for consumers an alternative to commonly available conventional food, the production of which (as well as in further processing) employs various kinds of chemicals allowing, on the one hand, to minimize costs incurred in its production, on

¹ ‘Euro-leaf’ was introduced on 01 July, 2010. Before it became a compulsory element for all products, a two-year transitional period was provided (from 01 July 2010 to 01 July 2012) so as to allow businesses to adapt to the new labelling rules and avoid waste of existing packaging (Commission Regulation, 2010).

the other hand – to improve the efficiency of the production and the sustainability of the resultant product. It is also opposed to genetically modified foods labelled with the acronym GMO (genetically modified organism).

The main characteristics of organic food (being also the features which differentiate it from conventional foods and GMOs) are considered most frequently relative to the following aspects (Zrałek, 2010: 392; Denisowski, 2012: 7-10; Tyburski, 2013: 10-11):

1. In its production (plant production) chemical pesticides and artificial fertilizers are not used (fertilization admits only green manure, compost, manure, minerals available in nature), and the appropriate crop rotation is applied;
2. In its production (livestock production) industrial feed containing synthetic additives are excluded (farm animals are fed mainly with own feed originating from the ecological farm);
3. As a result of the method used for their production, they contain less nitrates and nitrites, and far less pesticide, contain no artificial colours, fragrances, flavours or preservatives, also are free of GMOs and their derivatives².

3. The organic food market in Poland

Observers and researchers of the Polish food market who deal with consumer behaviour analysis on this market confirm that Polish consumers (following the behaviour model of consumers in other countries) more and more frequently pay attention not only to the place of origin of a food product (country of manufacture) but also to the method of its manufacture, checking whether it was produced with the use of organic methods. This procedure is an expression of the growing ecological awareness of Polish citizens and their sensitivity to the negative aspects of excessive and irresponsible consumption (*Żywność ekologiczna w opiniach Polaków*, 2012; *Badanie świadomości i zachowań ekologicznych mieszkańców Polski*, 2011, 2012, 2013). The social transformations taking place in this area are supported by both legislative changes (intensified by the Polish accession to the European Union) requiring businesses and individuals to direct actions undertaken to sustainable development (including the protection of the environment), as well as

² See also the results of the research conducted by an international team of 18 experts, led by C. Leifert from Newcastle University in the UK, published in June 2014 and widely commented (Barański *et. al*, 2014: 1-18).

by numerous information and educational activities aimed at shaping socially responsible attitudes and behaviours. Although the sales of organic food products in Poland are growing rapidly (especially after Poland's accession to the EU), they are still, if compared with other European countries, at an early stage of development (the recorded sales increases are primarily the result of a considerably smaller, if compared with those states, base which constitutes the reference point for the calculation of the growth rate). Consequently, the share of the organic market in the whole of Poland's food market is still small; also, relatively low are Polish consumers' expenses for organic food³. Polish consumers' growing interest in organic food has not translated yet into a comparable increase in demand. It is estimated that the reasons for this can be seen primarily in Polish consumers' still poor knowledge about such products and their relatively high price compared with prices of conventional food products (this results from high costs of production and certification) (Zientek-Varga, 2009: 18-25; *Żywność ekologiczna – najszybciej rosnący rynek żywnościowy w Polsce*, 2013). The increase in demand is also impeded by the following: limited access to organic food, problems in its distinguishing from food produced by conventional methods, or its insufficient (in relation to consumer expectations) offer in terms of quantity and level of differentiation (Śmiechowska, 2011: 482-486).

As estimated, the organic food market in Poland (similar to other countries) is a market of the future. Therefore, in response to the growing interest in Poland, the number of farms and processing plants that produce organic food (its production is backed by subsidies from the EU) is on the increase. The number of places where such products can be bought is also increasing (it is not any longer only the manufacturer's direct sale or sale at eco-fairs; nowadays these are also

³ *The global market for certified organic food in 2012 reached the value of \$ 64 billion (in 1999 it was only 15 billion), and the European market alone was worth 22.8 billion Euros (about 6% more than in 2011 and 100% more than in 1999). The Polish organic food market at that time was worth about 550-600 million PLN, but its annual growth was estimated at a level of 20% -30%. The record sales of organic foods can be seen in the USA (in 2012 the turnover reached 22.6 billion Euros). Two further positions in the ranking are occupied by European countries: Germany (7 billion Euros) and France (4 billion Euros). European countries have also recorded the highest annual consumption of organic food per capita. In 2012, Switzerland (189 Euros) took the lead in this respect and was followed by Denmark (almost 159 Euros). These were also European countries that occupied the next five positions (Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, Austria, Sweden, Germany subsequently). In comparison with the above data, the Polish consumer's spending on certified organic food is rather low (only around 3-4 Euros per year). The average consumption of organic food in the countries leading in the rankings (Denmark, Switzerland, Germany, Austria) is 4-5% of the total of the food consumed (consumption recorded) in them. In Poland it is around 0.2%. Despite these low values, high growth of Poland's organic food allows us to expect that in the coming years, these rates will increase significantly. (Willer and Lernoud, 2014: 39-44; *Kupujemy coraz więcej ekologicznej żywności*, 2012; *Rynek żywności ekologicznej rośnie*, 2013; *Polak wydaje na ekologiczną żywność... 4 euro rocznie*, 2014).*

specialty shops, and above all stands/shelves in retail networks dedicated to organic food as well as increasingly specialized and general food internet stores).

According to the latest report *The World of Organic Agriculture. Statistics and Emerging Trends 2014*, Poland occupies the ninth position among the countries of the world which altogether in 2012 recorded the highest (compared to 2011) increase in organic farmland (Willer and Lernoud, 2014: 30). Due to that Poland also occupies the fifth place in the ranking of European countries (after Spain, Italy, Germany and France) with the largest organic crop farmland (Lernoud and Willer, 2014: 30)⁴. In the period 2003-2012 the surface of such farmland in Poland increased eleven-fold, and according to the estimates of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MRiRW) is currently around 3.4% of farmland in the country (*Rolnictwo ekologiczne w Polsce*, 2014). The growing importance of Poland in the area of organic farming is also proved by its tenth position in the ranking of the world's countries with the largest number of organic producers. Globally, in 2012, there were nearly 2 million (out of which up to 600,000 are situated in India - the ranking leader) (Willer and Lernoud, 2014: 36-38). In Poland, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, on 31 December 2012 there were nearly 26.5 thousand of organic producers, including 25.9 thousand farms with arable land of 661,687 hectares (compared to 2011, the area of these farms has increased by about 10%) and 312 food processing plants possessing ecological certificates (*Rolnictwo ekologiczne w Polsce*, 2014). It should be emphasized, however, that it is the processing industry and its relatively slow growth (the number of processing plants has remained at almost the same level for several years), and also weak logistics and distribution (which still translates into relatively low availability of organic food products) are still regarded as the weakest links of the Polish organic food market (Przybylak, 2013).

⁴ It is worth noting that the total area of agricultural land under organic farming in the world has increased more than three times since 1999. In 2012 it amounted to 37.5 million hectares. Most acres of organic land (12.2 million hectares) are located in Australia and Oceania (the part of the world comprising the Australian continent together with the Pacific Islands of Oceania) and Europe (11.2 million hectares) which has shown a regular and at the same time the largest (among other parts of the world) increase in recent years. The country with the largest share of own land in the total area of ecological arable land is Australia (12%), followed by Argentina (3.6%) and the USA (2.2%). Together with seven other countries (China, Spain, Italy, Germany, France, Uruguay, Canada) they have a total of 26.3 million hectares of the world's total land (70%) allocated to organic farming. The countries with the highest proportion of the land designated for ecological agriculture in the total of agricultural land of a country are the Falklands/Malvinas (36.3%) followed by two European countries: Liechtenstein (29.6%) and Austria (19.7%) (Willer and Lernoud, 2014: 13-30).

4. Young Polish consumers on the organic food market – the outcome of the research⁵

The research the outcome of which is presented in a further section of this article was carried out with the use of an auditorium survey method in the time period February-March 2014. It was attended by 617 people aged 18-26 years (see Table 1) who, according to the majority of classifications available in the literature in the field of consumer behaviour, are within the so-called *young consumers* segment⁶. The selection of the research sample was non-random.

Table 1. Characteristic of the research participants (n=617)

Criterion	Number	Participation in percentage
Sex of respondents		
women	433	70.2
men	184	29.8
Age of respondents		
From 18 to 20 years	375	60.8
From 21 to 23 years	211	34.2
From 24 to 26 years	31	5.0

Source: elaborated by the authors based on the results of the research conducted.

The researched subjects were students⁷, a social group with its own specific characteristics resulting from their age, current employment status, shared similarities (within certain limits) in needs and obligations, as well as ongoing changes in their lives. These persons are formally adults (have become major) and have a certain independence in decision-making (including

⁵ The selected results presented in this part of the study were also used in the articles by Escher and Petrykowska, *Proekologiczne zachowania młodych polskich konsumentów* (an article written for the conference *Behaviour of consumers in the market for goods and services* organized on 16-17 October, 2014 in Gdynia) and Escher and Petrykowska, *Zachowania młodych polskich konsumentów na rynku żywności ekologicznej* (an article for the conference titled *Marketing in the future. Trends, strategies, instruments* organised on 5-7 October 2014 in Szczecin). The first article at the time of the submission of this article was waiting for reviews. The second article received positive reviews and was sent to be printed.

⁶ It should be emphasized that in the area of the definition of the concept of *the young consumer* (more precisely - in defining the age range of the person who can be classified into this segment of the market) there are no clear indications. The age range referenced to the category of *the young consumer* is taken variously (depending on the author, the purpose for which it is established, or the scientific discipline in which the concept of *youth*, a *young man*, or a *young person* is considered in detail.)

⁷ The respondents in the study described were students of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (majoring in Management, Economics, Finance and Accountancy, Social Work), and students of the Higher School of Banking in Toruń (majoring in Management).

purchase decisions), which is not always associated with full maturity in economic terms. At the same time their young age impacts the following characteristics:

- they are still consumers that in many areas show little maturity,
- they often change their own attitudes and preferences,
- they are willing to explore new products,
- they are not afraid of new experiences,
- they make decisions that are often irrational.

In addition, they are distinguished by their sense of cultural and generational identity and high tolerance for diversity. They have a lot of ease in the use of the latest technology, the ease of obtaining information, traveling and learning about different cultures. Therefore, they learn quickly and are influenced by the environment, including reference groups (especially peers), the media and the many trends and new ideas, which largely determine their behaviours and perceptions of reality (de Pourbaix, 2011: 266-267). Many of these features are embedded in the characteristics of the Polish *ecological consumer*, according to which, he/she is a young, educated, active, modern, open and friendly person (Śmiechowska, 2011: 484) (however, it must be remembered that the concept of *the ecological consumer* is much broader than the notion of *the organic food consumer*).

The above-mentioned persons belong to the generation of Poles, who, as can be supposed, are no stranger to issues related to broadly understood ecology, including *ecological consumption*. They had more opportunities than the older generation of Polish consumers to acquire knowledge and education of ecological habits conducive to respecting the natural environment and their own health. They spent their childhood and youth in the period during which in the free and democratic Poland economic and social problems started to be discussed openly. Debated themes included also such issues as progressive environmental degradation (resulting from, among other things, the pace of the increase in urbanization and industry and irresponsible exploitation of natural resources) and the harmful effects of certain products on health as well as welfare of consumers. Poland's accession to the European structures necessitated a more efficient implementation of legislative changes that have obliged Polish entrepreneurs and individual citizens to incorporate the principles favouring environmental protection in their activities. The changes also obliged a number of institutions to conduct wide-

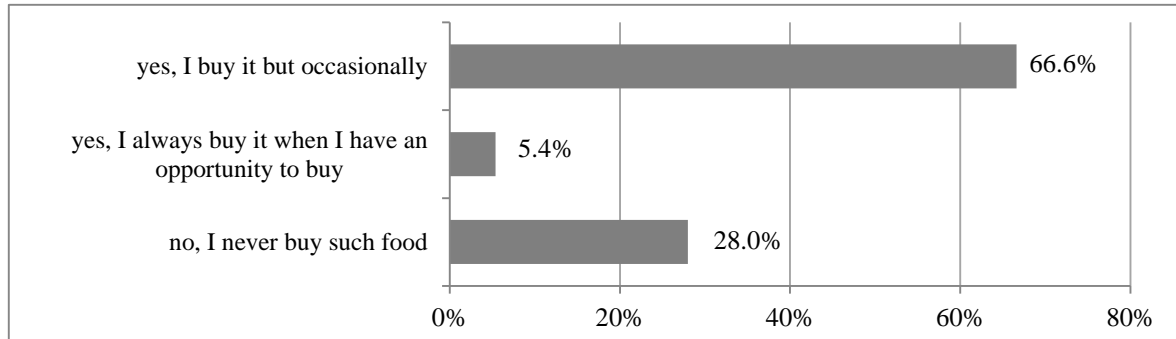
ranging information and education activities aimed at building environmental awareness of citizens and encouraging them to take a variety of pro-ecological behaviours (including those that refer to the conscious and responsible consumption). The mass media were obliged to shape a positive attitude of society to protect the environment and popularize the principles of the protection in publications and broadcasts, and regarding promotional activities (including advertising), companies were obliged to the elimination of the content promoting the consumption model that stays in opposition with the principles of environmental protection and of sustainable development. The issue of environmental protection was compulsorily introduced in the core curriculum of general education in all types of Polish schools and courses awarding professional qualifications. (*Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education, 2011; Regulation of the Minister of National Education, 2012; Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education, 2012*). Education for environmental protection (along with education for conscious and responsible consumption) has become in Poland part of the so-called *formal education* (implemented at the level of pre-school and early childhood education, elementary school, lower-secondary school, secondary school) and was additionally supported by the *non-formal education* conducted by NGOs, Ministry of Environment, local governments, local institutions, or by the above-mentioned media.

The presented facts suggest that Polish young consumers are (in comparison with the older generation of Polish consumers) both more experienced (even through the above-described changes in the system of *formal and informal education*) in the implementation of actions conducive to environmental protection and care for their own health, and possess comparatively far more ecological knowledge, including knowledge on sustainable consumption and organic food (we should bear in mind the fact that access to such foods and selection is much greater today than in the days of youth of older generation groups of Polish consumers). This, in turn, allows us to expect that a significant proportion of them shall purchase *organic food*, while being aware of its essential properties. The results of the research presented below show to what degree the assumption is correct.

Referring to the assumption made above, the persons subjected to measurement in this study were asked, among other things, whether they purchase organic food (they were also asked to provide the frequency of purchases). The results indicate that within the studied group of young consumers a significant number of them are familiar with organic food. As follows from

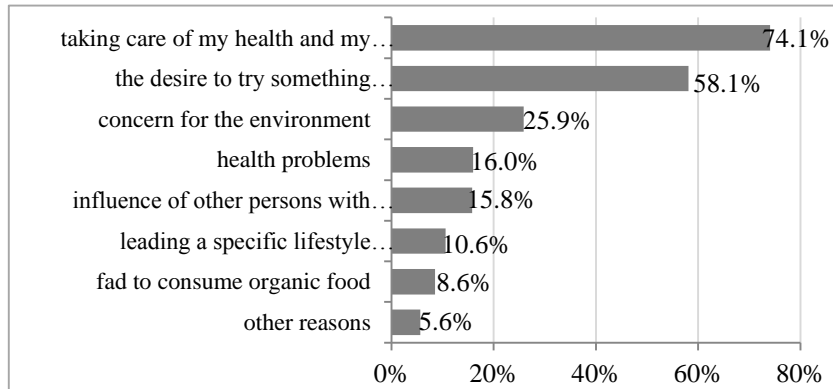
the data presented in Figure 1, the majority of them (72%) declared that they buy organic food (the total number of indications in the category: *I always buy when I have an opportunity to buy* and *I buy but occasionally*). Merely 28% of the respondents said that they *never buy such food*.

Figure 1. Distribution of replies to the question: *Do you happen to buy organic food?* (n=617)



Source: elaborated by the authors based on the results of the research conducted.

As pointed out in numerous studies, people buying organic food are guided by a variety of motives that are directly related to their perceptions of organic food as well as to their attitudes and preferences shown to it. An impulse to buy organic food may be their concern for personal health and the natural environment, or following a certain lifestyle or fashion. The results of the research conducted indicate that similar reasons drive young consumers surveyed (see Figure 2). Those who declared buying organic food (*I always buy it when I have an opportunity to buy*, or *I buy it but occasionally*) admitted that they buy it when motivated by the concern for *their and their closest persons' health* (74.1% of indications in this group of respondents). More than a half claimed, however, that when buying organic food they are also motivated by *the desire to try something new* (58.1%), and slightly more than one quarter (25.9%) – by their *concern for protecting the environment*.

Figure 2. The reasons why respondents buy organic food (n=444)

Source: elaborated by the authors based on the results of the research conducted.

As shown in Figure 2, the ‘*other reasons*’ category contained additional motives for purchase decisions provided by respondents (not referred to within the questionnaire response options). A total of 25 people pointed to them. These extra motives concerned primarily the aspects related to the value of organic food (*‘longer product life’, ‘better taste’, ‘higher quality’*) and the random nature of making purchase decisions (*‘I buy it accidentally or when I have no other choice’, ‘I buy it by mistake’, ‘by chance’*). There were also replies referring to the two variants contained in the questionnaire associated with *health concerns and one’s health problems*. These were the answers indicating a beneficial effect of organic food on health (*‘organic food makes you feel well’, ‘organic food is not allergic’, ‘organic food helps reduce body weight’, ‘organic food facilitates weight loss’, ‘organic food is dietary’, ‘organic food is low-calorie food’*).

Numerous studies on buying behaviours indicate that consumers’ opinions or preferences are not always convergent with their purchase decisions taken. Similar differences can be observed in the case of consumers participating in the study described here with regard to organic food. Despite a *positive attitude* shown by the vast majority of respondents to organic food (*i.e.*, a positive assessment given to its selected features - see Table 2), a significant percentage of them *do not* buy it. Other hand, however, the purchase of such products is declared by a considerable

number of respondents who *disagreed* with assigning them the features described in the two statements contained in Table 2, or by those who were unable to *respond explicitly* to them.

Table 2. Respondents' opinions about selected features of organic food and its actual purchase

Do you happen to buy organic food?	yes*	no
Respondents' attitude to the below statements		
Positive (approve)		
1. It has better nutritional value than non-organic food (n=465)	74.4	25.6
2. It is very healthy (n=463)	75.8	24.2
Negative (lack of approve)		
1. It has better nutritional value than non-organic food (n=25)	48.0	52.0
2. It is very healthy (n=6)	0.0	100.0
Ambivalent (lack of explicit attitude)		
1. It has better nutritional value than non-organic food (n=127)	67.7	32.3
2. It is very healthy (n=148)	62.8	37.2

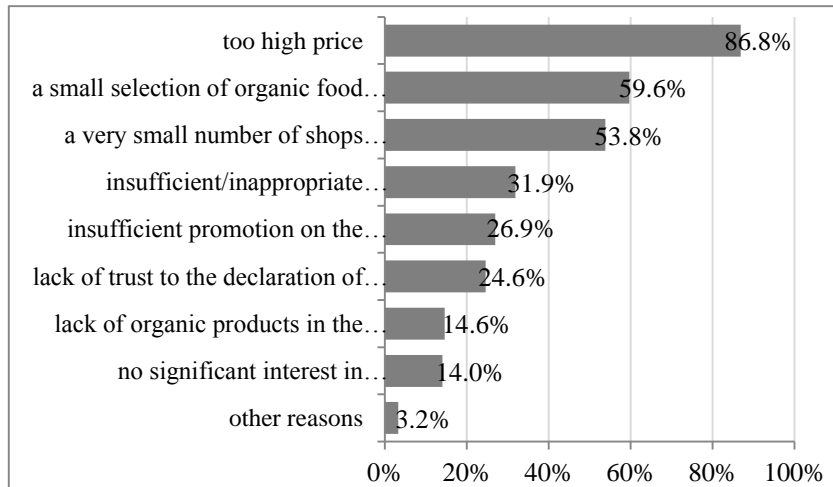
*The total percentage of indications of the two variants of answers: *I always buy when I have an opportunity to buy* and *I buy it but occasionally*.

Source: elaborated by the authors based on the results of the research conducted.

The discrepancies between the perception (positive) of organic food and the adapted purchasing behaviour may result from the numerous barriers that hinder its purchase (and thus also recognising its real values). As mentioned earlier in this article, the most important factors limiting the purchase of organic food in Poland include too high price, low availability in stores, difficulties in differentiating it from conventional food, or insufficient range (in terms of quantity and level of differentiation). The existence of these barriers (relating to young Polish consumers) confirm the results of this study (see Figure 3). As follows from these results, the main reason why respondents do not buy organic food, or buy it but in a limited range, is *too high price* of this food (86.8% of those who acknowledged that there are factors limiting their buying organic food). Other barriers to the purchase of organic food indicated by the majority of the researched group were the following: *a small selection of organic food in stores in which they usually do their shopping* (59.6%) and *a very small number of shops where you can buy organic food* (53.8%). Almost one third of people in the study group (31.9%) admitted that the factor limiting or preventing them from purchasing organic food is *insufficient (inappropriate) labelling of*

organic food, which makes it hard for them to recognise which products on the store shelf are organic.

Figure 3. Factors that cause that the respondents *do not buy organic food or buy less than they would like to* (n=343)



Source: elaborated by the authors based on the results of the research conducted.

It was noted in the fragment of the text preceding the presentation of the results of the study that an equally important factor limiting consumption of organic food in Poland is still a low level of knowledge of Polish consumers about such products. The results of the research seem to confirm the existence of this barrier also in the case of the young consumers surveyed, despite many facts (also described in this article) related to the changes taking place in Poland, including ones in the field of education, indicted that Polish young consumers would have a relatively high level of knowledge about the products in question. Both in Table 2 and Table 3 there is a significant percentage of respondents who were unable to assign explicitly attributes of organic food listed in the two tables (see the number of people with *ambivalent attitude* in the case of Table 2, and the percentage of people within the category ‘*no explicit opinion*’ in Table 3).

Table 3. Attitude of the respondents towards the selected statements concerning organic food (in % calculated for n = 617)

Evaluated characteristic of organic food	Approbate	Lack of approbate	Lack of explicit opinion
1. Its production does not pollute the natural environment.	62.9	3.2	33.9
2. It does not contain preservatives.	72.0	2.3	25.8
3. It is not modified genetically.	73.7	6.0	20.3
4. Apart from its higher price it does not differ from non-organic food.	6.8	54.3	38.9

Source: elaborated by the authors based on the results of the research conducted.

Statement no. 4 (*Apart from its higher price it does not differ from non-organic food*) received a surprisingly high percentage of ambivalent indications. Irrespective of the scope of knowledge young respondents have about organic food, it could be expected that they would be able to see other characteristic (than the price) that differentiates organic food from conventional food. The price aspect appears to determine to a large extent the perception and purchase of organic food by the young consumers surveyed. For the first time the price aspect appeared in the results of the researched when respondents were indicating the factors limiting them while purchasing organic food (see again Figure 3). It also occurs in another part of the research, in which respondents were asked to respond to several statements about organic food (see Table 4).

Table 4. Attitude of the respondents towards the selected statements concerning organic food (in % calculated for n = 617)

Evaluated statement	Approbate	Lack of approbate	Lack of explicit opinion
1. Environmental labelling on food products is only a marketing gimmick.	10.4	42.6	47.0
2. Consumers should buy organic food.	53.0	11.5	35.5
3. Organic food is only for rich people.	23.9	35.5	40.7

Source: elaborated by the authors based on the results of the research conducted.

The data presented in Table 4 show that although the majority of respondents (53.0%) agree with the statement that '*Consumers should buy organic food*', still a substantial proportion (slightly more than one-third - 35.5%), has not clearly defined their opinions on the subject. However, it is interesting that quite a lot of people (23.9%) agree at the same time with the statement no. 3 - '*Organic food is only for rich people*'. Analysing the distribution of responses to this statement, it can also be noted that just over one third of respondents (35.5%) did not express their approval for it. The dominant group, however, were people who could not decide explicitly (40.7%).

When continuing this thread of considerations, an interesting picture can be achieved by the combination of responses to statement no. 3 with the declared average monthly budget for the purchase of food by the respondents (it concerns the whole food category, without differentiating between conventional and organic food). As follows from the data presented in Table 5, almost within all respondent groups categorised by the size of the amount allocated monthly for the purchase of food products (except for the last category, *i.e.*, those with the highest declared budget) responses to statement no. 3 are similar. Among all these people the dominant group are those who could not decide explicitly about the statement in question. Only within the group of people declaring the highest monthly expenditure on food (over 800 PLN), the largest percentage concerns those who have a positive attitude towards statement no. 4 (43.7%). However, as in the case of other groups, a large group (31.3%) in it was formed of the respondents who were not able to comment on this statement explicitly. This means that people who participated in the study often do not have a clear definite opinion, or do not want to or cannot talk about their own convictions on the subject considered within statement no. 3.

Table 5. Attitude of the respondents towards the statement ‘Organic food is only for rich people’ with the consideration of their average monthly budget for purchasing food

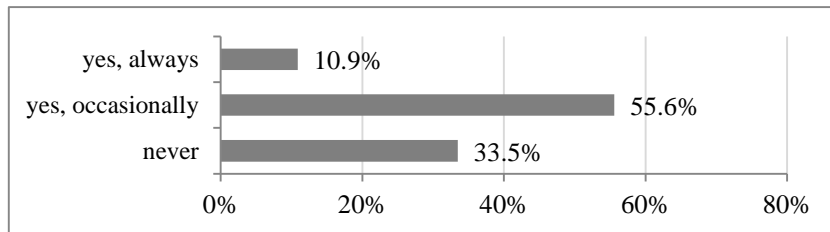
Average monthly budget for the purchase of food	‘Organic food is only for rich people’				
	Respondents’ attitude to the statement:	Appropriate	Lack of appropriate	Lack of explicit opinion	Total
Up to 200 PLN	Number of indications (participation in %)	66 (34.4)	51 (26.6)	75 (39.0)	192 (100)
201- 500 PLN	Number of indications (participation in %)	122 (36.1)	75 (22.2)	141 (41.7)	338 (100)
501 - 800 PLN	Number of indications (participation in %)	24 33.8	17 (23.9)	30 (42.3)	71 (100)
More than 800 PLN	Number of indications (participation in %)	7 (43.7)	4 (25.0)	5 (31.3)	16 (100)
Total	Number of indications (participation in %)	219 (35.5)	147 (23.8)	251 (40.7)	617 (100)

Source: elaborated by the authors based on the results of the research conducted.

Returning to the data shown in Table 4, it is also worth paying attention to the distribution of responses to the first of the statements contained there (*‘Environmental labelling on food products is only a marketing gimmick’*). The statement has a clear negative connotation. It is not surprising, therefore, that the percentage of people (10.4%) who expressed their approval in relation to it was the lowest. On the other hand, as much as 42.6% of the respondents did not agree with the statement, however, another 47% were unable to respond explicitly to it. The lack of explicit response surprises again. It points to young people’s lack of trust to producers of organic food and to markings placed by them on offered products. This result seems interesting because the majority of the researched participants (66.5%) admit that they pay attention to signs

placed on the packaging of organic products when buying food. However, scarcely 11% *always* do so (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Distribution of the respondents' answers to the question 'When buying food, do you always pay attention to ecological signs/symbols placed on the product packaging?' (n=617)



Source: elaborated by the authors based on the results of the research conducted.

The resulting picture is deepened by the overall data derived from Figure 4 and Table 4 (data concern statement no. 1 '*Environmental labelling on food products is only a marketing gimmick*'). Among respondents who declared that they *always* pay attention to ecological symbols, the largest group are those (65.7%) who disagree with statement no. 1 (see Table 6). Among them (compared with respondents from other groups) there can be found the lowest number of persons taking an ambiguous position to this statement (merely 22.4%). Therefore, it can be stated that the representatives of this group of young Polish consumers have more established views on organic food, constitute more aware recipients of organic food, pay attention to signs and at the same time show more confidence in them (do not treat eco-labels on organic food products only as a gimmick on the side of producers and retailers intended only to increase sales).

Table 6. Respondents' paying attention to ecological symbols on the food product packaging when doing the shopping and their attitudes to the statement 'Environmental labelling on food products is only a marketing gimmick'

'When buying food, do you always pay attention to ecological signs/symbols placed on the product packaging?'	'Environmental labelling on food products is only a marketing gimmick'				
	Respondents' attitude to the statement:	Appropriate	Lack of appropriate	Lack of explicit opinion	Total
Yes, always	Number of indications (participation in %)	8 (11.9)	44 (65.7)	15 (22.4)	67 (100)
Yes, occasionally	Number of indications (participation in %)	23 (6.7)	159 (46.4)	161 (46.9)	343 (100)
Never	Number of indications (participation in %)	33 (16.0)	87 (42.0)	87 (42.0)	207 (100)
Total	Number of indications (participation in %)	64 (10.4)	290 (47.0)	263 (42.6)	617 (100)

Source: elaborated by the authors based on the results of the research conducted.

Also in the case of people who only *occasionally* pay attention to ecological signs placed on the packaging of food products and of those who *never do it*, a large percentage are those who *do not agree* with the analysed statement (46.4% and 47% subsequently). Among them there is, however, a much higher percentage of those who are unable to respond explicitly to this statement (46.9% and 42% subsequently) and thus are not entirely convinced of the fairness on the side of manufacturers and retailers of organic food.

5. Summary and conclusion

Organic food is a category of food products whose production is associated with legally regulated standards of organic farming related to the specific conditions of plant cultivation, breeding of animals, processing methods and ingredients contained in it, and its origin is guaranteed by certain environmental certifications. In recent years, an increased interest in organic food has been observed on the Polish market, which is also caused by the overlapping of a variety of trends associated with a healthy lifestyle (including diet), dissemination of information about the harmfulness of certain components in the mass-produced food produced by conventional methods, as well as legislative changes (intensified with Poland's accession to the EU), and increased informational and educational activity aimed at shaping a socially responsible, environmentally friendly attitudes, and purchasing behaviours.

As confirmed by the outcome of the research, among the surveyed young Polish consumers organic food already has a significant group of customers, however, the vast majority of them *buy it occasionally*. Although organic food (its specific characteristics) is generally evaluated positively by those young buyers, their positive opinions are not always in line with their purchasing behaviours undertaken.

Purchases of organic food made by the researched persons is primarily motivated by the concern for their and their closest persons' health, the desire to try something new, and by their concern for the natural environment. At the same time such purchases are limited by numerous barriers. The barriers that were indicated by respondents most frequently included the following: too high price of organic food products, small selection of organic food products in places where they do their shopping, as well as too few shops where they can buy them. Further barriers that can be added to the list include lack of sufficient knowledge of the surveyed consumers about such products (at that moment a significant percentage of the respondents could not name explicitly fundamental attributes of organic food). They are not quite certain whether organic food pollutes the environment, whether it is free of preservatives, whether it is genetically modified, or whether it possesses some special characteristics apart from a higher price, which distinguishes it from conventional food.

The results obtained, in particular the identified inconsistency (typical of the young age of the respondents) between the expressed comments on (attitudes to) organic food and realised purchasing behaviours, or a significant percentage of people who were unable to take a firm

position on the specific statements relating to this category of food products (their attributes, the benefits arising from their purchase, etc.) indicate the need for intensifying the education of young people that has already been conducted in Poland for several years with a view to creating sustainable attitudes to and consistent behaviours on the organic food market.

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Młodzi polscy konsumenci na rynku żywności ekologicznej

Streszczenie

W opracowaniu autorki ukazują, w jaki sposób żywność ekologiczna postrzegana jest przez polskich młodych konsumentów, a także z jaką częstotliwością jest ona przez nich kupowana. W artykule wskazano również główne powody, dla których młodzi polscy konsumenci decydują się na zakup żywności ekologicznej oraz czynniki ograniczające ich w realizacji zakupów takiej żywności (zarówno, jeśli mowa o ilości, jak i częstotliwości dokonywania zakupu). Przy tworzeniu opracowania wykorzystano literaturę z zakresu ekologii, zachowań nabywców, marketingu oraz dane pozyskane z badania pierwotnego przeprowadzonego przez autorki w okresie luty-marzec 2014 r. metodą ankiety audytoryjnej na próbie 617 respondentów (młodych polskich konsumentów).

Słowa kluczowe: żywność ekologiczna, młodzi polscy konsumenci