

Careful, Gentle, Minimal - What are the principles of organic processing?

Consumer perspectives

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Background

- Consumers are an important stakeholder group
 - to be included in the process of developing a Code of Practice
- Knowledge on consumers' expectations of organic food processing is low

Objective

- Analyse consumer expectations and acceptance of (organic) food processing technologies

Research Questions

- What do consumers know about (organic) food processing?
- What is careful/organic processing in the eyes of consumers?
- Which milk processing methods do consumers prefer?

Methods

Focus group discussions

9 focus groups in Germany and in Switzerland

Online Survey in Germany and Switzerland (N=1287)

600 in Germany and 687 in Switzerland

Associations with processed food

- Preservation / deep-freezing & pasteurization
- Additives, salt, sugar, plastic packaging



time-savers, convenient, easy to portion, non-seasonal



General uncertainty → e.g. ingredients, packaging, CO₂ footprint

Expectations of organic processed food

- Organic ingredients
- Transparent and sustainable value chains



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→ Organic processing technologies not part of consumers' 'organic concept'



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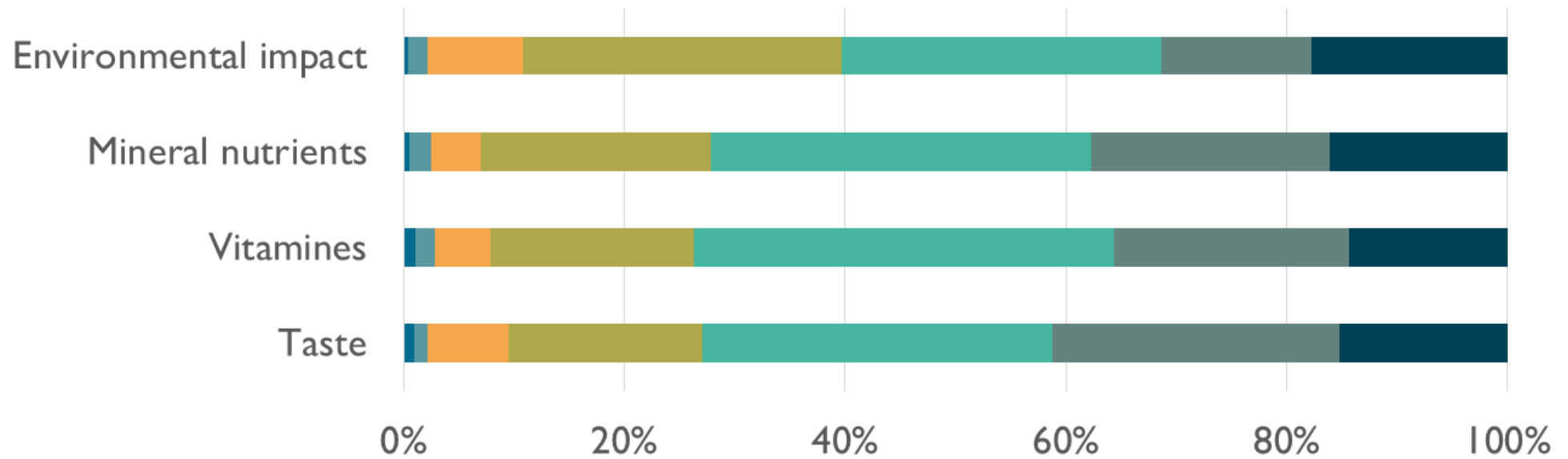
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Trade-offs

- Convenience ↔ Nutrients
- Convenience ↔ Taste
- Convenience ↔ Naturalness
- Longer shelf life ↔ Naturalness
- Longer shelf life ↔ Nutrients
- Naturalness ↔ Food waste
- Naturalness ↔ Taste



Careful processing - Acceptance of loss in quality aspects

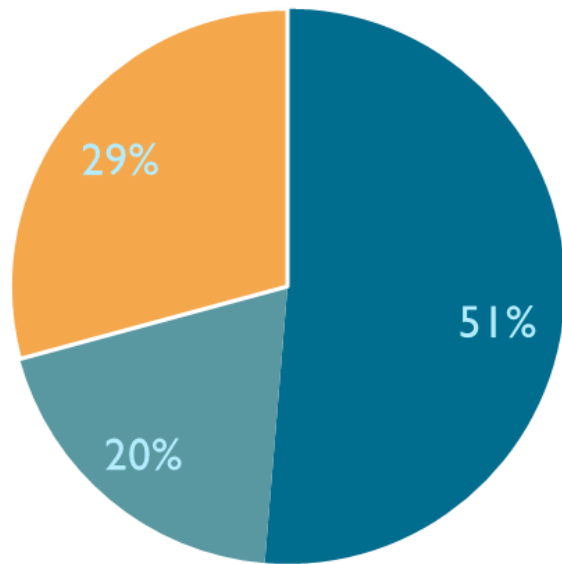


- Complete/very large modification/loss/impact
- Large modification/loss/impact
- Moderate modification/loss/impact
- Minor modification/loss/impact
- Very minor modification/loss/impact
- No modification/Loss/Impact
- Others (not relevant/I don't know)

Question: How well should a processed food product at least perform in the following four categories to be still considered as carefully processed?

Consumer preferences for milk processing method

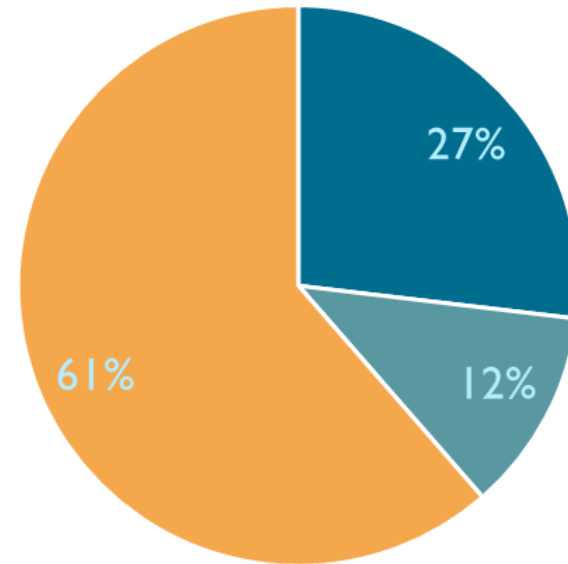
Without information treatment



N=647

- Pasteurisation
- Mikrofiltration and pasteurisation
- High pressure processing

With information treatment

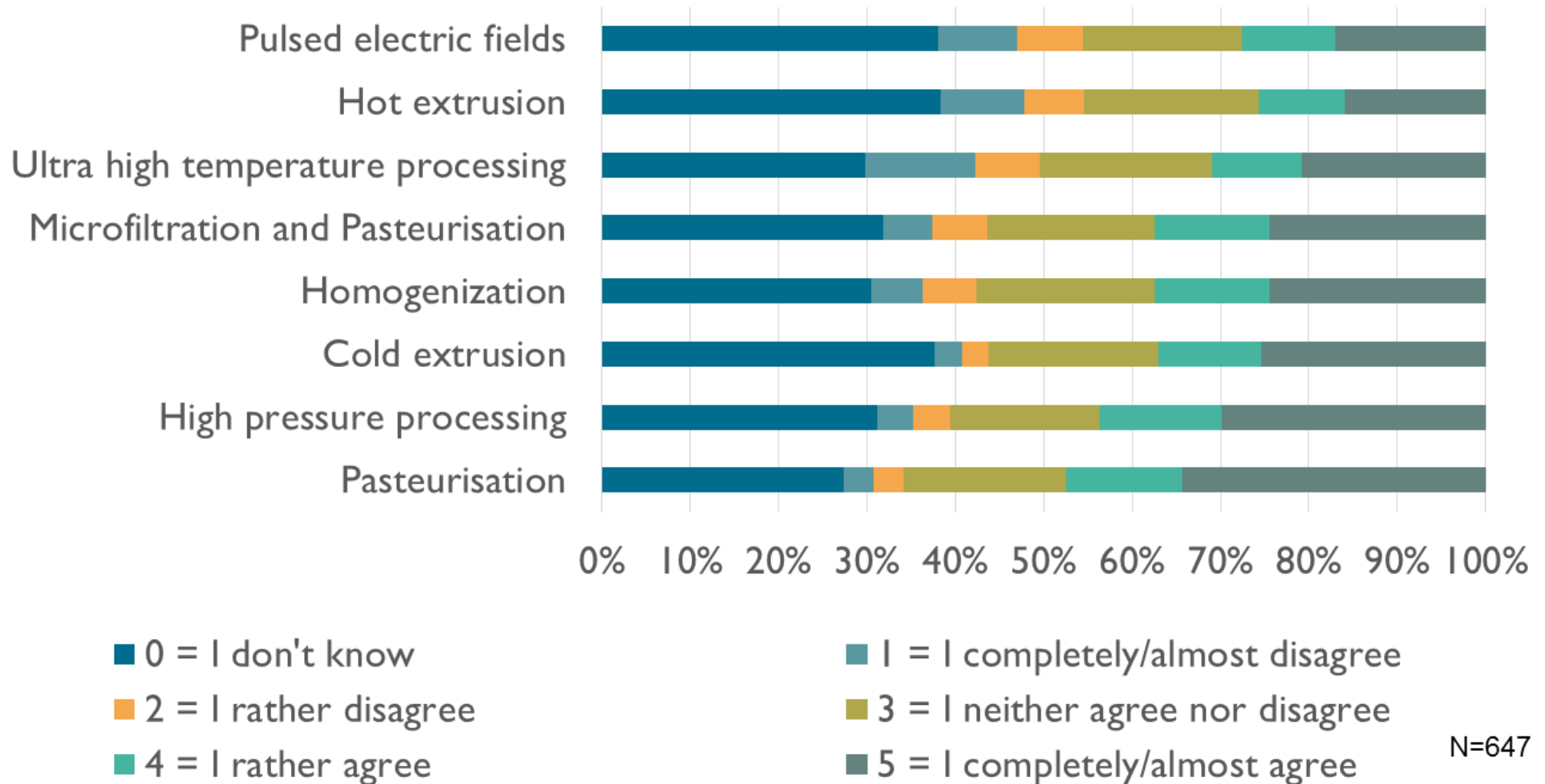


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- Pasteurisation
- Mikrofiltration and pasteurisation
- High pressure processing

Question: What would be your favorite milk processing method?

Suitability of various methods for organic processing



Question: Which of the following processing methods would you consider to be suitable for 'organic'? (Without information)

Consumers perception of ‘careful processing’

- Few processing levels, few modifications of food, retain originality
- Healthy, maintenance of ingredients, vitamins and micro elements
- Maintenance of taste, good taste
- “Environmental friendly” only mentioned by few respondents
- Relatively large share of answer “no idea”

keep taste and nutrients

Question: Please describe what careful processing means to you!

Conclusions

Milk processing

- high pressure processing as innovative milk processing method might be an interesting alternative for milk preservation

Careful processing

- Consumer focus is on maintenance of vitamins and (micro-) nutrients and taste
- Low acceptance of modification/loss/impact through processing
- Retain original products as much as possible → naturalness

Future consumer research in ProOrg

- What is the consumers' understanding of processing quality?
- Do the understandings of processing quality of processors and consumers match?
- Do consumers understand what processors want to say about food processing quality?

Preliminary consequences for the Code of Practice

- Consumers' with low knowledge of (and interest in ?) organic food processing
- High variation in consumer preferences
- Processing technologies are not part of consumers' concept of organic
- Careful → keep taste and nutrients, minimal modifications, natural, healthy
- Organic values → Principle of Care
- Anticipation of consumers' preferences
- Transparency
- Well-targeted communication

