

Romanian Consumers' Perspective on food safety

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Abstract

The level of knowledge of Romanian consumers regarding food hazard recognition, awareness on food label certifications, and the food safety information sources they trust was assessed in the frame of the SafeConsume project (Horizon 2020, Grant agreement No. 727580). The highest positive scores for hazard recognition were registered for chemical substances such as pesticides (78.4%) and heavy metals (72.5%). These chemical hazards had a higher recognition rate for consumers aged 35 and 75 years old (56.2 and 76.0% respectively) when compared with consumers below 35 years old. Non-hazards such as food additives and GMOs were also seen as being dangerous substances by more than half of the consumers, mostly of which were over 35 years old, meaning that an important category of consumers do not know what hazards to be aware of. While *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, and *S. aureus* were the most known pathogenic microorganisms, less than half, respectively third of the consumers perceived pathogens like *Listeria*, *Clostridium*, *Campylobacter*, and *Yersinia* as being dangerous. In other words, consumers do not know about the emerging pathogens that can affect their health. Older consumers (aged 55-75 years old) showed a higher trust in mass-media and science books and a higher level of awareness on certified labelled foods than the other consumers. Binary regression showed that consumers aged 35-75 years old are more prone to correctly recognize pathogens and hazards. Taking into consideration the place they live, consumers from the rural areas are less likely to perceive the listed pathogens and hazards as being dangerous. Confirmatory factory analysis (CFA) revealed significant correlations between hazard and pathogenic microorganisms' recognition and trust in certified food suggesting that the more knowledgeable the consumers, the higher the awareness of certified labelled foods. Suggestions are made on how to enhance consumers' food safety knowledge in regards to proper hazard recognition, awareness of certified labelled food, as well as the most reliable food safety information sources.

Biography

Octavian Augustin Mihalache, age 27 years old and I am currently in my 2nd year of Ph.D studying mainly the linkages between kitchen designs, food hygiene practices, and food safety practices. At the moment I have three papers published in reputed journals such as Food Control and I'm currently working on more.



[6th international conference on Food science and Food safety](#) | October 16, 2020

Citation: Octavian Augustin Mihalache, Romanian Consumers' Perspective on food safety , Food Safety Summit 2020, 6th International Conference on Food Science and Food Safety, October 16, 2020, 03