

“Assessing consumer preferences for yogurt-The case of Albania”

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Abstract

Yogurt is a culturally important dairy product that is made from cow, sheep, and goat milk with high fat percentages, or may be reconstituted from non-fat dry milk powder. Today, demand for yogurt consumers has increased in both developed and developing countries. In the last decade, developed countries have witnessed an increasing trend of yogurt consumption due to its extrinsic factors such as high diversity, intensive promotion, and diet orientation due to the presence of probiotics in many types of yogurts (Allen and Goddard,2012). In Albania also yogurt production has been increasing simultaneously with the demand for high quality milk products, availability of raw milk, and enhancement of local processing capacities. The supply of yogurt has been increasing since 2000 by achieving 4.3 kg per capita per year while being dominated by domestic production. However, imports still cover 16,6% of the domestic supply. One explanation is the low quantity of marketed domestic production and also partially from the preferences of certain consumer groups for quality and safety. There are other factors of consumer orientation toward imports such as preferences toward fruits, drinking yogurt, and other yogurt based products. There has not been an in-depth consumer survey in Albania that focuses on identifying consumer preferences for yogurt by type, origin, and other attributes. Understanding consumer preferences and behavior is important in the decision-making of key stakeholders in the agro industry (dairy processors), the policymakers, and the donors of the sector. This study aims to assess consumer preferences for yogurt in Tirana, Albania. The research objectives is by assessing consumer preferences for the main yogurt attribute and identify consumer segments in order to provide marketing and policy recommendations for the sector's stakeholders with particular focus on producers (dairy processors) and policy-makers. The methodology of the study is based on a conjoint analysis of the results gathered based on a face to face survey conducted with 250 consumers in Tirana (largest urban area and market in Albania). Providing information on consumer preferences for intrinsic and extrinsic indices of yogurt is of essential importance for the dairy industry in Albania. Purchasing behaviors are of crucial importance for increasing the competitiveness of the Albanian dairy industry and fine-tuning their investments for a stable market share in the domestic supply.

Keywords: *Consumers' preferences, safety, yogurt, Albania, fatness.*