

## Press release

### Czech Public on Organic Food – Food 2020

- ⊗ Just under a quarter (24%) of the public in the Czech Republic is interested in the topic of organic food, while 76% are rather not interested or not interested at all. On top of that, compared to 2017, the interest decreased slightly.
- ⊗ The situation is similar in the case of buying organic food, where only less than a quarter (23%) of Czechs buy it at least occasionally, while almost half (49%) of the respondents stated that they never buy organic food, while another 24% buy it only rarely.
- ⊗ Of people who at least rarely bought "BIO" labelled (organic) food, almost half (47%) preferred food without the label just rarely, about a third (34%) occasionally, 10% often and 1% always.
- ⊗ People most often buy organic food in a hypermarket / supermarket, then in a smaller shop, specialized shop (e.g. bakery, butcher shop), farmers shop, health food shop or grow it in their own garden.
- ⊗ If people in the Czech Republic buy organic food, they do so mainly because this food is not chemically treated. Other important reasons include the fact that organic food has better quality or it is tastier and fresher.
- ⊗ In general, women who also buy organic food more often as well as people aged 20 to 44 and respondents who rate the standard of living of their household as good, are more interested in the topic of organic food.

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The CVVM also included a block of questions concerning organic food in the special Food 2020 research which was focused mainly on food waste and shopping as well as the consumer behaviour of Czech citizens.

First, the respondents' interest in information related to organic food was investigated and then whether people buy organic food themselves, how often, where and for what reasons. People were also asked the question how often they prefer food which bears the "BIO" (organic food) label over the food that does not bear it?"

By organic food<sup>1</sup> we mean products produced in accordance with the requirements of applicable legislation for organic production (especially Act No. 242/2000 Sb. on Ecological Agriculture, Council Regulation (EC) No. 834/2007 and Commission Regulation (EC) No. 889/2008).<sup>2</sup> We define ecological agriculture as "a sustainable system that respects the environment and animal welfare, which also applies to the supply chain from the supply of ingredients, their processing, storage, transport and distribution up to the retail sale."<sup>3</sup> One of the basic principles and features of ecological agriculture is a ban on the use of chemical pesticides, fertilizers, antibiotics or genetically modified organisms, while farmers strive to keep their land fertile through crop rotation. Of course, the animals are fed with organic feed and they are bred in open-air runs or on farms, with an emphasis on renewable resources, soil and water protection in an effort to maintain the highest possible quality of the environment and biodiversity for future generations.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The term in English is "organic food", while Czechs refer to this food as "BIO" food.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.bezpecnostpotravin.cz/kategorie/biopotravin-y-\(bio\).aspx](https://www.bezpecnostpotravin.cz/kategorie/biopotravin-y-(bio).aspx)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/cs/headlines/society/20180404STO00909/biopotravin-y-a-ekozemedelstvi-v-eu-infografika>

<sup>4</sup> Lee, H., Yun, Z. 2014. Consumers' perceptions of organic food attributes and cognitive and affective attitudes as determinants of their purchase intentions toward organic food. Elsevier Ltd.

**Organic food labelling** is set out in legislation (see above). Organic food produced in the Czech Republic must be labelled with the national logo, i.e. the so-called "biozebra" and the European logo. If imported organic food is sold in the Czech Republic, it does not have to be labelled with the "biozebra" label. It is not necessary for the organic food imported into the EU from third countries to be labelled with the European logo. Related to this is other information that must not be missing from the packaging of organic food and that is information about the origin of the ingredients of which the food consists. Each organic food must also bear on its packaging the code of the organization which checked that the product actually meets the statutory conditions for such a label.<sup>5</sup>



*National logo (biozebra)*



*European logo*

Three independent private inspection bodies authorized by the Ministry of Agriculture are in charge of organic food inspection in the Czech Republic. Specifically, they are KEZ, o.p.s (code on the packaging: CZ-BIO-001), the organizational unit ABcert AG (code on the packaging: CZ-BIO-002) and BIOKONT CZ (code on the packaging: CZ-BIO-003). These subjects provide control of the activities related to the issuance of the certificate of the origin of the organic food or other organic products. In connection with the growth in the number of eco-farms, the Central Agricultural Inspection and Testing Institute (ÚKZÚZ) has become also involved in the control of compliance with ecological rules and standards since 1st January 2010. It primarily focuses on official control according to the regulations of the European Parliament and European Council.<sup>6</sup>

Interest in organic food in the Czech Republic is growing. The data of the Institute of Agricultural Economics and Information (ÚZEI) shows that the total consumption of organic food, including imported organic food, was CZK 4.43 billion in the Czech Republic in 2018, which is an increase of 33 percentage points compared to 2017. As for the total organic food turnover of the Czech entities (including exports), it reached approximately CZK 7.02 billion in 2018. The average annual consumption of organic food per capita in the Czech Republic in 2018 was CZK 416, compared to CZK 314 in 2017, while their share in the total consumption of food and beverages also increased (to 1.58%).<sup>7</sup>

CVVM dealt with the topic of organic food already in 2017<sup>8</sup> and since we were interested in how people's opinions as well as attitudes have developed over the past three years, we included a block of questions on this topic in the special Food 2020 survey. The first question focused on the topic of organic food. Although statistical figures show that interest in organic food in the Czech Republic is growing, the results of our research do not confirm this (see Chart 1), when the declared interest of the Czech public in organic food decreased slightly compared to 2017 (by 5 percentage points). In the current research, more than three quarters (76%) of the respondents stated that they were not interested in the topic of organic food, of which 32% were "rather not interested" and 44% were "not interested at all" and only less than a quarter (24%) expressed some interest. (4% were very interested, 20% were rather interested). It is thus possible that the overall share of consumers who are interested in buying organic food is not growing but those who are interested and buy this food increased the share of this food in their total consumption, which is reflected in the above figures. However, the interest in the topic of organic food could also be influenced by the fact that data collection took place in August after the first spring wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, which became a completely dominant topic not only in the Czech environment and which pushed other topics somewhat into the background.

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.bezpecnostpotravin.cz/kategorie/biopotravin-y-\(bio\).aspx](https://www.bezpecnostpotravin.cz/kategorie/biopotravin-y-(bio).aspx)

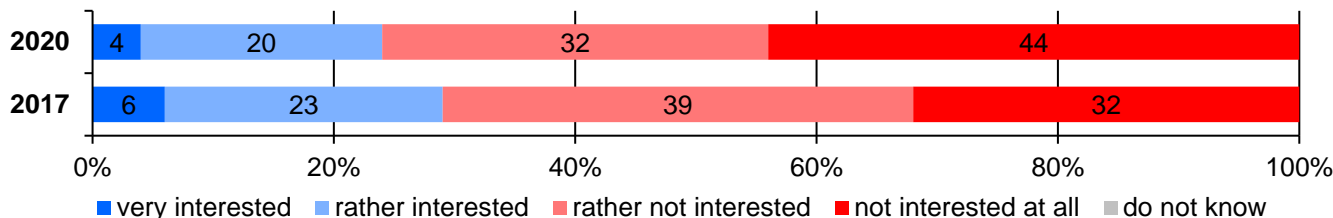
<sup>6</sup> [https://www.bezpecnostpotravin.cz/kategorie/biopotravin-y-\(bio\).aspx](https://www.bezpecnostpotravin.cz/kategorie/biopotravin-y-(bio).aspx)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.bezpecnostpotravin.cz/trh-s-biopotravinami-v-roce-2018-dynamicky-rostl.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> Černá, L. & Pilecká, J. 2017. The interest in organic food in the Czech Republic and its consumption - June 2017 Available from: [https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com\\_form2content/documents/c2/a4392/f9/OR170810.pdf](https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com_form2content/documents/c2/a4392/f9/OR170810.pdf)

A more detailed analysis has shown that women (33%, men 14%), university-educated people, people aged 20 to 44, respondents with a good household standard of living, people living in a household with children, respondents who perceived food waste as a big problem, those who shop every day or several times a week and people who believe in a diet other than that of ordinary food (e.g. vegetarianism, veganism, paleo, low carb) are significantly more often interested in the topic of organic food..

**Chart 1: Czech Public Interest in the Topic of Organic Food (%)<sup>9</sup>**



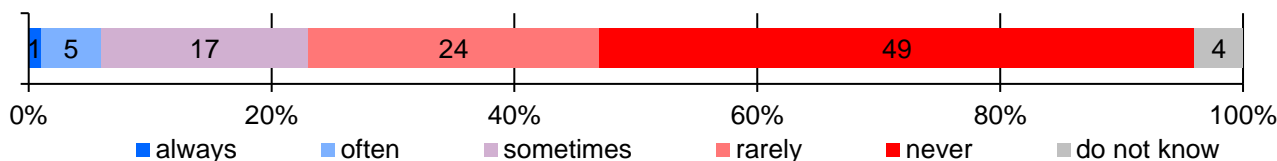
Note: In 2017, the wording of the question and answer was slightly different (definitely interested, rather interested, rather not interested, not interested at all).

Source: CVVM SOÚ AV ČR (Public Opinion Research Centre of the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences) Food 15th - 31st August 2020; 979 respondents over 15 years old, personal interview.

Consumption of organic food often reflects one's overall way of life. It grows out of an ideology that manifests itself in a specific value system that consists of personal standards, attitudes and consumer behaviour.<sup>10</sup> It was the consumer behaviour that was addressed by other research questions, which focused on whether and, if so, how often, where and for what reasons the respondents bought organic food. Chart 2 shows that just less than a quarter (23%) of the respondents buy organic food at least occasionally, of which 1% buy it, 5% often and 17% occasionally. On the contrary, almost half (49%) of the respondents stated that they never buy organic food and another 24% bought it only on rare occasions. The remaining 4% of the respondents to this question selected "do not know".

Organic food is more often purchased by women, people aged 20 to 44, people with university education, respondents declaring a good household standard of living, right-wing people as well as households with children. On the contrary, people over the age of 60, respondents with only elementary education, respondents who rate their household standard of living as poor, pensioners, unskilled workers and in terms of political orientation, people who support the left more often do not buy organic food. At the same time, it is not surprising that people who are generally interested in the topic of organic food bought it significantly more often than those who showed no interest in the topic of organic food.

**Chart 2: Frequency of Organic Food Shopping (%)<sup>11</sup>**



Source: CVVM SOÚ AV ČR (Public Opinion Research Centre of the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences) Food 15th - 31st August 2020; 979 respondents over 15 years old, personal interview.

We asked a few more questions to people who said in the research that they buy organic food at least on rare occasions. The first question tried to find out how often these people preferred food which bears the "BIO" (organic food) label over the food that does not bear it? Less than half (47%) of the respondents stated that they only rarely preferred food with the "BIO" (organic food) label over the food without the "BIO" (organic food) label, while another 7% never did. On the other hand, about one third (34%) preferred it occasionally, one tenth (10%) often, while only 1%

<sup>9</sup> Question wording in 2020: "Are you personally interested in the topic of organic food? You are very interested, you are rather interested, you are rather not interested, you are not interested at all." Question wording in 2017: "Are you personally interested in the topic of organic food? You are definitely interested, you are rather interested, you are rather not interested, you are not interested at all."

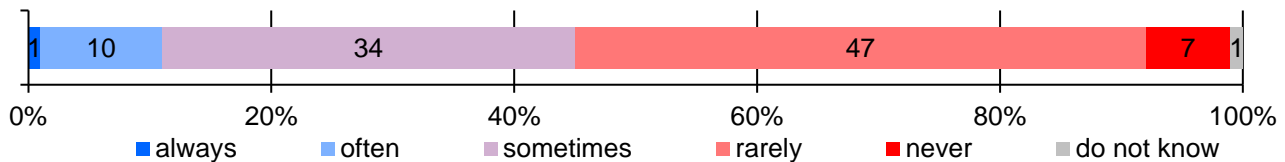
<sup>10</sup> Hughner, R. S., et al. 2007. Who are organic food consumers? A compilation and review of why people purchase organic food. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*. John Wiley and Sons, Ltd.

<sup>11</sup> Question wording: "How often do you buy organic food?" Always, often, sometimes, rarely, never.

of the respondents said that they always preferred organic food. The same share (i.e. 1%) of the respondents chose the "I don't know" response.

The analysis from the point of view of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents showed that food with the "BIO" (organic food) label are more often preferred by women, people aged 20 to 44 and those with a good household standard of living.

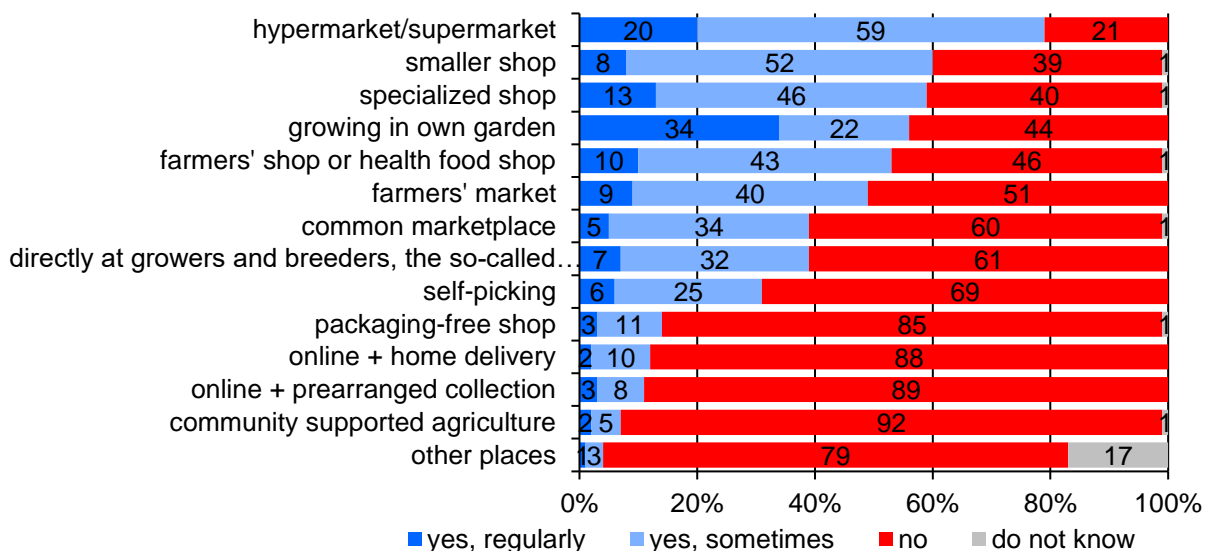
**Chart 3: How often people prefer organic food (%; only those who at least on rare occasions bought organic food)<sup>12</sup>**



Source: CVVM SOÚ AV ČR (Public Opinion Research Centre, Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences) Food 15th - 31st August 2020; 456 respondents over 15 years old, who stated that they at least sometimes purchased organic food, personal interview.

Subsequently, we asked where the respondents bought organic food. Chart 4 shows that by far the most common place was a hypermarket / supermarket, where almost four-fifths (79%) of the respondents bought organic food at least occasionally. More than half of the respondents also bought organic food at least occasionally in a smaller shop (60%), a specialized shop, such as a bakery or butcher shop (59%), a farmers shop or a health food shop (53%) or they simply grew it in their own garden (56%, of which 34% stated that they do so regularly). A relatively popular place for buying organic food was also a farmers shop, where less than half (49%) of the respondents go at least occasionally for organic food; less than two-fifths (39%) of the respondents bought organic food at regular markets or directly at growers and breeders. Just less than a third (31%) of the respondents used self-picking as a form of buying organic food at least occasionally. Other options for the purchase of organic food (packaging-free shop 14%, online + home delivery 12%, online + pre-arranged collection 11%, community supported agriculture 7%) were used by people much less often. Other places that respondents had the opportunity to mention, most often included the following: from parents, acquaintances, relatives, neighbours or even friends.

**Chart 4: Where respondents buy organic food (in %; only those who at least rarely bought organic food)<sup>13</sup>**



<sup>12</sup> Question wording: "How often do you prefer food which bears the "BIO" (organic food) label over the food that does not bear it?" Always, often, sometimes, rarely, never"

<sup>13</sup> Question wording: "Do you buy organic food in the following places? a) Hypermarket / supermarket, b) smaller shop, c) specialized shop (e.g. bakery, butcher shop), d) farmer's shop or health food shop, e) farmers' market, f) directly at growers and breeders, the so-called sale from the yard, g) regular marketplace, h) packaging-free shop, i) online + home delivery (e.g. Rohlík.cz, Košík.cz), j) online + pre-arranged collection (e.g. freshbednyky.cz, ebiopotraviny.cz), k) community supported agriculture), l) self-picking (i.e. personal picking at a certain place at a pre-arranged date), m) you grow it in your own garden, n) elsewhere." Response options: yes, regularly; yes, sometimes; no.

Note: Items are listed in descending order of the sum of the "yes, regularly" and "yes, sometimes" responses.

Source: CVVM SOÚ AV ČR (Public Opinion Research Centre, Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences) Food 15th - 31st August 2020; 456 respondents over 15 years old, who stated that they at least sometimes purchased organic food, personal interview.

The last question was devoted to the reasons why people buy organic food. People are naturally motivated to buy organic food for various reasons. In foreign studies, the prevailing explanation is that organic food is healthier than food without this label (e.g. chemically treated), as the use of pesticides is perceived as having long-term and as of yet unclear effects on one's human health.<sup>14</sup> Overall, the predominant main reasons for the consumption of organic food, were those which could be described as egoistic (e.g. personal health or nutritional value) rather than altruistic (e.g. interest in the environment and animal welfare).<sup>15</sup> The results of our research correspond to this, as we can see in Table 1. Respondents were asked a question in which they could choose up to three main reasons why they buy organic food. We received a total of 1,285 responses.

The most frequently mentioned reasons were associated with the aforementioned personal health. By far the most common reason was the fact that organic food is without chemical treatment (20%). Other important reasons why people buy organic food included the fact that it has better quality as well as it being tastier and fresher. Other reasons are less common (they were always mentioned by less than one tenth of the respondents). Less common reasons included altruistic reasons, such as the fact that organic food production is more environmentally friendly, that there was a guarantee that the animals have been kept in good conditions or that they could support the local region / farmers with its purchase. As for other reasons, the fact that it was often on sale was repeated several times.

**Table 1: Reasons for buying organic food (only those who at least rarely bought organic food)**

|   | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|-----------|----------------|
| It is without any chemical treatment                                    | 269       | 20             |
| It has better quality   | 186       | 14             |
| It tastes better  | 136       | 11             |
| It is fresher   | 123       | 10             |
| I want to live healthily  | 97        | 8              |
| Its production is more environmentally friendly                         | 84        | 6              |
| It is in its natural form   | 75        | 6              |
| There is a guarantee that the animals have been kept in good conditions | 73        | 6              |
| It is not genetically modified  | 60        | 5              |
| I want to support local farmers   | 52        | 4              |
| It is riper   | 48        | 4              |
| I want to support my own region   | 37        | 3              |
| People around me buy it   | 12        | 1              |
| Other reason  | 17        | 1              |
| Do not know   | 16        | 1              |

Source: CVVM SOÚ AV ČR (Public Opinion Research Centre of the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences) Food 15th - 31st August 2020; 1,285 responses; 456 respondents over 15 years old, who stated that they at least sometimes purchased organic food, personal interview.

<sup>14</sup> Hammit, J. K. (1990). Risk perception and food choice: An exploratory analysis of organic versus conventional produce buyers. *Risk Analysis*, 10: 367-374.

<sup>15</sup> Hughner, R. S., et al. (2007). Who are organic food consumers? A compilation and review of why people purchase organic food. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*. John Wiley and Sons, Ltd

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## Technical Parameters of the Research

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|---|--|
| Research:   | <i>Food 2020</i>   |
| Implementer:                                      | <i>Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění, Sociologický ústav AV ČR, v.v.i. (Public Opinion Research Centre of the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences)</i> |
| Project:  | <i>Strategy AV21 "Food for the Future"</i>   |
| Date of field investigation:                      | <i>15<sup>th</sup> August - 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020</i>  |
| Selection of the respondents:                     | <i>Quota sampling</i>  |
| Quotas:   | <i>Region (NUTS 3 areas), size of the place of residence, sex, age, education</i>  |
| Data weighting:                                   | <i>Education X NUTS 2, age X NUTS 2, sex X region, size of the place of residence X age, education X age</i>   |
| Source data for quota sampling and data weighing: | <i>Czech Statistical Office</i>  |
| Representative rate:                              | <i>Population of the CR, 15 years old and older</i>  |
| Number of the respondents:                        | <i>979</i>   |
| Number of interviewers:                           | <i>161</i>   |
| Data collection method:                           | <i>Personal interview of the interviewer with the respondent - a combination of CAPI and PAPI interviews</i>   |
| Research tool:                                    | <i>Standardized questionnaire</i>  |
| Questions:  | <i>PL.33, PL.34, PL.35, PL.36, PL.45</i>   |
| Message code:                                     | <i>OR201119</i>  |
| Published on:                                     | <i>19 November 2020</i>  |
| Prepared by:                                      | <i>Radka Hanzlová</i>  |

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## Dictionary of Terms:

Quota sampling - it mimics the structure of the basic set (in our case it is the population of the Czech Republic older than 15 years) by setting the size of selected parameters, the so-called "quotas". In other words, the quota selection is based on the same percentage of selected properties. We use data from the Czech Statistical Office to create the quotas. Our research sets quotas for gender, age, education, region and community size. The sample is therefore selected so that the percentage of e.g. men and women in the sample corresponds to the percentage of men and women in each region of the Czech Republic. Similarly, the percentage of the population of individual regions of the Czech Republic, citizens of different age categories, people with different levels of education and from differently sized municipalities is preserved.

A representative sample is such a sample from the whole population, from the characteristics of which it is possible to validly conclude the characteristics of the whole population. In our case, this means that the respondents are selected so that we can generalize the data to the population of the Czech Republic older than 15 years.

Data weighting - a way to increase the representativeness of the file with respect to selected characteristics of the population by assigning a weight to each respondent. The weights are generated using the iterative proportional weighing method and they range from 0.333 to 3.

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Public Opinion Research Centre (CVVM) is the research department of the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences (Sociologický ústav AV ČR, v.v.i.) Its history dates back to 1946, when the Czechoslovak Institute for Public Opinion Research began operating as part of the Ministry of Information. The current Centre was established in 2001 by transferring its predecessor (IVVM) from the Czech Statistical Office to the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences. Incorporation into a scientific institution guarantees a quality professional background and workplace credit; as a part of the academic environment, CVVM SOÚ AV ČR (Public Opinion Research Centre of the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences) must meet all requirements and thus reach the highest professional level. The main task of the department is the "Our Society" research project, within which ten surveys are conducted annually. This is public opinion research on a representative sample of the Czech population from the age of 15, in which it is always participated in by approximately 1,000 respondents. The omnibus form of the questionnaire makes it possible to cover a wide range of topics and therefore such political, economic and other general social issues are regularly included in the research. The research uses repeated questions, which makes it possible to monitor the development of the studied phenomena, as well as new topics that respond to current events. Due to its long-term and continuous nature, this scientific project of public opinion research is unique in the Czech Republic.

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