

Exploration of consumers' perception of enriched fruits and vegetables

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Highlights

Exploration of consumers' perceptions of enriched fruits and vegetables with focus groups suggested that:

- Fruits and vegetables were perceived as healthy, but participants
 - were not so familiar with content and function of nutrients
 - were not so familiar with the fruit and vegetables cultivations techniques e.g. LED lighting, plant nutrition and use of different varieties.
- This resulted in a wide variety of both positive and negative associations with enriched fruits and vegetables.

Objective

To explore consumers' perception of and associations with enriched fruits and vegetables and their cultivation



Introduction

There are contradicting ideas of growers, breeders and experts about the relevance and importance of enrichment of fruits and vegetables. In order to serve society also the consumers' point of perspective should be considered. Therefore this study explores consumers' perceptions of enriched fruits and vegetables.

Method

Approach

- 3 Semi structured focus group discussions in The Netherlands
- 17 Participants, 7 men and 10 women,
- Sample represented participants of different ages within the range of 26 to 66 years old, and of different educational levels,
- Enriched was phrased as "with extra nutrients".

Focus groups

Guide included the following topics:

- Introduction
- Vegetables in general
- Vegetables and extra nutrients
- Fruits and vegetables and claims
- Vegetables with extra nutrients and cultivation (LED lighting, plant nutrition, and different varieties)

"How do those extra nutrients get in (the vegetable)?"

"Vegetables are already healthy, additional nutrients are not really needed."

Results

Participants had positive experiences with vegetables; vegetables were associated with health, strength and energy.

"Vegetables give you power and make you strong."

But participants were unfamiliar with the nutrient content of vegetables and their function.

"All vegetables are rich in vitamins, the rest I don't know, what kind of vitamins? Fibre? I really don't know."

And participants were unfamiliar with cultivation; there was a wide variety in associations with cultivation of (enriched) vegetables.

- LED light: "light pollution", "better for environment"
- Plant nutrition: "It may contain ingredients, which are less good for us, to let the plants growing be faster."
- Different varieties: associations varied from traditional breeding to GMO: "As it used to be", "no GMO for me"



"I won't need it myself, seems to be for pregnant women or children."

Conclusions

Participants expressed both positive and negative associations with enriched fruits and vegetables. Their expressions reflect participants' unfamiliarity with the nutrient content and their function, and with the cultivation of fruits and vegetables.

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