

Effect of date marking terminology on food discarding behaviour in households

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Background

Misinterpretation of date marking by consumers is very often given as one of the more important causes of food waste.

However, little is as yet known about the **size** of this effect and how the **terminology** itself influences this behavior.

Lack of knowledge on how **no date** marking influences the consumers' behavior.

Commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs (*currently Agriculture, Nature & Food Quality*)

Objective

Gain insight in the effect on food discarding behaviour related to long shelf life products in households if:

- NO date marking is placed on the package
- An ALTERNATIVE terminology is used on the package



Approach



1 week

Sorting task

A stick figure with a question mark above its head is looking at several food items: a jar of jam, a carton of milk, a can of soup, a jar with a spoon, and another can. Below the items are two bins: a trash bin and a recycling bin. Red arrows point from the items to their respective bins.



2 weeks

Online task

A stick figure with a question mark above its head is looking at a framed illustration of a person sitting at a desk with a computer, typing on a keyboard.

Focusgroep discussies

A stick figure with a question mark above its head is looking at a group of colorful, stylized human figures sitting around a white table, representing a focus group discussion.



Participants

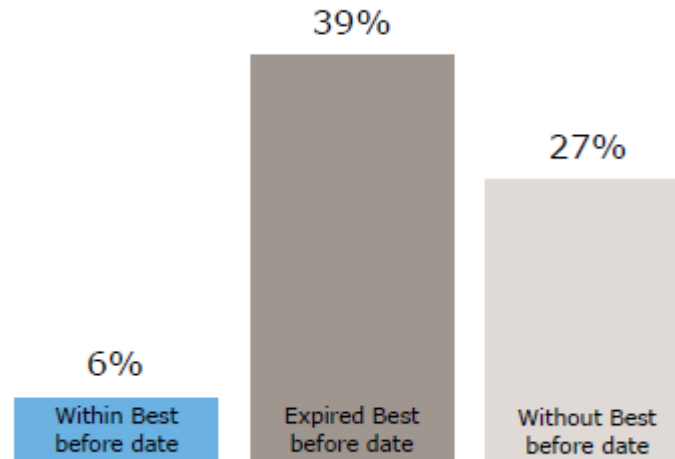
- 86 participants
 - 85% female
- Average age 40,5 years. Range 19-76 years



Type consumer	Percentage
Families with children	35%
Under 25 yrs	34%
1 person households	31%

- Participants were deselected if they indicated never to discard long shelflife food products.
- From the WFBR Taste/SenTo Panel of consumers

Part 1: Results



On Average, **12% less** products are discarded when NO DATE is included on-pack, compared with products BEYOND the BBD.

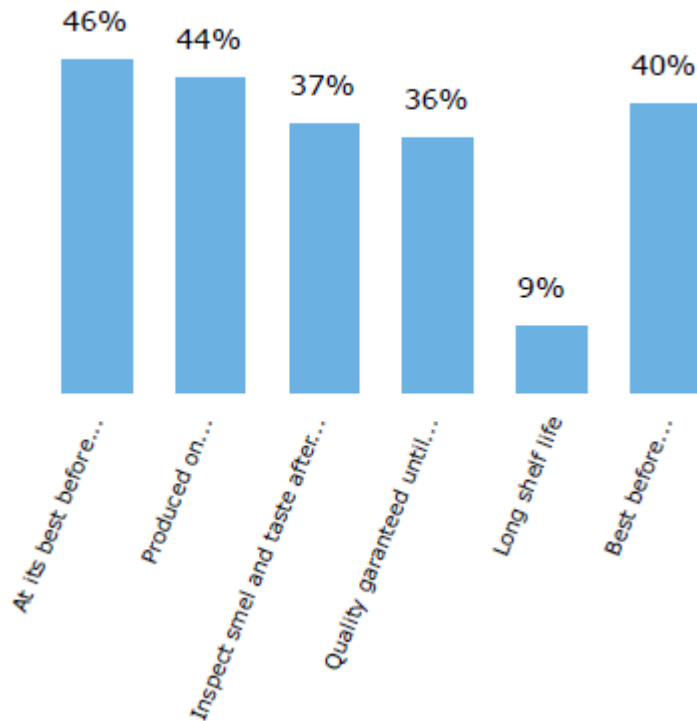
Differences between product categories are large
(range: -23% sugar syrup to +5% for juices)

Part 2: Online task

List of alternative terminology

- Quality guaranteed until [date]
- Inspect, smell and taste after [date]
- At its best before [date]
- Produced on [date]
- Long shelf life

Part 2: Results online task



■ N=85

- Changing into 'long shelflife (without a date) led to 31% less products being discarded
- When the term '*Quality guaranteed until [date]*' is used, 5% less is thrown away.
- The terms '*At its best if used before [date]*' and '*Produced on [date]*' led to more discards (+4% and +6% respectively).
- The term '*Inspect, smell and taste after [date]*' had no influence on discarding behaviour as compared to the current label of best before date.

Results (2)

- In the ranking test, participants indicated to find the terminology of '**long shelve**life' (which was discarded the least) **not very attractive**.
- It seems that the attractiveness of a term is not necessarily related to the potential of a term to influence behaviour (in the case of food waste & long shelve products).

Part 3 results focus groups

Lower
perceived
risk

- Dry, limited number of ingredients
- Products like:
 - Flour, coffee, tea, rice, pasta, suger, dried herbs
 - Soda drink

Higher
perceived
risk

- Wet, multiple ingredients, vulnarable ingredients.
- Products like:
 - Meat, fish, egg
 - Milk / dairy products
 - Juices
 - Sauces

Consumers seek 'security'

- Food safety
- Reduced quality

Questions?

THANK YOU!!



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