

## **ABSTRACT**

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**Trusting Finns? Consumer views on food safety.**

The study deals with consumer trust in food safety, with a focus on trust in the safety of different foods and the various actors in the food chain. The study was conducted similarly as a food trust survey covering six other European countries (United Kingdom, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Germany and Denmark). The survey forms part of the project 'Consumer Trust in Food. A European Study of the Social and Institutional Conditions for the Production of Trust', funded by the EU. The National Consumer Research Centre is a separate co-operation partner in this survey. The data (N = 1 207) were collected by means of telephone interviews of a representative sample of the Finnish population aged 18–79. The data were analysed separately and the results compared as applicable with those obtained in the other countries.

Finnish consumers can be divided into two groups according to their trust in food safety. Some Finns trust in large degree; others trust partially. The results indicate that there is no consumer group in Finland that would trust in food safety only very little or not at all. Trust appears to accumulate: there seems to be a correlation between trust in the safety of foods produced in different ways and from different raw materials, trust in the quality of the food chain, and trust in other people. Yet, consumer trust in different actors and products varies, and trust also varies according to the situation.

Consumers feel that food safety and healthiness has improved over recent decades. Still, they also see problems related to food, and consider unhealthy food habits and allergies to be the most serious of these. Views on the safety of different kinds of foods are affected by factors like raw materials, production method, processing, healthiness and familiarity. The importance of these factors varies for different foods. Of the foods given as example, consumers have highest trust in fresh fruit and vegetables and organic beef, and most distrust in fast food, canned tomatoes and genetically modified tomatoes. The younger respondents have higher trust compared to older ones particularly in above-mentioned foods that aroused most scepticism among all participants. Gender correlates with the level of trust even clearer than age. Women are more sceptical with respect to food safety than men, and regard the problems related to food as more serious than men.

Finns are relatively trusting as compared with other European consumers. Finns have more trust in the truthfulness of the information provided by different actors in the event of food scandals, consider that food quality has improved and see many foods as safer than consumers in the other study countries on average. Thus, as far as trust is concerned, Europe is divided into a trusting north and a sceptical south.

### **Keywords:**

Trust, safety, food, foodstuffs, consumers, food chain