

Social Dimensions of Food Safety in the European Union: An Analysis of Consumer Awareness and Risk Perception

Dr. Emese Prihoda

Associate Professor, Institute of Agricultural and Food Economics, Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences (MATE), Hungary

Abstract:

This research investigates the social dimensions of food safety in the European Union, focusing on consumer awareness and risk perception. Although the EU maintains one of the most stringent food safety regulatory frameworks worldwide, its effectiveness depends not only on scientific risk assessment but also on how individuals perceive and respond to food-related risks.

The study is based on the 2025 Eurobarometer on Food Safety dataset, which provides representative data on citizens' attitudes toward food safety across the EU-27. The research aims to identify differences in awareness, concerns, information sources, and trust in institutions among various socio-demographic groups. Quantitative methods, including cluster analysis are applied to explore the structure of risk perception and to identify distinct consumer segments.

Particular attention is given to groups characterized by low awareness but high perceived risk, as these groups pose challenges for effective risk communication. Preliminary findings suggest significant variation in risk perception across countries and demographic categories, influenced by factors such as education, age, and perceived economic well-being.

The study contributes to a better understanding of the social construction of food safety and supports the development of targeted, audience-specific communication strategies. The results align with the European Food Safety Authority's "audience-first" approach, aiming to enhance public trust and improve the effectiveness of food safety communication across the European Union.

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