

Experiences of the avian influenza

(Hungarian birds under siege)

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of avian flu in Europe poses new challenges for the Hungarian food chain, highlighting the importance of risk-communication to the consumers. This paper analyses the Hungarian consumers' preference structure and risk perception, based on a direct-question survey, conducted at end of 2005. Experiences show that basic information sources include almost exclusively the mass media channels. The role of the electronic media is especially dominant in the case of lower qualified consumers, where printed media seems to have an insignificant role. Importance of electronic media (including internet) is unquestionable for those of higher educated as well, although they use other sources (newspapers, journals, magazines) for gathering information. The level of trust is especially high in researchers and medical authorities, while significantly lower in the case of political actors and media. Beside the negative effects (decreasing consumption), the avian flu problem enhances the importance of place of origin of products, which could present a stronger level of loyalty toward controlled quality products of local origin.

(Keywords: consumer study, food safety, avian influenza, attitudes)