

Pitfall and challenges

As such a measure is regulatory rather than simply incentivizing, a typical challenge is the resistance to it amongst the farming community. This can become a source of important conflicts and divisions at the community level. When such measures are discussed on a higher level such as regional, national or supra-national level, there can also be a strong political lobby from the agribusiness sector against the measure.

Such decisions have more chances of acceptance if they are embedded in long-term policy efforts and in-depth monitoring activities to address specific objectives with clear targets, e.g. in terms of pesticide residues levels in water bodies. Hence the prohibition of chemical use does not appear as a sudden or arbitrary measure, but as an essential step in the progress towards politically legitimate objectives and targets. Experience also shows that prohibition alone is often not sufficient. It needs to be accompanied by measures to support farmers in transitioning to organic (e.g. compensation and technical advice) and preferably also access the premium organic markets (e.g. support for certification or PGS development).

3. “Pull” measures

a. Consumer education and promotion campaigns

Political justification

Increasing household consumption of organic products is one of the main “pull” measures to increase demand for organic products. The main bottlenecks to increase household purchase of organic products are: 1) product availability in various market channels, 2) consumer awareness of organic benefits, and 3) product attractiveness including quality and price.

Consumer education campaigns are an important mechanism in increasing consumer awareness about organic products across the board. Especially in emerging sectors, the organic industry itself does not have sufficient resources (and is often not sufficiently linked) to fund mass public education campaigns, which can be very costly. Also, since this is a matter of education and public health, as well as environmental public goods, there is political rationale for the government to put public funds into such campaign.

In a market economy, incomplete information on the side of the buyer is a main reason for what is called “market failure”. Without all consumers understanding the benefits behind the organic label, the organic market operates at a sub-optimum level. This may justify government intervention on the level of consumer education.

An experiment from the Netherlands implemented in 2006, whereby certain municipalities subsidized selected organic products to reduce their sales price to a

comparable level to conventional products, showed that the effect on consumer purchases is low if the measure is not combined with consumer awareness efforts. Hence to be effective all policy measures aiming at increasing the accessibility of organic products by consumers must also be accompanied by consumer awareness actions.

Another political reason often plays an important role in the decision for governments to finance organic consumer awareness campaigns: the desire to promote the consumption of domestic products. Indeed, organic consumer awareness campaigns often have a double objective: to generate awareness about organic, but also to promote in particular the national/regional organic products.

Suitable contexts

Consumer awareness of organic agriculture can be implemented at various stages of organic agriculture development, and regardless of the culture of intervention of the government on the agricultural sector. However, consumer awareness campaigns for organic agriculture are most efficient when there is an officially referenced organic guarantee system or an organic regulation. This is because consumer awareness of the benefits of organic should ideally be combined with the promotion of the national organic logo, which enables consumers to identify organic products (and such a logo needs to be backed up by an agreed-upon guarantee system). The launch of a national organic logo is typically the ideal period to launch a consumer awareness campaign to explain what stands behind the logo. However, consumer awareness campaigns should be repeated regularly to reach an ever-increasing share of the population as the availability of organic products increases in various market channels.

Consumer awareness campaigns aim to increase domestic demand, and therefore are not relevant to the policy objective of wanting to earn foreign currency. They are also not, as such, relevant to the policy objective of increasing self-sufficiency (replacing the import of organic products by domestic production), except if combined with a campaign for local (domestic) organic products (as in the example of Canada or Switzerland below).

Possible modalities of implementation

Public support to consumer awareness raising activities takes place under various policy instruments.

In the EU, it mostly takes place in the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy, which involves co-funding from the EU and from Member States. In particular, two CAP measures are most often used and combined: Measure 132 (support to quality schemes) and Measure 133 (Information and promotion activities), which supports activities such as advertising via various communication channels, tasting events or participation in fairs and exhibitions for products covered by approved quality schemes. Under those measures, public funds are given to producer organizations for the implementation of promotion activities. Producer groups may receive a grant of up to

70 % of eligible costs. However, very often the measure is not specific to organic farming promotion, but open as well for applications from other food quality (certification) schemes. For example, in Cyprus, Denmark, Saxony (Germany), Campania (Italy), Poland, Portugal (Mainland and Madeira), Slovenia and some regions of Spain corresponding support schemes have been implemented which address not only organic farming but also other European and national food schemes. Other countries, such as Malta and Estonia, have reserved access to such support for organic organizations only.

For other countries, organic consumer awareness activities are decided as part of the national organic action plan or set of measures (e.g. Denmark, Tunisia, Bhutan) or are even written into the organic policy adopted by the parliament (e.g. Costa Rica, Turkey). They can also be decided and financed through a special government-funded project (but those are then time-limited activities like campaigns) such as in Saudi Arabia or Canada.

Brazil is an interesting case where the organic unit in the Ministry has managed to secure long-term commitment to the Organic Week campaigns (held annually for over a decade) by including it both in the Multi-Year Plans of the Federal Government (prepared by the Government and approved by Congress every four years) and in the National Plan for Agroecology and Organic Production which is launched by the President and commits four different Ministries to implementation.

Cooperation with the private organic sector is highly recommended when it comes to consumer campaign activities. A typical setup is where the organic umbrella organization manages the campaign, the Ministry and potentially external donors co-fund it, and the domestic industry (organic companies) also contributes funding. Retailers are strongly involved as partners in the implementation. Government support can incentivize and leverage important private contributions. For example, in Canada, the EUR 400,000 government funding was completed by EUR 600,000 Euros private sector investment in the campaign.

In Brazil, the federal government transfers a small budget to each state for implementation of local specific actions and events for the Organic Campaign. Each state can define its own activities in line with the theme and guidelines developed by the organic unit in the federal ministry. Actions in the various states are also co-financed by local public and private entities.

In any case, before any significant action is taken the existing situation should be assessed through consumer surveys in order to better understand the profile, concerns, and shopping habits of both the existing organic consumers and the potential new ones.

The types of consumer awareness raising activities supported through public funds include general information for the public about organic food and agriculture through a permanent website, booklets and brochures, TV and radio programs, newspaper articles, billboards, and more recently and increasingly social media. But also, very importantly, commercial actions such as special product displays and tasting are carried

out in shops, special organic product fairs, and open farm days where consumers can come into direct contact with organic products and organic farming. Packaging the promotion activities in the form of an annual time-limited action, such as Organic Action Days or an Organic Week or an Organic Month every year is a popular format of action. Promotion campaigns are usually targeted at consumers or the wider public but they might target, as an intermediary step, retailers, caterers and schools, who then become partners in targeting consumers.

Organic promotion campaigns often associate the national organic logo with a slogan or a set of special messages that are repeated over multiple communication channels and in multiple locations (e.g. Canada, Saudi Arabia).

Policy makers may also contribute to raising public awareness about organic agriculture in their speeches or government declarations. For example, if a president or minister makes a statement in favor of organic agriculture, this sends an important signal to the media and to the general public, including consumers. Featuring organic products in prominent public events like government dinners, Olympic games, World Exhibitions, UN events, etc., can also be powerful messages to the public in favor of organic products.

Country examples

In 2008, the **EU** Commission launched a promotional campaign for organic food and farming, which aimed to inform consumers about the meaning and benefits of organic farming and food production. Following this, national consumer information and promotion campaigns were conducted in Austria, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, Latvia and Lithuania. The EU Commission finances projects to promote EU agricultural products to EU consumers through annual calls for proposals under its policy on information provision and promotion measures concerning agricultural products¹⁰⁴. In the 2007-2013 period, the Commission funded 17 projects to promote organic products to consumers, at a cost of EUR 21 million.

In EU Member States, organic promotion activities are often co-funded with the EU as part of various CAP measures, such as Measure 132 (support to quality schemes) or Measure 133 (Information and promotion activities). Such support is often channeled through producer organizations. Below are just a few examples of EU countries' national investment in organic consumer awareness campaigns.

In the **Czech Republic**, the Ministry of Agriculture co-funds the yearly "Organic Food Month" campaigns whose goals are to encourage more consumers to explore organic products through tasting, farm visits, etc. In the previous Czech Organic Action Plan (2004-2010) there were some innovative awareness events for the public, such as a competition for the 'Best organic farmer of the year' and 'Best organic food of the year'.

¹⁰⁴ The current regulation in force is regulation 1144/2014.

The later plans (2011-2015 and 2016-2020) also include promotional and educational activities for the public on the advantages of organic food and farming.

In **Austria**, since 2004, the Ministry of Environment, in partnership with other ministries, retailers and NGOs, sponsors the annual Sustainability Weeks event to promote organic, locally-produced and fair trade goods. The event involves thousands of retailers throughout the country who promote and have special offers on organic, fair trade, and locally made products.

The government of **Denmark** has regularly invested funds in organic consumer campaigns over the past decade. For example, in the period 2008-2010, EUR 1 million was invested (with 50% EU co-funding) into organic food campaigns. For 2015-2018 the government has allocated more than EUR 3.3 million for sales promotion in the domestic market. See more information in the Best Practice textbox below.

The government of **Switzerland** provides regular financial support to the organic umbrella organization Bio Suisse, in the form of co-funding, to promote the organic brand in the country. For example, in 2015, the subsidy provided to Bio Suisse for the promotion of sales of Swiss organic products was about EUR 2 million. Part of this amount is used for consumer campaigns organized by Bio Suisse.

Outside Europe, other countries also invest public resources in educating consumers about organic food. Below are some examples.

In **Canada**, organic consumer awareness activities are implemented mostly by the industry, but the government funded the development of a branding concept and program for Canada Organic, which resulted in the bold “*Think Before You Eat – Think Canada Organic*” sector brand campaign, successfully launched in 2013. The government also hosts the *ThinkCanadaOrganic* website (www.thinkcanadaorganic.ca) and participates in the Organic Week - a promotion campaign implemented annually across Canada. In April 2016, the **Quebec** Ministry of Agriculture announced a support of EUR 400,000 to the Quebec organic umbrella association (Filière Biologique du Québec) for the implementation of another organic consumer awareness raising campaign.

In **Turkey**, the Ministry of Agriculture undertakes organic awareness raising campaigns. Moreover, under the 2004 law for organic agriculture, state television must broadcast half an hour of educational and/or promotional programs on the organic sector every month.

In **Tunisia**, the government decided in 2010 to create an Organic Tunisian Product Week that would take place every year. This organic week includes various conferences and events for the sector but also reaches out to consumers and pupils in the various districts, including via radio programs. It is managed by the Ministry of Agriculture.

In **Saudi Arabia**, the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture (MEWA) financed and co-organized two national public awareness campaigns for organic agriculture for a total budget of around EUR 400,000 (see best practice example text box below).

In **Korea**, the Chungcheongbuk-do provincial government and the Goesan County hosted, in 2015, the Goesan Organic Exposition. This was the largest organic exhibition ever organized for the public in the world. It presented scientific materials and interactive displays on the benefits of organic agriculture at 10 themed pavilions. The event attracted 1.1 million Korean visitors and sent a strong message that the government endorses the benefits of organic food.

In **Brazil**, the Ministry of Agriculture, in partnership with other ministries and with NGOs, has been financing and organizing Organic Food Week campaigns every year since 2005, which involves promotion activities in nearly every state of the country.

Best practice example(s)

Best Practice 1: Supporting Consumer Awareness in Denmark

The Danish government has been supporting organic consumer awareness initiatives since 1991. Funding support is given to private sector and civil society actors who implement specific projects and campaigns.

Denmark's organic sector NGO, Organic Denmark is a main actor in most of the funded activities. It receives project support to implement its own public awareness activities, which are reviewed and approved annually by the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries. Organic Denmark is primarily responsible for promoting the national organic label and activities toward this are ongoing in its public awareness program.

Denmark's current Organic Action Plan for 2015-2018 allocated EUR 3.3 million annually for organic promotion in the domestic market. Until 2011 this was allocated through a "Program for quality organic foods", in which the government has provided 70-100% of the cost of consumer awareness and market initiatives, which include these campaigns and also assistance for conversion of farms and new product development by organic food companies. The consumer awareness funding is open to groups of companies that apply for particular projects and campaigns. Organic Denmark often plays a role in these initiatives, as it is often hired to lead or take part in planning and implementation. These campaigns exemplify a high level of collaboration among government, civil society and the private sector toward achieving a common objective, which in this case is to grow Denmark's domestic organic market.

Organic Denmark uses its consumer awareness funding to support activities which include harvest events and markets, messaging in traditional and social media, point-of-sale materials, information in public schools and child care centers, media relations, events and special campaigns. In 2015 it implemented a campaign celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Danish organic label in collaboration with all major retail chains, aiming to increase retail organic sales by 10%. A 12% increase in retail organic sales was achieved that year.

Organic Denmark has two annual high-profile consumer awareness events. The Organic Harvest markets in September, attended by 75,000 people, and Organic day, Øko-day, where consumers are invited to organic farms in springtime to see the cows stampede out of the barns onto fresh grass after a winter inside. In 2016, more than 250,000 people visited more than 80 participating organic farms. This is almost 5% of the Danish population.

Best Practice example 2: National Organic Consumer awareness campaigns funded by the Ministry of Agriculture in Saudi Arabia¹⁰⁵

Background

Saudi Arabia depends on imports to meet 70% of its food requirements, and its organic production sector is at an early stage of development. For nearly a decade, the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture has been working with the technical assistance of GIZ International Services (an independent operational department of the federally owned Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) and in cooperation with the Saudi Organic Farming Association (SOFA) to support the development of organic agriculture in Saudi Arabia. This was done under the framework of the Organic Farming Project financed by the Ministry and implemented together with GIZ International Services. In 2008, the Department of Organic Agriculture (DOA) was established in the MEWA, which was then called Ministry of Agriculture (MoA). In 2009 the first version of an organic regulation was adopted. In January 2011, the Saudi National Organic Logo was launched. The Ministry acknowledges the important role of organic consumption as a driver of growth for its emerging sector and a way to contribute to an innovative and modern production of high quality and healthy food. Since 2011, it has engaged in promoting the National Logo and organic products primarily through financing awareness campaigns implemented by GIZ International Services.

The campaigns' key objectives have been to raise awareness for "organic", to inform Saudi consumers about the benefits of organic food and agriculture, and to establish the Saudi Organic Logo as a trustworthy brand.

First Promotion Campaign

The launch of the National Organic Logo included an eight week consumer awareness campaign at a cost of nearly €100,000. A qualitative consumer survey conducted by interviews in shopping malls preceded the campaign, in order to inform the campaign design. The National Logo combined with a key message, "The health of your family depends on a healthy diet," was the centerpiece of 180 posters placed in public spaces, high traffic streets in the capital city Riyadh and on digital billboards in shopping malls. Media outreach, especially to print media, led to additional dispersal of this messaging.

Second Promotion Campaign

Based on lessons learned from the first campaign, the Organic Farming Project organized another 4-week campaign in 2014 with a budget of around €300,000. The approach to the survey changed from information collection in public places to the Internet (online survey advertised in social media), and was supplemented by cooperation with a fitness studio chain and a catering business. The survey reached more than 3000 responses. Objectives of this campaign were to: 1) create a linkage between "high quality", "healthy" and "organic" 2) promote organic foods as high quality products and 3) support domestic organic foods. A marketing agency was tasked with the creative design and implementation of the campaign. The core messages were: "Go Organic, Go Natural", "Organic...your natural choice to enjoy the benefits of pesticide-free foods!" and "There is no alternative to the original", all associated with the national logo.

The campaign consisted of:

¹⁰⁵ Information provided by the Department of Organic Agriculture (DOA) / Saudi Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture and Organic Farming Project, Saudi Arabia / GIZ International Services.

- A press conference with the Minister of Agriculture and prominent business representatives from the private sector (CEO of Danube and CEO of Tamimi Markets) at the launch of the campaign to attract media attention;
- Four weeks of information in social media (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) on the benefits of organic, in conjunction with two weeks of campaign banners on several frequently visited Saudi webpages including Google and Yahoo;
- Four weeks of “organic food festivals” in two of the biggest Saudi supermarket chains (Danube and Tamimi Markets), which partnered with the campaign to prominently display and heavily promote organic products in 20 stores located in all major cities of the country;
- Displays of the campaign’s key messages on digital billboards inside major shopping malls over the four-week period.

The social media campaign was very successful (16,000 followers and 39,000 Likes) and encouraged many consumers to get actively involved. Combined with organic festivals that enabled sensitized consumers to actually find the products in their normal supermarkets, it has significantly increased the organic consumer base in Saudi Arabia and motivated supermarkets to increase their organic products range (including many imported products). Parallel to consumer awareness campaigns, the Organic Farming Project has been working on the front of organic product and market development, in order to ensure that local organic products meet consumers’ (increasing) expectations in terms of quality, packaging, etc.

Pitfalls and challenges

The main risk when embarking on a consumer awareness raising campaign activity is spending a lot of resources and then still missing the target. Especially if government agencies implement such activities without consulting or cooperating with the private organic sector, there is a high risk that the efforts will not lead to the highest possible impact.

In countries with a very young organic sector, and generally speaking a low income per capita, it would be a waste of resources to do a mass campaign targeting the general public when organic products are not easily available and most people cannot afford to pay a premium. Instead, consumer campaigns should be more targeted to the potential “LOHAS” (Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability) profiles of consumers, such as those going to health clubs, dieting, doing yoga, etc., and young mothers with sufficient purchasing power.

The consumer information campaign should direct consumers to where they can find organic products. It should preferably be coordinated with push measures to ensure that there will be enough and well organized organic products to meet the newly created demand.

The core messages of the campaigns also need to be well thought through and adapted to the audience. In developing countries with emerging organic sectors, the topics such as animal welfare, biodiversity, or soil conservation, are unlikely to be driving a lot of new consumers to organic. Instead, the topics of health (avoiding pesticide residues, particularly), and the image of a “natural” product, are more likely to be effective. In

well-developed organic markets and countries with generally high consumer purchasing power, the messages and the target groups of the campaigns will be different.

It is a difficult exercise to make a consumer campaign that has the expected impact. Therefore, efforts should be invested in monitoring and evaluation of consumer campaign activities. A good practice is to collect and publish sales figures regularly (ideally annually). Such data can also be used as content for annual media conferences to present new statistics and consumer trends and show case developments, which is also a form of promoting the sector, both to potential investors and to the general public.

b. Public procurement

Political justification

Catering (the provision of food services) is an important and increasing part of the food sector. For example, the catering sector in Nordic countries accounts for one-third of total food consumption. Of this, public catering that is managed by the public sector (government institutions, municipalities, etc.) is a significant part¹⁰⁶. This includes canteens of schools, hospitals, care homes, universities, government buildings, prisons, and armed forces. As the general demand for organic food increases, so does the demand for an offer of organic food in such canteens.

Aside from fulfilling the demand of canteen users and contributing to the growth of the organic sector by developing a strong demand factor for organic products, there are many reasons why offering organic products in public canteens is a powerful instrument for change towards sustainable organic food systems.

It is one of the most effective ways to raise awareness about organic food consumption and even to make it “fashionable”. Public procurement has a strong symbolic impact in influencing the increase in the consumption of organic products, and it can easily be combined with educational activities around the benefits of organic food, tasting events, nutrition advice, etc.

It provides access to organic food to a broad public, including children from poorer households, and those who would otherwise be unlikely to fall in the consumer group for organic products. It therefore contributes to reducing food and nutrition inequalities in society.

Government and public institutions, which serve the public good should operate in an ethical framework of care for their communities and the environment. Regarding food purchasing decisions they therefore should consider not only the price tag of food

¹⁰⁶ For example, in the UK in 2007, the public sector provided approximately 1.8 billion meals every year, accounting for 7% of the entire UK catering sector.