

The Ethical Food Consumer - UK - 2021

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This report looks at the following areas:

- The impact of COVID-19 on sales of food and drink with ethical certifications.
- Purchasing of food and drink with ethical certifications by type.
- Shoppers' motivations for buying ethical food and drink.
- Principal barriers to more widespread purchase of ethical food and drink.
- Ethical issues that consumers see as top priorities for food and drink companies.

Price is the primary barrier to more widespread buying of ethical food and drink, but this is notably down on 2019, reflecting the expansion in own-label products with ethical certifications over 2019-21. Highlighting the breadth of ethically certified own-label and presenting this as a way for shoppers to get 'value with values' should therefore allow the grocers to drive sales of ethical food and drink and to win favour.

The COVID-19 lockdowns and the closure of the hospitality sector for much of 2020 boosted sales of food and drink with selected ethical certifications along with overall retail food and drink sales. Media coverage linking humans' environmental impact with the spread of global pandemics also prompted many shoppers to actively seek out ethically certified products.

Widespread consumer doubts over whether their actions make a difference to the environment present a challenge to any government or organisation looking to steer people towards more sustainable habits or brands with ethical certifications looking to gain sales. Consumers' uncertainty over what the different ethical certifications stand for and over which ethical issues to prioritise will also engender apathy and hinder certified products' ability to gain sales.

It is imperative therefore for food and drink companies to give tangible details of what the different ethical certifications stand for and to prove to shoppers



"Increased consumer awareness of environmental issues, stoked by media coverage of the pandemic, offers considerable growth potential for ethical food and drink."

– Alice Baker, Senior Research Analyst

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that they are making a positive difference by buying. Demonstrating the potential here, clearer indication of where the extra money from certified products went would persuade 56% of adults to buy ethical food and drink more often.

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THE CONSUMER – KEY TAKEAWAYS

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- Animal welfare and the environment are important issues to many
- Price is less of barrier than previously
- Need to explain more about ethical certifications
- Strong feel-good factor about ethical products, but many doubt they can make a difference
- Eating seasonally is widely seen as an environmentally friendly act

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