

More than 2 out of 3 consumers* prefer European-grown fruit and vegetables.

Taste and quality are the most important purchase criteria

When buying fruit and vegetables, consumers prioritize quality, taste, and food safety over other aspects such as variety and price. In addition, more than half of them prefer a solar greenhouse as a growing system because they consider it safe, environmentally friendly, and healthy.

Six out of ten consumers surveyed eat a portion of fruit or vegetables every day. In Belgium it is even seven out of ten. Quality and taste are therefore the most important purchasing criteria. In fact, 40% of those surveyed say that European cultivation methods inspire confidence. Among Belgian consumers, this confidence is even higher at 47%. In addition, 56% think that fruit and vegetables grown in solar-powered greenhouses are safe and healthy. These are the main conclusions of the first European survey on the perception of fruit and vegetables in the context of the European CuteSolar programme.

Perception of solar greenhouses

Six out of ten fruits and vegetables consumed in Europe are grown in solar greenhouses in the southern Spanish region of Almeria and on the coast of Granada. The production capacity of Spanish solar greenhouses is so large that they supply 50% of European markets. In winter, the figure is even 60%.

The survey shows that almost 50% of consumers positively image the cultivation of fruit and vegetables in solar greenhouses. Thirty-six percent have no opinion, and less than four percent have a negative image. The main reason for the positive perception of solar greenhouses is the green energy used for cultivation. 96% of this energy comes directly from the sun. 58% of the respondents point this out as a positive aspect. Next, 37% of the users associate the image of greenhouses with high-tech agriculture. In addition, 34% of respondents link the low environmental impact with a positive social impact for the region, thanks to creating jobs, especially for the low-skilled. 56% believe that the cultivation of fruit and vegetables in solar greenhouses is more environmentally friendly.

This results from a major European study on consumer perceptions of fruit and vegetables, conducted among a representative sample of 4,505 people in Belgium, Germany and Spain in the framework of the CuteSolar programme "Growing the taste of Europe in solar greenhouses". CuteSolar asked consumers about their knowledge of fruit and vegetable production methods and their purchasing habits.

What is a solar greenhouse?

A solar greenhouse is a closed structure covered with a plastic film through which the sun's rays shine, giving the plants the light they need to maintain the right temperature for their development during the winter months so that they can carry out photosynthesis. In the process, the plants produce nutrients from the CO₂ they absorb from the air and release enormous amounts of oxygen into the atmosphere. Solar greenhouses are very different from the production methods used in other greenhouses, which use fossil fuel-based heating and lighting systems that consume up to 30% more energy and are therefore harmful to the environment.

About CuteSolar

CuteSolar is a support programme funded by the European Union (EU) and supported by a consortium of Andalusian fruit and vegetable growers' associations (APROA), the Spanish inter-branch fruit and vegetable association (HORTIESPAÑA) and the European fruit and vegetable trade association FruitVegetableEUROPE (EUCOFEL). The aim of the information and promotion campaign, which will run until 2022, is to inform consumers about the sustainable and environmentally friendly production and cultivation methods of EU fruit and vegetables, the high standards of greenhouse technology and the quality of fruit and vegetables from southern Spain.

The programme, with a total investment of €1.95 million, is co-financed by the proposing organisations and the European Union, will run for three years (2020-2022) and will be implemented in Spain, Germany and Belgium.

Disclaimer

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