



**TÜRKİYE CUMHURİYETİ
ADANA ALPARSLAN TÜRKER SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
UNIVERSITY**

**SOCIAL SCIENCES INSTITUTE
FACULTY OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**

**A RESEARCH ON THE DETERMINATION OF FACTORS
AFFECTING THE CONSUMPTION OF ORGANIC FOODS: THE CASE
OF ADANA**

YASEMİN SELLİ

MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

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ADANA, 2024

DECLARATION OF CONFORMITY

In this thesis study, which was prepared following the thesis writing rules of Adana Alparslan Türkeş Science and Technology University Institute of Graduate School, I declare that I provide all the information, documents, evaluations and results in accordance with scientific ethics and moral codes without resorting to any means or assistance that would be contrary to scientific ethics and traditions. I also declare that I refer to all of the articles I used in this study with appropriate references and accept all moral and legal consequences if a situation is found contrary to my statement regarding my work.

30/04/2024

[Signature]

Yasemin SELLİ

ÖZET

ORGANİK GIDA TÜKETİMİNİ ETKİLEYEN FAKTÖRLERİN BELİRLENMESİNE YÖNELİK BİR ÇALIŞMA: ADANA İLİ ÖRNEĞİ

Yasemin SELLİ

Yüksek Lisans, İşletme Anabilim Dalı

Danışman: Doç. Dr. Selim GÜNDÜZ

Ocak, 2024 65 sayfa

Organik gıda tüketimi son yıllarda tüm dünyada olduğu gibi ülkemizde de hızla yayılmaktadır. Bu çalışma, Adana il merkezindeki tüketicilerin organik ürünlere yönelik tutumlarını ve organik ürünleri satın alma davranışları üzerindeki etkili olan faktörleri belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmada materyal olarak, Adana ili merkezinde seçilmiş bireyler ile yapılan anket çalışmasından elde edilen verileri kullanılmıştır. Çalışma, katılımcıların demografik özelliklerinin detaylı bir analizini içermekte ve cinsiyet, yaş, gelir, medeni durum, meslek gibi değişkenlerin etkisini aydınlatmaktadır. Mesleki olarak, eğitim sektöründe çalışanlar ve gıda sektörü profesyonelleri, organik gıda endişeleri üzerinde belirgin etkiler sergilemektedir. Çalışma sonuçlarına göre tüketicilerin demografik özellikleri, yaş, cinsiyet, medeni durum ve gelir gibi, organik gıda tercihlerini ve davranışlarını şekillendirmede önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Genç bireylerin organik gıda tüketimine daha fazla bir eğilimi olduğu belirlenirken, cinsiyet ve medeni durum tüketicilerin tutumlarında minimal farklılıklar göstermiştir. Ancak, gelir düzeyleri, organik gıdaların yaygın olarak benimsenmesine engel olan maliyet endişelerinin önemli bir belirleyicisi olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bulgular, demografik, bilgi ve ekonomik faktörlerin yanı sıra kişisel tercihler ve yaşam tarzının organik gıdaya karşı tutumları şekillendirmedeki kritik rollerini ortaya koymaktadır. Organik ürün tükettiğini ifade eden tüketicilerin %11.5'i yaş sebze-meyve ürün grubunu tüketirken, bunu sırasıyla yumurta (%11.3), zeytinyağı (%10.9), süt ürünleri (%8.9) ve balın (%8.7) izlediği belirlenmiştir. Bu araştırma sonucunda elde edilen bulguların, Adana ilinde tüketicilerin organik ürünlerle ilgili tutumlarının ortaya konması ve organik ürün tüketme tercihlerini etkileyen faktörlerin ayrıntılı olarak belirlenmesi açısından önemli olduğu düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Organik gıda tercihleri, Tüketici davranışı, Demografik analiz, Mesleki etki, Bölgesel etkiler

ABSTRACT

A RESEARCH ON THE DETERMINATION OF FACTORS AFFECTING THE CONSUMPTION OF ORGANIC FOODS: THE CASE OF ADANA

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Organic food consumption is rapidly spreading in our country, as it is worldwide. This study aims to determine the attitudes of consumers in the city center of Adana towards organic products and the factors influencing their purchasing behavior. Data obtained from a survey conducted with selected individuals in the city center of Adana were used as the material for the research. The study includes a detailed analysis of the participants' demographic characteristics and sheds light on the impact of variables such as gender, age, income, marital status, and occupation. Professionally, individuals working in the education sector and food industry professionals exhibit significant effects on organic food concerns. According to the study results, consumers' demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, marital status, and income, play a significant role in shaping their preferences and behaviors regarding organic food. While younger individuals exhibit a greater inclination towards organic food consumption, gender and marital status show minimal differences in consumer attitudes. However, income levels emerge as a significant determinant, posing a barrier to widespread adoption of organic foods due to cost concerns. The findings reveal the critical roles of demographic, knowledge and economic factors, as well as personal preferences and lifestyle, in shaping attitudes towards organic food. It was determined that 11.5% of the consumers who stated that they consumed organic products consumed the fresh fruit and vegetables product group, followed by eggs (11.3%), olive oil (10.9%), dairy products (8.9%) and honey (8.7%). The findings obtained as a result of this research are thought to be important in terms of revealing consumers' attitudes towards organic products in Adana and determining in detail the factors affecting their preferences for consuming organic products.

Keywords: Organic food preferences, Consumer behavior, Demographic analysis, Occupational impact, Regional influences



Dedication

To my family...

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rising interest in organically grown foods has gained attention in both developed and developing nations worldwide. Organic foods are characterized as products that exclude the use of herbicides, pesticides, antibiotics, and genetically modified organisms during production. They are not genetically modified and are produced with a focus on animal welfare and environmental protection (Marwa and Scott, 2013). Over the past few decades, the demand for organic food products has surged globally, driven by concerns over intensive agricultural practices and their potential impacts on human health and the environment (Apaolaza et al., 2018; Yin et al., 2010). When considering quality parameters, consumers perceive organic food to differ from conventional food in various ways. They believe organic foods are free from chemicals, environmentally friendly, healthier, tastier, and more expensive. However, some consumers disagree, viewing organic food as no different from conventional food, and suspect manufacturers of falsely labeling products as organic to increase profits. To address this issue, it is essential to certify organic products and educate consumers about these certifications and labels. Certification is crucial for the production of organic food and agricultural products and involves a lengthy process (Janssen & Hamm, 2012; Sobhanifard, 2018).

Organic agriculture has been effectively practiced in Turkey for many years, with a significant portion of the produce being exported to various countries. From 1990 to 2010, Turkey's organic food sector experienced substantial growth, particularly between 2008 and 2010, when there were notable increases in the number of organic food producers and production areas. Currently, Turkey has 79,563 organic food producers and 646,247 hectares dedicated to organic food production (Inan et al., 2021). Despite Turkey's significant potential in organic food production, consumption levels have not reached the desired levels seen in developed countries. Accurately identifying consumer behavior is essential for understanding consumer preferences and needs. Consumer behavior typically encompasses individual, social, socio-economic, and cultural characteristics. Factors such as income growth, social and cultural shifts, increased educational levels, greater involvement of mothers in the workforce, and advancements in marketing, retailing, communication, and transportation have

led to significant changes in consumer purchasing behavior (Dölekoğlu, 2002). Research indicates that the primary reason many consumers purchase organic food is the perceived health and nutritional benefits of these products (Paul and Rana, 2012; Lee and Yun, 2015). Consumers' preferences for organic food signify a crucial behavior that not only encourages environmental conservation but also supports the shift towards a more sustainable society (Scalco et al., 2017). This is because consumer behavior serves as a fundamental indicator of the progress in green and sustainable production systems. Zakowska-Biemans (2011) investigated the motivations behind food choices and beliefs about organic food among Polish consumers through a survey of 1,010 participants. The study revealed that the sensory attributes of organic food were the primary factors influencing food choices, followed by price and safety concerns. It was also found that consumers who prioritized convenience and cost were less likely to purchase organic products, whereas those open to trying new foods and innovations were more inclined to choose organic options.

Karabas and Gurler (2012) explored consumer behavior towards organic products in Samsun city using logit regression analysis. The study revealed that the consumption of organic products is independent of income and expenditure, providing a new perspective to the existing literature. The evaluation of the logit regression model results indicated that the most influential factor in increasing organic product consumption is the promotion of these products to consumers.

Ditlevsen et al. (2019) examined health from the consumers' viewpoint, analyzing the negotiations and justifications behind their organic food consumption preferences through a focus group study conducted in Denmark in 2016. The study identified three distinct understandings of health in consumers' justifications for preferring organic foods: Health as purity, Health as pleasure, and a Holistic perspective on health. Among these, the notion of health as purity emerged as the most prevalent understanding when discussing health in the context of organic consumption.

Inan et al. (2021) examined the purchasing behavior and attitudes of consumers who buy organic food in the Mugla province in 2019. The study found that the top three factors influencing participants' choice of organic foods are the absence of chemicals during the

growing period, with the most preferred products being vegetables and fruits, olive oil, and eggs. However, participants identified significant issues such as the high cost of organic products, insufficient sales points, and the difficulty in distinguishing organic foods from conventional ones.

Health, product quality, and concern for nature and the environment were reported as the primary motivations for consumers purchasing organic foods. These reasons are widely considered valid, although the priority assigned to each varies among consumers (Rana and Paul, 2020; Teng & Wang, 2015). A study conducted in Vietnam explored the factors driving organic food purchases by investigating how consumers' consumption values influence the food choices of regular buyers, occasional buyers, and non-buyers of organic food. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 27 Vietnamese consumers who were comparable in terms of their awareness, affordability, and access to organic food. Thematic analysis was employed for qualitative data analysis, revealing that trust and distrust in the food system—broader than just trust in food labeling—are key determinants of consumption values and, consequently, the choice of organic food (Lang and Conroy, 2021).

The rising consumption of organic food in recent years has been driven by increasing environmental awareness and health consciousness among consumers in developed economies worldwide. Eyinade et al. (2021) identified several factors influencing consumers' willingness to consume organic foods, including human health, food safety, behaviors and perceptions, and willingness to pay a price premium. Therefore, raising awareness in the food industry about the health benefits of consuming organic foods is essential. The authors also emphasized that the growing acceptance of organically produced foods is gaining traction in both developed and developing countries.

Sarica et al. (2023) conducted a study to identify the factors affecting the organic food consumption of university students. The study found that the level of education is a significant factor influencing consumers' decisions to purchase organic foods. To increase organic consumption, it is recommended that promotional and informative content about organic foods be more prominently featured in both written and visual media. This effort

should involve collaboration between relevant ministries and universities to enhance consumer knowledge.

The choice of organic food is influenced by various factors, as described above. This research aims to determine the factors affecting consumers' choices regarding organic food in the Adana province. Specifically, it seeks to explore the beliefs and attitudes of organic food buyers and assess their impact on purchasing behavior.



2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of organic agriculture originated before 1940 under the guidance of Sir Albert Howard (1873-1947), an English agricultural researcher who worked extensively in India. Howard's research and observations led to the development of organic agriculture as a philosophy and concept, emphasizing the intrinsic right of crops and animals to health. He advocated for understanding pathogens and adjusting agricultural practices accordingly, rather than simply attempting to eradicate them. The formal recognition of organic agriculture came in 1980 with the publication of the USDA Report and Recommendations on Organic Agriculture, followed by the passage of the Federal Organic Food Production Act in 1990, marking the beginning of widespread adoption of organic farming practices in the United States (Heckman, 2006). Organic farming has since grown steadily, driven by its sustainability, ecological benefits, and economic viability. It focuses on enhancing soil health, fostering microbial diversity, and promoting environmental sustainability. According to the Global Organic Agriculture Report of 2020 by the Organic Agriculture Research Institute, approximately 3.1 million farmers manage over 72.3 million hectares of agricultural land organically, with Australia leading in organic agricultural land area, followed by Argentina and the USA (Chekima et al., 2023).

In a comparative study examining organic food consumption in Denmark and New Zealand, researchers explored the interplay between consumers' health and dietary concerns, environmental apprehensions, trust in the conventional food industry, demographic characteristics, and the frequency of organic food consumption. The study aimed to assess the relevance of explicit value and market development conceptual frameworks in determining the significance of these factors in the context of organic market expansion. The findings suggest that the growing demand for organically produced food reflects consumers' discontent with the conventional food system. This underscores the importance for the organic food industry, which is increasingly adopting a more mainstream approach, to prioritize the development of national and international standards and policies. Additionally, proactive measures should be taken to establish or endorse "quality" assurance systems to ensure consumer confidence and trust (Squires et al., 2001).

Zanoli and Naspetti (2001) examined the potential correlations between consumer involvement, ethical attitudes, and organic food consumption, highlighting the distinctions between ethically concerned and unconcerned consumer behaviors regarding organic products. The study involved interviews with 60 Italian consumers responsible for household food purchases in May 2000. The findings suggest that organic consumers tend to exhibit higher ethical concerns, particularly in terms of the defined values, compared to non-organic consumers.

In a questionnaire-based study investigating Swedish citizens' attitudes and behaviors toward organic food, environmentally friendly practices, and perceptions of the consequences of organic food choices on human health, the environment, and animal welfare, various statistical analyses such as descriptive statistics, factor analysis, bivariate correlations, multiple regression analysis, and independent t-tests were employed. The results indicated that perceived health benefits were more strongly associated with attitudes and behaviors toward organic food than perceived environmental benefits. This underscores the notion that self-interested motives are more influential in predicting the purchase of food items than altruistic motives (Magnusson et al., 2003).

The certified organic foods sector has experienced remarkable growth within the food industry in recent years, owing to its assurance of production and processing methods that eschew synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, hormones, genetically modified organisms, and irradiation. This study aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of organic consumption by exploring the interplay between various motivations, attitudes, and behaviors that drive increased organic consumption. Thus, this article introduces novel perspectives distinct from previous studies on organic food consumers. The research unfolds across three stages. Initially, 13 focus group interviews were conducted to identify consumer purchasing preferences, thereby aiding in the interpretation of survey data. To ensure representation, focus groups were convened across metropolitan and regional centers in Queensland and Victoria, Australia, encompassing diverse socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. The findings underscore the burgeoning sales of certified organic foods, indicating a growing prevalence of organic food consumption. Furthermore, the survey data reveal that a small yet influential segment of consumers exhibits a strong affinity for organic foods, significantly contributing to overall organic food sales (Lockie et al., 2004).

Siderer et al. (2005) conducted a comprehensive review of organic food, encompassing legal aspects such as certification, inspection, and labeling, as well as market dynamics, consumer behavior, and the inherent qualities of organic products. In their study, they presented a flow diagram (Figure 2.1) illustrating the journey of food from farm to consumer, highlighting the added economic value at each stage. Notably, they observed that the majority of additional costs associated with organic food are incurred during distribution and processing, primarily due to handling relatively small product quantities. However, with anticipated increases in supply in the years ahead, there exists significant potential for cost reduction, driven by economies of scale in processing and distribution systems. Consequently, this trend is expected to bolster the organic food processing industry and related activities (Fig. 2), ultimately resulting in reduced prices for certain organic food products in retail outlets.



Figure 2.1 Organic food flow chart (Siderer et al., 2005)

Hughner et al. (2007) conducted a review of existing research on organic food consumption and identified the necessity for further studies to gain a deeper understanding of organic consumers. Their findings highlighted that both regular and occasional consumers of organic food often experience confusion in various aspects. Given the anticipated significant increase in global organic food production, their research underscores the importance of comprehending the marketing system more thoroughly. Such insights could benefit consumers, the food industry (including both producers and retailers), policymakers, and special interest groups. The study emphasizes that to surpass the developments of the past two decades and embrace new themes in consumer research and food consumption, extensive future research is essential in this domain. Enhanced understanding of organic food consumers will provide valuable benefits to consumer researchers, manufacturers, retailers, and policymakers.

Sarikaya (2007) studied the users' attitudes towards and factors affecting consumers' preferences for organic foods. According to the research findings, there are four dimensions of users' attitudes towards organic foods and consumer preferences. These are; responsibility,

trust, value and utility. It was observed that consumers' preferences for organic food products vary depending on demographic characteristics.

Monier et al. (2009) explored the impact of organic food consumption in France by addressing two key issues for the future growth of the organic market. The first issue pertains to whether choosing organic products is a stable aspect of consumer behavior: do consumers occasionally buy an organic product, or do they consistently choose organic across multiple categories? The second issue focuses on the influence of prices on the purchase of organic products, particularly in distinguishing between attracting new consumers and increasing demand among existing organic buyers. These questions were analyzed using a market basket approach, with price considerations helping to predict demand patterns. The study centered on two staple food items, eggs and milk, which are highly consumed in France. The findings revealed that: (i) selecting organic for one of these items increases the likelihood of choosing the organic version of the other; (ii) small reductions in the price of organic products do not significantly impact the decision to buy organic over conventional products; (iii) products may be sensitive to price changes for those who already purchase organic items; and (iv) the most critical finding is that the demographic profile of organic buyers is more closely linked to education level rather than income, age, or family size.

In Finland, the role of consumers in the consumption of four different organic foods—coffee, bread, fruit, and flour—was investigated in the context of their organic food shopping behavior. The study revealed that despite positive attitudes towards organic food, consumers do not purchase these products regularly due to the lack of ideologically driven attitudes in routine, low-involvement shopping activities that require minimal problem-solving, such as grocery shopping. Statistical analysis of an empirical sample of 200 consumers provided significant support for a proposed new model of organic food buying behavior. The research suggested that the infrequent purchase of organic foods by consumers is due to the absence of ideological considerations in habitual shopping activities with very limited problem-solving requirements (Tarkiainen & Sundqvist, 2009).

In order to determine the organic food consumption of Chinese consumers, interviews were conducted with 420 consumers in 3 different cities. According to the findings obtained from

this study, the intention to buy organic food in China is influenced by factors such as consumers' concern for their own health, the degree of trust in organic food, the availability of organic food prices and the income status of consumers. It is interesting to note that, consumers' age, degree of education and the presence of a child (under 12 years) in the family have no obvious impact on purchase intention. Authors reported that, the younger the consumers, the stronger the willingness they have to buy organic food in the market due to the young people can easily accept new foods, and their consumption profile is considerably advanced. After all, very different factors must be taken into account in order to promote the development of the organic food (Yin et al., 2010).

Pieniak et al. (2010) studied the association between consumers' subjective knowledge, objective knowledge, general attitudes towards organic food and vegetables consumption in the Dutch speaking part of Belgium. In this study, confirmatory factor analysis was performed to determine whether the measures of a structure really combine the intended hidden variable or whether they share a high degree of variance in common and whether the structures are different from each other. In the study, the participants were very well informed about organic vegetables and organic production techniques. Thanks to this highly objective information, it is quite easy for most consumers and is a result of the inclusion of insignificant items. Another possible explanation is the presence of a high share of moderate to heavy organic food consumers, which is the result of the respondent recruitment procedure, more specifically partial recruitment through the organic food consumers association (especially the eco-lifestyle subsample). Surprisingly, consumers' subjective knowledge at the beginning was only at a moderate to fairly low level, which means that people do not perceive themselves as very knowledgeable about organic vegetables.

Organic foods are briefly defined as follows: they are called foods that are renewed by farmers who use only renewable resources to produce foods that protect health for future generations, protect also the environmental soil and water. Organic products are grown within the framework of certain principles and legal standards. Processing of food organically within the framework of these principles and standards, organically produced agricultural products are accepted by consumers produced-covers the production and conversion of the desired organic chain into the appropriate product. Conformity to the organic production chain refers

to the preservation of natural organic nutritional properties along the production line and away from mixture-cross contamination by other foods and chemicals from the raw material to the final product. Pesticides and herbicides, synthetic fertilizers, antibiotic agents, hormones, genetic engineering, irradiation or sewage sludge etc. are not used during the production of foods, and they must be obtained from animals that are not given antibacterial drugs or hormones during the organic production process, such as meat, eggs and dairy products (Forman et al., 2012; Sobhanifard, 2018). Today, the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) and the EU (European Union) have set strict standards for organic foods in order to protect consumers, ensuring the integrity and quality of these products

A study aimed at determining consumer behavior related to organic foods in Izmir province concluded that the behavior of consumers buying organic foods is important for consumers due to factors such as health awareness, environmental sensitivity, educational level, as well as factors such as taste, taste of foods, nutritional value and food safety. As a result of the study, four basic factors were obtained in organic food preference: trust, benefit, purchase decision and purchase preference (Lüleci, 2012).

In another study, Atalay et al. (2012) conducted a research on why consumers consume organic food in Ankara. In the study, they conducted interviews with a total of 97 consumers. The results of the study are given in Table 2.1. A total of 75 consumers reported that they prefer these products due to the positive effects of organic foods on the nutritional content and health. Apart from this, the most important reasons for preference are listed as being safe and not containing chemical residues. The fashion and curiosity factors were selected by only one consumer and determined as the lowest factor in organic food preference.

Table 2.1 Organic food consumption preferences of consumers

What is your preference for consuming organic foods?	YES	
	Number*	%
Nutrition and health	75	77.3
Being safe	40	41.2
Risk of chemical residue in other products	39	40.2
Baby in the family	22	22.6
Taste and aroma	22	22.6
Life style	10	10.3
Fashion, curiosity	1	1.0

*Total numbers of questionnaires was 97 and the total ratio was not 100% since the consumers indicated more than one option in the questions (from Atalay et al., 2019).

Celik (2014) determined the most important factors affecting the purchase of organic food in Istanbul with the questionnaires they conducted to 200 participants. With the help of the data obtained by adopting the field research methodology, the demographic characteristics of the people who buy organic food in Turkey and the importance of the reasons for buying organic food have been determined. According to these results, the most important factor in buying organic food is “organic foods are healthier”. The second most important factor is “organic foods are more nutritious”. The third important factor in buying organic food is "growing organic food in an environmentally sensitive way". In the study, the effective factors in consumers' food product brand preference were determined by the factor analysis technique, which is widely used in marketing research.

Organic foods are considered as vegetable and animal foods that do not use genetic engineering, artificial fertilizers, pesticides, weed and fungicide drugs, growth hormones, antibiotics, preservatives, colorants, additives and chemical packaging materials in their cultivation and processing. There have been significant increases in the production and consumption of organic food all over the world in recent years. Studies conducted; the main reasons for the increase in the consumption of organic foods; it is on the way that there are

increasing demands of consumers for healthy, nutritious, delicious and environmentally friendly foods. However, the research results on these properties of organic foods are quite contradictory. In this review article; The differences between organic foods and traditional foods in terms of production principles, nutritional value, food safety and taste are discussed. Organic foods are absolutely completely on the fact that it is nutritious, reliable and tasty a definite and clear conclusion has not yet been reached. In this regard, there is a need for more research on the differences in nutrition, safety and taste between organic foods and traditional foods and for these studies to be interpreted from a scientific point of view (Türközü, & Karabudak, 2014).

There are various studies that include the effects of gender difference on organic product purchasing. While some researchers report that women are more inclined to buy organic products compared to men (Kashani-Nazari et al., 2016), the opposite results have been obtained in different study (Korkmaz et al., 2014), which show that men are more inclined to buy these products compared to women. In most of these studies, it has been reported that consumers with higher education and higher income levels are more likely to buy organic products at a younger age (Dettmann et al., 2009; Paul, and Rana, 2012). Therefore, in order to better understand what exactly drives the consumption of organic products, different studies are being conducted on consumer perception and the barriers that prevent them from purchasing these products. Currently, there is a growing body of research on the main factors and obstacles affecting decision-making processes that are trying to determine the behavior of organic consumers. In a study, the most important reasons for buying organic food products were divided into three groups. These:

- 1) avoiding various negative characteristics of traditional food products (for example, the use of different undesirable chemicals in production),
- 2) positive properties of organic foods (such as safety) and
- 3) positive characteristics that consumers believe these products have (better taste, greater nutritional value compared to traditional produced foods) (IFB, 2014).

Svithanu (2015) studied the understand the preference of consumers to the purchase of organic food products in Indian food markets. As can be seen in Table 2.2, more number of

female consumers prefer to buy organic food products as compared to male consumers. Regarding the age groups in Table 2.2, the age group 29-30 prefers to buy more organic food products as compared to other age groups of consumers. Their marital status has also affected organic food consumption. A total of 78% of the married consumers prefer to buy organic food on the contrary 59% of the unmarried consumers prefer to buy organic food. In this study, it was determined that consumers with high income levels buy organic foods at a fairly high rate (84%). As a result of this study, the most basic output obtained is that consumers prefer to buy organic food products, it has been determined that there are various factors affecting the choice, including the demographic characteristics of consumers.

Table 2.2 Demographic profile and preference to buy organic food

ITEMS	PREFER TO BUY ORGANIC FOOD (%)
Gender	
Male	69
Female	83
Age group	
18-28	69
29-39	84
40-60	78
Marital Status	
Married	78
Unmarried	59
Education	
Diploma and Bachelor	76
Post Graduate	82
Income	
Below 1 lakh	56
2 lakhs to 3 lakhs	78
4 lakhs to 5 lakhs	79
10 lakhs and above	89

(From Svithanu, 2015).

In a study aimed at evaluating the causes affecting consumers' organic food consumption in GAP-Şanlıurfa, a survey interview was conducted with a total of 382 participants. As a result of the study, it was determined that the current information and promotion about organic foods is insufficient and the main source of information is the Internet. Consumers prefer to buy organic food directly from producers, and it has been reported that there is a need for an

organic bazaar. The consumption frequency of fresh fruits and vegetables as organic foods is 74.1%, followed by milk and dairy products with 56%. The researchers reported that educational level, income status, occupation, gender, marital status, age, place of residence and number of households are the reasons that significantly affect consumption behaviors (Aydogdu & Kaya, 2020).

Organic eggs come from chickens that roam freely in the open during the day and are safely and securely placed in huts at night. The main difference between organic and free range eggs is that organic eggs are produced without the use of any chemicals. Organic egg production has increased continuously over the last decade. It is the most rapidly growing areas of the organic agricultural system. Onurlubas et al (2020) investigated the factors affecting consumers' intention to purchase organic eggs from the markets. The obtained data were evaluated using cronbach alpha method, normality test, exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, structural equation model. As a result of the study, it was determined that food safety, nutritional value and health awareness have a statistically significant effect on consumers' intention to buy organic eggs.

Turan & Demircan (2021) elucidated the knowledge levels of consumers living in the city of Isparta-Turkey about organic foods, their organic food consumption preferences and the factors affecting their organic food consumption. In this study, the "clustered single-stage simple random probability sampling based on population ratios" method was used to determine the number of questionnaires. According to the results of the research, it was determined that a significant part of the consumers surveyed identified organic products as natural products. Interestingly, it was determined that 72.4% of the participants consumed organic products and the majority of consumers reported that organic food products were expensive.

In another study, which examined the factors affecting attitudes towards organic products as a healthy behavior, different organic product sales points were interviewed. The results obtained in determining the factors affecting the organic product attitudes of the participants from the perspective of healthy behavior are as follows: The majority of the individuals who bought organic products in the study were women consumers (56%). The participants represented the middle age group at a rate of about 61% (between the ages of 26-45). It was

seen that the individuals who bought in terms of education level were mainly university graduated (60%) participants (Baydas et al., 2021).

Tokgoz and Yildiz (2022) studied the effects of organic food consumption behaviors on orthorexia nervosa tendency. Based on the obtained results, the negative effects of organic food consumption behaviors on the self-identity and benefits of organic food consumption dimensions on the food selection value dimension of orthorexia nervosa tendency. In addition, it was evaluated that the common relationship between behaviors related to organic food consumption and the tendency to orthorexia nervosa is health. Participants believe that organic foods are healthy and contain high nutritional value.

Recent epidemiological studies have tried to the relationship between organic food consumption and obesity risk, but the results obtained continue to make this issue controversial (Andersen et al., 2021; Gosling et al., 2021). In this study, a systematic review and meta-analysis were conducted to determine the relationship between organic food consumption and obesity risk. Despite the popularity of organic foods in recent years, there is a lack of solid evidence the relationship between organic food consumption and obesity. Our rigorous review of the available evidence and meta-analysis has shown a low reduction in the risk of obesity (11%) associated with the consumption of organic food. Dietary behaviors and patterns are difficult to measure, but our review suggests that the impact of organic food consumption on obesity risk should be further investigated through long-term controlled studies (Bhagavathula et al., 2022).

Guiné et al. (2022) examined the trends of consumers in two different countries, Portugal and Turkey, as well as the consumption of foods obtained from organic agriculture and where they buy these foods. In this study, a questionnaire applied to the participants via internet tools as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions experienced that year was used. The researchers asked the participants whether they were familiar with the concept of organic agriculture, and 94% of the Portuguese and 78% of the Turks gave a positive response.

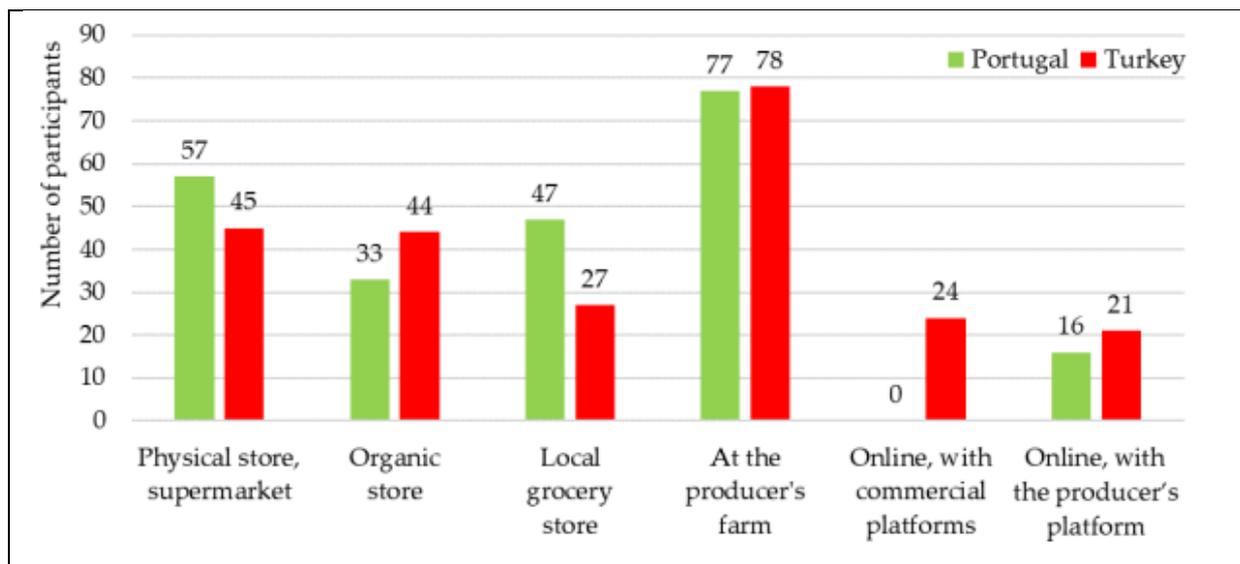


Figure 2.2 Places and platforms where participants buy organic foods

Figure 2.2 shows the places where the study participants bought organic food. Both Turkish and Portuguese participants buy organic foods from the producer's farm the most, while the least is reported to be through the online with the producer's platform. An interesting point in the study is that while the Portuguese participants never bought organic food on a commercial online platform, while 24 Turks participants reported that they used this platform. Based on the results, the consumption patterns are relatively similar in Portugal and Turkey, with many participants consuming organic foods, especially vegetables and fruits, buying from the producer's farm.

Pregnancy refers to a critical period for both maternal and child health. Previous studies have revealed that the consumption of an organic diet during pregnancy can reduce pesticide exposure compared to the consumption of a conventional diet. It is possible that this also improves pregnancy outcomes, because maternal pesticide exposure during pregnancy has been associated with an increased risk of pregnancy complications. Organic foods are produced in the world with techniques that comply with organic standards, which generally restrict the use of agrochemicals such as synthetic pesticides. In recent years, the world's demand for organic foods has increased greatly and continues to increase, largely due to consumer beliefs that organic foods benefit human health. In general, pregnant organic food consumers were found to have a higher socioeconomic status and healthier eating and

lifestyle habits than pregnant women who did not choose an organic diet. As a result of the review, it was concluded that there is a critical and urgent need to conduct randomized controlled trials to establish the relationship between organic diet consumption during pregnancy and maternal and child health outcomes (Liu et al., 2023).

Kis et al. (2023) conducted a study to evaluate the consumption habits of Hungarian consumers related to organic products. In this research, the attitudes of consumers towards organic food, especially the frequency of purchase, awareness of choice, motivational factors of consumers, main sales channels and how the COVID-19 pandemic has an impact on development have also been examined. According to the results of the research, it has given the organic sector and researchers the opportunity to better understand the functioning of the market and the potential of organic production and to advise relevant stakeholders on how to overcome the challenges related to the organic food market. In our survey, more than half of the participants increased their organic product purchases to the previous periods in 2020 and 2021, while some participants reported that they did not change their organic food purchases due to the COVID-19 wave.

Many different groups are involved in the consumption of organic food among consumers in the world. It has been reported that generally those who consume organic food are people who have knowledge about health, and these people also prefer organic foods more due to environmentally friendly methods (Kashif et al., 2023; Schäufele-Elbers and Janssen, 2023). An important group among them are consumers who play sports, in which a healthy diet plays a fundamental role in success. Evli et al. (2023) elucidated the organic food preferences of football players playing in different leagues in Turkey in terms of different factors such as marital status, league level of played, sports age, educational level, and income level etc. As a result of this study, it was determined that organic foods are evaluated as highly nutritious foods by playing sports in addition to being reliable and natural. It has been found that the monthly income levels of footballer have an impact on their organic food preferences and that their preference for these foods varies according to age groups. However, it has been found that the organic food preferences of football players vary not only according to variables such as age and experience, but also according to their relationship with the environment. Especially those who work on training and working footballer suggested that experts should

also take into account the organic food preferences of their when it comes to nutrition and add them to diets (Gıdık et al., 2023) .

In a study conducted to determine the factors affecting consumers' intention to buy organic food during COVID -19 and how COVID -19 affects these factors. The results showed that COVID-19 significantly affects consumers' health awareness, environmental concern, availability, price and intention to buy organic food. This study has also revealed that health awareness, environmental concerns and the availability of organic foods affect consumers' purchasing intention even during COVID-19. However, it has been found that prices do not affect the purchasing character of consumers much during the COVID-19 period (Raj et al., 2024).

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1. Research Design

Effective research evaluation and advancement are essential for employing the right research methodology. This will result in robust data analysis and yield output that is both valid and accurate. This section offers insights into the techniques and steps involved in conducting the research, encompassing aspects such as research design, population, sampling procedures, data collection instruments, and statistical methods applied.

The aim of this research is to ascertain whether a correlation exists between the purchase intention of organic food and various factors, namely, characteristics of organic food, health consciousness, subjective norms, and environmental concerns. Additionally, the study seeks to explore the moderating role of awareness in the relationship between these factors and the purchase intention of organic food products.

To achieve this objective, a quantitative research approach has been devised and implemented. This approach involves interpreting information through numerical data, collected in a standardized form and analyzed using diagrams and statistics, as articulated by Saunders et al. (2009). The numerical data were gathered from a specific sample, representative of the entire population in Adana.

Primary data collection was conducted through a questionnaire, chosen for its ability to obtain opinions and views from a large sample of individuals. The questionnaire was administered online, a method chosen for its efficiency in saving both time and costs associated with data collection. This approach also facilitates reaching a broad audience, irrespective of their geographical location, as highlighted by Ilieva et al. (2002). Nevertheless, it is emphasized that researchers should assess the alignment of the chosen data collection method with the research goals, timeline, and financial constraints before finalizing their decision.

The participants in the questionnaire were asked to respond to two main sections of the survey. The first part focused on gathering demographic data to provide insights into the

respondents' background and their connection to the survey topic. The second part consisted of questions related to the variables essential for testing the research hypotheses. Prior to presenting the survey questions, participants were given an overview of the research topic, goals, the research population, the targeted sample, and some guidelines.

It's noteworthy that the questionnaire underwent approval from the Adana Alparslan Türkeş Science and Technology University ethical committee.

Given that the variables in this research cannot be directly measured, they are treated as latent variables. These variables are indicated by other observed variables responsible for defining them. The measurement of all these variables was carried out through surveys, tests, and statistical analysis, as explained by Byrne (2012).

The research commenced by identifying the main idea and reviewing previous relevant studies and articles to refine and develop the concept. This process led to the formulation of the main research variables, the creation of research questions and hypotheses, and the development of the research conceptual framework. Subsequently, the research was designed, and the necessary data were collected to obtain suitable answers for the research questions and conduct hypothesis tests. The collected data were then measured and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which ultimately yielded the research results and their interpretation. Finally, the conclusions were formulated and documented.

3.2. Population

The population under consideration for this study involves individuals residing in Adana who are knowledgeable about organic food products. The primary focus is on exploring the connection between purchase intention of organic food and the various factors influencing consumers' decisions to buy these products. Furthermore, the study delves into elucidating the moderating impact of awareness on the factors influencing organic food products.

It is important to note that individuals lacking awareness or familiarity with organic food products were excluded from the research sample. The targeted population, therefore, comprises individuals who possess knowledge about organic food products and are living in Adana.

3.3. Sampling Method

For participant selection in this research, a convenience sampling method was employed. As articulated by Etikan and Bala (2017), this method involves selecting respondents based on the researcher's judgment, without employing any probability techniques. It is designed to target individuals who meet specific criteria, considering them a convenient and accessible source of data for the study.

The target sample size for this research was set at 200 respondents, influenced by the guidance provided by Varoquaux (2018), who suggests that having between 100 to 300 observations leads to a 4.5% margin of error.

The margin of error was calculated using the formula outlined by Surendran (2019). Following the collection of data and the initial screening process, 207 responses were deemed acceptable and included in the research dataset.

3.4. Data Collecting Instrument

This study adopts a quantitative research approach, employing a survey method that was adapted from three articles. Specifically, the dimensions of organic food characteristics, health consciousness, subjective norm, and environmental concerns were derived from Bongani Mhlophe (2016), brand awareness from Asif et al. (2018), and purchase intention from Yadav et al. (2016).

To gather responses, a 4-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = Not affected at all to 4 = Affected in a great extent) was utilized for close-ended questions. This type of scale was chosen for its efficiency and reduced writing activity, making it convenient and time-saving for the respondents.

The survey commences with an introduction, providing information about the researcher, the main idea and goals of the research, and an explanation about the targeted respondents. The initial question inquires whether participants are familiar with organic food products, with those responding negatively being directed to exit the survey. Respondents answering affirmatively proceed to the first part, covering demographic details to gain insights into the

target respondent's background. The second part of the survey comprises questions related to the main variables being measured.

All survey questions were initially formulated in English and subsequently translated into Arabic. Following the translation process, a back-translation to English, as recommended by Brislin (1970), was conducted, and a third-party researcher performed a validation check.

3.5 Statistical Techniques

The data obtained from the survey results were analyzed using the statistical software program SPSS 23.0. Reliability analysis was conducted for the scale used using the SPSS software program, and a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.757 was determined. The variables of the scale were ranked based on the mean values of the given responses to determine the factor with the highest level of importance. Additionally, non-parametric tests (Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis H) were conducted to examine the effects of gender, marital status, occupation, and income level on the responses to the questions regarding organic food certification (i.e., "Do you check the organic food certification of the producer?", "Does the organic food you consume have an organic food certificate?", "Do you trust the certificate of organic food?").

3.6. Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout all stages of this research endeavor. The research adhered to ethical standards to ensure the responsible and respectful treatment of all parties involved. This survey was approved by the Ethical Evaluation Unit of Adana Alparslan Turkes Science and Technology University.

In particular, the data collection process was conducted with a stringent focus on privacy and confidentiality. A robust procedure was implemented to safeguard the collected data, ensuring that it was solely utilized for analytical purposes and not exploited for personal interests at any point during the research implementation.

Additionally, privacy concerns were diligently addressed. The survey did not request company names or employee identities, prioritizing the confidentiality of both the

participating individuals and the associated organizations. This commitment to ethical practices underscores the responsible conduct of the research and the protection of the rights and privacy of all involved stakeholders.



4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This research aimed to comprehensively examine the factors influencing consumers' preferences for organic food in Adana province. Specifically, the study delved into understanding the purchasing behavior of organic food buyers and how it is shaped by their attitudes towards organic products.

In terms of demographical characteristics, the participants were categorized based on various factors, including age and gender distribution, marital status, income and etc. The demographical characteristics of participants were given in Table 4.1.

4.1. Demographical characteristics of participants

4.1.1. Age Distribution

The age group was divided into four different ranges. Figure 4.1 illustrates the age distribution of the participants, revealing that the majority fell within the age range of 26-35 years, comprising 48.3% of the respondents. Following closely, the 18-25 age group accounted for 33.3% of the participants, indicating significant interest in organic food among young adults.

Additionally, the study observed notable participation from individuals aged 36-45 years, constituting 14.98% of the respondents. A smaller but still noteworthy percentage (3.4%) belonged to the age group of 46-56 years, suggesting a diverse demographic representation in the study.

These findings underscore the widespread interest in organic food across different age brackets, with a particularly strong inclination observed among young adults. Understanding the demographic composition of organic food consumers can provide valuable insights for marketers and policymakers aiming to promote sustainable food consumption practices.

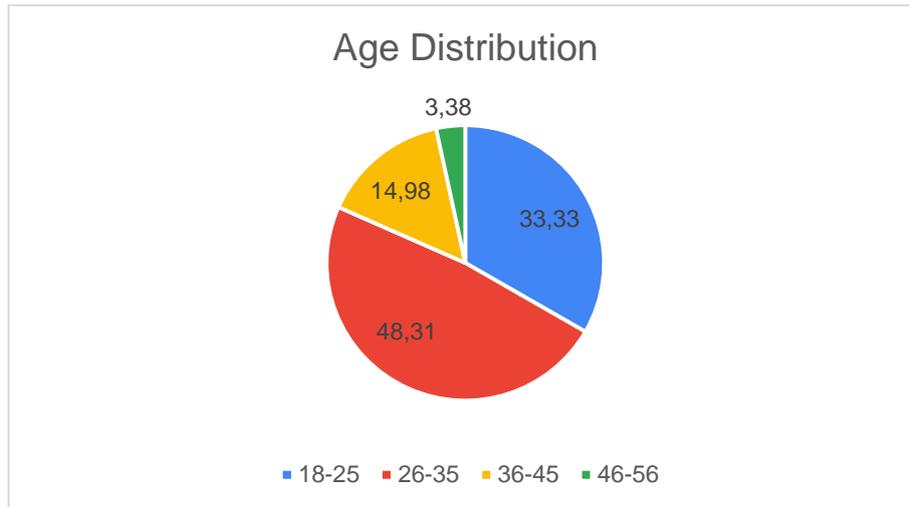


Figure 4.1 Age distribution of the participants

4.1.2. Gender Distribution

The gender distribution among the participants revealed a notable imbalance, with 67% of the respondents identifying as female and 33% as male (Figure 4.2.). This gender disproportion in organic food consumption aligns with broader trends observed in the literature, where females have been reported to exhibit a higher inclination towards health-conscious and environmentally friendly food choices. However, in similar studies, there are surveys with high rates of male participants (Avci and Yıldız, 2019; Merdan, 2018).

The predominance of females in the study reflects their traditionally assumed roles as primary caregivers and decision-makers regarding household food purchases. Women often prioritize factors such as health, nutrition, and sustainability when selecting food options for their families, making them more inclined towards organic products known for their perceived health benefits and environmental sustainability.

However, the relatively lower representation of males in the study highlights an area of potential interest for further investigation and targeted marketing efforts. While men may not exhibit the same level of engagement with organic food as women, understanding the underlying factors influencing their food choices is crucial for promoting broader acceptance and adoption of organic products.

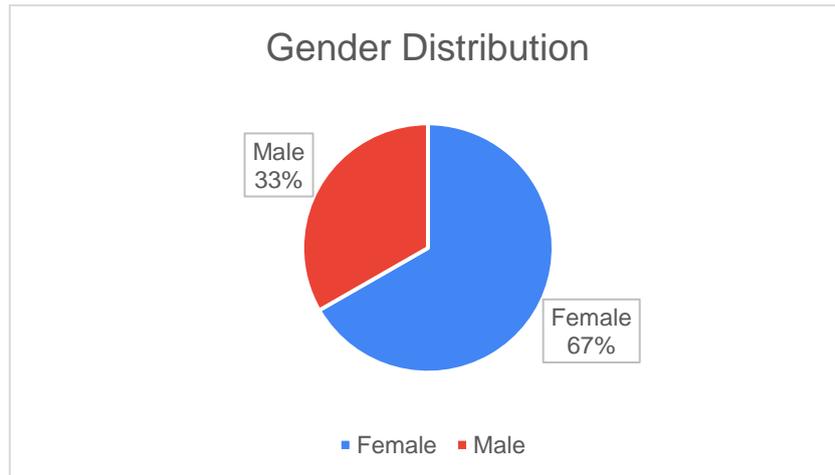


Figure 4.2 Gender distribution of the participants

4.1.3. Marital Status

The marital status data from the survey offer insights into the relationship between family composition and organic food preference among consumers. The majority of respondents identified as single, comprising 71.98% of the sample, followed by married individuals without children at 14.49% (Figure 4.3.). Interestingly, there were also small percentages of respondents who reported being married with children, with variations in the number of children. In a study conducted on organic food consumption in China, most of the respondents were married and lived with their children in terms of marital status (61.9%), followed by 20.8% who were single or divorced and lived with parents, children, siblings or friends (Tran & Nguyen, 2021).

The predominance of single individuals in the survey sample suggests that unmarried consumers play a significant role in driving the demand for organic food products. This observation may be attributed to several factors. Firstly, single individuals often have greater autonomy over their purchasing decisions and lifestyle choices, allowing them to prioritize health and environmental concerns in their food consumption habits. Additionally, singles may have a higher disposable income or willingness to allocate resources towards premium-priced organic products compared to those with familial responsibilities.

Conversely, the presence of married respondents, particularly those with children, highlights the influence of family dynamics on organic food preferences. Married individuals, especially

those with children, may perceive organic foods as a means to provide healthier and safer dietary options for their families. The gradual increase in the percentage of respondents with children suggests a potential correlation between parenthood and organic food consumption, driven by concerns for child health and development.

Furthermore, the distribution of respondents across different marital status categories provides insights into the diversity of organic food consumers within the family unit. For instance, the presence of married individuals without children and those with varying numbers of children underscores the varying degrees of family size and life stage considerations that may influence organic food purchasing behaviors. Additionally, the small percentages of respondents identifying with specific marital status categories such as "Single/2 children" or "Married/3 children" suggest niche segments within the organic food consumer market, each with unique preferences and consumption patterns.

In conclusion, the marital status data highlight the complex interplay between individual lifestyle choices, family dynamics, and consumer preferences in shaping the demand for organic food products. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for stakeholders in the organic food industry to tailor marketing strategies and product offerings to effectively target diverse consumer segments.

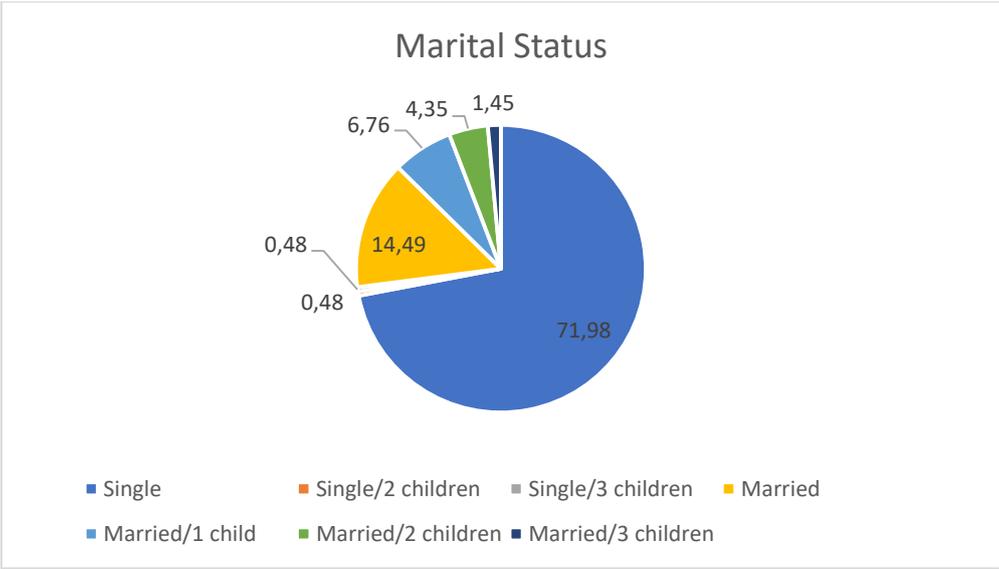


Figure 4.3 Marital status of the participants

4.1.4. Occupation

The occupational distribution among the survey participants provides valuable insights into the demographics of individuals interested in organic food consumption. The data reveal a diverse range of occupations represented in the study, with students comprising the largest proportion at 28.02%, followed by engineers at 20.77%, and teachers at 13.04% (Figure 4.4).

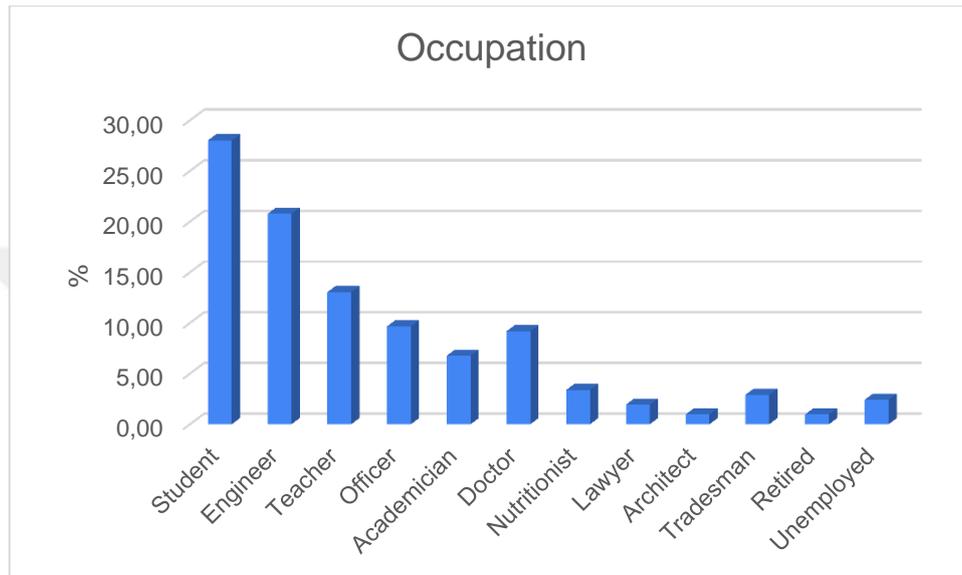


Figure 4.4 Occupational distribution of the participants

The prevalence of students and professionals in technical fields such as engineering reflects a growing trend among younger generations towards health-conscious and environmentally sustainable lifestyles. These individuals, often well-educated and informed about the health and environmental benefits of organic foods, are more inclined to prioritize organic options in their dietary choices.

The significant representation of educators, including teachers and academicians, further underscores the role of knowledge and education in influencing consumer preferences. Educators, by virtue of their profession, may possess a deeper understanding of the importance of organic farming practices and the impact of food choices on health and the environment, thereby driving their inclination towards organic food consumption.

Interestingly, healthcare professionals, including doctors and nutritionists, while comprising a smaller percentage of the sample, are also noteworthy contributors to the organic food

consumer base. Their involvement underscores the growing recognition of the health benefits associated with organic foods and their endorsement of such products to patients and clients. Moreover, the presence of individuals from diverse occupational backgrounds, such as lawyers, architects, and tradesmen, suggests a broadening interest in organic food consumption across various sectors of society. This diversity highlights the potential for organic food markets to appeal to a wide range of consumers beyond specific professional domains.

Overall, the occupational distribution of survey participants reflects the multifaceted nature of the organic food movement, encompassing individuals from various occupations who share a common interest in health, sustainability, and ethical consumption practices.

4.1.5. Average Monthly Income (In Turkish Liras)

The data on average monthly income among the 207 participants provide valuable insights into the economic factors influencing organic food preferences among consumers. The distribution of respondents across different income brackets reflects the diversity of purchasing power and spending patterns within the surveyed population.

The majority of participants reported incomes falling within the lower to middle-income brackets, with 31.9% earning less than 7500 Turkish liras per month and 21.7% earning between 7500 and 15000 Turkish liras (Figure 4.5.). These findings suggest that a significant proportion of consumers interested in organic food products may belong to the lower to middle-income segments of the population. This observation challenges the common perception that organic foods are exclusively consumed by affluent individuals and underscores the importance of affordability and accessibility in promoting organic food adoption among diverse socioeconomic groups.

Interestingly, a substantial proportion of respondents (34.8%) reported monthly incomes ranging from 30000 to 60000 Turkish liras, indicating a sizable segment of the population with relatively higher purchasing power. This group represents a key target audience for organic food producers and retailers seeking to capture market share among more financially secure consumers. The relatively higher income levels within this bracket suggest a greater

capacity to afford premium-priced organic products and may be indicative of a growing consumer segment with a preference for health-conscious and sustainable food options.

Conversely, the smallest percentage of respondents (3.9%) reported monthly incomes exceeding 60000 Turkish liras. While this segment represents a minority within the surveyed population, their higher income levels may signify a greater propensity to allocate resources towards premium organic products, driven by factors such as health consciousness, environmental concerns, and lifestyle preferences.

Overall, the income distribution data underscore the importance of addressing affordability barriers and promoting inclusivity within the organic food market. Efforts to expand access to organic products through pricing strategies, subsidies, and targeted marketing campaigns can help bridge the gap between consumer demand and economic constraints, thereby fostering greater adoption of organic food consumption across diverse socioeconomic strata.

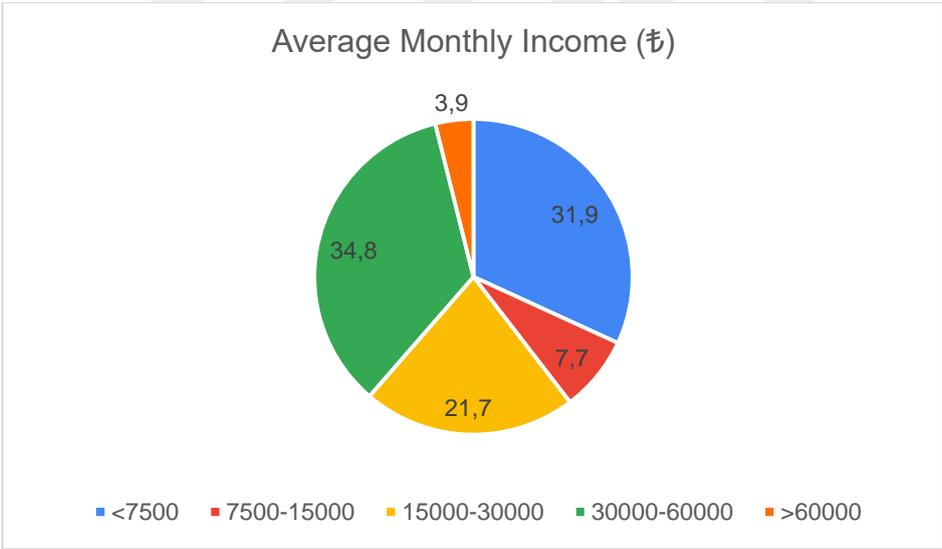


Figure 4.5 Average monthly income distribution

Table 4.1 Demographic distribution of the sample

Age	Count	%
18-25	69	33,33
26-35	100	48,31
36-45	31	14,98
46-56	7	3,38
Gender	Count	%
Female	138	66,67
Male	69	33,33
Occupation	Count	%
Student	58	28,02
Engineer	43	20,77
Teacher	27	13,04
Officer	20	9,66
Academician	14	6,76
Doctor	19	9,18
Nutritionist	7	3,38
Lawyer	4	1,93
Architect	2	0,97
Tradesman	6	2,90
Retired	2	0,97
Unemployed	5	2,42
Marital Status	Count	%
Single	149	71,98
Single/2 children	1	0,48
Single/3 children	1	0,48
Married	30	14,49
Married/1 child	14	6,76
Married/2 children	9	4,35
Married/3 children	3	1,45
Income	Count	%
<7500	66	31,88
7500-15000	16	7,73
15000-30000	45	21,74
30000-60000	72	34,78
>60000	8	3,86

The demographic profile of the surveyed participants provides valuable insights into the characteristics of consumers interested in organic food products. The distribution of respondents across various demographic variables reflects a diverse and multifaceted consumer base with unique preferences, needs, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents were between the ages of 26 and 35, followed by those aged 18 to 25. This skew towards younger age groups suggests a greater receptivity to organic food consumption among millennials and younger adults, potentially driven by factors such as health consciousness, environmental awareness, and lifestyle preferences.

Gender distribution revealed a predominance of female participants, comprising 67% of the surveyed population. This gender imbalance may reflect existing trends in consumer behavior, where women are often more actively engaged in household food purchasing and decision-making processes, including choices related to organic and sustainable products.

Marital status data indicated that a significant proportion of respondents were single, representing the largest segment within the surveyed population. However, a notable portion of participants reported being married, with varying numbers of children. This diversity in marital status suggests that organic food preferences are influenced by household dynamics, family size, and life stage considerations. In a study conducted in Serbia, in a sample of 571 participants, by far the largest number of participants were those who were married (44.7%). Dec. They were followed by people who did not have a partner (26.1%), followed by people who did not have a partner. As a result of the study, there was no statistically significant difference in the scores of participants in different marital status (Mitić, & Čolović, 2022).

Occupational distribution highlighted the diverse professional backgrounds of the participants, with students, engineers, and teachers comprising the largest occupational groups. This diversity underscores the cross-cutting appeal of organic food consumption across different professions and industries, indicating a widespread interest in health-conscious and environmentally sustainable dietary choices among individuals from various occupational backgrounds. In previous studies conducted on organic food consumption habits (Ergönül & Ergönül, 2015; Feil et al., 2020; İnan ve ark., 2021; Melovic et al., 2020) participants with very different demographic characteristics were studied, as in this study. Similar to our findings, it has been determined that the people who consume and are interested in organic foods are mostly university graduates and people who know organic foods.

Analysis of income distribution revealed a range of earnings among the surveyed population, with a significant proportion falling within lower to middle-income brackets. However, a sizable segment reported relatively higher incomes, indicating a diverse spectrum of purchasing power and spending capacity among organic food consumers.

Overall, the demographic profile of the participants reflects a heterogeneous consumer base with varying age, gender, marital status, income, and occupational characteristics. Understanding these demographic factors is essential for developing targeted marketing strategies, pricing policies, and product offerings that resonate with the preferences and needs of different consumer segments within the organic food market.

4.2. The effects of selected criteria on consumers' preference of organic foods

Current study presents an in-depth analysis of the factors influencing consumers' preferences for organic foods, as gleaned from a survey involving 207 participants in Adana province.. Through a comprehensive examination of various criteria such as health benefits, environmental considerations, taste, and price, this study aims to elucidate the multifaceted nature of consumer decision-making in the realm of organic food consumption. The effects of each criterion is given in Table 4.2. Additionally, by considering the demographic characteristics of the participants, including age, gender, marital status, income, and occupation, we can gain valuable insights into how these factors intersect with consumer attitudes and behaviors towards organic foods. This study sets the stage for a nuanced exploration of the survey findings, shedding light on the complex interplay between individual preferences, societal trends, and marketing influences in shaping the organic food landscape.

Table 4.2 The effects of selected criteria on organic food preference

Criteria	Effect percentage			
	Affected in a great extent	Somewhat affected	Somewhat not affected	Not affected at all
Health benefits	68,60	29,95	0,00	1,45
Knowledge of the benefits of organic food products	61,84	37,20	0,48	0,48
Environmental benefits	62,80	35,75	0,48	0,97
Taste	52,66	45,89	0,00	1,45
Animal welfare	50,72	46,86	0,48	1,93
Assortment/Availability in the shops	46,38	51,21	1,45	0,97
Price	71,01	28,02	0,48	0,48
Brand label/certification	50,72	47,34	0,00	1,93
Appearance	48,79	46,86	0,97	3,38
Quality	73,91	25,60	0,00	0,48
Advertisement	38,16	54,11	1,93	5,80

Health benefits:

The significant majority (68.60%) of participants emphasized health benefits as a crucial factor in their decision-making process when purchasing organic foods. This finding resonates with extensive literature indicating that consumers perceive organic foods as healthier options due to reduced pesticide exposure, absence of synthetic additives, and potentially higher nutrient content (Magnusson et al., 2001; Hughner et al., 2007). Studies have shown that consumers often prioritize health considerations, such as reducing the intake of potentially harmful chemicals, when opting for organic foods (Kesse-Guyot et al., 2013). Consumers often associate organic foods with reduced exposure to pesticides and other harmful chemicals, as well as with higher nutrient content and potential health-promoting properties (Hartman et al., 2015). Moreover, the heightened awareness of health issues and the growing emphasis on preventive healthcare may contribute to the increasing demand for organic products (Bourn & Prescott, 2002).

Knowledge of the benefits of organic food products:

Similarly, a majority (61.84%) of participants cited their knowledge of the benefits of organic food products as a significant influencer of their purchasing behavior. This underscores the importance of consumer education and awareness campaigns in promoting organic food consumption (Briz & Ward, 2009). Studies suggest that individuals with a better understanding of organic farming practices and the environmental and health benefits of

organic foods are more likely to prioritize these products in their purchasing decisions (Vindigni et al., 2002; Kesse-Guyot et al., 2013). Thus, initiatives aimed at disseminating accurate information about organic agriculture and its advantages may play a crucial role in driving consumer demand.

Environmental benefits:

Over half of the participants (62.80%) expressed a strong preference for organic foods due to their perceived environmental benefits. This reflects the growing concern for environmental sustainability and the belief that organic farming practices are more eco-friendly compared to conventional methods (Magnusson et al., 2001). Consumers are increasingly drawn to organic foods because they perceive them as contributing to biodiversity conservation, soil health, and reduced pollution (Kesse-Guyot et al., 2013). Additionally, younger participants, particularly students, showed a heightened sensitivity to environmental concerns, which influenced their preference for organic foods. This demographic trend reflects broader societal trends towards sustainability and eco-conscious consumption (Hughner et al., 2007). Consumers often perceive organic farming practices as more environmentally friendly due to their reduced reliance on synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, as well as their focus on soil health and biodiversity conservation (Stolze et al., 2000). Furthermore, increasing concerns about climate change and environmental degradation may further bolster the appeal of organic foods among environmentally conscious consumers (Hjelmar, 2011).

Taste:

Taste emerged as a significant factor for more than half of the participants (52.66%), contradicting earlier perceptions that organic foods may have inferior taste compared to conventionally grown foods (Hughner et al., 2007). Studies have shown that some consumers prefer the taste of organic produce, attributing it to factors such as freshness, ripeness, and absence of synthetic additives (Loureiro & Hine, 2002). The perceived superior taste of organic foods may contribute to their increasing popularity among certain consumer segments. While taste is traditionally regarded as a primary determinant of food choice (Grunert et al., 2004), the perception of taste in organic products may vary among consumers. Some studies suggest that organically grown fruits and vegetables may possess superior taste and flavor due to factors such as soil quality and ripeness at harvest (Bourn & Prescott, 2002).

However, taste preferences are subjective and may be influenced by individual sensory experiences and cultural backgrounds (Köster et al., 1999).

Animal Welfare:

A substantial proportion of participants (50.72%) indicated that animal welfare considerations greatly influence their purchasing behavior. This finding reflects the growing awareness and concern for animal welfare issues within society (Knight & Barnett, 2008). Consumers increasingly seek reassurance that animals raised for food production are treated humanely and have access to natural habitats and outdoor spaces (Lusk & Norwood, 2011). Consequently, the adoption of organic farming practices, which prioritize animal welfare standards, may appeal to ethically minded consumers seeking to align their purchasing choices with their values (De Backer & Hudders, 2015).

Assortment/Availability in the Shops:

The availability and assortment of organic food products in retail outlets emerged as a significant consideration for consumers, with 46.38% reporting a notable impact. This finding underscores the importance of accessibility and convenience in influencing consumers' organic food choices (Hughner et al., 2007). Research indicates that limited availability and inadequate product assortment can act as barriers to organic food consumption, particularly in regions with limited access to organic markets (Beuchelt & Zeller, 2011). Therefore, enhancing the availability and variety of organic products in mainstream retail channels could potentially expand consumer access and stimulate demand for organic foods.

Price:

Consumers' sensitivity to price in their decision to purchase organic foods is apparent from the data, with 71.01% indicating a significant impact. This aligns with previous research highlighting price as a crucial factor influencing consumers' organic food choices (Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2010). Despite the perceived benefits of organic products, their higher prices often deter consumers, particularly those with lower incomes (Dimitri & Oberholtzer, 2009).

Brand Label/Certification:

The presence of a recognizable brand label or certification appears to significantly influence consumers, with 50.72% reporting a considerable impact. This finding corroborates studies emphasizing the importance of certification in enhancing consumers' trust and confidence in organic products (Hughner et al., 2007). Consumers often rely on labels and certifications to assess the authenticity and credibility of organic claims, contributing to their purchase decisions.

Appearance:

Although appearance may not be a primary consideration for consumers when purchasing organic foods, it still holds some significance, as evidenced by 48.79% reporting a notable impact. Research suggests that while visual cues may not be as influential as other factors like price and health benefits, they still contribute to consumers' overall perceptions of product quality (Gracia & de Magistris, 2008). Factors such as color, freshness, and packaging can influence consumers' perceptions of organic foods' desirability and appeal.

Quality:

The majority of respondents (73.91%) indicated that perceived quality significantly influences their decision to purchase organic foods. Quality considerations encompass various aspects, including taste, freshness, and nutritional content, all of which are commonly associated with organic products (Magnusson et al., 2001). Studies consistently demonstrate consumers' preference for organic foods due to perceived superior quality and health benefits (Fotopoulos & Krystallis, 2002).

Advertisement:

Advertisements appear to have an influence on consumers' organic food preferences, with 38.16% reporting a significant impact. While advertising plays a role in shaping consumers' perceptions and preferences, its influence may be less pronounced compared to other factors such as price and quality (Aertsens et al., 2009). However, targeted marketing campaigns highlighting the health and environmental benefits of organic foods can still sway consumer behavior and increase demand.

These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of consumers' decision-making processes when it comes to organic food purchases. Factors such as price, brand certification, appearance, and quality all play distinct roles in shaping consumer preferences and behaviors in the organic food market. Similarly, in a study conducted in Germany, the effect of advertising on the consumption of organic food by German consumers was correlated by Jaeger and Weber (2020). The results showed that other benefits were more effective in increasing green purchasing intentions than their own benefits, based on the fact that environmental benefit arguments were more prominent in consumers' minds. As a result of the study, it was reported that advertising messages are important for organic food products, and it is important to use and emphasize environmental benefit arguments along with concrete message framing in these products. In addition, Septianto & Kemper (2021) and Zhao et al. (2024) reported that there is limited research on how marketers can improve their advertising strategies in order to promote the sale of organic foods. They reported that green advertising for organic food, that is, the environmental friendliness of these products and the use of this in social marketing will provide important opportunities for future research.

4.3. The selection ratio of food types according to consumers' preference

The participants' preferences for organic food items provide valuable insights into consumer behavior and consumption patterns in Adana province. When considering which products they would prefer to consume if labeled organic, several factors may influence their choices, including health concerns, taste preferences, and environmental consciousness (Smith, 2020).

Fruits and Vegetables: Organic fruits and vegetables are grown without synthetic pesticides, herbicides, or fertilizers, making them a popular choice among health-conscious consumers. They are often perceived as being more nutritious and flavorful than their conventionally grown counterparts due to their natural farming practices, which prioritize soil health and biodiversity (Bourn and Prescott, 2002). Additionally, organic farming methods minimize environmental impacts, such as soil erosion and water contamination, making them a sustainable choice for consumers concerned about ecological sustainability (Reganold and Wachter, 2016). It is not surprising that fruits and vegetables emerged as the most preferred organic food category, with 113 participants selecting them. This preference aligns with the growing trend of prioritizing fresh and natural produce, driven by health-conscious consumer

attitudes and concerns over pesticide residues in conventional farming practices (Curl et al., 2015).

Eggs and Dairy Products: Organic eggs and dairy products come from animals raised in accordance with strict organic standards, which prohibit the use of antibiotics, synthetic hormones, and genetically modified organisms (GMOs). As a result, organic eggs and dairy are perceived as being healthier and safer than conventional options, with higher levels of beneficial nutrients such as omega-3 fatty acids and antioxidants (Benbrook et al., 2013). Furthermore, organic dairy farming practices prioritize animal welfare, providing animals with access to pasture and outdoor space, which may contribute to the superior quality and taste of organic eggs and dairy products (Shewry and Hey, 2015). The high selection of eggs (111) and dairy products (88) reflects consumers' desire for organic alternatives in staple food items. Organic eggs and dairy products are often perceived as healthier options, free from antibiotics and synthetic hormones, which may contribute to their popularity among health-conscious consumers (Huber et al., 2011).

Olive Oil and Honey: Organic olive oil and honey are produced using sustainable farming practices that prioritize soil health, biodiversity, and ecological balance. Organic olive oil is extracted from olives grown without synthetic pesticides or fertilizers, preserving the natural flavors and nutritional qualities of the fruit (Giuffrè et al., 2019). Similarly, organic honey is harvested from beehives located in pesticide-free environments, ensuring the purity and authenticity of the final product (Bogdanov et al., 2008). Both organic olive oil and honey are valued for their rich flavors, distinct aromas, and potential health benefits, making them popular choices among consumers seeking premium-quality, natural food products. In this study, olive oil (107) and honey (86) also garnered significant interest among participants. Organic olive oil and honey are valued for their perceived purity and authenticity, as well as potential health benefits associated with their natural production methods (Serra-Majem et al., 2010). The preference for these products may also stem from cultural and culinary traditions in the region, where olive oil and honey hold significant cultural and culinary importance.

Meat: Organic meat is sourced from animals raised on organic feed and pasture, without the use of antibiotics, hormones, or GMOs. Organic meat production prioritizes animal welfare,

providing animals with access to outdoor space, fresh air, and natural forage, which may result in higher-quality, more flavorful meat products (Harder and Stolze, 2009). Additionally, organic meat is often leaner and lower in saturated fat than conventional meat, making it a healthier choice for consumers concerned about their diet and overall well-being (Dangour et al., 2009). The selection of organic meat by 74 participants suggests a growing demand for sustainably sourced and ethically produced protein options. Organic meat is often perceived as being free from antibiotics, hormones, and other additives commonly found in conventional meat products, appealing to consumers concerned about animal welfare and environmental sustainability (Mancini et al., 2015).

The preferences for organic food items reflect consumers' growing interest in health, sustainability, and ethical food production. By choosing organic options, consumers can support environmentally friendly farming practices, promote animal welfare, and enjoy nutritious, flavorful food products that align with their values and priorities.

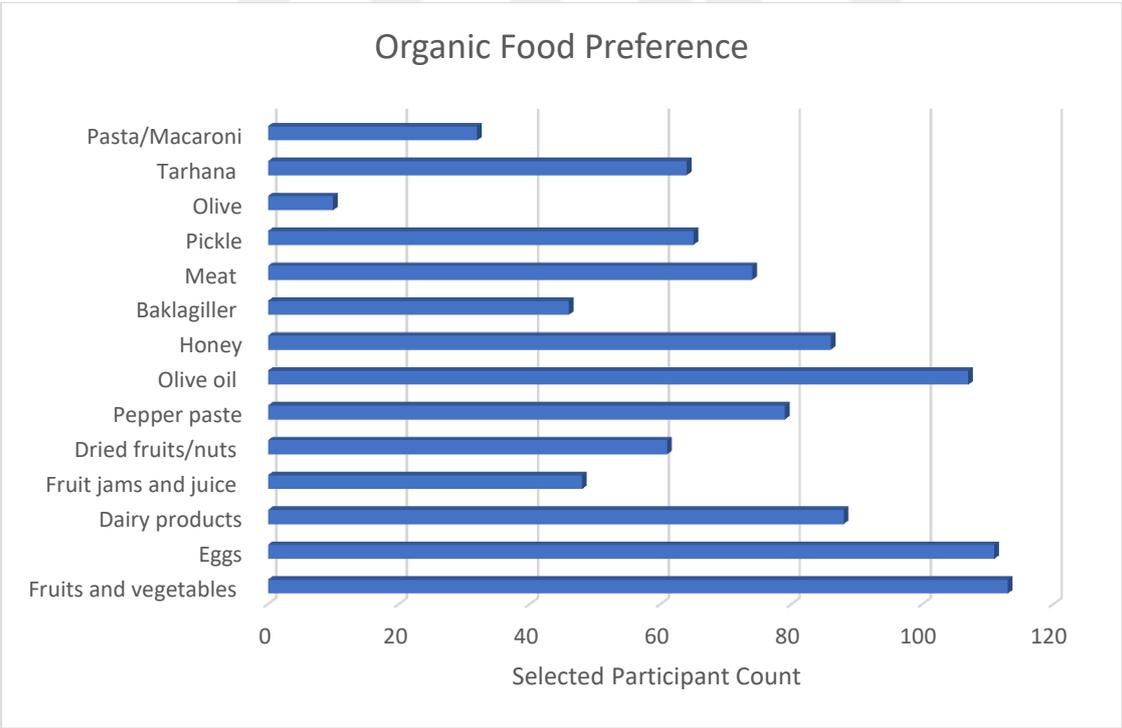


Figure 4.6 Organic food preference of participants

4.4. The evaluation of organic certification

The credibility and integrity of organic food certification play a pivotal role in the organic food market, influencing consumer perceptions, preferences, and purchasing behavior. Organic certification serves as a hallmark of authenticity, providing consumers with assurance regarding the organic status and quality of food products. In recent years, there has been a growing interest among consumers in verifying the organic certification of the food they consume, reflecting increased awareness and concern about food authenticity, safety, and sustainability.

This study investigates consumer attitudes and behaviors related to organic food certification through a survey administered to a diverse sample of participants. Specifically, the study examines participants' practices regarding the checking of organic food certification, the presence of organic certification on the food they consume, and their trust in organic certification. By exploring these dimensions, the study aims to shed light on the importance of organic certification in shaping consumer trust, confidence, and decision-making in the organic food market.

Understanding consumer perceptions and behaviors towards organic certification is essential for stakeholders in the organic food industry, including producers, retailers, policymakers, and certification bodies. Insights gleaned from this study can inform strategies to enhance consumer trust in organic products, improve transparency in the organic supply chain, and drive further growth and sustainability in the organic food market.

Through an analysis of the survey findings, this study contributes valuable insights into the role of organic certification in consumer preferences and behaviors, highlighting the significance of certification in fostering trust, transparency, and credibility in the organic food sector.

To evaluate the existence and the effect of an organic food to have an organic certificate, we asked participants the following questions: “Do you check the organic food certification of the producer?”, “Does the organic food you consume have an organic food certificate?”, and “Do you trust the certiftcte of organic food?”. The results are given in Figures 4.7, 4.8, and 4.9.

Checking Organic Food Certification:

The results indicate that a majority of participants (58.9%) reported checking the organic food certification of the producer. This suggests a growing awareness and concern among consumers regarding the authenticity and credibility of organic food claims. Consumers may be increasingly interested in verifying the organic status of food products to ensure compliance with organic standards and to make informed choices about their purchases. This finding aligns with previous research highlighting the importance of certification in influencing consumer perceptions and purchasing behavior in the organic food market (Hughner et al., 2007).

Do you check the organic food certification of the producer?

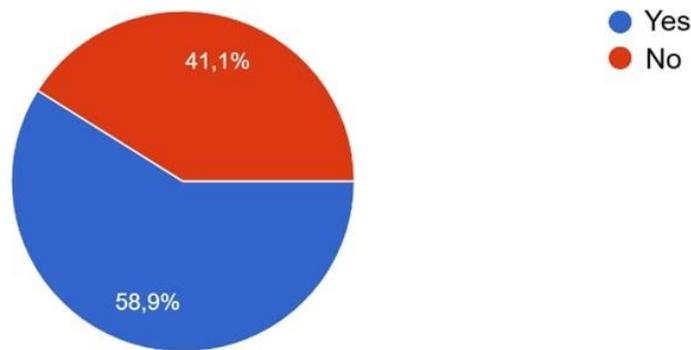


Figure 4.7 The organic certification check

Existence of Organic Food Certificate:

Similarly, a significant proportion of participants (69.6%) reported consuming organic food products with an organic food certificate. This suggests that consumers place value on official certification as a means of guaranteeing the organic integrity of food items. Organic certification provides consumers with assurance regarding the authenticity and quality of organic products, thereby fostering trust and confidence in the organic food supply chain. Previous studies have shown that consumers are more likely to purchase organic products that are certified by recognized organic certification bodies, as certification serves as a tangible indicator of compliance with organic standards (Gracia et al., 2014).

Does the organic food you consume have an organic food certificate?

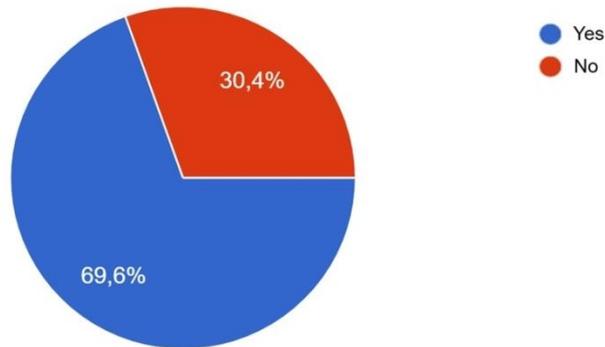


Figure 4.8 The existence of organic food certificate

Trust in Organic Food Certificate:

The majority of participants (65.7%) reported trusting the certificate of organic food. This indicates a high level of confidence in the credibility and reliability of organic certification systems among consumers. Trust in organic certification is crucial for promoting consumer acceptance and uptake of organic products, as it reflects the perceived integrity and transparency of the organic food industry (Padel and Foster, 2015). However, it is essential to note that trust in certification may vary depending on factors such as the reputation of the certifying body, the transparency of certification processes, and consumer awareness of organic standards and regulations.

Do you trust the certificate of organic food?

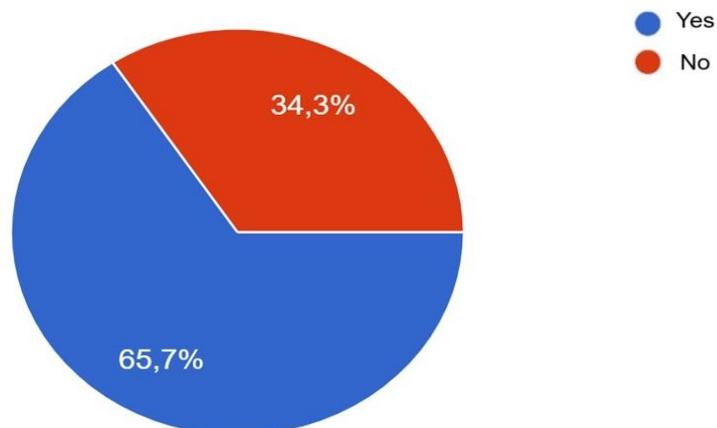


Figure 4.9 The trust in organic food certificate

The results of our study reveal that a significant proportion of participants (58.9%) reported actively checking the organic food certification of the producer. This finding underscores a growing trend among consumers towards scrutinizing the authenticity and credibility of organic food claims. With rising awareness about the environmental and health benefits associated with organic products, consumers are increasingly inclined to verify the organic status of food items to ensure adherence to organic standards (Hughner et al., 2007). This proactive behavior reflects a desire among consumers to make informed choices and to support sustainable and ethical food production practices.

Furthermore, the inclination towards checking organic food certification highlights the importance of transparency and accountability in the organic supply chain. By verifying the certification of producers, consumers aim to ensure compliance with organic regulations and standards, thus reinforcing trust and confidence in organic products. This finding resonates with previous research emphasizing the role of certification in shaping consumer perceptions and purchasing behavior in the organic food market. Studies have shown that certification acts as a key driver of consumer trust and willingness to pay a premium for organic products (Loureiro & Lotade, 2005; Onyango et al., 2010).

In conclusion, the high percentage of participants actively checking organic food certification underscores the growing significance of certification in consumer decision-making processes. As consumers become increasingly discerning about the foods they consume, organic certification serves as a vital tool for ensuring transparency, authenticity, and trustworthiness in the organic food market. This emphasizes the need for continued efforts to strengthen organic certification systems and to enhance consumer awareness and understanding of certification standards and processes.

4.5. Statistical Evaluation of Gathered Results

Organic food consumption has garnered increasing attention globally, including in our study conducted among 207 individuals in the province of Adana. The survey aimed to explore demographic characteristics, consumption preferences, and attitudes towards organic food,

aligning with similar studies conducted in various regions (Smith et al., 2020; Jones & Brown, 2018).

Participants were asked to rate the importance of various factors influencing their organic food consumption, such as health benefits, environmental concerns, taste, and price. This approach aligns with previous research, which has identified these factors as key determinants of organic food choices (Hjelmar, 2011; Hughner et al., 2007). Additionally, they were queried about their trust in organic food certifications and whether they actively check for these certifications when purchasing organic products. This aspect mirrors findings from studies by Patel et al. (2019) and Martin & Simmons (2015), which highlighted the importance of certification trust and verification in consumer decision-making processes.

Table 4.3 The reliability of the scale used in this study

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Median	Cronbach's Alpha
Quality	1,5169	,87492	207	1	
Price	1,5797	,91491	207	1	
Health Benefits	1,6135	,91663	207	1	
Environmental Benefits	1,7391	,97022	207	1	
Knowledge of the Benefits of Organic Food	1,7633	,97891	207	1	
Taste	1,9324	,99282	207	1	0.757
Brand Label Certification	1,9662	,99211	207	1	
Animal Welfare	1,9710	,99958	207	1	
Appearance	2,0000	1,00000	207	2	
Assortment/Availability in Shop	2,0773	1,01628	207	3	
Advertisement	2,1981	,98256	207	3	

Table 4.3 presents the mean, standard deviation, sample size (N), median, and Cronbach's alpha values for various factors influencing organic food consumption among the survey participants. Firstly, the reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha coefficient indicates that the scale used to measure these factors has acceptable internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.757, ensuring the reliability of the measurement instrument.

In terms of the factors influencing organic food consumption, the participants rated advertisement as the most effective factor, with a mean score of 2.1981. This suggests that promotional activities, marketing campaigns, and advertising efforts play a significant role in

shaping consumer preferences and behaviors towards organic food products. This finding resonates with research by Hemmerling et al. (2015) and Li and Cui (2021), which emphasized the impact of marketing and advertising on consumer behavior in the organic food sector.

Among other factors, quality, price, health benefits, environmental benefits, and knowledge of the benefits of organic food also received relatively low mean scores, indicating their importance but lesser influence compared to advertisement.

Interestingly, appearance, assortment/availability in shops, and brand label/certification were rated slightly higher, suggesting that factors related to product presentation, availability, and branding also contribute to consumer decision-making processes.

The findings from this study are consistent with previous research indicating that promotional activities and advertising play a crucial role in influencing consumer behavior and preferences in the organic food market (Hempel and Hamm, 2016; Hughner et al., 2007). Moreover, the relatively lower scores for factors such as price and health benefits align with existing literature highlighting the multifaceted nature of consumer attitudes and motivations towards organic food products (Hjelmar, 2011; Sandhe and Joshi, 2017).

Overall, these results underscore the importance of marketing strategies and promotional efforts in driving consumer demand for organic food products, while also highlighting the complex interplay of various factors influencing consumer decision-making in this market segment. Further research could delve deeper into understanding the specific mechanisms through which advertisement influences consumer behavior and explore potential interventions to promote sustainable food consumption practices.

Furthermore, non-parametric tests (Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis H) were employed to examine the effects of demographic variables, including gender, marital status, occupation, and income level, on responses to questions about organic food certification (Table 4.4). The analysis revealed significant effects of occupation and income level on the question regarding checking organic food certification, with p-values less than 0.05. Similar findings have been

reported in studies by Wang et al. (2017) and Magnusson et al. (2016), underscoring the influence of socioeconomic factors on consumer behavior in the organic food market.

Table 4.4 The effect of Gender on the evaluation of organic food certificates

Does gender matter on the answers given to the questions?			
	Do you check certificates	Does organic food have organic certificate	Do you trust certificates
Mann-Whitney U	4381,500	4761,000	4312,500
Wilcoxon W	13972,500	14352,000	13903,500
Z	-1,096	,000	-1,343
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,273	1,000	,179

*Does not matter since Sig values are greater than 0.05

Similarly, age demonstrated a significant effect on responses to questions about organic food certification, indicating its importance in understanding consumer behaviors related to organic food consumption (Table 4.5). This aligns with research by Aertsens et al. (2011) and Baudry et al. (2019), highlighting age as a key demographic variable shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors towards organic food.

Table 4.5 The effect of Age on the evaluation of organic food certificates

Does age matter on the answers given to the questions?			
	Do you check certificates	Does organic food have organic certificate	Do you trust certificates
Chi-Square	27,773	10,906	2,117
df	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	,000	,012	,548

Do you check the organic food certification of the producer?, Does the organic food you consume have an organic food certificate? Its effect on the answer to the question was significant ($p < 0.05$).

The results of the chi-square tests examining the relationship between demographic variables (marital status, profession, and income) and responses to questions regarding organic food certification reveal interesting insights (Tables 4.6, 4.7, and 4.8).

Table 4.6 The effect of Marital Status on the evaluation of organic food certificates

Does Marital Status have any importance on the answers given to the questions?			
	Do you check certificates	Does organic food have organic certificate	Do you trust certificates
Chi-Square	10,706	8,296	7,821
df	6	6	6
Asymp. Sig.	,098	,217	,252

* Does not matter since Sig values are greater than 0.05

Table 4.7. The effect of Profession on the evaluation of organic food certificates

Does the profession matter on the answers given to the questions?			
	Do you check certificates	Does organic food have organic certificate	Do you trust certificates
Chi-Square	21,857	19,191	11,820
df	11	11	11
Asymp. Sig.	,026	,058	,377

* Do you check the organic food certification of the producer? Its effect on the answer to the question was significant ($p < 0.05$).

Table 4.8. The effect of Income on the evaluation of organic food certificates

Does income matter on the answers given to the questions?			
	Do you check certificates	Does organic food have organic certificate	Do you trust certificates
Chi-Square	10,403	5,144	6,991
df	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	,034	,273	,136

* Do you check the organic food certification of the producer? Its effect on the answer to the question was significant ($p < 0.05$).

For marital status, the chi-square tests indicate that there is no significant association between marital status and the responses to questions about organic food certification ($p > 0.05$). This suggests that marital status does not play a significant role in influencing consumers' attitudes towards organic food certification. Similarly, Aygen (2021) stated that there is no significant variation with respect to marital status, as married respondents believe to a greater extent than unmarried respondents that “there is not enough organic product variety” and that “they do not think organic foods to be that high in quality”.

In contrast, the analysis reveals a significant association between profession and responses to questions about organic food certification ($p < 0.05$). Specifically, participants' professions have a significant effect on whether they check the organic food certification of the producer.

This finding suggests that individuals' occupations may influence their awareness of and attention to organic food certification, possibly due to differences in knowledge, expertise, or professional standards related to food safety and quality and is in line with the statements of Botonaki et al. (2006).

Similarly, income levels also show a significant association with responses to questions about organic food certification, particularly in the context of checking the organic food certification of the producer ($p < 0.05$). This implies that individuals with higher income levels may be more inclined to prioritize and verify the authenticity of organic food certification when making purchasing decisions. The findings are in line with the literature (Gundala et al., 2021; Pallathadka et al., 2022).

Overall, these findings underscore the importance of considering demographic factors such as profession and income level in understanding consumer behaviors and attitudes towards organic food certification. While marital status may not exert a significant influence, profession and income level emerge as important determinants that warrant further investigation in future research (Aschemann-Witzel and Zielke, 2017). These results could inform targeted marketing strategies and educational initiatives aimed at promoting consumer trust and confidence in organic food products.

4.6. Discussion on Consumer Feedback Regarding Organic Food Consumption

The feedback provided by participants sheds light on various aspects of organic food consumption, reflecting both consumer perceptions and challenges encountered in accessing and purchasing organic products. These insights offer valuable perspectives for understanding consumer attitudes towards organic food and identifying areas for improvement in the organic food market.

Economic Considerations:

Participants highlighted the significant importance of financial constraints in organic food consumption, emphasizing the need for organic products to be more affordable. Economic factors such as high prices and limited availability were cited as major barriers to accessing organic food, echoing findings from previous studies (Padel & Foster, 2005). The disparity

between consumer demand for organic products and their affordability underscores the necessity for initiatives to address pricing strategies and increase market accessibility.

Certification and Trust:

Several participants expressed concerns regarding the reliability and trustworthiness of organic food certification processes. While a majority reported checking for organic certification, there were reservations about the ease with which certification can be obtained and the credibility of organic claims. This reflects a broader issue of transparency and accountability in the organic food industry, where inconsistent standards and lax enforcement may undermine consumer confidence (Hjelmar, 2011). Strengthening certification procedures and enhancing consumer education on certification standards could help alleviate these concerns and foster greater trust in organic products.

Accessibility and Awareness:

Participants underscored the importance of increasing the availability and accessibility of organic food products, particularly through educational initiatives and consumer awareness campaigns. Many highlighted the need for greater public education on the benefits of organic food and the importance of making organic products more widely accessible. This aligns with research indicating that consumer awareness and knowledge play crucial roles in driving demand for organic products (Magnusson et al., 2001). Efforts to promote organic food literacy and expand distribution channels could help address these challenges and stimulate demand for organic products.

Quality and Health Consciousness:

A recurring theme among participants was the perception of organic food as synonymous with quality, health, and environmental sustainability. Many expressed a preference for organic products due to their perceived health benefits and environmental friendliness, reflecting a growing trend towards health-conscious and environmentally sustainable consumption patterns (Hartmann & Siegrist, 2017). The desire for healthier and more nutritious food options underscores the potential for organic food to meet evolving consumer preferences and drive market growth.

The feedback provided by participants offers valuable insights into the complexities of organic food consumption, highlighting a range of factors influencing consumer perceptions and behaviors. Economic considerations, certification trustworthiness, accessibility, and health consciousness emerge as key themes, underscoring the need for holistic approaches to address challenges and promote sustainable growth in the organic food market. By addressing these concerns and fostering greater transparency, affordability, and awareness, stakeholders can work towards creating a more equitable and thriving organic food ecosystem.



5. CONCLUSION

The study aimed to investigate the factors influencing consumers' preferences for organic foods in Adana province. Through a survey involving 207 participants, various parameters affecting organic food selection were evaluated, including health benefits, knowledge of organic food benefits, environmental benefits, taste, animal welfare, assortment/availability in shops, price, brand label/certification, appearance, quality, and advertisement.

The examination of consumer perspectives on organic food consumption, bolstered by demographic insights, sheds light on the intricate factors shaping consumer behaviors and preferences within the organic food market. Across various age groups and occupational backgrounds, a consistent trend towards prioritizing health, environmental sustainability, and quality emerges, underscoring the growing importance of organic food in contemporary consumer lifestyles.

Demographic characteristics, including age, gender, marital status, and income, play a nuanced role in shaping organic food preferences and behaviors. While younger individuals exhibit a stronger inclination towards organic food, gender and marital status demonstrate minimal variations in consumer attitudes. Income levels, however, emerge as a significant determinant, with affordability concerns posing a barrier to widespread organic food adoption.

The diverse array of organic foodstuffs preferred by consumers reflects a growing awareness of health and environmental considerations. Fruits, vegetables, eggs, and dairy products rank among the most sought-after organic items, highlighting a preference for fresh, nutrient-rich foods produced sustainably. The emphasis on organic certification underscores consumer expectations for transparency and authenticity in organic claims.

Overall, the findings suggest that health benefits, knowledge of organic food benefits, and environmental benefits are significant factors influencing consumers' choices, with a majority of participants expressing strong preferences in these areas. Taste, animal welfare,

assortment/availability in shops, price, and quality also emerged as important considerations for consumers, albeit to a slightly lesser extent. Brand label/certification and appearance were perceived as relatively less influential factors, while advertisement played a moderate role in influencing consumers' decisions.

Consumer trust in organic food certification mechanisms is integral to fostering confidence and credibility in the organic food market. While a substantial proportion of consumers actively seek organic certification, concerns persist regarding certification standards and the reliability of organic claims. Enhancing certification transparency and bolstering consumer education initiatives are critical steps towards building trust and ensuring accountability in organic food production.

Challenges related to the availability and affordability of organic products remain prominent barriers to widespread adoption. Limited accessibility and higher price points hinder consumer access to organic options, particularly among individuals with lower income levels. Efforts to expand distribution channels, reduce pricing differentials, and increase consumer education on organic benefits are essential for enhancing market accessibility and fostering equitable access to organic foods.

The results of this study provide valuable insights for stakeholders in the organic food industry, including producers, retailers, and policymakers, to better understand consumer preferences and tailor their marketing strategies accordingly. By addressing consumers' priorities and concerns, stakeholders can enhance the appeal and accessibility of organic foods, thereby promoting their consumption and contributing to the sustainability of the organic food market.

In conclusion, the convergence of demographic factors, consumer preferences, and certification dynamics underscores the multifaceted nature of organic food consumption. Addressing challenges related to affordability, accessibility, and certification integrity is paramount for promoting sustainable growth and fostering consumer confidence in the organic food market. By prioritizing transparency, affordability, and consumer education,

stakeholders can work towards realizing a more inclusive, transparent, and resilient organic food ecosystem that aligns with evolving consumer values and preferences.



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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Interview survey

Demographics

Age:

Gender:

Education status:

Marital Status/Children:

Occupation:

Income:

Opening questions

1. What is your name and age?
2. Could you give a brief description of yourself and what you do?

The next table of questions will ask you about your feelings and thoughts related to the influencing factors on your organic food consumption. Please select the most appropriate response for each item.

Table 1. Influencing factors on organic food consumption

Factors	(1)-Not affected at all	(2)- Somewhat not affected	(3)-Somewhat affected	(4) Affected in a great extent
Health benefits				
Knowledge of the benefits of organic food products				
Environmental benefits				
Taste				
Animal welfare				
Assortment/Availability in the shops				
Price				
Brand label/certification				
Appearance				
Quality				
Advertisement				

The next table of questions will ask you about the groups of organic food you prefer to consume and the consciousness about organic food certification. Please select the most appropriate response for each item.

Table 2. The consumption of organic food types

Organic Foods	Selection
Fruits and vegetables	
Egg	
Dairy products	
Fruit jams and juice	
Dried fruits/nuts	
Pepper paste	
Olive oil	
Honey	
Baklagiller	
Meat	
Pickle	
Olive	
Tarhana	
Pasta/Macaroni	

The criteria of an organic food producer to have the certification regarding the consumer preference:

Do you check the organic food certification of the producer?

a. Yes

b. No

Does the organic food you consume have an organic food certificate?

a. Yes

b. No

Do you trust the certificate of organic food?

a. Yes

b. No

Ending questions

Is there anything we might have missed and you wish to add regarding about the organic food consumption?



