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“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

Consumer Preferences Regarding Quality Rice in Thailand

LARA BEISIEGEL, NINA LANGEN

University of Bonn, Dept. of Agricultural and Food Market Research, Germany

Abstract

Rice is the primary staple crop for more than half of the world's population. Thus, quantity has long been the main focus of research in order to alleviate poverty and malnutrition. But with increasing prosperity across Asia, rising incomes and urbanisation levels a diversification of the diet composition and of consumption habits can be observed. In particular rice consumption is reported to begin to decrease among affluent consumers due to a westernisation of their diets. For Southeast Asia this holds especially true for Thailand. The transition towards western habits includes the shopping behaviour in terms of quality awareness as well as market channels. A shift away from wet markets to supermarkets can be observed. The growing share of supermarkets has a high sensitivity for high income consumer demands and is able to translate those desires into standardised requirements which have to be met by the downward supply chain. This creates challenges but also opportunities for a market orientation throughout the value chain which can be met if the preferences of the respective consumer segments are understood. Hence, knowing and meeting the preferences of the growing middle and upper class in terms of quality becomes a crucial factor in ensuring long term economic viability in the production and domestic marketing of the country's main agricultural commodity.

Against this background the paper describes a consumer study investigating Thai consumers preferences for rice. The current decisive attributes when selecting rice for at-home consumption among the urbanised population of Thailand are investigated. Trends like convenience, sustainability, safety and health concerns are taken into consideration to assess the extent to which these quality criteria influence consumers' purchase decision. The question which rice quality attributes play a major/minor role is answered by means of a survey based on “Best Worst Scaling”.

Keywords: Consumer research, food choice trends, rice quality, urbanisation