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“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

Finnish Citizens' Concerns about Global Food Security and Agri-Environmental Issues

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Abstract

The global population growth and economic growth of large developing nations increase the global demand for food. Since the global arable land and water resources are limited, it is crucial that agricultural production is sustainable and takes environment into account. The climate change will also affect greatly on farming conditions worldwide. Sufficiency of food is a challenge especially in developing countries. Their food production is often insufficient and unstable or serves developed countries. Different countries have different concerns, but citizens are important indicators of the state of food security. Therefore it is important to examine citizens' views related to sustainability and food security not only in developing countries but also in developed ones.

Based on quantitative survey data set (n=1,623), this research examines Finnish citizens concerns about various dimensions of global food security and agri-environmental issues. The research data was collected via nationwide mail survey in 2007 by the National Consumer Research Center of Finland. To determine the citizens' concern about different policy dimensions, a four-point Likert scale from no cause for concern (1) to extremely worrying (4) was used.

Principal component analysis exposed two components of concern. The components may be called food security and agri-environmental dimension and risk dimension. These components explain 59,4% of the total variance. A cluster analysis of the respondents, based on the two components, produced four clusters: risk-concerned, generally concerned, concerned about food security and biodiversity and not concerned respondents. The clusters differed by their demographic, economic, attitudinal and consumption profiles. It seems that citizen's concerns focus on specific aspects of sustainability and various social groups have specific profiles in their concerns.

Keywords: Agriculture, citizens, food security, public concern, sustainability