

Are consumers sacrificing healthy food when times are tough?

Consumers are now actively considering the environment alongside their individual health when buying food, according to Tetra Pak's Index 2023. These environmentally conscious consumers labelled 'Climatarians' are willing to alter their eating habits to protect the planet.



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The market for healthy foods is already well established, as consumers actively seek products that will have a positive impact on their physical wellbeing. But a significant majority now take a more holistic view: 70% say that healthy products should not harm the environment, while another 54% are willing to take responsibility for the planet and change their diet to contribute to a better world.

This dual focus is reflected in the rising number of consumers consciously reducing the amount of meat they eat, known as "flexitarians", with nearly half of all consumers saying they are reducing meat intake or excluding meat altogether.

The Tetra Pak Index, based on a survey conducted in ten countries around the world by global market research firm IPSOS, found that this trend towards meat reduction is a global phenomenon. 56% of respondents cite health reasons for adopting a flexitarian, pescatarian, vegetarian or vegan diet, but over a third (36%) specifically cite the environment as their primary motivator.

The research also reveals that convenience is no longer king. In a marked shift in long-prevailing attitudes, 70% would sacrifice convenience for healthier products. The drive for health is also unaffected by the cost-of-living crisis, with only 17% willing to sacrifice food and drinks with health benefits in the current economic climate.

A rising trend

The climatarian trend is expected to grow, as the effects of climate change are felt more widely; with consumers expecting food manufacturers to deliver products that are both healthy and sustainable.

Adolfo Orive, president and CEO at Tetra Pak, comments: “The findings of this year’s Index are reflective of the direction we have taken in the last few years, to decarbonise the food industry and make food systems more resilient and sustainable. In many parts of the world, people rely on products such as milk and juices for their daily nutrition, so it is critical to optimise their value chain with innovations in sourcing, packaging, processing and distribution, which is where we have been playing an active role together with our customers and suppliers.

In addition, considering that the world will need 60% more food by 2050, we are complementing these efforts through technologies that can help explore new sources of nutrition - ranging from new plant-based sources to alternative proteins produced with biomass and precision fermentation. Both these areas are critical to contribute towards food system sustainability.”

The potential of new food

Breakthrough new food innovations can play a strong supporting role in delivering products that are not only tasty, but also resource efficient. The good news is that consumers are ready to embrace innovations that improve how we live and eat, with 62% believing that technology has a role to play in a more sustainable future. At the same time, some consumers are concerned that such innovations may not be as natural as fresh, unprocessed food - so finding the right balance will be key.

“This area is developing quite rapidly, and it is difficult to predict when and to what extent it will succeed; but it is only through continued efforts and leveraging collaboration to explore every potential opportunity, that we will find solutions to the current food system challenges” says Adolfo.

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