

Wave 5: Chapter 4 Food shopping and labelling

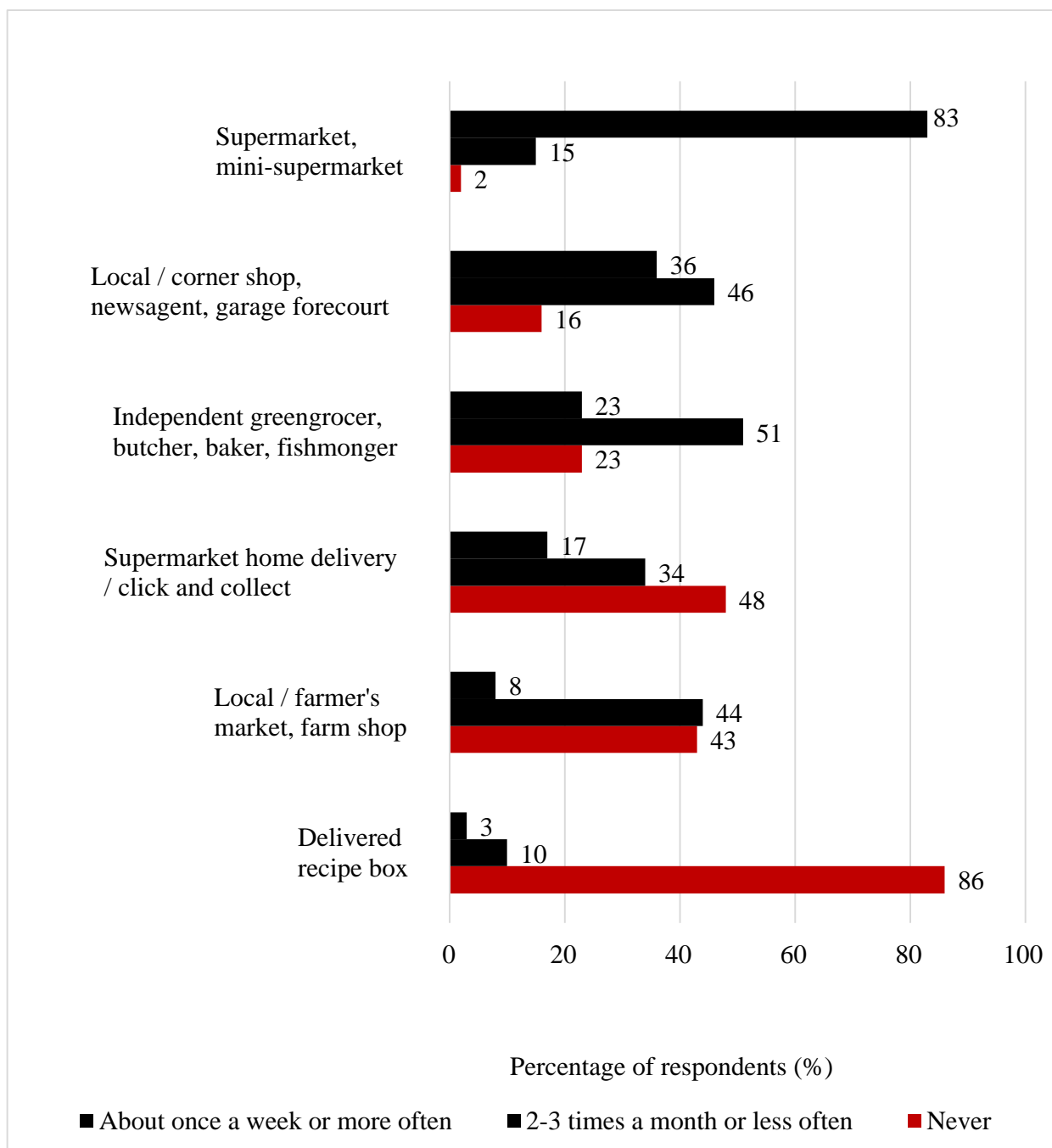
The remit of food labelling is held by multiple bodies, that differ between [England, Wales and Northern Ireland](#).

The FSA is responsible for aspects of food labelling which relate to food safety and allergens in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. In addition, the FSA in Wales is responsible for food labelling related to food composition standards and country of origin. The FSA in Northern Ireland is responsible for food labelling related to food composition standards, country of origin and nutrition [\(footnote 1\)](#).

[The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs \(Defra\)](#) plays a major role in food production and is responsible for aspects of food labelling such as composition and provenance.

This chapter provides an overview of food purchasing, what respondents look for when they are shopping and confidence in allergen labelling. Defra co-funded questions in this chapter which relate to food provenance, sustainability, and animal welfare.

Figure 9. Where respondents buy food from

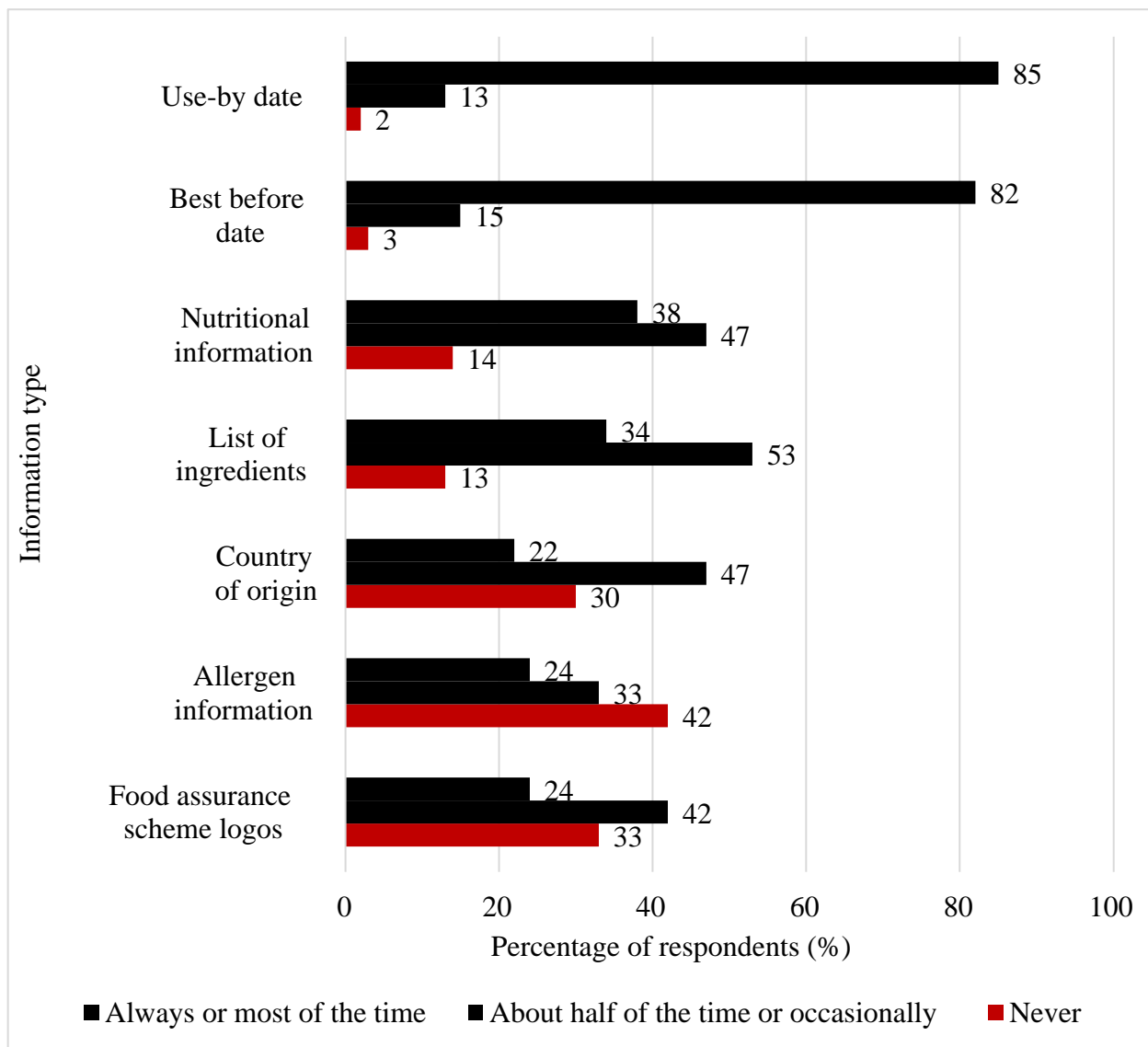


Source: Food and You 2: Wave 5

Respondents were asked to indicate where and how frequently they buy food. Most respondents reported that they bought food from a supermarket or mini supermarket about once a week or more often (83%). Around half (51%) of respondents reported that they bought food from independent shops (greengrocers, butchers, bakers, fishmongers) and 44% bought food from a local / corner shop or newsagents 2-3 times a month or less often (Figure 9) [\(footnote 2\)](#).

What do respondents report that they look for when buying foods?

Figure 10. What information respondents look for when buying food



Source: Food and You 2: Wave 5

Respondents were asked to indicate what information they check when buying food. Most respondents reported that they often (i.e. always or most of the time) check the use-by (85%) or best before (82%) date when they bought food. Respondents reported that they check the list of ingredients (53%), nutritional information (47%), country of origin (47%) and food assurance scheme logos (42%) on an occasional basis (i.e. about half the time or occasionally). Allergen information was least often checked by respondents, (Figure 10) (footnote 3). However, respondents who have a food allergy (72%) or an intolerance (46%) were more likely to often (for example, always or most of the time) check allergen information when food shopping compared to those without a food hypersensitivity (19%).

Respondents were asked what they consider to be most important from a list of options when choosing which food to buy. The most common attribute that respondents mentioned was price or value for money (57%), followed by quality (40%) and freshness (33%). Around 1 in 5 respondents mentioned use-by dates and/or how long it will keep for (24%), healthiness (22%) and taste (21%) (footnote 4).

When asked what information is used to judge the quality of food from a list of options, respondents reported that they most commonly used freshness (54%), taste (46%), and appearance (45%) to judge food quality. Fewer respondents reported that they used the ingredients (28%), price (27%), brand (24%), animal welfare (16%) and country of origin (10%) to judge food quality. Assurance schemes (9%), environmental impact (7%) and convenience (3%)

were reported to be least used by respondents when judging food quality ([footnote 5](#)).

Respondents were asked their views on animal welfare, food provenance and the environmental impact of food. Most respondents reported that, it was important to buy meat, eggs and dairy which are produced with high standards of animal welfare (90%), support British farmers and food producers (87%), and to buy food which has a low environmental impact (84%) ([footnote 6](#)).

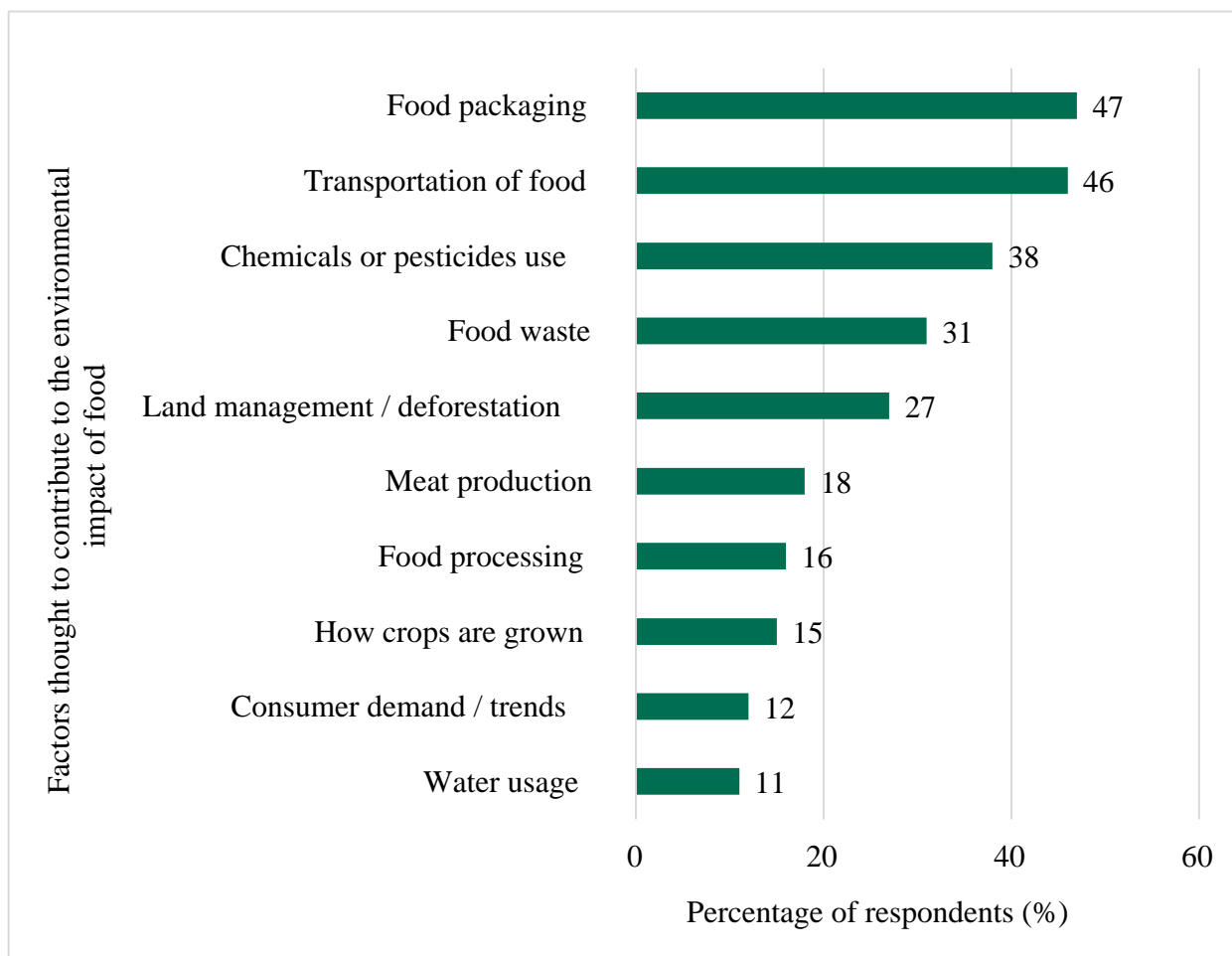
The importance placed on buying food which has a low environmental impact varied between different categories of people in the following ways:

- age group: older respondents were more likely to consider buying food which has a low environmental impact to be important than younger respondents. For example, 90% of those aged 55 years or over considered it important to buy food which has a low environmental impact compared to 73% of those aged 16-25 years
- household size: respondents who lived in smaller households were more likely to consider buying food which has a low environmental impact to be important than those who lived in larger households. For example, 90% of those who lived in 1-person households considered it important to buy food which has a low environmental impact compared to 76% of those who lived in households of 5 or more people.
- NS-SEC: respondents in most occupational groups (for example, 88% of those in managerial, administrative, and professional occupations) were more likely to consider buying food which has a low environmental impact as important compared to full-time students (74%) and those who were long term unemployed and/or never worked (68%).
- region (England): the likelihood that respondents would consider buying food which has a low environmental impact as important varied by region. For example, respondents who lived in the East (90%) and South-East (89%) of England were more likely to consider buying food which has a low environmental impact as important compared to those who lived in the East Midlands (79%) and West Midlands (78%).
- ethnic group: white respondents (86%) were more likely to consider buying food which has a low environmental impact as important than Asian or Asian British respondents (74%)
- responsibility for cooking: respondents who were responsible for cooking (85%) were more likely to consider buying food which has a low environmental impact as important compared to those who do not cook (75%)
- responsibility for shopping: respondents who were responsible for shopping (86%) were more likely to consider buying food which has a low environmental impact as important compared to those who never do food shopping (69%).

Respondents were asked how frequently they check for information about the environmental impact and animal welfare of food when shopping. Almost a third (31%) of respondents reported that they often (for example, always or most of the time) checked for information about the environmental impact when purchasing food and 40% of respondents reported that they often checked for information about animal welfare ([footnote 7](#)).

Respondents were asked to indicate how often, where possible, they buy food which was produced in Britain, has animal welfare information or which had a low environmental impact. Around 6 in 10 respondents often (i.e., always or most of the time) buy food produced in Britain (60%), or buy meat, eggs and dairy which has information on animal welfare (61%), and 41% often buy food which has a low environmental impact ([footnote 8](#)). A third (33%) of respondents thought that meat, eggs, and dairy products show enough information about animal welfare, and 21% thought that food products show enough information about their environmental impact ([footnote 9](#)).

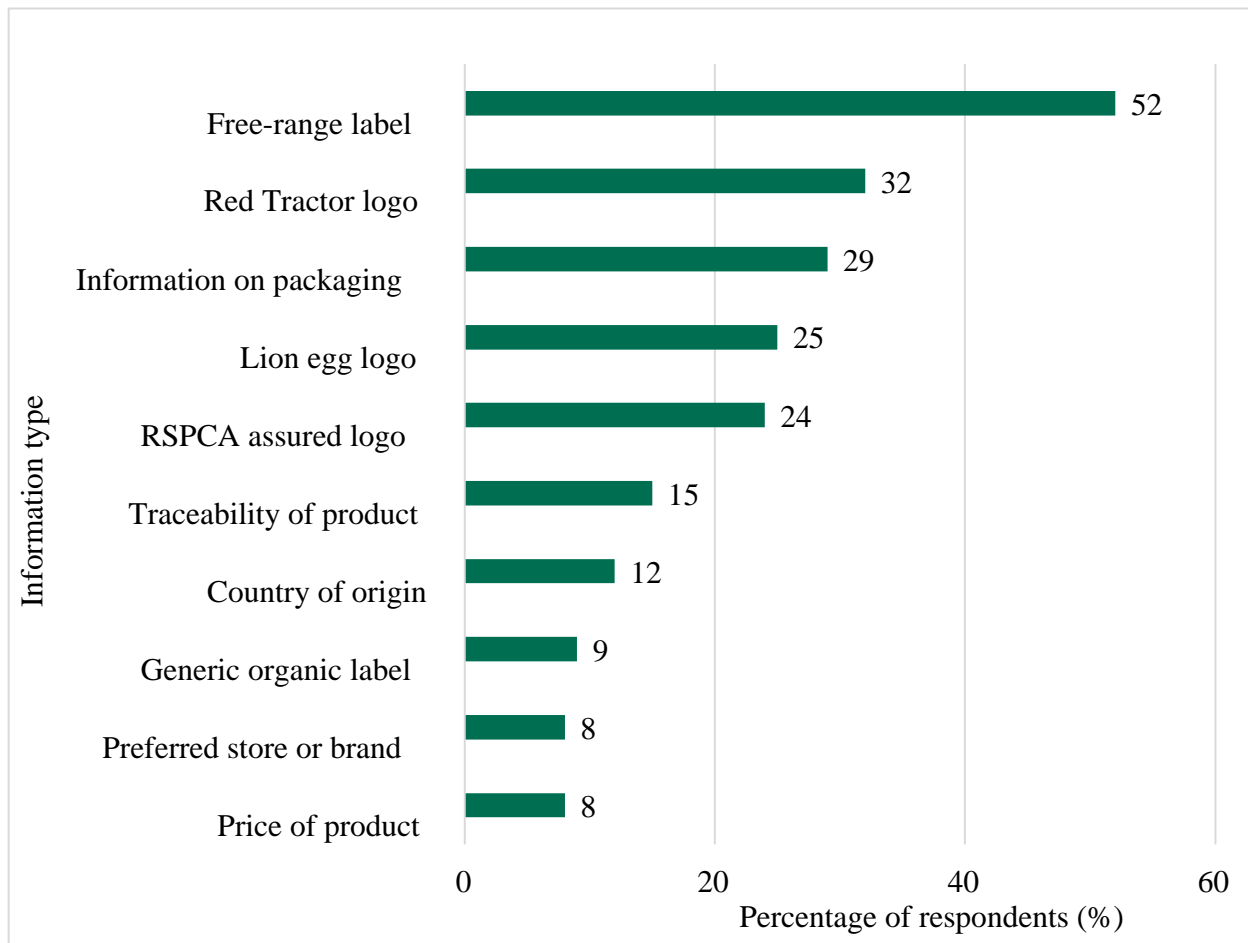
Figure 11. Factors thought to contribute most to the environmental impact of food



Source: Food and You 2: Wave 5

Respondents were asked, from a list of options, what they think contributes most to the environmental impact of food. The factors thought to contribute most to the environmental impact of food were food packaging (47%) and the transportation of food (46%). The use of chemicals and pesticides (38%), food waste (31%), land management and/or deforestation (27%), and meat production (18%), were also considered as contributors to the environmental impact of food (Figure 11) [\(footnote 10\)](#).

Figure 12. What would indicate high animal welfare standards of meat, eggs, and dairy products to respondents



Source: Food and You 2: Wave 5

When respondents were asked, from a list of options, what would indicate whether a product containing meat, eggs or dairy had been produced with high standards of animal welfare the most common indicator mentioned was a free-range label (52%). Other indicators of animal welfare standards were the Red Tractor logo (32%) and information on packaging (29%) (Figure 12) ([footnote 11](#)).

Confidence in allergen labelling

Respondents who go food shopping and take into consideration a person who has a food allergy or intolerance were asked how confident they were that the information provided on food labelling allows them to identify foods that will cause a bad or unpleasant physical reaction. Overall, 83% of respondents stated that they were confident (for example, very confident or fairly confident) in the information provided ([footnote 12](#)).

Respondents were asked how confident they were in identifying foods that will cause a bad or unpleasant physical reaction when buying foods which are sold loose, such as at a bakery or deli-counter. Respondents who bought food loose were more confident in identifying these foods from supermarkets in-store (67%), from an online supermarket (67%) and when shopping at independent food shops (63%) compared to buying food from food markets or stalls (52%) ([footnote 13](#)).

1. Nutrition standards and nutrition food labelling is the remit of the Department of Health and Social care in England and the Welsh Government in Wales.
2. Question: How often, if at all, do you...a) shop for food in store at a supermarket (including mini supermarkets like Metro/ Local). b) shop for food at independent greengrocers', butchers', bakers' or fishmongers'. c) shop for food at local/corner shops, newsagents' or garage forecourts. d) get a home delivery from a supermarket. e) shop for food at a local market, farmer's market or farm shop. f) get a recipe box delivered (e.g. Hello fresh, Gousto). Responses: every day, most days, 2-3 times a week, about once a week, 2-3 times a month, about once a month, less than once a month, never, can't remember, I don't do any food shopping. Base= 5160, all online respondents and Version A postal respondents who have at least some responsibility for food shopping for their household.
3. Question: When shopping for food, how often, if at all, do you check...a) use-by dates. b) best before dates. c) list of ingredients. d) allergen information. e) nutritional information. f) country of origin. g) food assurance scheme logos. responses: always, most of the time, about half the time, occasionally, never, don't know. Base= 3771, all online respondents who ever do food shopping.
4. Question: What is most important to you when you are choosing which foods to buy? Responses: price/value for money, quality, freshness, taste, appearance of food, healthiness, use-by date/how long it will keep for, country of origin, ingredients, that it is ethical or eco-friendly, farming methods for example, organic or free-range farming, how it is made or how it is produced, choice/availability/variety, buying what my household/ children want, trust in supplier, safety of product, convenience/how easy it is to cook or prepare, other, don't know. Base= 6770, all respondents.
5. Question: What do you use to judge the quality of food? Responses: taste, appearance, country of origin, convenience, ingredients, animal welfare, freshness, assurance schemes, brand, price, environmental impact, other. Base= 6770, all respondents.
6. Question: How important is it to you...a) to support British [if Northern Ireland: UK and Irish] farmers and food producers. b) to buy meat, eggs and dairy which are produced with high standards of animal welfare. c) to buy food which has a low environmental impact. Responses: very important, somewhat important, not very important, not at all important, don't know. Base= 6770, all respondents.
7. Question: When purchasing food, how often do you do the following...a) check for information on animal welfare. b) check for information on environmental impact. Responses: always, most of the time, about half the time, occasionally, never, don't know. Base=6770, all respondents.
8. Question: How often do you do the following, where possible? A) Buy food produced in Britain [If Northern Ireland: 'the UK and Ireland']? B) Buy meat, eggs and dairy which has information on animal welfare. C) Buy food which has a low environmental impact. Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half the time, Occasionally, Never, Don't know. Base= 6770, all respondents.

9. Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? a) meat, eggs and dairy products show enough information about animal welfare. b) food products show enough information about their environmental impact. Responses: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree, don't know. Base= 6770, all respondents.

10. Question: What do you think contributes to the environmental impact of food? Responses: food packaging, chemicals or pesticides, transportation of food, land management/deforestation, food waste, production of meat, the way in which crops are grown, food processing, consumer demand/trends, water usage, other, don't know. Base= 6770, all respondents.

11. Question: What would indicate to you whether a product containing meat, eggs or dairy had been produced with high standards of animal welfare? Responses: free-range label, information on packaging, country of origin, traceability of product, preferred store or brand, appearance of product, price of product, generic organic label, Red Tractor logo, RSPCA assured logo, Lion egg logo, Soil Association logo, Marine Stewardship (MSC) logo, other certification/logo [open text], other [open text], don't know. Base= 6770, all respondents.

12. Question: How confident are you that the information provided on food labels allows you to identify foods that will cause you, or another member of your household, a bad or unpleasant physical reaction? Responses: very confident, fairly confident, not very confident, not at all confident, it varies from place to place, don't know. Base= 2365, all respondents who consider the dietary requirements of themselves/someone else in the household when shopping.

13. Question: When buying food that is sold loose (e.g. at a bakery or deli counter), how confident are you that you can identify foods that will cause you or another member of your household a bad or unpleasant physical reaction? Consider food sold loose from the following sources...a) supermarkets in store. b) supermarkets online. c) independent food shops. d) food markets/stalls. Responses: very confident, fairly confident, not very confident, not at all confident, it varies from place to place, don't know. Base A=2256, B=1857, C=2166, D=2036, all online respondents, and those who completed the version A postal questionnaire, who consider the dietary requirements of themselves/someone else in the household when shopping, excluding 'I don't buy food from here'/'I don't buy food sold loose'.