

F&Y2 Wave 5-6 NI: Chapter 7: Food shopping and labelling

Introduction

In March 2022, the FSA launched a new [5 year strategy](#) (2022-2027). Building on the previous strategy, the FSA's vision has evolved to include 'food is healthier and more sustainable', to account for the growing priorities of dietary health and sustainability for the Northern Ireland Executive, UK Government, Welsh Government, and for consumers.

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

In Northern Ireland and Wales, the FSA has policy responsibility for non-safety food information (general requirements), e.g. name of the food, ingredients lists etc. and food composition standards. In addition, the FSA in Northern Ireland has policy responsibility for nutrition related labelling and composition standards. In Scotland, FSS has policy responsibility for general food labelling, food composition standards and nutrition related matters. In England, the [Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs](#) (Defra) is responsible for aspects of general food labelling and food composition standards, with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) being responsible for nutrition related labelling and composition standards. FSA, FSS, Defra and DHSC work together under common framework structures which aim to coordinate policy development in their respective areas and minimise divergence between nations.

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 environmental impact and sustainability.

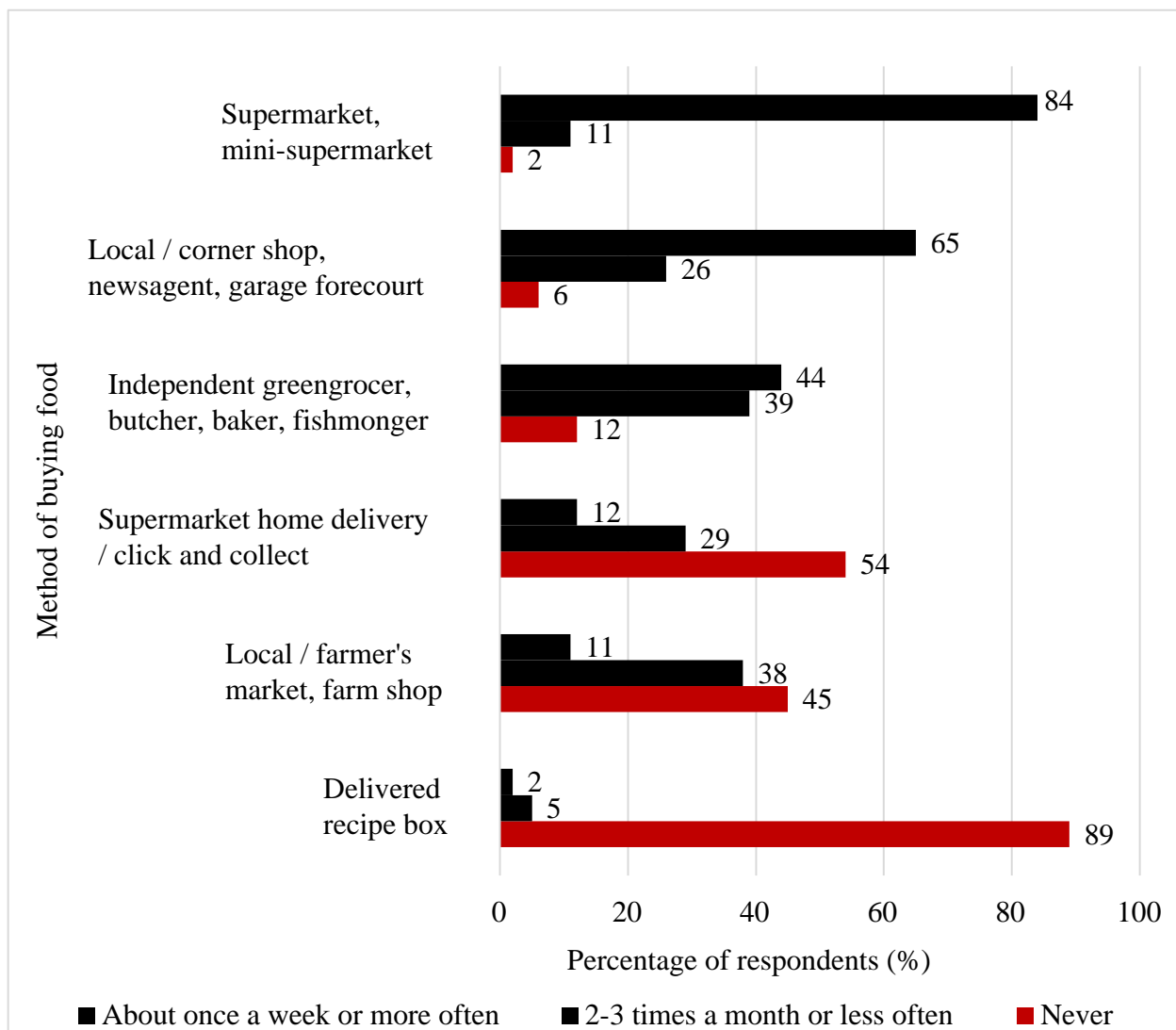
The findings in this chapter are from Wave 5 of the Food and You 2 survey.

Where do respondents buy food?

Figure 19. Where respondents buy food from.

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Change to chart view



Method of buying food	Never	2-3 times a month or less often	About once a week or more often
Delivered recipe box	89	5	2
Local / farmer's market, farm shop	45	38	11
Supermarket home delivery / click and collect	54	29	12
Independent greengrocer, butcher, baker, fishmonger	12	39	44
Local / corner shop, newsagent, garage forecourt	6	26	65

Method of buying food	Never	2-3 times a month or less often	About once a week or more often
Supermarket, mini-supermarket	2	11	84

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[Image .csv](#)

Source: Food and You 2: Wave 5

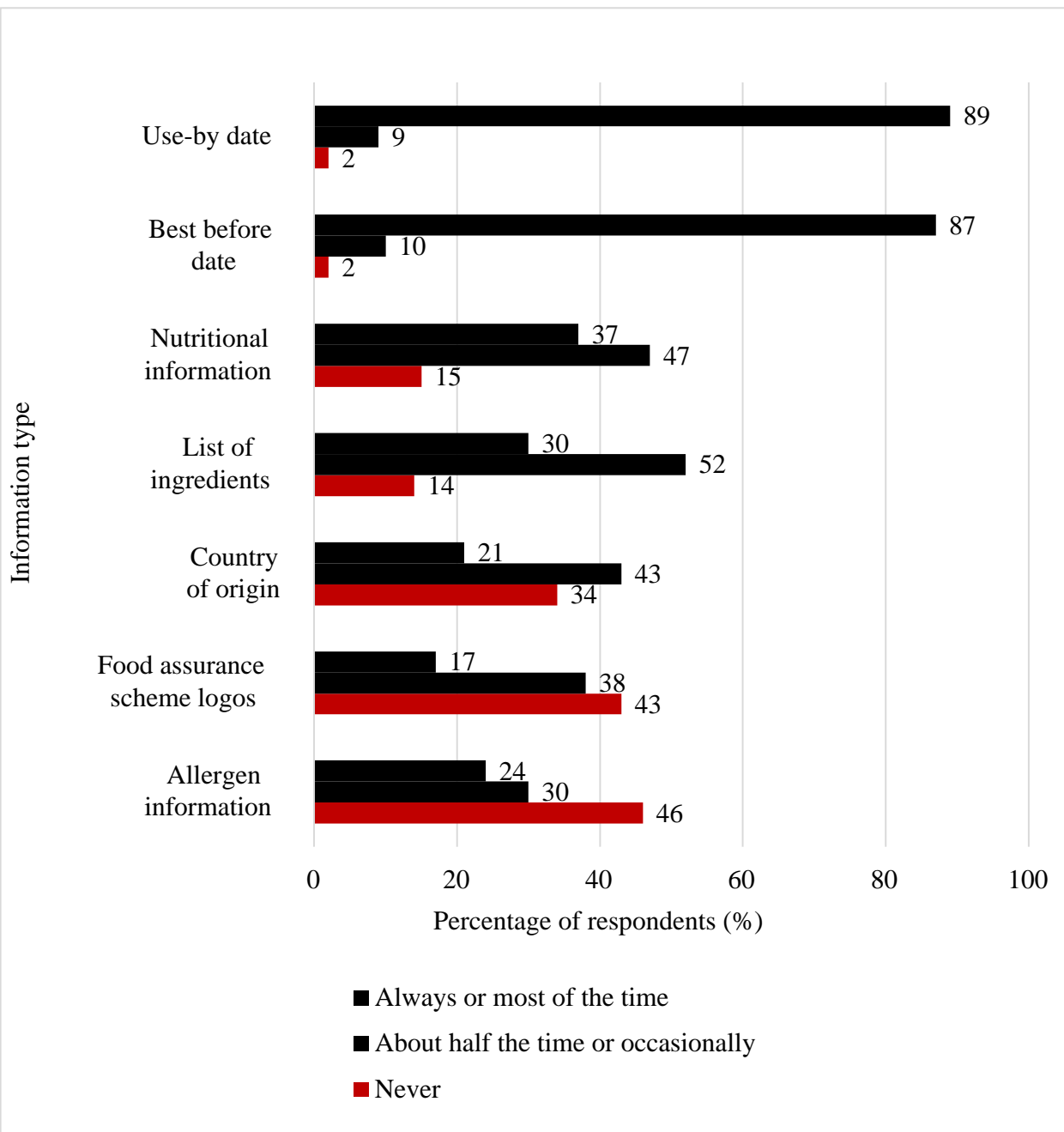
Respondents were asked to indicate where and how frequently they buy food. Most respondents reported that they bought food from a supermarket or mini supermarket (84%), or local / corner shops, newsagents or garage forecourts (65%) about once a week or more often (Figure 19) ([footnote 1](#)).

What do respondents look for when buying food?

Figure 20. Type of information respondents check while shopping.

Change to table and accessible view

Change to chart view



Information type	Always or most of the time	About half the time or occasionally	Never
Allergen information	24	30	46
Food assurance scheme logos	17	38	43
Country of origin	21	43	34
List of ingredients	30	52	14

Information type	Always or most of the time	About half the time or occasionally	Never
Nutritional information	37	47	15
Best before date	87	10	2
Use-by date	89	9	2

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 5

Respondents were asked to indicate what information they check when buying food. Most respondents reported that they check the use-by (89%) or best before (87%) date always or most of the time when they bought food. Respondents reported that they check the list of ingredients (53%), nutritional information (48%), and country of origin (44%) about half the time or occasionally (Figure 20) ([footnote 2](#)).

When asked what information is used to judge the quality of food from a list of options, the information the highest proportion of respondents reported using to judge food quality was freshness (57%), taste (45%), and appearance (45%). Fewer respondents reported that they used the price (30%), ingredients (26%), brand (24%), and country of origin (12%) to judge food quality. Assurance schemes (11%), animal welfare (10%) environmental impact (4%) and convenience (4%) were reported to be used least by respondents when judging food quality ([footnote 3](#)).

The importance of buying foods with a low environmental impact

Respondents were asked how important it was to buy food which has a low environmental impact. 82% of respondents reported that it was important (i.e. very important or somewhat important) to them to buy food which has a low environmental impact. 14% of respondents did not consider it important (i.e. not very important or not at all important) to buy food which has a low environmental impact ([footnote 4](#)).

How often respondents check for information about the environmental impact of food

Respondents were asked how frequently they check for information about the environmental impact of food when purchasing food. Over a quarter (27%) of respondents reported that they checked for information about the environmental impact when purchasing food always or most of the time, 40% did this about half of the time, or occasionally and 26% reported that they never checked for information about the environmental impact when purchasing food ([footnote 5](#)).

How often respondents buy foods with a low environmental impact

Respondents were asked to indicate how often, where possible, they buy food which has a low environmental impact. Over 4 in 10 (44%) respondents buy food which has a low environmental impact always or most of the time, 33% do this about half of the time, or occasionally and 7% of respondents reported that they never buy food which has a low environmental impact. However around 2 in 10 (16%) respondents do not know how often they buy food which has a low environmental impact ([footnote 6](#)).

Attitudes toward information about a products environmental impact and animal welfare

Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agree or disagree that food products show enough information about their environmental impact. Around a fifth (21%) of respondents agreed (i.e. strongly agree or agree) that products show enough information about their environmental impact, however 38% neither agreed or disagreed. 29% of respondents disagreed (i.e. strongly disagree or disagree) that products show enough information about their environmental impact ([footnote 7](#)).

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that meat, eggs and dairy products show enough information about animal welfare. Around a third (35%) of respondents said that their neither agreed not disagreed that meat, eggs, and dairy products show enough information about animal welfare while 32% agreed (strongly agree or agree) ([footnote 8](#)).

1. 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. Base= 1467, all respondents in Northern Ireland. Wave 5.
2. 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= 946, all online respondents who have at least some responsibility for food shopping for their household, in Northern Ireland. Wave 5.
3. 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= 1875, all online respondents, in Northern Ireland. Wave 5.
4. Question: How important is it to you 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= 1875, all respondents in Northern Ireland. Wave 5.
5. Question: When purchasing food, how often do you check for information on environmental impact? Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half the time, Occasionally, Never, Don't know. Base= 1875, all online respondents, and those answering the 'Eating at Home'

postal questionnaire in Northern Ireland. Wave 5.

6. Question: How often do you buy food which has a low environmental impact, where possible? Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half the time, Occasionally, Never, Don't know. Base= 1875, all online respondents, and those answering the `Eating at Home' postal questionnaire, in Northern Ireland. Wave 5.

7. Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree that food products show enough information about their environmental impact? Responses: Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree, Don't know. Base= 1875, all online respondents, and those answering the `Eating at Home' postal questionnaire, in Northern Ireland. Wave 5.

8. Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? Meat, eggs and dairy products show enough information about animal welfare. Responses: Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree, Don't know. Base= 1875, all respondents, in Northern Ireland. Wave 5.