

F&Y2 Wave 7: Chapter 4 Food shopping and labelling

Introduction

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](#)).

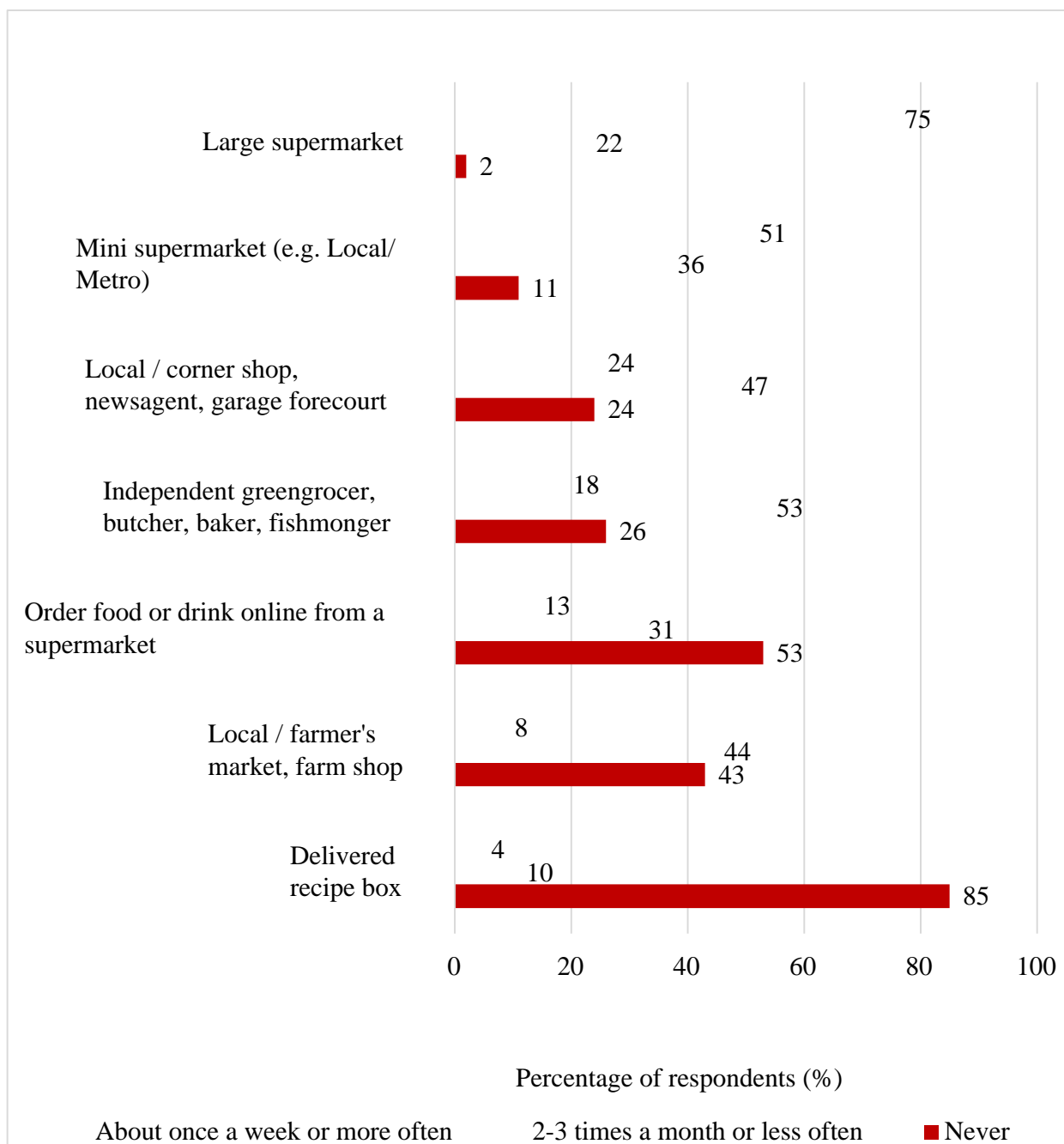
The [Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs](#) (Defra) plays a major role in food production and is responsible for aspects of food labelling such as composition and provenance.

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 14. Where respondents buy food from.

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| Food business | Never | 2-3 times a month or less often | About once a week or more often |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Delivered recipe box | 85 | 10 | 4 |
| Local / farmer's market, farm shop | 43 | 44 | 8 |
| Order food or drink online from a supermarket | 53 | 31 | 13 |

| Food business | Never | 2-3 times a month or less often | About once a week or more often |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Independent greengrocer, butcher, baker, fishmonger | 26 | 53 | 18 |
| Local / corner shop, newsagent, garage forecourt | 24 | 47 | 24 |
| Mini supermarket (e.g. Local/ Metro) | 11 | 36 | 51 |
| Large supermarket | 2 | 22 | 75 |

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 7

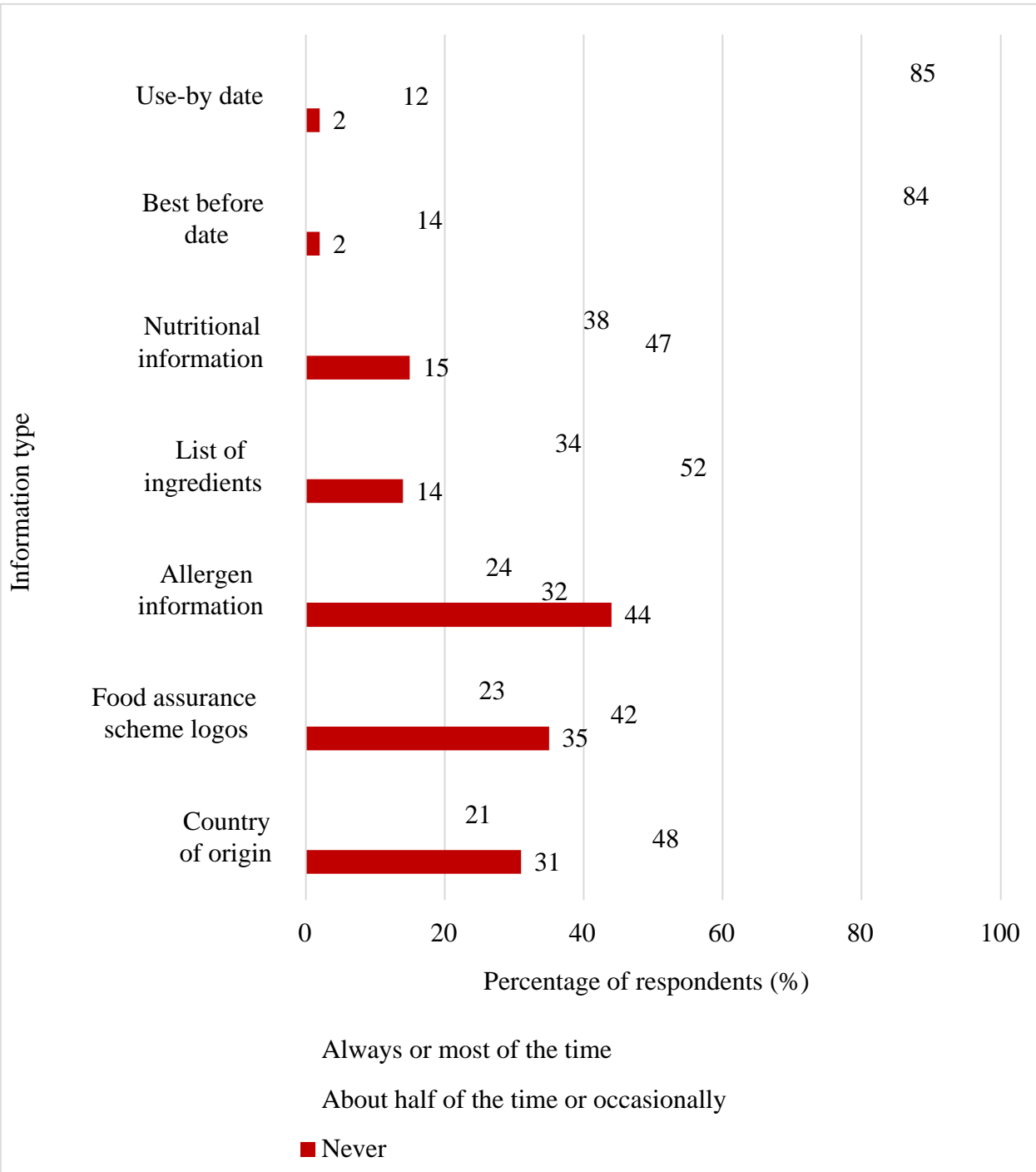
Respondents were asked to indicate where and how frequently they buy food. Most respondents reported that they bought food from a large supermarket (75%) or mini supermarket about once a week or more often (51%). Around half (53%) of respondents reported that they bought food from independent shops (greengrocers, butchers, bakers, fishmongers), 47% of respondents bought food from a local / corner shop, newsagent or garage forecourt, and 44% bought food from a local / farmers' markets or farm shops 2-3 times a month or less often. Around half (53%) of respondents reported that they had never ordered food or drink online from a supermarket. Most respondents (85%) reported that they had never had a recipe box delivered (Figure 14) ([footnote 2](#))

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

Figure 15. What information respondents look for when buying food.

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| Information type | Always or most of the time | About half of the time or occasionally | Never |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------|
| Country of origin | 21 | 48 | 31 |
| Food assurance scheme logos | 23 | 42 | 35 |
| Allergen information | 24 | 32 | 44 |

| Information type | Always or most of the time | About half of the time or occasionally | Never |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------|
| List of ingredients | 34 | 52 | 14 |
| Nutritional information | 38 | 47 | 15 |
| Best before date | 84 | 14 | 2 |
| Use-by date | 85 | 12 | 2 |

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 7

Respondents were asked to indicate what information they check when buying food. Most respondents reported that they 'always' or 'most of the time' check the use-by (85%) or best before (84%) date when they bought food. Respondents reported that they check the list of ingredients (52%), nutritional information (47%), country of origin (48%) and food assurance scheme logos (42%) about 'half the time' or 'occasionally'. Allergen information was least often checked by respondents, (Figure 15) [\(footnote 3\)](#). However, respondents who have a food allergy only (64%)* or an intolerance only (40%) were more likely to check allergen information 'always' or 'most of the time' when food shopping compared to those without a food hypersensitivity (19%).

Respondents were asked what they consider to be most important when choosing which food to buy from a list of options. The most frequently selected attribute was price or value for money (61%), followed by quality (39%), freshness (29%), and use-by dates and/or how long it will keep for (27%). Around 2 in 10 selected taste (23%), and healthiness (22%) [\(footnote 4\)](#).

When asked what information is used to judge the quality of food from a list of options, respondents reported that they most frequently used freshness (55%), taste (48%), and appearance (43%) to judge food quality. Fewer respondents reported that they used the ingredients (29%), price (28%), brand (21%), animal welfare (16%) and country of origin (11%) to judge food quality. Assurance schemes (9%), environmental impact (5%) and convenience (3%) were reported to be used by least respondents when judging food quality [\(footnote 5\)](#).

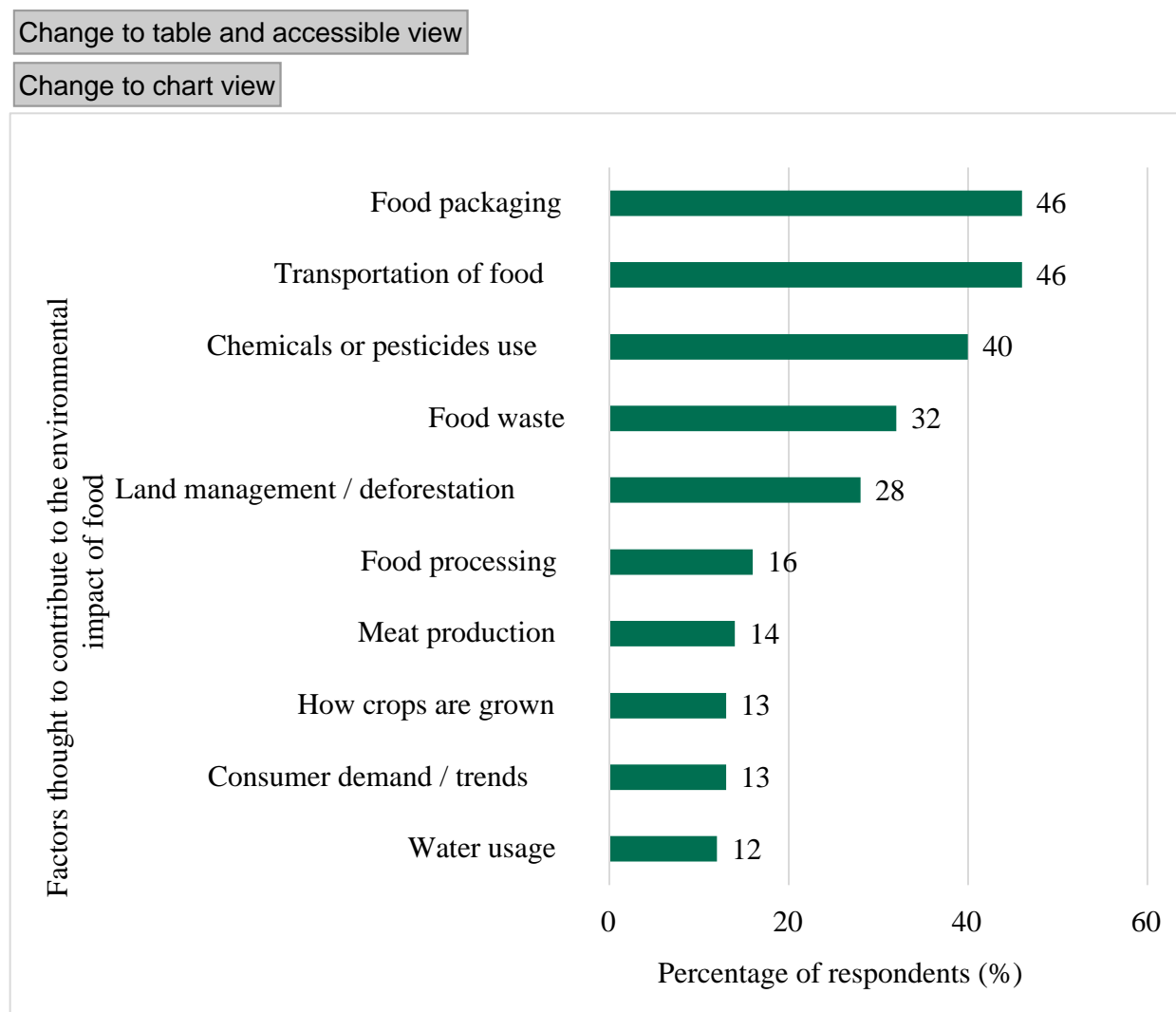
Views on animal welfare, food and drink provenance and the environmental impact of food

Respondents were asked their views on animal welfare, food and drink provenance and the environmental impact of food. A greater majority of respondents reported that, it was important to buy meat, eggs and dairy which are produced with high standards of animal welfare (85%), to buy food which has a low environmental impact (74%) and to buy food that was produced in Britain (66%). Around half (49%) of respondents reported that it was important to buy drink that was produced in Britain [\(footnote 6\)](#).

Respondents were asked how frequently they check for information about the environmental impact and animal welfare of food when shopping. A quarter (25%) of respondents reported that they checked for information about the environmental impact 'always' or 'most of the time'. Around a third (34%) of respondents reported that they 'always' or 'most of the time' checked for information about animal welfare when purchasing food [\(footnote 7\)](#).

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 meat, eggs and dairy which has information on animal welfare (57%), 51% often buy food produced in Britain, and 36% often buy food which has a low environmental impact [\(footnote 8\)](#). Half of respondents thought that food products show enough information about their country of origin (50%). Around a third (34%) of respondents thought that meat, eggs, and dairy products show enough information about animal welfare, and 21% thought food products show enough information about their environmental impact [\(footnote 9\)](#).

Figure 16. Factors thought to contribute most to the environmental impact of food.



| Factors thought to contribute to the environmental impact of food | Percentage of respondents (%) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Water usage | 12 |
| Consumer demand / trends | 13 |
| How crops are grown | 13 |
| Meat production | 14 |
| Food processing | 16 |
| Land management / deforestation | 28 |
| Food waste | 32 |
| Chemicals or pesticides use | 40 |
| Transportation of food | 46 |
| Food packaging | 46 |

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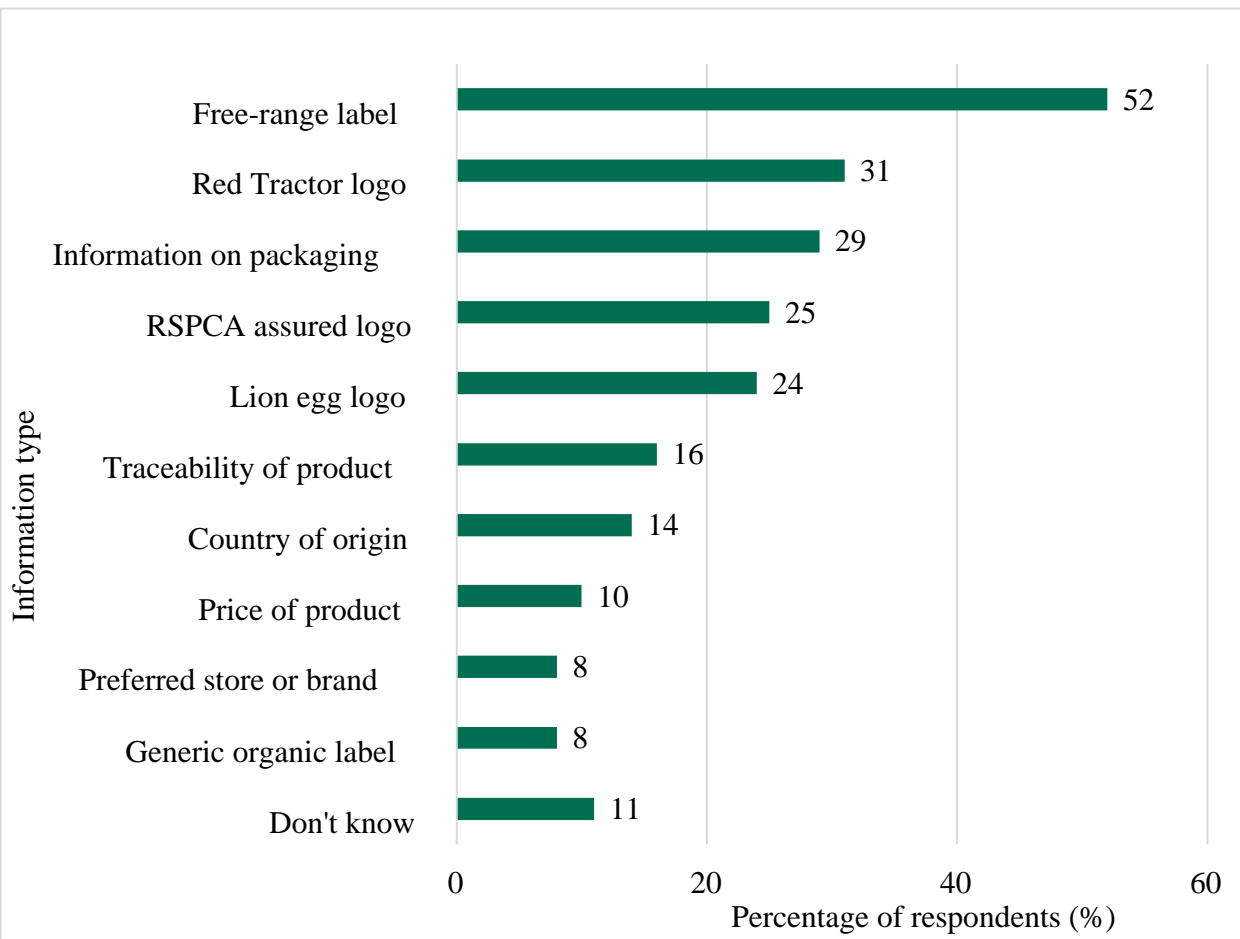
Source: Food and You 2: Wave 7

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 (46%) and the transportation of food (46%). The use of chemicals and pesticides (40%), food waste (32%) and land management and/or deforestation (28%) were also considered as contributors to the environmental impact of food (Figure 16) [\(footnote 10\)](#).

Figure 17. What would indicate high animal welfare standards of meat, eggs, and dairy products to respondents.

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| Information type | Percentage of respondents (%) |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Don't know | 11 |
| Generic organic label | 8 |
| Preferred store or brand | 8 |
| Price of product | 10 |
| Country of origin | 14 |
| Traceability of product | 16 |
| Lion egg logo | 24 |
| RSPCA assured logo | 25 |
| Information on packaging | 29 |

| Information type | Percentage of respondents (%) |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Red Tractor logo | 31 |
| Free-range label | 52 |

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 7

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 selected was a free-range label (52%). Other commonly selected indicators of animal welfare standards were the Red Tractor logo (31%) and information on packaging (29%). Around 1 in 10 (11%) reported that they do not know what would indicate whether a product containing meat, eggs or dairy had been produced with high standards of animal welfare (Figure 17) [\(footnote 11\)](#).

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 would cause a bad or unpleasant physical reaction. Overall, 83% of respondents stated that they were confident (i.e., 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 (72%), from online supermarkets (68%), and when shopping at independent food shops (65%) compared to buying food from food markets or stalls (55%) [\(footnote 13\)](#).

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 large supermarket b) shop for food in store at a mini supermarket (e.g., Local/ Metro). c) shop for food at independent greengrocers', butchers', bakers' or fishmongers'. d) shop for food at local/corner shops, newsagents' or garage forecourts. e) get a home delivery from a supermarket. f) shop for food at a local market, farmer's market or farm shop. g) 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= 5812, all 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= 3394, all online respondents who ever do food shopping. Please note: allergy only base n=93*.

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= 5157, all online respondents and those answering the England & Wales postal questionnaire.
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= 5157, all online respondents and those answering the England & Wales postal questionnaire.
6. Question: How important is it to you...a) to buy food that was produced in Britain [if Northern Ireland: UK and Ireland] b) to buy drink that was produced in Britain [if Northern Ireland: UK and Ireland] c) to buy meat, eggs and dairy which are produced with high standards of animal welfare. d) 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= 5157, all online respondents and those answering the England & Wales postal questionnaire.
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=5157, all online respondents and those answering the England & Wales postal questionnaire.
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= 5157, all online respondents and those answering the England & Wales postal questionnaire.
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 c) food products show enough information about their country of origin. Responses: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree, don't know. Base= 5157, all online respondents and those answering the England & Wales postal questionnaire.
- 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= 5157, all online respondents and those answering the England & Wales postal questionnaire.

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= 5157, all online respondents and those answering the England & Wales postal questionnaire.
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= 2472, 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=2369, B=1925, C=2267, D=2153, 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'.