

F&Y2 Wave 7-8 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 food labelling aspects (including safety, allergens, composition standards, country of origin). The FSA in Northern Ireland has additional policy responsibility for Nutrition standards and nutrition food labelling. 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 7 unless stated otherwise.

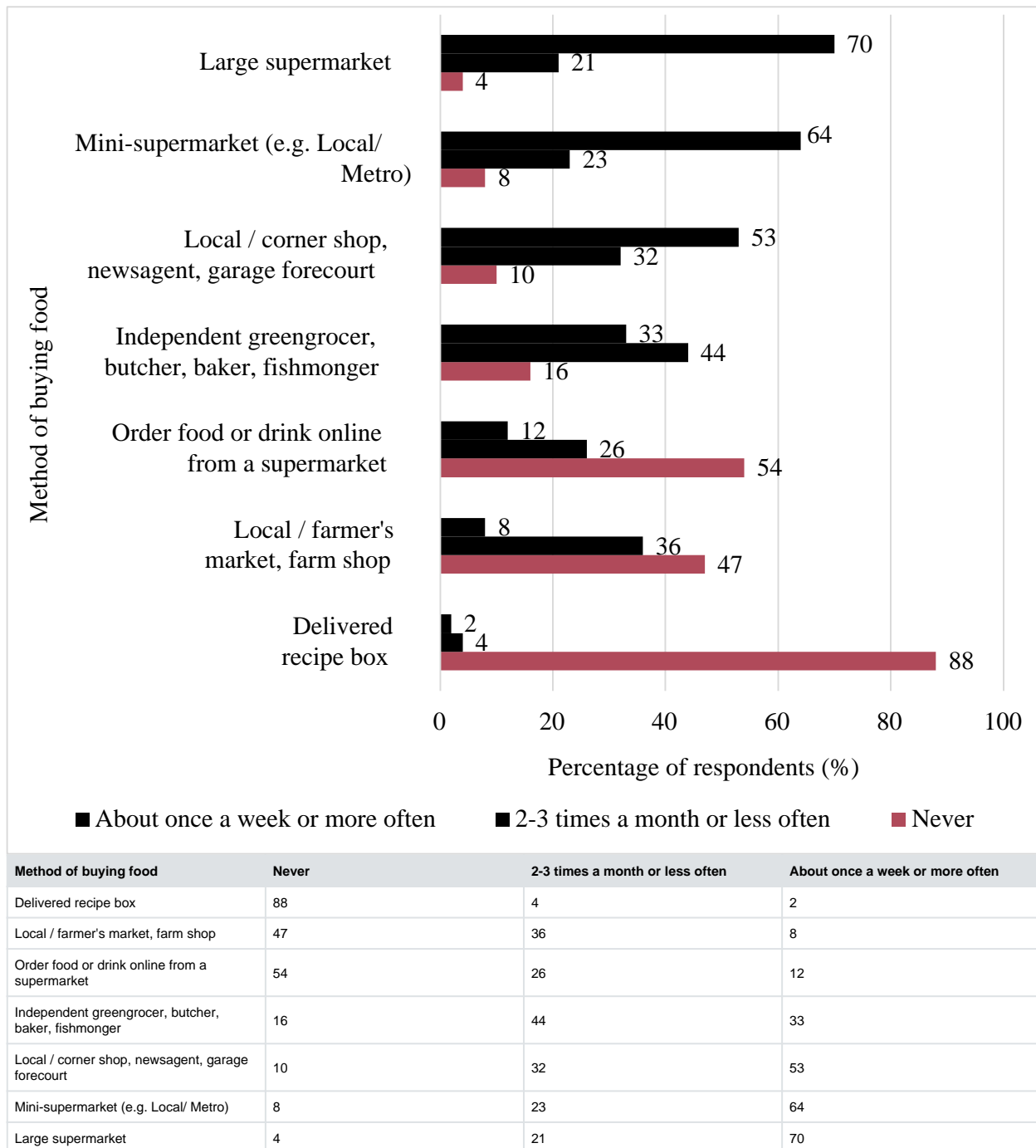
Where do respondents buy food?

Respondents were asked to indicate where and how frequently they buy food. Most respondents reported that they bought food from a large supermarket (70%) or mini supermarket (64%) about once a week or more often (Figure 17). [\(footnote 1\)](#)

Figure 17. Where respondents buy food from.

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 7

What do respondents look for when buying food?

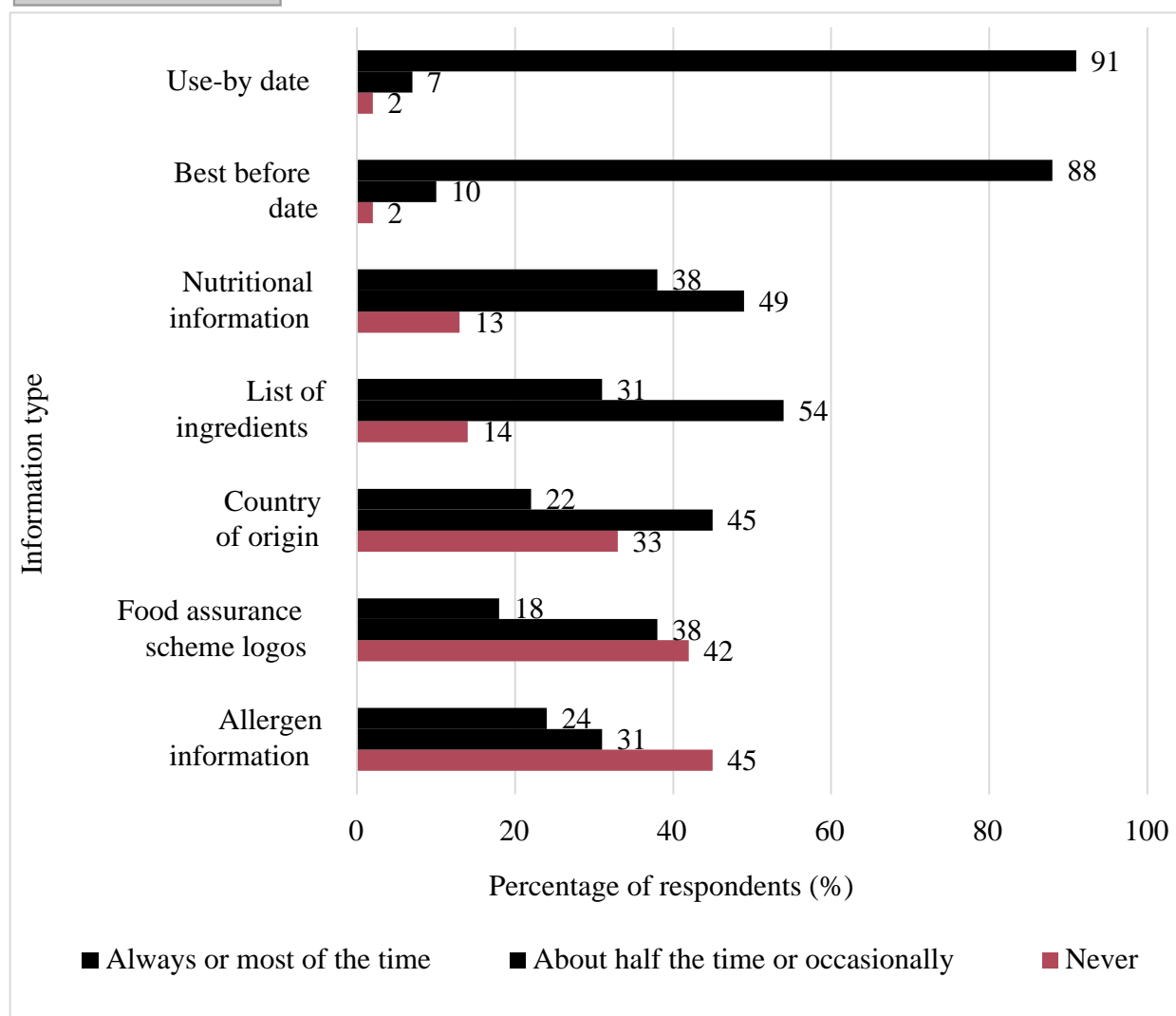
Respondents were asked to indicate what information they check when buying food. Most respondents reported that they often (i.e. always or most of the time) check the use-by (91%) or best before (88%) date when buying food. Respondents reported that they check the list of ingredients (54%), nutritional information (49%), and country of origin (45%) about half the time or occasionally (Figure 18). [\(footnote 2\)](#)

When asked what information is used to judge the quality of food from a list of options, respondents reported that they most often used freshness (63%), taste (40%), and appearance (39%) to judge food quality. Fewer respondents reported that they used the price (31%), ingredients (30%), brand (24%), and country of origin (15%) to judge food quality. Animal welfare (12%), assurance schemes (11%), environmental impact (3%) and convenience (3%) were reported to be least used by respondents when judging food quality. [\(footnote 3\)](#)

Figure 18. Type of information respondents check while shopping.

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Information Type	Always or most of the time	About half the time or occasionally	Never
Allergen information	24	31	45
Food assurance scheme logos	18	38	42
Country of origin	22	45	33
List of ingredients	31	54	14
Nutritional information	38	49	13
Best before date	88	10	2

Information Type	Always or most of the time	About half the time or occasionally	Never
Use-by date	91	7	2

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 7

Perceptions of foods with a low environmental impact

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. Around three-quarters (73%) 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. Around 2 in 10 (22%) 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. Around a fifth (21%) of respondents reported that they often checked (i.e. always or most of the time) for information about the environmental impact when purchasing food, 44% did this less often (i.e. about half of the time, or occasionally) and 31% of respondents 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. Around a third (35%) of respondents often (i.e. always or most of the time) buy food which has a low environmental impact, 37% do this less often (i.e., about half of the time, or occasionally) and 8% of respondents reported that they never buy food which has a low environmental impact. However, around 2 in 10 (19%) respondents do not know how often they buy food which has a low environmental impact. [\(footnote 6\)](#)

Product information on 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 2 in 10 (18%) respondents agreed (i.e. strongly agree or agree) that products show enough information about their environmental impact, however 34% of respondents disagreed (i.e. strongly disagree or disagree). Over a third (37%) of respondents reported that they neither agreed nor disagreed 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. Over a quarter (28%) of respondents thought that meat, eggs, and dairy products show enough information about animal welfare, and 23% thought that food products show enough information about their environmental impact. However, 37% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that meat, eggs and dairy products showed enough information about animal welfare. [\(footnote 8\)](#)

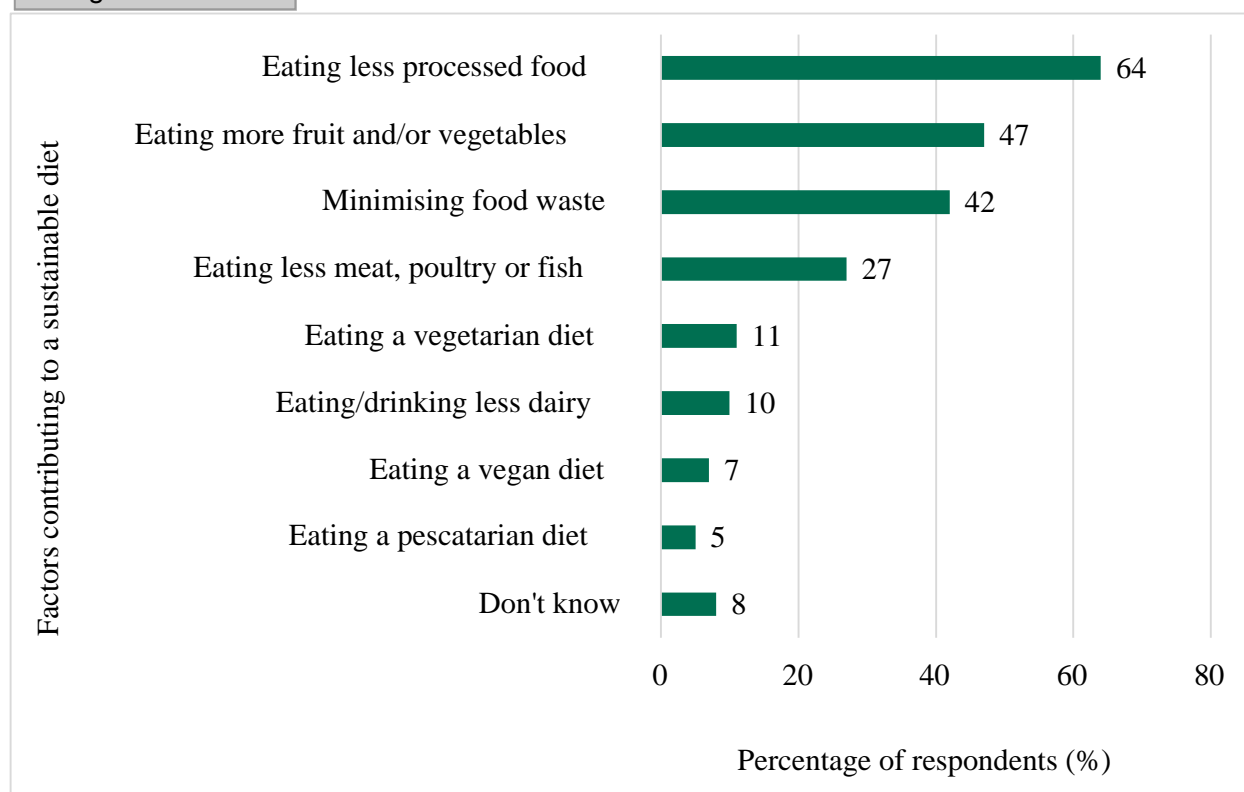
Perceptions of what contributes to a sustainable diet

At Wave 8 respondents were asked, from a list of options, what they thought contributes most to someone having a sustainable diet. Most respondents thought that eating less processed food (64%) contributed most to a sustainable diet, followed by eating more fruit and/or vegetables (47%) and minimising food waste (42%). Around a quarter (27%) of respondents thought that eating less meat, poultry, or fish contributed most to a sustainable diet. Fewer respondents thought that eating a vegetarian (11%), vegan (7%), or pescatarian (5%) diet or consuming less dairy (10%) contributed most to a sustainable diet. Additionally, 8% reported that they 'don't know' what contributes most to a sustainable diet (Figure 19). [\(footnote 9\)](#)

Figure 19. Factors which respondents thought contributed most to a sustainable diet.

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Factors	Percentage (%)
Don't know	8
Eating a pescatarian diet	5
Eating a vegan diet	7
Eating/drinking less dairy	10
Eating a vegetarian diet	11
Eating less meat, poultry or fish	27
Minimising food waste	42
Eating more fruit and/or vegetables	47
Eating less processed food	64

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 8.

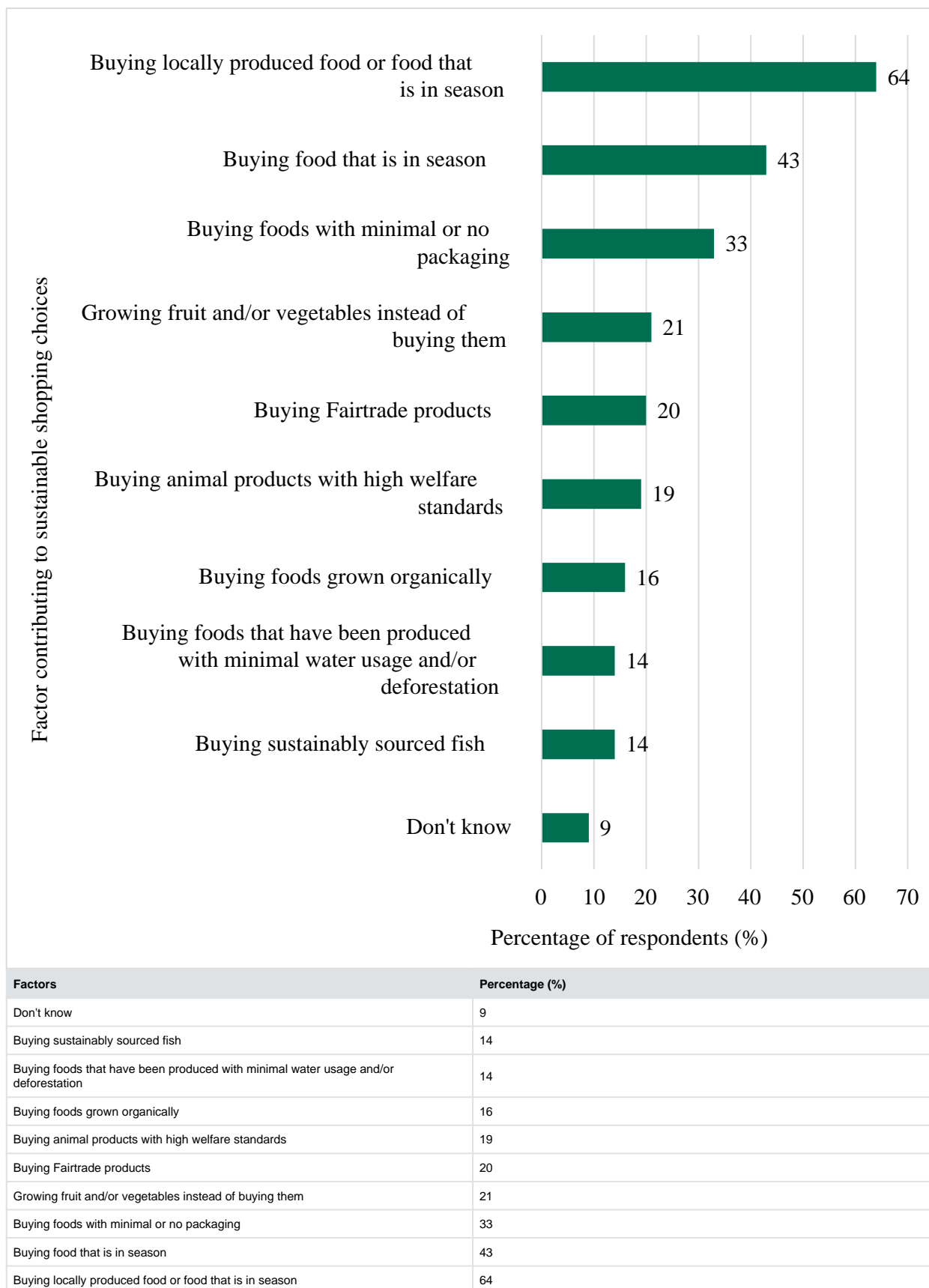
Perceptions of what contributes to sustainable shopping choices

Respondents were asked, from a list of options, what they thought contributed most to someone making sustainable food shopping choices. Most respondents thought that buying locally produced food (64%) contributed most, followed by buying food that is in season (43%). Around one third (33%) of respondents thought that buying foods with minimal or no packaging contributed most. Fewer respondents thought that buying foods produced with minimal water usage and/or minimal deforestation (14%) contributed most to someone making sustainable food shopping choices. Additionally, 9% reported that they 'don't know' what contributes most to someone making sustainable food shopping choices (Figure 20). [\(footnote 10\)](#)

Figure 20. What respondents think contributes most to sustainable shopping choices.

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1. 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) Order food or drink online from a supermarket (including home delivery and collection from store). D) Shop for food at independent greengrocers', butchers', bakers' or fishmongers'. E) Shop for food at local/corner shops, newsagents' or garage forecourts. 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, I don't do any food shopping, Can't remember. Base = 1,526, all respondents in Northern Ireland. Wave 7.
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= 820, all online respondents who ever do food shopping for their household, in Northern Ireland. Wave 7.
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= 871, all online respondents, in Northern Ireland. Wave 7.
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= 871, all online respondents in Northern Ireland. Wave 7.
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= 871, all online respondents in Northern Ireland. Wave 7.
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= 871, all online respondents in Northern Ireland. Wave 7.
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= 871, all online respondents, in Northern Ireland. Wave 7.
8. 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= 871, all online respondents, in Northern Ireland. Wave 7.
9. Question: Which of the following do you think contributes most to someone having a sustainable diet? Responses: Eating a vegetarian diet, Eating a pescatarian diet, Eating a vegan diet, Eating less meat or poultry or fish, Eating/drinking less dairy, Eating less processed food, Eating more fruit and/or vegetables, Minimising food waste, None of these,

Don't know. Base = 1,243, all online respondents and those answering the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire in Northern Ireland. Wave 8.

10. Question: Which of the following do you think contributes most to someone making sustainable food shopping choices? Responses: Buying animal products with high welfare standards, Buying fair trade products, Buying locally produced food, Buying food that is in season, Buying foods with minimal or no packaging, Buying foods that have been produced with minimal water usage and/or minimal deforestation, Buying foods grown organically, Buying sustainably sourced fish, Growing fruit and/or vegetables instead of buying them, None of these, Don't know. Base = 1,243, all online respondents and those answering the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire, in Northern Ireland. Wave 8.