

ORGANIC FOOD CONSUMPTION

An insight into organic consumers' self identities

Master's Thesis

The
Organic
Supermarket
Fresh Food, as nature intended

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Lyudmila Ilchevska

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ABSTRACT

Organic food has become increasingly popular in Ireland over the past few years. However, there is little or no research on the reasons behind organic food consumption apart from the well known motivational factors such as the belief that organic food is healthier and safer.

The purpose of this research is to provide a new perspective that relates to organic food consumption, one that stems from the notion of Consumer Culture Theory and the need for individuals to create meaning by reshaping their self identities. The research was focused around two main theories – McCracken's notion of movement of meaning, which also includes consumers' rituals as well as Belk's concept of the self and extended self.

Through analyzing the findings of this research by taking an interpretivist approach and conducting five semi-structured interviews it was established that more research is needed in order to establish whether rituals were of any importance to organic food consumption. Furthermore, in regards to Belk's notion of identity, it was determined that consumers' self identity played a key role in regards to the consumption of organic food.

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1. Introduction

The way we see and perceive food has changed significantly over the past century as food is nowadays easier to obtain than ever by simply walking into a grocery store or even more so by a single click of a mouse and choices are more abundant than ever. We have all heard the phrase “We are what we eat” but are one's food choices extend of one's self identity or purely based on satisfying basic needs such as hunger and survival? What makes us choose what we and our loved ones consume, whether it's fresh or fast food, organic or conventional, GMO or not, free range, etc...?

Since I have been employed in a company called The Organic Supermarket (hereafter TOS) for the past three and half years I have often seen new parents or terminally ill people turning to organic food. This triggered my interest in why people choose to consume organic food beyond the obvious reasons such as health and wellbeing concerns. With consumer's fears over one's health and food safety rising, organic food has become a trendy and increasing consumer's choice. (Aarset et al., 2004) So what are the main motives for Irish consumers to purchase organic? Does one's self identity play a key role in one's food related purchases?

Past studies are mainly concerned with motivational factors influencing purchasing decisions rather than actual consumption of organic food. (Chekima, Oswald, Wafa, & Chekima, 2017) There has been some research on what the main motives and barriers for organic food consumption are and even though their importance may vary from country to country, researchers seem to have agreed on a few main stimuli. Tobin, Larkin & Moane state in an article published in 2011 that according to surveys of Irish consumers, the latter recognize organic food to be healthier, safer and with a better taste. (2011) O'Reilly, McCarthy and O'Donovan also include

animal welfare and environmental concerns to a lesser extent to the above. (Baourakis, 2004)

On the other hand some of the main barriers to organic food consumption are its inaccessibility, higher price and consumers' disbelief that it is in any way superior to conventional food. (Asif, Xuhui, Nasiri, & Ayyub, 2018; Bryła, 2016) Despite the latter statement, organic food is becoming increasingly available and supermarket chains have started introducing their own brands of organic products with prices similar to conventional food, which in turn reduces some of the barriers to entry.

In addition to all of the above, some researchers have recently recognized the importance of self-identity and image as stimuli for organic food consumption as psychological motives for purchasing have hardly been considered in previous studies. (Tung, Tsay, & Lin, 2015; Yen, 2017) Therefore I would like to examine what motivates and drives consumers to purchase organic food and in more detail how organic food consumption relates to one's self-identity and image.

2. Theory Development

The purpose of this chapter is to review what is already known to date about organic food and organic food consumption and examine theories and notions that would help pin point and answer the research question presented in this chapter.

2.1. *Organic food and agriculture*

Organic food has become increasingly popular over the last couple of decades and as mentioned earlier some markets are developing slower than others but none the less it is an increasing trend. But before I go into describing how the organic food market has developed lately, I am going to provide a brief explanation of what organic food actually is.

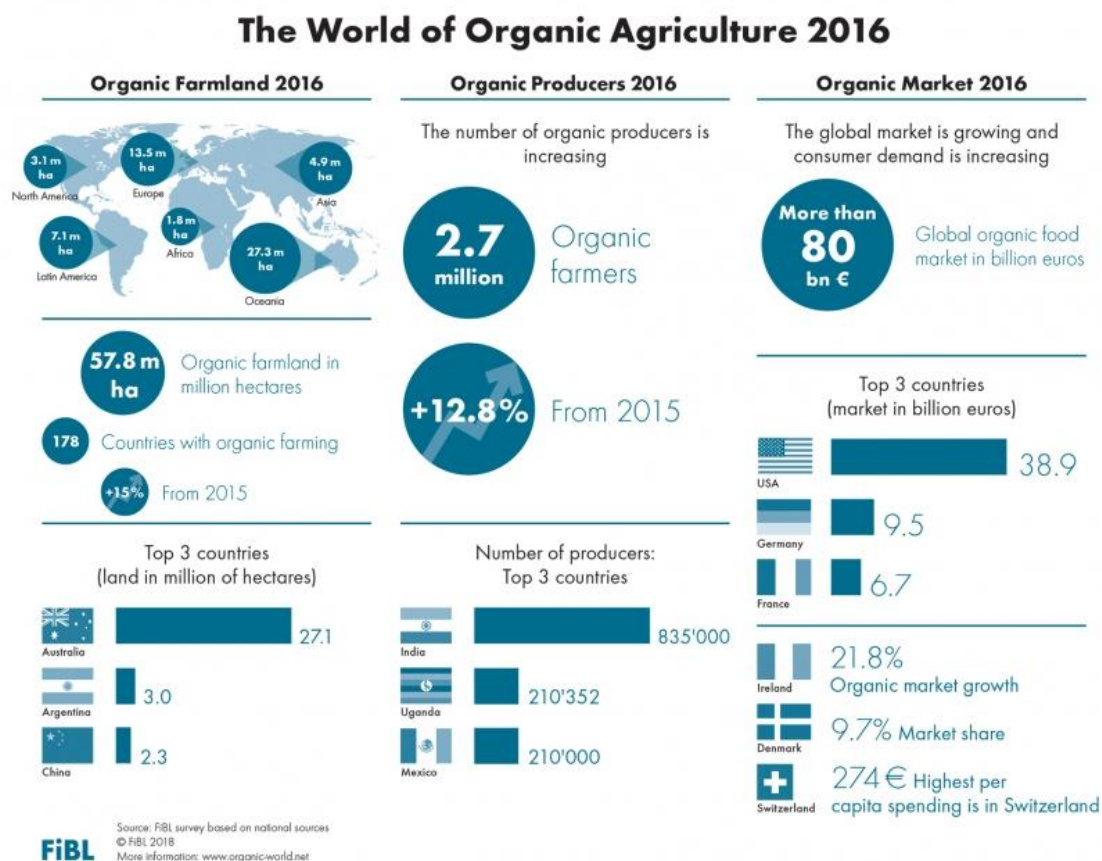
The Food Authority in Ireland defines organic food as follows as:

“... the product of an agricultural farming system that places a strong emphasis on environmental protection and animal welfare. While organic and non-organically produced food may appear very similar, the systems of farming involved in their production can be very different. Food can only be labeled and marketed as organic when produced on a farm certified as organic and inspected by an official certification body.” (“The Food Safety Authority of Ireland,” 2017)

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine provides a further explanation as of what we define as organic food. Generally, it is food that is pesticide and chemical free as synthetic fertilizers, “pesticides, herbicides, growth regulators and livestock feed additives are excluded or severely restricted.” (Department of Agriculture, n.d.)

Organic food has become increasingly popular as a natural and healthier food option due to concerns over one's health and wellbeing. In order to draw a comparison of how the organic sector has developed and continues to do so I have attached a table by Eurostat in Appendix 1. It illustrates the increase or decrease of organic farmed land across Europe for 2016 in comparison to 2012. As seen from the table some European countries have seen a decrease in organic land while most of them have allocated more land for organic farming. Overall the organic farmed land across Europe has increased by nearly 2 million hectares.

Furthermore, the organic food sector has grown rapidly worldwide in the past decade and estimated 75 billion euro in 2015 with USA contributing for nearly half of all sales – 35.8 billion euro, followed by Germany – 8.6z billion euro. (Lernoud & Willer, 2017)



The Irish market on the other hand grew at a slow pace in 2015 by 6.9% to 114.7 million euro followed by a further increase of 21.8% in 2016 bringing the total market value to 142million euro. (Bord Bia, 2016) The infograph shown on the previous page and produced by the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture, gives an overall look of how much the organic food sector grew in 2016 compared to 2015 (FiBL, 2018). More information regarding worldwide agricultural growth could be found in Appendix 2.

2.2. *The Irish organic food consumer*

As the Irish organic food sector is growing at a high speed some researchers have studied the main motivations for organic food consumption. A group of researchers concluded in an article published in the Journal of Consumer Behavior in 2007 what some of the main reasons for Irish consumers to purchase organic food are. Consumer motivations for purchasing organic meat, for example, included better “quality, safety, labeling, production methods, and value (Hughner, McDonagh, Prothero, Shultz, & Stanton, 2007, p.98). Overall organic food consumers' perception of organic food was that it is safer, tastier, of a better quality and overall better for the environment. As Hughner et. al. state in their publication only a “few studies have attempted to develop profiles and descriptions of the regular consumer of organic food” and a lot more research is needed. (Hughner et al., 2007, p.105)

It seems that studies regarding one's self-identity are lacking in Ireland. However, Robert White and Michael Fraser talk about the Irish personal and collective identity from a political perspective (Stryker, Owens, & White, 2000). They study social movements and activists in particular and conclude that “the importance of identities may change over time” and that it is possible for one identity to be more prominent than another. (Stryker et al., 2000, p.326) They also specifically talk about social movements' collective identities and describe them as developments of

“shared aspects of the personal identities” (Stryker et al., 2000, p.326) Furthermore, White and Fraser suggest that even though activists be a part of the same group, their identities may be quite different and vary from one activist to another in terms of involvement and commitment.

The above was just a glimpse on the topic of self-identity, which would be further examined in the pages to follow.

2.3. *Culture and consumption*

In 1986 McCracken suggests that meaning and more specific cultural meaning had a specific way of moving through the world and into the final consumer. Usually with the help of advertising and fashion systems, meaning is transferred from the “culturally constituted world” into consumer goods, which in turn transfer meaning on to the individual consumer. Table 2 summarizes the movement of meaning from the world to the final consumer.

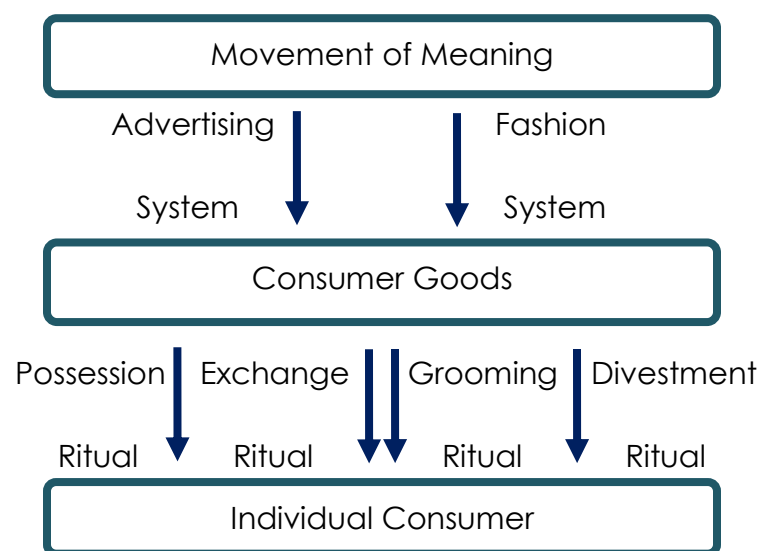


Table. 2: Movement of Meaning (Source: McCracken, 1986, p. 72)

- Advertising and fashion as instruments of meaning transfer from world to good

As mentioned above there are two systems that McCracken (1986) refers to as ways of transferring meaning to consumer goods – advertising and fashion systems.

Advertising refers to specific way an ad is created and tailored by an advertising agency to encode a specific message from the client into the good/ experience that is being advertised. The potential consumer, on the other hand, that the ad is tailored for must decode the message and find similarities between the culturally constituted world and the advertised good/service.

The fashion system on the other hand is much more complex than advertising. Meaning transfer from the world into consumer goods often changes due to trends and could easily be attached or detached to goods. Furthermore, the fashion system helps create new cultural meanings. This normally occurs when people of higher social status serve as an influence to those of a lower social standing. As McCracken (1986) explains, the actors involved in this system are product designers and fashion journalists or social observers. Contrary to the advertising system where the advertising agency has to embed meaning into the consumer good without being able to change it, designers create meaning by changing the physical as well as symbolic properties of the product. The designer, in this case, relies on the fashion journalists to inform the potential customer of current trends and innovations and the consumer on the other hand should be able to find meaning in the potential good on his own. Even though organic food is not widely advertised currently in Ireland, it is becoming increasingly popular and trends such as vegetarianism or veganism have become quite fashionable.

- Rituals as instrument of meaning transfer from good to consumer

In 1985 Rook suggests that rituals are an integral part of our daily lives even though in many cases we don't acknowledge our actions as rituals. He goes on to defining rituals as more than just religious or mystical ceremonies and in more detail as "expressive, symbolic activity constructed of multiple behaviors that occur in a fixed, episodic sequence, and that tend to be repeated over time." (Rook, 1985, p.252) Rituals normally comprise of four elements – ritual artifact, script, performance roles and a ritual audience. In addition, McCracken (1986) refers to rituals as instruments of transferring meaning from the consumer goods to the individual consumer and divides them into four different types – exchange, possession, grooming and divestment rituals. I won't explain in detail all rituals as they are not relevant to my work but I will however focus on further describing the ritual of grooming.

As Rook (1985) describes a primary behavioral source for rituals are also personal aims and emotions, which in turn give rise to personal rituals such as grooming. McCracken (1986) furthermore explains that grooming rituals draw meaning from tangible however perishable goods and meaning should be drawn repeatedly in order to make sure that goods properties are continuously transferred to the consumer. I believe this is of importance to this study and will further describe in the analysis chapter of this thesis.

2.4. Self identity and Image - The extended self

Belk (1988) suggested that individuals have one main or core identity that by the use of possessions as well as consumption rituals people tend "to extend, expand, and strengthen their sense of self." (Ahuvia, 2005, p. 171) Furthermore he concluded that our core selves are comprised of the "body, internal processes, ideas, and

experiences", while "persons, places, and things to which one feels attached" are often seen as part of our extended selves (R. W. Belk, 1988). Therefore, objects or intangible goods to which we do not feel affiliated with or attached to, are not considered to belong to our selves. Our self is also comprised of our relationships with other such as family, friends and communities. The less we affiliate ourselves with certain groups, the less important they are for our extended self (Ahuvia, 2005; R. W. Belk, 1988; Kunchambo, Lee, & Brace-Govan, 2016)

Belk's notion of self and extended self has been used for years in and is cemented among scholars. He proved that we use items, either tangible or intangible, in order to present our best selves to the world. According to Belk (1988) our concept of self changes over time and is highly subjective as it varies from person to person. Our past and present memories and experiences as well as our "imagined futures" help create our unique identity. (Ahuvia, 2005, p. 172) However, in a recent article, it is mentioned that he has not managed to shed light on how our extended selves change and evolve when having internal, i.e. self-conflicts. (Ruvio & Belk, 2018) This might be an interesting perspective to discuss in the analysis part of this thesis and will therefore go back to this topic in the chapters to follow.

2.4.1. The conflicting selves

Belk's research on the extended self has been supported by many other researchers. Ahuvia, for example, even though agrees with Belk, points out that people could have two conflicting identities. (2005) He suggests that loved objects for instance could be a way for people to "resolve conflicts and tensions in the consumer's identity narrative." (Ahuvia, 2015, p.182) Ahuvia's research helps to make sense of how people deal with the different personal conflicts they might have. He suggests that any internal conflicts are overcome by our link to and possession of objects we love. Furthermore, what he found out is that "love objects

assist with symbolically demarcating the boundary between the self and identities that the consumer rejects." (Ahuvia, 2005, p.182) In other words, by possessing objects that we love we aim to minimize the internal tensions we have, created by our conflicting past, present and hoped-for future identities. This is a worthy of note perspective for this study as it would be interesting to see what kind of, if any, personal conflicts the subjects of this research go through. Ahuvia (2005) also concludes from his research that individuals normally have to either compromise in order to resolve their internal conflicts or create a mix of the conflicting identities, which in turn as he puts it "comes close to giving them the best of both worlds." (p.181)

In addition to the above, Belk had suggested that our relationships "with objects are never two-way (person-thing), but always three-way (person-thing-person)." (Belk 1988, p.147) Ahuvia supports this claim by investigating the relationship people have with objects. (2005) In his research Ahuvia proves how our affection or relationship with items, could be triggered by other people as well as our need for belonging to a specific group (2005). Even though this concept mainly relates to brands and brand communities as well as gifts, this notion seems to stretch even further as in the case Ahuvia (2005) presented where his subject's "love of popcorn and Bugs Bunny cartoons involved her social relationships in the way these items supported her bohemian identity and through that were ultimately used to manage her relationships to social groups." (p.180)

2.4.2. Nature as extended-self

As Belk and Ahuvia focus on examining our relationships with objects, it is interesting to note another perspective that might be of importance for this study and is possibly going to become a lot more popular in the near future. Kunchambo, Lee & Brace-Govan examine our relationship with objects and how they relate to our

extended selves (2016). In particular they focus on our relationship with nature and how it affects us. They have focused on investigating our “attachment to places, emotional relationships, symbolic meanings, and personal experiences, that work together to form a web of meanings to understand nature as part of the extended self.” (Kunchambo, Lee, & Brace-Govan, 2016, p.126) Kunchambo et. al. reflect on Belk's notion of extended self and in particular on the idea that external objects are considered as possessions and could include “physical environments” and that these possessions could become part of the self if they have power over us. (Kunchambo et al., 2016, p.127) To illustrate how physical environments could be a part of one's self we could picture a person who owns a farm. His/her identity is very much likely to be strongly associated to being a farmer. Furthermore, Kunchambo et. al. suggest that there are three main dimensions to our relationship with nature and are as follow – relational extended self, encapsulated self and assimilated self (2016). This notion relates back to Belk's concept that objects could become part of our extended selves by controlling or creating tangible or intangible objects (1988). “Applying psychological ownership to experiences in nature forms an attachment. Nature attachment examples include conquering a mountain (controlling), gardening (creating), or experiencing river trekking (knowing).” (Kunchambo et al., 2016, p.127)

We can talk about relational extended self when one considers nature to be a part of a bigger, larger self. This dimension of the self considers nature to be an object that one uses rather than be a part of the individual. The individual is the more important and significant being in this case. The encapsulated self, as the name might suggest, refers to the notion that the self is a part of the larger and more “superior nature” and last but not least assimilated self refers to the idea that we are one with nature or in other words that nature is incorporated in our self. (Kunchambo et al., 2016, p.128)

The concept of nature as an extended self is quite interesting and relatively new. In order for this it to occur the individual should not consider nature as a remote object. As Kunchambo et. al. suggest it could potentially promote responsible consumption behavior as long as the individual considers nature to be a part of his/her extended self (2016) As mentioned by the authors, in order for this relationship to flourish a number of factors should be considered such as "perceptions of boundaries between the self and nature, inclusiveness, beliefs, values, emotional bonding, symbolic meanings, purposes for engaging with nature, and behavior towards nature. External factors influence the inner self (core self) and formation of the extended self." (Kunchambo et al., 2016, p.127)

2.5. Consumer Culture Theory

In order to gain better understanding of consumer choices the consumer culture theory (hereafter CCT) will be applied. Developed over twenty years of research, Eric J. Arnould and Craig J. Thompspon (2005, p. 868) define it as a "(...) family of theoretical perspectives that address the dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace, and cultural meanings." CCT suggests that consumers' choices are based not only on their socio-demographic market offerings and ethos but are in turn driven by overlapping cultural meanings, interests and beliefs. Therefore, consumer culture theory takes a broader look at the macro globalized environment rather than focusing on the micro – state cultural beliefs and social media and the internet, in general, which have made specific food cultures and traditions popular internationally.

Understanding CCT is important for this study as it is going to help shed light on why consumers choose to act the way they do and how their market offering as well as beliefs, interests and inspirations from other cultures affect their consumer choices. Consumers' choices are also driven and shaped by their community and loved

ones and CCT stipulates that one's self-identity or group identity is also formed around the sense of community and belonging. Identity is formed by sharing the same "values, norms, ideals and conventions", which in turn creates different subgroups and communities within the market setting. CCT could be viewed "(...) as a social arrangement in which the relations between lived culture and social resources, between meaningful ways of life and the symbolic and material resources on which they depend, are mediated through markets." (Arnould et al., 2005, p. 605) The consumer is an active participant in this setting and makes decision based on his/ hers self-identity and current lifestyle goals by decoding messages such as advertisements, brand images, market environments and products. (E. J. Arnould & Thompson, 2015; E. Arnould et al., 2006; Joy & Li, 2012)

CCT is mainly concerned with studying the experiential, esthetic and ritualistic aspects of consumption rather than consumption as a way of satisfying basic needs. It focuses but is not limited to four main areas – consumer identity projects, marketplace cultures, sociohistoric patterning of consumption and mass-mediated marketplace ideologies. After a revision of CCT in 2015, Arnould and Thompson added another four dimensions to the already existing ones mentioned earlier – the ontological conception of culture as distributed networks, the politics of consumption, consumer marketing theoretics and regional cultural theoretics. These four new areas of interest to CCT have been added to reflect the ever changing nature of culture and cultural meaning in a globalized society (E. J. Arnould & Thompson, 2015; R. Belk, 2017).

Furthermore, le Grand (2018) talks about neo-tribes and how their formations have resulted in "increasing individualization rather than 'massification'" (p.19). He continues on by stating that neo-tribal gatherings might produce fragmented identities as the former are localized to an extent. Le Grand (2018) also states that "in the field of alternative food researches suggest that increasing interest among consumers in environmental concerns and local production 'accord with the notion

of neo-tribes as demographically diverse groupings, reflective of the freedom of consumers in post-industrial economies to make food choices on the basis of factors other than traditional determinants such as social class or income'" (p.19) An exception to the above is Bauman's opinion on the matter who shares the same vision as Arnould and Thompson, i.e. that groups or neo-tribes are formed by "the multitude of individual acts of self-identification which are mediated by the market and expressed through lifestyles." (le Grand, 2018, p.20) Furthermore, le Grand points out that individuals' purchasing power makes it easy for one to change identities if he/she wanted to by simply acquiring the needed-to-fit-in objects or experiences (2018). Therefore, in order to be able to change identity or tribes, one should have the needed resource and those who lack the latter are simply excluded.

This is similar to the notion that Arnould and Thompson introduced in 2015 about the ontological concept of culture as a distributed network, a significant change of the theory made possible by the infusion of another concept into CCT – assemblage theory. Assemblage theory introduces a very different perspective into CCT that "heterogeneous elements can hold together without actually forming a coherent whole". (E. J. Arnould & Thompson, 2015, p. 6) An example for better understanding of this notion is a TV show. All the different elements that form a show such as hosts, guests, audience, fashion brands, etc. could change slightly or drastically over time. This in turn would change the brand assemblage and some consumers (in this case viewers) might feel disengaged from it.

2.6. Research Interest

As I have mentioned above, organic food is becoming increasingly popular in Ireland, especially in the past decade, however there is no prior research as to what drives Irish people into consuming organic food apart from the generalized notion

that health and lack of pesticides are main factors. Taking into account CCT and the notion of self-identity and image as well as McCracken's model of movement of meaning, I would like to examine whether there is a connection between one's self-identity and image and one's desire to purchase and consume organic food. Therefore the research question that I would like to focus on and attempt to answer in this thesis is the following:

How consumers' purchasing behavior of organic food is influenced by one's self-identity and how important are rituals for organic food consumption?

3. Research Design & Method

This chapter is solely focused on presenting the research approach that I have chosen for this study as well as the methods for gathering data ranging and choosing the subjects of this study. It also presents any delimitation

The research method for this study will be qualitative as “qualitative research is typically inductive, subjective and contextual”, meaning that theory will be drawn based on observations by focusing on examining in-depth a smaller group of people. (Carson, 2001; Morgan, 2014) Furthermore, qualitative research is best used when the topic of interest, as in this case, hasn't been examined well and data is limited. As described by Carson (2001, p.70) qualitative research is best suited “where the research emphasis is on in-depth understanding of how, why and in what context certain phenomena occur; and what impacts upon or influences such phenomena.” Therefore qualitative research seems to be the logical choice of research for this thesis as I am not going to focus on generalizing data by surveying a vast amount of people but rather examine specific personal experiences and only focus on a few individuals that I have chosen for this study.

Data was gathered by carrying out interviews with organic food consumers in-store. The interviews were semi-structured so that the interviewees had the freedom to share additional information if they felt the need to do so that would in turn shine more light on their personal beliefs and motives. Once all interviews were carried out, data was transcribed and coded in order to provide a better understanding of consumers' motives for choosing organic vs. non-organic food and whether image and self-identity play a role in their purchasing decisions.

3.1. Choice of Approach

Since this study builds up on existing theory in order to answer “how” and “why” questions the research methodology that I have chosen for this it is interpretive. Empirical data as well as prior theory are going to be used in order to further build up on previous theoretical foundations. (Carson, 2001) Furthermore, these theoretical frameworks should help the researcher but not constrain him/her and serve as guidelines for inductive reasoning. Morgan further describes that qualitative research methods normally rely on the subjectivity of the researcher in order present his/her view on the social world. (2014) It differs from quantitative research because it is not generalized but rather focuses on examining “specific settings and circumstances” (Morgan, 2014, p. 9)

3.2. Data Collection

3.2.1. Semi-structured Interviews

The purpose of the interviews is to gather more sensitive data about the respondents such as feelings, memories and respondents' understanding on the specific subject at hand. (Carson, 2001) They are considered to be one of the main data collection methods by social researchers. Before carrying out the interviews an overall objective was determined. In this case, the overall objective was to explore the reasons behind the interviewees' interest in purchasing and consuming organic food. Following the setting up of an interview objective was the creation of an interview guide, which as Carson suggests is an important step in planning the interview (2001). The interview guide comprised of a few open ended questions that were significant to this study but also allowed for the respondent to take direction and speak freely without being constrained. The purpose for the latter was to gain more in-depth knowledge from the respondents' and let them take the lead to an

extent and discuss topics that are of importance to them. As Matthews and Ross (2010) point out the main use of semi-structured interviews is gathering data which explores "participants' experiences, opinions and feelings and collects data to help (the researcher) to gain a better understanding or explanation of behavior or attitudes."

The interview guide could be found in Appendix 3 of this paper. The questions were changed after the first interview as it seemed the questions regarding rituals were out of place and were in a way leading the interviewee to specific answers, which would have presented inaccurate data.

In order to make the respondents welcomed and more relaxed, which in turn would provide fuller and more personal answers, the interviews started by letting them know what the interview was going to be about without giving away too much detail. (Carson et al., 2001) After greeting the respondents and thanking them for the taking the time to be interviewed, I asked for their permission to record the interview and also let them know once again that the thesis that I am writing is about organic food. I made sure to let them know that there are no right or wrong questions to make them even more open minded and get them to share as much as possible. All of the interviewees allowed me to record the interviews in question however I have produced only four transcripts of the interviews as well as one of the recordings.

- *Sampling*

The interviewees for this study were chosen based on their frequency of purchasing in TOS and were picked from a specific geographical location – Malahide, Co. Dublin. I consider the frequency of purchasing to be important criteria in order to answer the research question of this study as I would mainly like to focus on

individuals who are regular organic food consumers rather than accidental ones. Even though all respondents are women this was not initially intended. I had asked to interview a number of regular customers - male and female however I only received positive responses from females. I also wanted to interview customers from different age groups in order to see how and if their needs have changed over time.

- *Managing the interview*

While managing the interview I followed the rules that Carson has suggested for achieving best results (2001). Once I asked a question I let the interviewee talk as much as they felt like however made sure to guide them back towards the topic of interest if they were getting carried away. I used encouragement phrases and murmurs such as "Mmhm" and "Yes" as Carson suggests in order to stimulate the respondents to continue on with their story. (2001) I also made sure I was showing interest in their stories by keeping eye contact with the interviewee in the pauses or in the times I was not taking notes. Furthermore, I used the "active listening" technique that Carson (2001) suggests, which means feeding back phrases that the interviewee has used to him/her in order to find out more. This shows that the interviewer (me) is paying attention and gets the respondent to further elaborate on certain topics.

- *Interview transcription*

In interpretive research it is important to have both recordings and notes in case any of the recordings is corrupted or lost (Carson, 2001). This was quite important for me as I had accidentally deleted the first interview I made while I had only transcribed it half-way through. In order to avoid any future setbacks such as the

one mentioned above all other interviews were stored on alternative devices. Therefore, Suzanne and Linda's interview is incompletely transcribed in Appendix 4.

Another issue that I had encountered while transcribing the interviews was background noise as Suzanne and Linda were interviewed in Starbucks. This was prevented in the future by carrying out the rest of the interviews in the shop's office which is noise free most of the times and made the transcription process of the rest of the interviews much easier.

Furthermore, in order to make it easier to interpret and code the interviews, I have excluded affirmative noises and phrases such as "Mhmm" and "Yeah" as I had quite often used them to encourage the interviewees and reassure them I was actively listening to their stories. Similar to the latter I have also excluded other non-verbal or unclear parts of the conversations as they might result in misleading and confusing data, which could affect the validity of the study. (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005)

- *Coding*

Once I had transcribed the interviews I did an open coding or in other words I tried to determine what the main concepts that emerged from all interviews were. (Carson et al., 2001; A. Ghorbani, Moridsadat, & Jafarzadeh, 2015) This step was carried out in order to break down the interviews into smaller and more manageable sections, which in turn eased the process of finding similarities and differences between the responses from the interviewees. This was followed by what is known as axial and selective coding, which means that the coding process is not an open process anymore but rather selective in order to compare and categorize data, which is then presented in the chapter to follow.

As Ghorbani et al (A. Ghorbani et al., 2015) go on to describing in relations to annex and selective coding, "the researcher tries to facilitate the next steps by putting emphasis on those parts that can play a more important role in the development of theory." Therefore, the aim of these two steps of interview coding was to pin point the data that was going to be used in order to answer the research question of this study.

3.2.2. *Observations*

Since I have been employed in TOS for nearly four years now and I have had numeral encounters with shoppers in the store where most interviews were carried out as well as in another two company locations also within County Dublin. I have used some of the observations that I have gathered over the years in order to complement the data gathered from interviews as data from observations could be very limited and scarce.

Observations are means for collecting data that "represent one of the most systematized and logic forms for visual record and it is also verifiable of what is pretended to know, consists in using the senses either to describe, analyze or explain from a valid and reliable scientific point of view a subject, fact or phenomenon based on a participatory or non-participatory, structured or unstructured form; in this manner raises the need that the observer have skills that allows him to develop this process successfully" (Ferrer, 2015, p.79). Observations can be structured or unstructured as well as participatory or non-participatory. (Ferrer, 2015) In this case, my role as an observer could be considered as participatory as I had integrated with the subjects of observation since I have been employed in TOS for the past nearly four years now. Furthermore, when referring to the observation structure of this study, I would consider it unstructured as until

recently I had no definition or idea about the patterns to be observed (Carson et al., 2001; Ferrer, 2015).

One of the disadvantages of observation that Carson mentions, is the fact they could be biased to my own perspective as a researcher (2001). It should be noted however that I have tried to be as objective as possible. Since the interaction between me and the subjects of observation is limited and minimal, it is hard to collect data in relation to subjects' emotions or beliefs, which is another reason for using observation as a support mechanism in data collection (Carson et al., 2001; Ferrer, 2015).

One of the advantages, on the other hand for using this research method, is that subjects are observed in their natural environment and the observer actually registers people's real behavior. Furthermore, the subjects that are being observed do not experience "fatigue, demotivation, or that the order of the questions affects the responses and the investigation results." (Ferrer, 2015, p.81)

3.3. *Authenticity and Trustworthiness*

In order to determine the trustworthiness of the research the following three dimensions have to be considered – credibility, dependability and confirmability. (Carson, 2001) According to Carson (2001) qualitative "empirical findings will gain validity from these dimensions because of careful assessment and use of prior theory as various stages of the research study, and as such are unlikely to become detached from the closeness of their proximity to aspects of marketing behavior inherent in the domain itself." (p.67)

According to Daymon and Holloway, this approach to measuring trustworthiness and authenticity of a qualitative research is more appropriate when taking an interpretivist approach (2002). Furthermore, they state that authenticity of the study

occurs “when the strategies [...] used are appropriate for the “true” reporting of participants’ ideas, when the study is fair, and when it helps participants and similar groups to understand their world and improve it.” (Daymon & Holloway, 2002, p.93) Daymon and Holloway also add another dimension to evaluating trustworthiness – transferability. (2002)

3.3.1. Credibility

There are a few strategies for improving the credibility this study. (Korstjens & Moser, 2018) Since I have been employed in TOS for nearly four years I have had a lasting presence in the shop and therefore have been able to build trust with the interviewees of this study. Furthermore, the prolonged engagement in the shop has helped me better understand the organic food culture and consumers that I have decided to study and also test and make sure to extend that for misinformation.

Triangulation was somewhat used in this study by using method and data triangulation by using more than one method for collecting data – surveys and interviews as well as collecting data over different shop locations and times. (Korstjens & Moser, 2018)

However, the credibility of this study could be improved by having more than one researcher (in this case myself) carry out the interviews and observations. It could have also been improved by performing member checks, i.e. presenting copies of the transcribed interviews to the interviewees for feedback. (Korstjens & Moser, 2018)

3.3.2. Transferability

Korstjens and Moser (2018) describe in their practical guide to qualitative research that transferability “is to provide a thick description of the participants and the research process, to enable the reader to assess whether your findings are

transferable to their own setting; this is the so-called transferability judgement.” (p.122) I believe the transferability of my research could be improved as I feel there could be more descriptive data provided. Nonetheless, I have tried to sufficient information taking into account the time constraint have had.

3.3.3. *Confirmability*

“Confirmability concerns the aspect of neutrality.” (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p.122) As described previously, the interpretivist approach is considered to be subjective to extend as data and interpretations are subjective and may vary from one researcher to another. However, even though I am aware of my subjectivity I am also conscious of the fact that I might be biased by my own personal motivations, which could result in misinterpreting data from the respondents. In order to avoid tampering the results of this study, I often went back to check the data I had collected from interviews to reassure I had not misinterpreted it as well as make sure that I have not missed any important information, which I could have overlooked initially. Furthermore, I have tried to challenge myself and take a different perspective in order to present a more objective answer to the research question of this thesis.

One way to ensure that confirmability has been achieved was to adopt a reflexivity approach. “In other words, reflexivity is about analysing the hidden bias and presumptions that our social world or naturalistic environment dictates to us.”(Takhar-Lail & Chitakunye, 2015, p.22) Furthermore, it presents a continuous evaluation of me as a researcher performed by myself. The easiest way to describe it is, as Takhar and Chitakunye (2015) suggest, is to think of this notion as a process “about thinking about what you are thinking about.” (p.22)

This continuous evaluation of me during the process is to ensure that the process has not being impacted or implicated by me as “the researcher cannot separate

themselves from the social world that they study, but they can prevent bias by trying to be objective through the adoption of researcher reflexivity." (Takhar-Lail & Chitakunye, 2015, p.23) To conclude on the notion of confirmability, I believe I have continuously evaluated myself – my thoughts and emotions in order to present an objective perspective.

3.3.4. *Dependability*

Dependability mainly refers to ensuring that data collection is consistent and there are no major variations. "This is about being able to trace sources that the data comes from and about documenting the data, methods and decisions made during the fieldwork." (Johnson & Rasulova, 2017, p.268)

As qualitative research is subjective, some degree of variation is allowed however major variations would conflict with the notion of dependability. As I have been the only researcher for this study and I have tried to my best ability to stick to the research process I have chosen, I believe this research meets the dependability criteria. I believe if another researcher was to undertake the same research, there will not be a high degree of variation.

4. Findings & Analysis

As the chapter name suggests it will summarize the findings of all interviews as well as observations that I have carried out for the purpose of this study. It is interesting to note that a few patterns and characteristics between most interviewees emerged. For instance, almost all respondents were vegetarian and practiced yoga. I found this to be interesting as the respondents were not selected on the basis of any personal characteristics but rather on their frequency of shopping, which as mentioned in the previous chapter I had considered to be the most important factor for choosing interviewees.

4.1. *The respondents*

As mentioned in the previous chapter, five interviews were carried out in total. The interviewees were all female and their ages ranged from 29-69 years old. The main characteristic that I knew they had in common before interviewing them was that they all live in or around Malahide and purchased organic food in TOS. The following few paragraphs are a brief presentation of all respondents.

- Linda and Suzanne

Linda and Suzanne are sisters who moved to Dublin about a year ago. They are originally from a small town in Co. Meath and are currently self-employed. Linda is the elder sister – 36, who teaches yoga and Suzanne is 30 and has somewhat followed in her sister's footsteps as she also teaches yoga. They are both vegetarian and until recently tried to be vegan. Furthermore, they are both customers in TOS for about half a year now and since moving to Dublin live together. The highest level of education that they both have acquired up to date is Master's degree.

- Rebecca

Rebecca is 29 years old and works as a painter. She does yoga in her spare time and likes cycling. She is born and raised in Dublin, however has moved to live in Malahide not too long ago. She has a place of her own where she lives however spends a good bit of time in her dad's house. Rebecca has been a customer in TOS for about one year now and in terms of her diet preference is vegan. Her highest level of education is a Bachelor's degree.

- Julie

Julie is 69 years old and is currently retired. She sings in a choir and used to teach yoga years ago. She was also born and raised in Dublin and also lives in Malahide. Julie has been a customer of TOS since the store opened at the end of January 2015. She used to be vegetarian years ago however due to increasing health concerns has started eating meat again. Julie's highest level of education is a Master's degree.

- Lucy

Lucy is 32 years old and is currently works in retail. She is the only person that does not practice yoga however wants to be more active and mentioned she would like to start going to the gym. For the past 12 years she has lived in Dublin. Lucy has been a customer of TOS for about three years now. The highest level of education she has currently obtained is a Bachelor's degree.

- Gráinne

Gráinne is 64 years old and similar to Julie is retired. She does yoga and usually minds her grand children in her spare time. Like most of the other interviewees, she is

also a vegetarian. Gráinne is born and raised in Dublin and has been a customer of TOS since the store opened in Malahide.

4.2. *Past to Present Self-Identity*

The first thing that becomes noticeable from the interview with Linda and Suzanne is the impact a life changing experience has had on their identities. As Belk suggests experiences play an important role in shaping our self-identities and are a part of our extended selves (1988). It becomes apparent that Linda and Suzanne's interest in organic food was triggered because of their mother was suffering from throat cancer at the time. We could see from the following statement that Suzanne gave, that this experience was life changing for herself and Linda as well as affected their current food consumption and more importantly their current self-identities.

Interviewer: How did you guys start shopping organic? How did you go into that vibe and why, what triggered it?

Suzanne: So the first thing I suppose, the major thing that triggered us eating organic food was our mother got diagnosed with throat cancer.

Again in relation to the question I had asked Suzanne added the following statement, which shows how their current behavior had changed.

So when she got sick we started looking up, obviously we were in a bit of... well, huge panic at the time because it was such massive shock obviously to the family and with cancer you never know the people, person could be told "You have a few weeks to live." You never know at that stage.

Furthermore Linda continued by saying:

It was concerning our mother so we started looking at the facts, certain types of food but we don't quite know of the link between certain food and you know... I kind of suppose that got us into different perspective, changed our outcome of food and everything.

It seems that Linda and Suzanne were somewhat pushed into consuming organic food due the illness of their mother but stated many times during the interview that self-education and self-awareness are important factors, which according to them caused people to switch to organic food. They also mentioned the importance of socio-economic factors and that they served as a barrier that some people face even though they might want to become organic food consumers.

Rebecca on the other hand started consuming organic food due to her own self-awareness at the time as well as social media. In her case her self identity was changed because of the information she found on social media regarding the devastating impact of pesticides.

Rebecca: [...] I started looking into how pesticides were affecting the population and that kind of thing. Then I started to put two and two together and decided if pesticides we are putting in food are hurting bees, we eating them isn't going to do me any good. If it's meant to kill everything that it touches like... me eating it is never going to be good.

Furthermore, Julie referred to her interest in organic food being triggered by "the lady in the farm" who had served her organic food at lunch and had given a talk about how unhealthy salt and sugar could be. Again, as in the case of Linda and Suzanne, an experience that she had was life changing and served for changing her identity and in particular her extended self.

Julie: [...] I went to a health farm when I was 31 and now I am 69 so if you subtract that it's nearly 40 years and when we'll be having our meal, it was in county Mayo, the lady used vegetables and all that, it was all from the garden. And she talked then even about the dangers of sugar - too much sugar, too much salt. So when I came back then from that week I started then to look. Also as well, we did yoga for years and we used to go to doctor Ogtan for years. She was an English lady and she did homeopathy. So she always said too "If you can buy organic, buy it." And I think in a nutshell what I feel is that when I am eating I really like that my food does not have pesticides on it. That is the biggest thing for me.

These people that she met and the experiences she had with them, as Belk suggested could very much be a part of one's extended self when control by objects is exercised. (1988)

Lucy on the other hand refers to her interest in organic food being driven by her wish for being healthy, her hoped-for self. When I asked her when she first discovered organic food, she referred to the time she spent in the countryside when she was a child. Her reference had almost a nostalgic tone to it and as she said:

Lucy: I think I first discovered organic food when I was a kid. I didn't know at the time it was organic or what organic meant for that matter. We had a house in the countryside with a lot of different trees. My sister and I used to climb them and pick the nuts and fruits. It was an amazing experience that I didn't really appreciate at the time.

She states that she did not appreciate this experience at the time even though she now considers it to have been "amazing".

Last but not least, Gráinne's interest in organic food was triggered by her daughter and more specifically by a book her daughter gave her 10 years ago for Christmas called *Eating animals*. This book affected her so much that she actually became vegetarian after reading it and as she says she never touched meat afterwards. We might not talk about a loved object in this case in relations to the book she received however it is once again evident that a person-thing-person relationship that Belk talked about

4.3. *Healthy Lifestyle – Healthy Self*

Another theme that emerged from the interviews was the health of the interviewees as a main reason for consuming organic food. This has been widely researched in the past and is known as one of the main reasons for organic food consumption however it was important to find out whether the respondents of this study also felt this way or there were other reasons for their organic food consumption.

Linda and Suzanne, for example, state that their diet comprises of 95-100% organic food, which three to four years ago was as much as 0%. As mentioned earlier they had completely changed their diet due to the life changing experience of their mother getting cancer.

Interviewer: So, why is it relevant for you to consume organic food?

Suzanne: It's relevant I suppose for us because we have seen the impact of it. Initially, I suppose, we informed ourselves of the health benefits. [...] Because initially it had nothing to do with us, we were still eating that food and slowly transitioned over the course of a few months we were baking our own bread. So we had completely changed from eating processed food to kind of now 100% organic diet.

Even though they were going to a traumatic for them life event they had not identified a need to consume organic.

Furthermore, when I asked Rebecca about the amount of organic food she consumed daily she stated it was anywhere between 80-100% depending on whether she eats at home or not. She identifies as feeling healthier but further more she feels more nourished when she eats organic food.

Rebecca: I felt a lot more nourished with organic food and I don't know if that's a psychological thing but I genuinely feel like there is more in them, they are grown better you know, that their water content is less, that you actually get a full meal. It just feels like you are getting more nutrients and it just feels as your body is getting more of it as if you don't eat organic food.

Rebecca also talked about how her current financial situation was a barrier for her to consuming organic food or as she said:

[...]in the beginning I didn't have enough money to buy organic or thought I didn't have enough money but I'll be spending it on other stuff, other things that are just gone now.

She used to smoke but she eventually decided it was more important for her to consume organic food rather than smoke.

Julie as well identifies a need for being healthy. When I asked her about the relevance for her in consuming organic food she replied:

Julie: Because I feel it's better for my health. I'd be very conscious of being healthy. I say to my sons "I don't want to be the one on the trolley in Beaumont hospital." I am very conscious of being well. Probably from going back that time to the health farm and learning and not wanting

to put medication in my system unless it was somehow natural because of the side effects.

She remarks as well that she changed her diet as she used to be a vegetarian and started occasionally eating meat since her doctor suggested she was “very stressed” and a steak and glass of red wine might be good for her. Julie also stated that practicing yoga made her feel stressed even though most people would consider it to be a relaxing activity. It seems even though she did not want to consume meat, which might have led to conflicting identities at the time, she had to compromise and resolve this conflict for the benefit of her health.

Julie: [...] I also like to think that when they are going to be killed, the cows... I still have a thing about that, I say “Oh my God, the poor cow!”... but that it is in some way more humane. I don’t know if this, I mean, killing an animal is still killing it. I don’t know. I suppose I do have the fish and we do vegetarian meals but I do have the fish and a bit steak occasionally, maybe the steak not even once a week but mostly really for my health.

This is slightly different to the notion Ahuvia suggests, that we resolve internal conflicts by possessing loved items as her health is not really an “object” (Rabinovich & Morton, 2016)

Lucy, on the other hand, does not currently have a healthy lifestyle however wishes for such. She gave the following reasons as to why she started consuming organic food:

Lucy: Until recently I wasn’t really picky about what I would purchase from the store. It was only about three or four years ago that I started thinking more about my health and wellbeing. I like to get organic fruit and veg, because I feel like most of the times it tastes better and I

don't think it does because it is organic per say but because the produce isn't forced to grow.

Furthermore, she considers organic food consumption to be relevant for her as she believes it to be a step in the right direction of becoming healthier. Her daily organic food consumption at the moment is about 50%-100%, which seems like quite a large gap if compared to the rest of the respondent. She did however say she would like to make a change.

Lucy: Well, mainly because I would like to be healthier. I gained a lot of weight three years ago and I started thinking about my way of life. I want to change my bad habits and become a healthier and happier person. I am not as active as I used to be due to a lot of reasons, but mainly my job I guess and I suppose the quality of food I eat isn't great or at least wasn't.

As she currently does not associate herself to be healthy but is a something that she would like to achieve in the future, it could be said that her hoped-for self identity is that of someone who is more physically active and healthier.

Gráinne considers the use of pesticides to be one of the main reasons for her to consume organic food. She spoke about a case brought up against Monsanto by a man in LA. She went on to say that the person had won the case however was terminally ill and was going to die shortly. The case was in regards to the use of pesticides by Monsanto and these pesticides were the main cause for the man from LA to get cancer. Her personal belief is that you should not be consuming fruit and vegetables that people spray in full body suits. Her organic consumption does not stop at just food as she stated as her cosmetics are also fully organic. Gráinne believes that her organic food consumption currently is about 85-90%.

A paradox that I have observed regarding organic consumers and their healthy lifestyle was observed in Masha. Masha is a colleague of mine who works in another branch of TOS. She is also an organic food consumer and has been for a few years now. She has her own small garden and grows organic vegetables and when we have spoken about organic food she stated that her diet consists of at least 95% of organic food. Where the paradox stems from the fact that even though she practices yoga and consumes organic food and considers herself healthy she smokes as she says “only 2-3 cigarettes a day.” I considered this to be interesting as it in some way revealed an internal conflict that she had, which I believe she resolves by compromising that she “only” smokes two to three cigarettes a day.

4.4. Green Consumer

All of the interviewees were environmentally conscientious and in a sense were trying to minimize their environmental impact. An uprising trend in Ireland is the minimization of packaging. This trend mainly emerged due to overwhelming consumer concerns about the environment. This is a great example of how the consumer, as stipulated by CCT, is responsible for reshaping market offerings and the market. Since consumer's actions of leaving plastic packaging in stores had started before proceeding to leave the store initiated a few years ago, supermarkets started revisiting their product packaging and introduced more loose fruit and vegetables.

An observation of the behavior I had in relation to another regular consumer of organic food in TOS – Catherina is that she often comes to the store to bring back some of the paper bags she has used. She mainly uses her own bag whenever she comes to shop however on rare occasions when she has forgotten it, she uses a paper one instead. She has recently started bringing back recyclable plastic as she explained she did not have where to recycle it.

Another customer that we had a while back would bring her own vegetable reusable bags. She explained to me at the time that one of the reasons she would shop in TOS was because there was no useless packaging on all fruit and vegetables. The latter customer was regular in the shop for about a year; however she has not been a customer of the shop for over a year now.

Overall, I find that over 50% of our regular shoppers use their own bags. It might seem like a trivial fact or observation however it shows to extend that these people are also concerned about the environment. I have made this assumption based on the fact that the shop does not have a charge for the use of paper bags and therefore I assume the reasons behind consumers bringing their own bags is one to do with their environmental impact and consciousness.

When I asked Linda and Suzanne, what type of person they think organic food would be Linda answered the following:

Linda: Someone who looks after the environment as well. Very much environmental friendly, so less plastic, less carbon footprint, help the farmers and wants to keep the economy of vegetables growing within their country. Help farmers in that sense as well. They are very much about home roots, nourishing that.

Further in the interview I had asked them what aspects of the “organic food person” that they describe relate to them and both Linda and Suzanne agreed that environmentally conscious was one of them.

Despite their statements, they had not acknowledged the fact that most of the organic fruit and vegetables that are sold in TOS are imported. Furthermore, taking the stance of an observer in the shop while they have been there, I have noticed that even though they claimed they are concerned about packaging and carbon footprint, this did not quite reflect on their purchasing habits. For example, when

both Irish and foreign organic produce is available, they do not necessarily go for the Irish produce. As a matter of fact, I cannot recall a time when they have purchased any of the Irish produce at all.

Rebecca also expressed that she was against the use of packaging when it could be avoided and said the following:

[...] I feel very guilty if I buy stuff with plastic packaging now, it makes me very anxious and annoyed. "Eh! Why am I buying carrots with a lot of plastic around them?" it's just stupid. This is so dumb, when I can just buy them and have them.

I had asked Rebecca why she would not shop in Lidl or Aldi in relation to what she had previously explained that she thought she could not afford organic food and her response was the following:

Rebecca: Mostly it would be the packaging. Then in that case because they kind of do it but they don't do it properly. They only do it to market it. If people hadn't stopped buying food there they wouldn't have made that step. It doesn't come from the top down "Oh we really care about the environment." Or "Oh we really care about the health of our customers". Because if they really cared, they would have just stopped it.

It was quite evident from her reply that she did not associate with supermarket chains and considers their effort for sustainability to be a marketing trick rather than driven from actual concerns. She continued by saying:

Rebecca: I just felt it was like giving a dog a bone. "Ah, we'll give you a few organic bananas with a little brown thing around them as opposed to a lot of stupid plastic" and it's just like... I'd much rather my money went into something like here when you know it's going that little bit

further and at least you are investing, the business is trying to do right or at least what it feels like is a fairly decent job. Nobody is perfect. It's a step forward I feel. I walked out of Tesco the other day. I really did. I was hungry, I wanted to get food, I walked in and saw all the packaging and I was like "fuck this" and I walked out.

When we have spoken before she acknowledged the fact that the organic produce she purchases in TOS has some carbon footprint however she also stated that being an organic food consumer is possibly the best thing to do until you can produce your own vegetables. This statement makes me believe that she considers that she is compromising until she can get to where she wants to be, to her hoped-for self.

Julie, similar to the other interviewees, mentioned that does not like the use of plastic packaging by saying:

Julie: Well in the supermarkets they do have them [about organic fruit and vegetables], as I say, they are always in the plastic. And I think it looks nicer when you come in here and you see all the vegetable and fruit are out.

Compared to the other respondents, she did not seem to be as environmentally orientated. She does not seem to like the idea of mass production as she associated the non-organic person with it and also seemed to be concerned with the ethics of killing an animal for human consumption.

Lucy did not mention to what extent she as a consumer tries to make a difference and whether she does at all. From our conversation it became evident that she was somewhat concerned about the environment however she did not discuss that any of her buying habits might be related to being environmentally friendly.

Lucy: I mean that it is sad how the world is being destroyed by us. We are being destroyed by us. It's sad that it is more important for someone to make more money and profit of people's health or from carelessly using our global resources. We are just stupid consumers that don't think about anything else but ourselves. We managed to completely wipe out animal species, our seas are extremely polluted and the Great Barrier Reef is almost being destroyed. Ice caps are melting and polar bears are dying, deforestation is a thing as well. It's just really sad to be honest. It breaks my heart. Anyway... I suppose we'll see how things turn out. Hopefully we still have time to change...

As one might suggest, she might be environmentally conscious to extend however it is not known in what way.

Last but not least, Gráinne said she believes the planet cannot sustain the amount of meat we eat and produce. Going back to the book she read, a way for her to express her environmental concerns was going vegetarian. She also stated that her generation was not aware of what they were doing at the time and were spraying everything with pesticides and destroying the environment. She was also concerned that her granddaughters were going to be the ones who would have experienced the consequences of our actions meaning that if we do not try to make a difference.

Gráinne associated the "organic food person" as someone who will not be greedy but will be considerate towards the environment. She stated that she tries to recycle as much as she can as well as not use single plastics however believes that corporations should be doing more. She added that no matter that she is not a big organization she tries to do as much as she could however it sometimes is not practical. Another point that she made was regarding the carbon footprint of the produce she buys in store and in particular with her preference to buy Irish produce

whenever possible however it proves to be difficult as the choice of organic Irish food is limited and for example you cannot get organic Irish peppers. She wants to help the planet by doing every little bit she can to leave it less contaminated.

4.5. *The Self*

One of the questions I asked all interviewees was to describe organic food as if it was a person. The purpose of this question was to see how they viewed organic food and whether any of the characteristics that they had allocated to organic food were going to relate to them. I wanted to research whether there is a correlation between the characteristics the respondents had allocated to organic food and how they perceived themselves. This in turn would show what kind of identity needs the respondents meet and fulfill by consuming organic food.

Furthermore, I wanted to draw a comparison of how they perceived non-organic food if it was a person and therefore I had also asked them to describe what characteristics it would have. This is similar to Ahuvia's research in 2005, when he drew a comparison of his subjects conflicting identities in order to find out how loved possessions helped people with conflicting identities to overcome that conflict. (Ahuvia, 2005)

When I asked Suzanne to describe what kind of person she associated with organic food, she said the following:

Suzanne: Health conscious person. [...] I think of someone in their thirties [...] I also think that person is very physically active, that goes to the gym, does yoga. They are health aware; they are into how they look on the outside but also on the inside. They don't just end up eating crap and go to the gym. Actually conscious about what they put into their own body. Somebody who looks after themselves.

Linda furthermore added that she associates organic food with someone environmentally conscious, which I described earlier. They furthermore complemented each other's ideas of what the organic food person would be and continued by saying:

Suzanne: I think it's somebody as well, just from our own experience, that educate themselves on food - both types of food. Both the food that you get in mass production and food that... the other side, the organic side. Someone who is actually interested in what's causing deceases, someone who read and watches documentaries.

Linda: Someone that is actually aware. Because you can go to the gym all you want and still come back and eat some crap. It doesn't mean that you are healthy, you know. You might look really fit but it's not a healthy. It's not about ... but it's more about what you put into your mouth, into your own body.

It seems that description is quite similar to their current lifestyle and idea of healthy living. The aspects they went on to say that related to them matched their descriptions of the "organic food person". I believe this correlates to McCracken's theory regarding movement of meaning even though it might be hard to talk about any of the four rituals he suggests serve as ways of transferring meaning from consumer goods on to the consumer. (Mccracken, 1986)

The answer that Rebecca had on the above question was as follows:

Rebecca: I don't know... Very down to earth. Calm. Relaxed. They'll be quite driven as a person, you know, on the ball. Committed to what they are doing. If they went on to do something they'll be very dedicated to it. It takes a lot more work to grow organic food, so for someone to be an

organic person they'd have to be very dedicated and on the ball and hard working and so on. Nice and friendly and stuff as well.

The aspects that she could relate to on the other hand did not only present characteristics that she already had. She also associated her future or hoped-for self with the "organic food person's" characteristics. She expressed a desire to be more driven and hardworking and relate to the description she gave by saying the following:

Rebecca: [...] So I suppose being quite nice, energetic and caring will be things I'd relate to. Because one of the main reasons I started eating organic was caring about my own waste and stuff. It was through kind of seeing stuff online and seeing other people talking about it and telling you how bad it is and feeling the guilt as well. I didn't know it was all going into the ocean or that it would take hundreds of years, thousands of years to melt down or all the fisheries. So yes, I guess I would identify with the kindness aspect of it and then wanting to be hard working and driven.

In the case of Julie, her interpretation of the "organic food person" was the following:

Julie: I suppose vitality. Someone with vitality and caring and thoughtful. That type of thing rather than all mass produced, you know and maybe not too much thought going into it. So, yes, vitality, the caring, the thoughtful. That's it.

Similar to Suzanne and Linda, Julie's idea of what the organic food would be like if it was a person, corresponds to the way she perceives herself or thinks of herself. When questioned about what aspects of the above description she believes relate to herself she answered:

Julie: Well, I think I am thoughtful. I'd like to think that I am a thoughtful person and I am kind. And I do have I'd say vitality. Well sometimes I am tired but most of the time I think because I keep myself as well as I can so I'd say I can relate.

This strengthens the notion that the respondents somewhat describe themselves when allocating characteristics to organic food.

Similar to Rebecca, when Lucy had to allocate human features to organic food she associated her hoped-for self with the person she described. The following paragraph represents her thought on what organic food would be if it were a person:

Lucy: I think it would be a positive, energetic, happy person. I kind of picture it as a woman in her thirties or forties, full of life. I imagine one of these pictures of Spring in kids' books. Spring is always playful and happy and always a woman. That's kind of what I imagine when I think about organic food - pure and kind, wearing a white dress, smiling and dancing on a green lawn nearby trees or a forest. A motherly figure as well I guess and someone who doesn't smoke.

She associated herself with being kind and positive however she expressed a wish for being healthier and livelier. She also added that she aspired to become a mother. Again, similar to Rebecca, it could be assumed that these are not characteristics that she currently associates her self identity with but are rather a vision of her hoped-for self identity.

In addition, to Gráinne's response of what organic food might be as a person, which I talked about previously, she added that she also associated herself with greedlessness that she found out about from yoga. The term, as it might suggest, relates to using just as much as you need without being greedy.

Furthermore, I also wanted to investigate what kind of identities the respondents did not associate with so I had asked them to describe the way they envision non-organic food as a person. Most of the respondents associated non-organic food with a person who is greedy, materialistic and careless, which is quite contrary to the traits they allocated to organic food. Furthermore, some of the descriptions included someone who is ill, smokes, a person that is uneducated or disadvantage. Linda and Suzanne went on to defining this person as being unaware however they specified that this unawareness was not through his/her own fault. In addition to all of the above, non organic food was compared to someone who is not physically active, spends his money anything but food and is miserable.

It is interesting to note that Lucy associates the organic food as someone who does not smoke and also stated that she has recently stopped smoking. This leads me to believe that she associates organic food with her desire to be healthier and vice versa to distance herself from the unappealing image she created for non-organic food.

In conclusion of the descriptions that the respondent drew of organic and non-organic food as people while being interviewed, I would assume that the interviewees associate themselves with the organic food person and distanced themselves and their self-identities from the "non-organic food person".

4.6. *Influencing Others*

As mentioned in CCT, consumers' choices are driven and shaped by their community and loved ones and CCT stipulates that one's self-identity or group identity is also formed around the sense of community and belonging. Furthermore, Identity is formed by sharing the same "values, norms, ideals and conventions", which in turn creates different subgroups and communities within the market setting

as discussed earlier (E. Arnould et al., 2006). Therefore, I wanted to study the extent to which interviewees shared information about their organic food consumption and furthermore tried to persuade others into consuming organic food.

When I asked Linda and Suzanne if they would tell other people about their organic food consumption and the benefits of consuming organic food in general they stated that they used to do so in the beginning of their transition. They went on to specify that even though they used to tell people about the benefits of consuming organic food they do not try to convince people to switch to it as they would rather let them make their own choice without trying to force their opinion on people. Furthermore, they suggested that it is better for people to make their own minds as they feel it is better to serve as an example to people.

Rebecca as well feels the need to share with other people about her consumption of organic food. When I asked her whether or not she told other about it she replied:

Rebecca: Yea, I do. I definitely do. I think for a lot of people the unavailability of it and then the cost is like a major issue but then some people think it's fancier than non organic food. There's a bit of a stigma attached to it that being healthy is an upper class of thing or a very upper middle class thing. There's this kind of thing circulating "Oh, is it organic?" You know the way people have made fun of people that do yoga. So there's that little bit of stigma to it.

Interviewer: So you find that most people you tell about organic food consumption don't really take it seriously or think it's really fancy?

Rebecca: Yea, it's just because it's that little bit more expensive they think it's out of their price range or not worth it because I don't think there's enough

emphasis put on the health ramifications. And maybe there's not even that much research into organic food over non organic food

From what Rebecca shared, we could assume that her circle of friends and acquaintances considers organic food to be "fancier" to extent. It is considered to be something that people of higher class would be privileged to, which in turn as she suggests, people have made fun of.

The difference in feedback that Rebecca as well as Linda and Suzanne have experienced from telling others about their organic food consumption is most likely caused by a difference in values and norms that they share with their friends and acquaintances as well as different socio-economic backgrounds.

Julie has also had some bad experiences in telling others about her organic food consumption, which have actually made her a lot more cautious about what she shares. When presented with the same question as Linda, Suzanne and Rebecca she said:

Julie: Not too much. I remember years ago a friend of mine Mary Flynn, she's a doctor Flynn now, she's a dietician. We are still in touch. And I remember saying to her "I'd only eat organic food." And this was years ago, in my early thirties and she got really annoyed with me and said "Julie you have to remember that there are so many people that can't afford organic food. There are people with big families and they go into the supermarket. It drives me mad when you start talking like that!"

As Julie was from a better socio-economic background than most people she was on a few occasion reminded of it, which in turn has made her much more careful on talking about organic food in front of her acquaintances and friends. She mentioned that her close friends know that she shops organic however she does

not try to convince anyone into switching to organic food and just as Linda and Suzanne believes in leading by example. She would not even try to convince her sons as she thinks that they might not be able to afford it at the moment.

Lucy on the other hand, does not tell others about her organic food consumption or as a matter of fact try to convince anyone about consuming organic food, as she thinks it would be hypocritical of her to do so since her diet is not very consistent. The only people that she finds herself sharing with are her parents.

Furthermore, Gráinne's response in relation to the question whether she tells others about her consumption was that she has "backed off a little bit" as she thinks she was "pain in the ass". She does share her values though with some of her friends and continued on to say that she does not try to convince other people to change and switch to organic food anymore but she would much rather show them. She quoted Gnadhi by saying she prefers the idea of leading by example and to "be the change you want to see".

In summary, all of the respondents have stated that they tell others about their organic food consumption however they feel like there is no need to convince anyone into consuming organic food probably due to the fact that their comments were often met with criticism. Most of the respondent much rather prefer to lead by example.

4.7. *The Hoped-for Self*

The hoped-for self is possibly a concept that all of us could relate to at some point in our lives. We all strive to be the best version of ourselves, do more, be more proactive in a way. I feel that three of the respondents were somewhat concerned about their future self.

When I asked Rebecca about the characteristics that she thinks she shares with the “organic food person”, she replied the following:

Rebecca: Well, I'd like to be hard working and I'd like to be focused and determined and stuff. So they'll be my role models in that. I'll be like “Oh they are so great! Look at them go!” [...] I would identify with the kindness aspect of it and then wanting to be hard working and driven.

Further on in the interview when she spoke about her brother and she mentioned that he is about to start growing his own food she said:

Rebecca: That's my ultimate goal to be able to grow food.

Therefore, it could be said she considers her current self strives to become someone who is hard working and determined. She also said at some point during the interview that she considers her organic food consumption to be the best that she could do for the time being until she could produce her own food. This leads me to believe that her hoped-for self identity is of a grower/farmer and she is currently somewhat compromising.

Lucy also seemed to be talking about her hoped-for self. For her this hoped-for self identity was that of someone healthier and happier. She said that one of the main reasons of her organic food consumption was that she wanted to be healthier. The following is related to the reasons organic food is relevant to her:

Lucy: Well, mainly because I would like to be healthier. I gained a lot of weight three years ago and I started thinking about my way of life. I want to change my bad habits and become a healthier and happier person.

Furthermore, Julie said she would like to preserve how she feels and stay healthy. She expressed that she was very health conscious. I would assume that her hope-for self identity relates to someone who is healthy and vital even though she currently is.

I did not get a sense of what Linda's, Suzanne's and Gráinne's hoped-for selves were. Probably more interviews would have been needed in order to determine what their thoughts about their future selves are if they can relate to this concept.

This chapter presented an overlook of all interviews that were carried out as well as some observations that I have gathered over the years. I will try to answer the research question of this thesis based on these findings in the chapter to follow.

5. Discussion

The discussion chapter is solely focused on analyzing the findings of the previous chapter and relating them to the theoretical foundation that was presented in Chapter 2. The purpose of this chapter is to give an answer to the research question of this thesis about how consumer identities' affect organic food consumption and how important are rituals for organic food consumption.

5.1. *Movement of Meaning & Rituals*

As discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, the concept of movement of meaning introduced by McCracken refers to the notion that meaning is transferred from the “culturally constituted world” into consumer goods, which in turn transfer meaning on to the individual consumer (Mccracken, 1986). One question that I had asked all interviewees and served to illustrate what respondents perceived as meaning that could have been transferred from organic food on to them related to the characteristics they would allocate to organic food if it were a person. As described in the previous chapter, all respondents listed certain characteristics that they saw best fitted for “the organic food person”.

In order to find out whether meaning was in fact transferred from organic food on to the respondents and confirm or reject that the concept, I had further investigated what aspects of the characteristics by which they described the organic food as person actually related to them. Since all respondents associated themselves with the “organic food person” they described, I believe it is possible to say that by consuming organic food they were transferring meaning from the good to themselves. However, because organic food is perishable, in order for the consumer to continue to draw meaning from the properties one associates with

organic food, he/she would have to repeatedly consume the latter as suggested by McCracken. (1986)

As discussed in Chapter 2, grooming rituals seem to be an effective way of transferring meaning from perishable goods on to consumers (Rook, 1985). But whether the respondents' actions related to what a ritual is, is debatable. Out of the four elements that Rook outline that need to be present in order for a ritual to exist – ritual artifact, script, performance roles and audience, this study has possibly identified with two. (Rook, 1985) One would be the ritual artifacts, which in this case would be the organic food itself and artifacts related to respondents' houses and in more detail related to the consumption of organic food – pots, juicers, chopping boards, etc. Another element that could possibly be identified is the ritual audience, which in the case of the respondents would be family – spouses, granddaughters, daughters, sons, and friends.

However, the present study has not found any information on what the performance roles or the ritual script might be and therefore the importance of rituals, if any, cannot be determined.

5.2. *The Self and Nature as Extended Self*

Going back to Belk's concept of self and extended self, it is evident from the interviews that all respondent have transitioned from one from one old self to a new, healthier version of self (R. W. Belk, 1988). The only respondent that is still somewhat in transition of becoming that hoped-for version of self is Lucy as she stated she would like to become healthier. It could be said that all other respondents associate themselves as being healthy and somewhat environmentally conscious as they associated themselves with these two characteristics. Therefore,

it could be assumed that their core self identifies as being a healthy and environmentally conscious individual.

In addition to the above, Kunchambo et. al. suggest that nature could have power over us as individuals which in turn results in nature being a part of our extended selves (Kunchambo et al., 2016). All of the respondents related to nature in some way however it seemed that in the case of Rebecca, it is probably likely to assume that she would identify with the encapsulated self. The reason for this is the way she spoke about nature – as a higher being – and considered herself as well as referred to other as stemming from Mother Nature. Whether we could consider nature as part of the other respondents' extended selves is hard to say and more research would be needed in order to confirm or reject this notion.

Finally, I would like to address the research question and evaluate whether one's organic food consumption is affected by one's self identity. I believe it is safe to say that the self identities of the subjects' studied played a role in their organic food consumption. This idea is mainly supported by the movement of meaning from organic food consumption on to the respondents discussed earlier.

Nonetheless, due to the small sample size I believe additional research is needed in order to strengthen this idea. It is important to say, that this research only focused on organic food consumers and that not all people who identify with a healthy self would be a part of this group – organic food consumers.

To summarize on the research question of this thesis:

How consumers' purchasing behavior of organic food is influenced by one's self-identity and how important are rituals for organic food consumption?

I would say that the importance of rituals could not be determined due to lack of data and therefore more research is needed in order to establish whether rituals are of any importance to organic food consumption. I would finish by saying that in relation to the respondents' who were interviewed it could be assumed that self identity played an important and key role of shaping consumers' purchasing behavior and consumption of organic food.

6. Conclusion

The overall research objective of this thesis was to establish whether consumers' self identity played a role with regards to their organic food consumption and whether rituals were of any importance for this consumption. The research question as I had identified that there was lack of research on this topic.

The research had taken into consideration the stance of CCT or in other words that consumers' desire to constructing their personal identities and identity projects as well as play a significant role in reshaping market offerings. Two key concepts were discussed in order to answer the research question of the thesis – the notions of self identity and rituals.

The main conclusions that were drawn from this study were:

First, that more research we needed in order to establish whether or not rituals are of importance for organic food consumption;

Second, consumers' self identities play a key role in shaping their consumer purchasing habits and consumption.

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8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Land allocated for organic agriculture by country

	Total organic area (ha)		2012–16 (% change)
	2012	2016	
EU-28	10 047 896	11 931 589	18.7
Belgium	59 718	78 452	31.4
Bulgaria	39 138	160 620	310.4
Czech Republic	468 670	488 591	4.3
Denmark	194 706	201 476	3.5
Germany	959 832	1 135 941	18.3
Estonia	142 065	180 852	27.3
Ireland	52 793	76 701	45.3
Greece	462 618	342 584	-25.9
Spain	1 756 548	2 018 802	14.9
France	1 030 881	1 537 351	49.1
Croatia	31 904	93 593	193.4
Italy	1 167 362	1 796 333	53.9
Cyprus	3 923	5 550	41.5
Latvia	195 658	259 146	32.4
Lithuania	156 539	221 665	41.6
Luxembourg	4 130	4 274	3.5
Hungary	130 607	186 322	42.7
Malta	37	24	-35.1
Netherlands	48 038	52 204	8.7
Austria	533 230	571 423	7.2
Poland	655 499	536 579	-18.1
Portugal	200 833	245 052	22.0
Romania	288 261	226 309	-21.5
Slovenia	35 101	43 579	24.2
Slovakia	164 360	187 024	13.8
Finland	197 751	238 240	20.5
Sweden	477 684	552 695	15.7
United Kingdom	590 011	490 205	-16.9
Iceland	:	22 594	:
Norway	55 260	47 621	-13.8
Switzerland	121 013	141 249	16.7
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	:	3 245	:
Serbia	:	14 358	:
Turkey	:	533 218	:

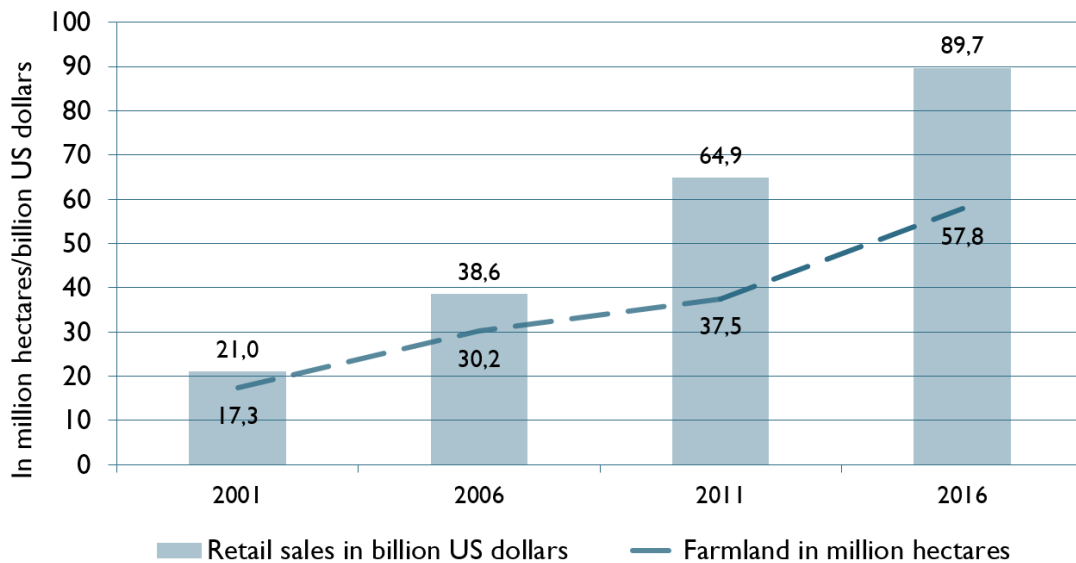
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Appendix 2 – Statistics related to organic food – Source FiBL, 2018

Growth in organic food & drinks sales and farmland, 2001-2016

Source: Ecovia Intelligence 2018

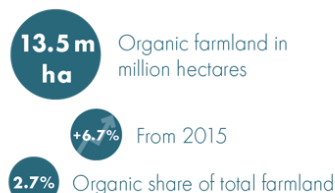
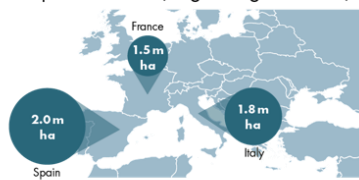
ecovia
INTELLIGENCE



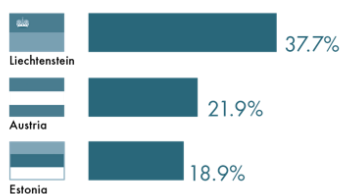
Organic Agriculture in Europe 2016

Organic Farmland 2016

Top 3 countries (largest organic area)



Organic share of total farmland: Top 3 countries



Organic Producers & Processors 2016

The number of organic producers is increasing



Number of producers: Top 3 countries

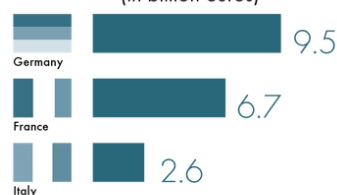


Organic Market 2016

The European market is growing



Organic retail sales: Top 3 countries (in billion euros)



21.8% Organic market growth

9.7% Market share

274 € Highest per capita spending is in Switzerland

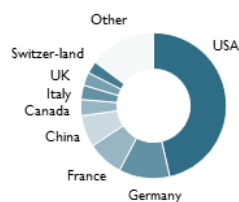
FiBL

Source: FiBL survey based on national sources
© FiBL 2018
More information: www.organic-world.net

ORGANIC RETAIL SALES 2016

World
over
80 billion €

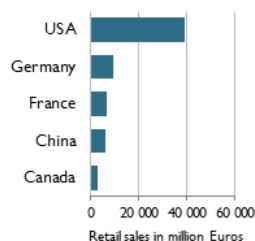
The largest single market is the USA followed by the EU (30.7 billion €) and China. By region, North America has the lead (41.9 billion €), followed by Europe (33.5 billion €) and Asia.



Distribution of retail sales value by country 2016

North America
almost
42 billion €

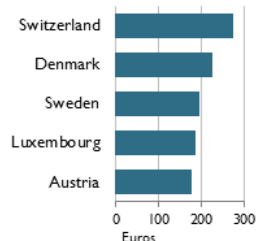
The countries with the largest market for organic food are the United States (38.9 billion €), followed by Germany (9.5 billion €), France (6.7 billion €) and China (5.9 billion €).



The five countries with the largest markets for organic food 2016

274€
are spent per
person in
Switzerland

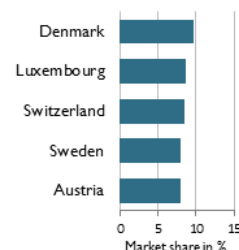
Switzerland has the highest per capita consumption worldwide, followed by Denmark and Sweden.



The five countries with the highest per capita consumption 2016

9.7%
of the
food market
in Denmark is
organic

The highest shares the organic market of the total market is in Denmark, followed by Luxembourg, Switzerland, Sweden, and Austria.



The five countries with the highest organic shares of the total market 2016

FiBL

www.fibl.org

Source: FiBL survey 2018 www.organic-world.net

Appendix 3 – Interview Guide

Entry questions:

Before we start would you like anything to drink?

Do you mind if I record the interview?

Do you live in the area? Do you like living in Malahide (area in Dublin where the shop is located)?

Did you grow-up in the area?

Background information:

When/How did you discover organic food?

Why was it relevant for you to consume organic food?

What percentage of your daily diet consists of organic food? How has this changed over time?

Projective technique showing what people associate with organic food:

If organic food was a person, what type of person would it be? Might be appropriate to ask the same regarding non-organic food in order to draw a comparison or not

Individual identity needs that organic food allows people to meet:

What aspects of the “organic food person” relate to yourself as a person?

What does it mean to you as a person to consume organic food?

How does consuming organic food make you feel?

Social identity needs that organic food allows people to meet:

Do you tell others about your organic food consumption?

Do you try to convince others to consume more organic food? If not, why not? If yes, why is this relevant for you?

Rituals

How would you normally consume organic food?

Do you think about the type of food you use when having friends/family over or for special occasions?

Is there any organic food that you always go back to? How is it a part of your life?

Do you buy organic food for your friends/ family as a treat?

Would you like to share anything else?

Appendix 4 - Interviews

Interview 1: Linda and Suzanne – 36 and 30 years old

- Interviewer: How did you guys start shopping organic? How did you go into that vibe and why, what triggered it?
- Suzanne: So the first thing I suppose, the major thing that triggered us eating organic food was our mother got diagnosed with throat cancer. How many years was that ago? Three years ago?
- Linda: Four.
- Suzanne: Is it?
- Linda: Oh yeah
- Suzanne: So our mother got diagnosed with throat cancer and before that we would have just eaten typical Irish diet, you know you local supermarket...
- Linda: All the usual like Tescos
- Suzanne: Meat, veg, potatoes. That type of thing. We would have had a bit of junk food, frozen food.
- Linda: Yeah, processed food.
- Suzanne: Not loads of frozen food but a bit of frozen food
- Linda: There was, yeah. Chips and all that frozen shit
- Suzanne: So when she got sick we started looking up, obviously we were in a bit of... well, huge panic at the time because it was such

massive shock obviously to the family and with cancer you never know the people, person could be told "You have a few weeks to live." You never know at that stage. So she had been diagnosed and first thing we started looking up online like Linda was ringing friends. We were all ringing friends, family and just reaching different people and started looking then. One of the main things we started looking at was the diet - what she was eating or what we were eating then as a family. I suppose we started looking at things like the wheatgrass. We started buying it, we actually got the seeds.

Linda: We got the seeds, we started growing our own. We got juicer, we started juicing it, we did the whole thing. We were basically were thrown into the field of unknown. Imagine growing up with this kind of thing... and so it's kind of unknown. It was searching, researching, hearing other people's positive feedback.

Suzanne: So it was basically through kind of researching... We knew organic existed but we would have... we went in search of organic food there. We actually looked up articles, you know, reached out to people. We did a lot of research ourselves on it and health benefits.

Linda: It was concerning our mother so we started looking at the facts, certain types of food but we don't exactly know how... We started looking at the facts of certain types of food but we don't quite know of the link between certain food and you know. I kind of suppose that got us into different perspective, changed our outcome of food and everything.

Interviewer: And was it easy to find organic food at the time?

Suzanne: At the beginning, no. So we are from the next county to Dublin, which is Meath. So you are looking at smaller towns that would have the likes of SuperValu, Lidl, Aldi, those kind of stores. You would get a small selection of organic vegetables in SuperValu and stuff like that but nothing compared to what you would get in TOS.

Linda: Some of them might actually grow for their own, for their own consumption.

Interviewer: So, why is it relevant for you to consume organic food?

Suzanne: It's relevant I suppose for us because we have seen the impact of it. Initially, I suppose, we informed ourselves of the health benefits. Mom was sick and all that so we researched. Because initially it had nothing to do with us, we were still eating that food and slowly transitioned over the course of a few month we were baking our own bread. So we had completely changed from eating processed food to kind of now 100% organic diet.

Interviewer: So do you think your diet at the moment is 100% organic food?

Suzanne: More or less. I'd say about 95%

Linda: More or less, yes. Take-away now and again, junk food every now and again but the majority of it - 95%.

Interviewer: So you would say for 3-4 years it went from 0% to 95%?

Suzanne: Yeah, yeah.

Linda: Yeah, yeah.

Suzanne: The taste of organic food has completely transformed both of our...

Linda: Preference

Suzanne: Preference for organic food. The taste of the vegetables, the taste of the food, the taste of the dinners we make using organic produce is not like we could have ever had before. So we would never go to certain places, or go to someone's house and have salad and you know that they don't buy organic... You know the difference very, very quickly and it is not very enjoyable for us... because we are so used to the nice flavor you get of organic ingredients

Interviewer: This is a bit of a strange question but try and answer it as you perceive it. If organic food was a person, if you can give it any personal traits, what kind of person would it be?

Linda: Pure, fresh, clean.

Suzanne: Health conscious person. I think somebody in their... if I just close my eyes and think about it, I think of someone in their thirties and the reason I think that is because I suppose when you are in your twenties, unless your parents brought you up with organic food, it's only in your late twenties or your late thirties that you become more aware of what you are actually putting in your body. Because when you are twenty you drink and smoke and you don't care but when you get in your thirties you are more into your body. Especially, I also think that person is very physically active, that goes to the gym, does yoga. They are health aware, they are into how they look on the outside but

also on the inside. They don't just end up eating crap and go to the gym. Actually conscious about what they put into their own body. Somebody who looks after themselves.

Linda: Someone who looks after the environment as well. Very much environmental friendly, so less plastic, less carbon footprint, help the farmers and wants to keep the economy of vegetables growing within their country. Help farmers in that sense as well. They are very much about home roots, nourishing that.

Suzanne: I think it's somebody as well, just from our own experience, that educate themselves on food - both types of food. Both the food that you get in mass production and food that... the other side, the organic side. Someone who is actually interested in what's causing diseases, someone who read and watches documentaries.

Linda: Someone that is actually aware. Because you can go to the gym all you want and still come back and eat some crap. It doesn't mean that you are healthy, you know. You might look really fit but it's not a healthy. It's not about ... but it's more about what you put into your mouth, into your own body.

Interviewer: And in the same sense how would you describe non-organic food, if you had to allocate human traits into non-organic food, physical description?

Linda: I suppose money is thing as well, an income, you know. In terms of I suppose, in families it would be depending on their income they tend to buy cheaper, processed food. So I do think income has a part to play with it, education as well.

Suzanne: Someone who generally comes from a lower socio-economic background.

Linda: It starts with education as Suzanne said.

Interviewer: Someone who is uneducated or?

Linda: Disadvantaged.

Suzanne: Not through their own fault. It could be upbringing or their background, you know what I mean so someone like that. Someone that as well probably has no interest in being physically active, is a bit of a couch potato that would live on processed, frozen food and loads of mass produced food.

Linda: Lack of awareness, I think. Lack of education. Lack of interest. It all starts from probably something happened in your family as Suzanne said or when you are conditioned to eating that way. These habits are created unless something happens which did in our family to make you look in that direction.

Suzanne: It could be as well that this person has a different mindset. Their preference might be to go and have... spend money on cigarettes, alcohol or recreational drugs versus food. Eating habits may be something that is really pushed to the back of their mind. It's just something, that they just eat cause it's... they've chosen something because it's quick. They have a really busy lifestyle as well, working nights and long hours and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Yes, yes, I get that. I know what you mean.

Linda: And it's also up to your values. You know you have values in your head. We behave in certain ways depending on your values

Interview 2: Rebecca – 29 years old

Interviewer: What was the way you turned into organic food? How did you find it?

Rebecca: So, I guess I started eating organic because I started doing research, not even research but even online I started looking into how pesticides were affecting the population and that kind of thing. Then I started to put two and two together and decided if pesticides we are putting in food are hurting bees, we eating them isn't going to do me any good. If it's meant to kill everything that it touches like... me eating it is never going to be good. And a big thing of it was the plastic packaging in shop. A lot of times I was buying food in Lidl and Aldi, which are a lot cheaper but trying to be more environmentally aware and having all this food packaged in plastic. And it seemed like TOS and the green door market in town, cause I used to live in town and the green door market is in town. They used to sell it. Those guys were the most convenient for me to get to and once I started eating organic it was very hard to go back, because your body just knows then, gets used to it.

Interviewer: And how long ago did you start researching this?

Rebecca: It probably started just about three years ago and then slowly started. Slowly cause in the beginning I didn't have enough money to buy organic or thought I didn't have enough money but I'll be spending it on other stuff, other things that are just gone now. So about three years ago.

Interviewer: So why do you feel it was relevant for you to consume organic food apart from the pesticides?

Rebecca: I felt a lot more nourished with organic food and I don't know if that's a psychological thing but I genuinely feel like there is more in them, they are grown better you know, that their water content is less, that you actually get a full meal. It just feels like you are getting more nutrients and it just feels as your body is getting more of it as if you don't eat organic food. When I eat organic chick peas my brain and my body is like "Yea, cool. That was a meal; we got what we needed from it." Where, if I eat a pack of normal chick peas I'm not sated.

Interviewer: What percentage of your daily diet consists of organic food?

Rebecca: 80% to 100%. Especially if I am at home. If I'm at home it's 100% cause I shop here most of the time. But if I am out and about and if I had to eat in town and stuff that obviously brings it down.

Interviewer: How do you find... How did this change over time? You said you sort of started about three years ago and you kind of slowly went into consuming organic food. So did it drastically change over time or how did it change in terms of daily consumption?

Rebecca: It was like a trickle effect. It was maybe like, half of the stuff you buy was organic and then just over time I started realizing that I felt much better when I ate organic food. I didn't mind spending the extra bit of money on organic food when I was connecting really emotionally with it even. I feel very guilty if I buy stuff with plastic packaging now, it makes me very anxious and annoyed.

"Eh! Why am I buying carrots with a lot of plastic around them?" it's just stupid. This is so dumb, when I can just buy them and have them. Yeah, so it was a trickle effect. Just the more I had it it made complete sense. It's cleaner, it's like... there's nicer energy attached to it. It feels like there's less residual energy. I don't know if this makes any sense? You know picking it up feels nice. It's like "Hm... this came out of the ground, it hasn't been overly washed and they haven't picked all the ugly carrots. You know what I mean? They haven't picked all the ugly carrots. It hasn't gone through one of those big machines that goes "Dddrrr, dddrrr" and power washed and then put in a truck. I know there's a miles on these things as well but it just feels less. Trying to be zero waste or just reduce you waste.

Interviewer: Is that kind of one of the reasons you wouldn't go back to let's say shopping in Aldi or Lidl? Because I know they have organic produce as well and they are trying to minimize their packaging as well. If they are doing the same thing why wouldn't you shop there? Because they are cheaper as far as I know and they offer organic as well.

Rebecca: Mostly it would be the packaging. Then in that case because they kind of do it but they don't do it properly. They only do it to market it. If people hadn't stopped buying food there they wouldn't have made that step. It doesn't come from the top down "Oh we really care about the environment." Or "Oh we really care about the health of our customers". Because if they really cared, they would have just stopped it. They have the capability to change how supermarkets work completely because they are selling it so cheap. No matter what they do

people are going to shop there pretty much. I just felt it was like giving a dog a bone. "Ah, we'll give you a few organic bananas with a little brown thing around them as opposed to a lot of stupid plastic" and it's just like... I'd much rather my money went into something like here when you know it's going that little bit further and at least you are investing, the business is trying to do right or at least what it feels like is a fairly decent job. Nobody is perfect. It's a step forward I feel. I walked out of Tesco the other day. I really did. I was hungry, I wanted to get food, I walked in and saw all the packaging and I was like "fuck this" and I walked out.

Interviewer: This is a bit of an unusual question but try to answer it the way you can picture it. If organic food was a person what kind of characteristic do you think this person would have?

Rebecca: I don't know... Very down to earth. Calm. Relaxed. They'll be quite driven as a person, you know, on the ball. Committed to what they are doing. If they went on to do something they'll be very dedicated to it. It takes a lot more work to grow organic food, so for someone to be an organic person they'd have to be very dedicated and on the ball and hard working and so on. Nice and friendly and stuff as well.

Interviewer: It's kind of the same question regarding non-organic food. What kind of person comes to mind? If you had to compare them and give them physical appearances what kind of people they are - both organic and non-organic.

Rebecca: Yes, the other one the non-organic one I'll see as kind of sickly now. Like if someone is on constant medication. If you've met

somebody and they are on medication all the time. I see them as they are always in and out o hospitals and they are insecure and you know... like materialistic. Not even materialistic but reserved and very caught in their ways. But mostly I see them as kind of sickly now. Like awkward and all their limbs are a little bit inward and their body language is quite like constricted as opposed to the organic person, who will be full bodied and expressive and like much more colorful, has much more character than the non-organic person, which is dull and grey.

Interviewer: And what kind of aspects of the organic food person that you describe you think relate to you or you see in yourself?

Rebecca: Well, I'd like to be hard working and I'd like to be focused and determined and stuff. So they'll be my role models in that. I'll be like "Oh they are so great! Look at them go!" So I suppose being quite nice, energetic and caring will be things I'd relate to. Because one of the main reasons I started eating organic was caring about my own waste and stuff. It was through kind of seeing stuff online and seeing other people talking about it and telling you how bad it is and feeling the guilt as well. I didn't know it was all going into the ocean or that it would take hundreds of years, thousands of years to melt down or all the fisheries. So yes, I guess I would identify with the kindness aspect of it and then wanting to be hard working and driven.

Interviewer: If you were to give the organic food character an age and gender, like if you were to close your eyes and picture it how would you see them?

Rebecca: I'd say thirties. Regardless of if it's male or female, good posture, nice and you know someone who is in the prime of their life - mid twenties to late thirties. No, not late thirties - thirties. Even forties actually. You know you can just see someone really healthy with a bit of color on their skin and it looks like they've been outside a bit more. Get a bit windswept you know. I kind of see my big brother a little bit you know. He's a windsurfer and he's tanned. He's always outdoors and he's muscly and he's lean. He's strong and he's fit.

Interviewer: Does he eat organic as well?

Rebecca: Yes, and he's really health conscious as well and he's always been quite aware.

Interviewer: Was he the first to discover organic food or ?

Rebecca: No, I'd say I'd actually be more on the organic side than he would. But he's starting to grown his own food now though. You know he can still buy non organic food in the shops, like in SuperValu and stuff but he's moved to a place now where he can start to grow his own. So he's kind of like one step back and one step ahead of me at the same time but he is in the position to grow food. That's my ultimate goal to be able to grow food.

Interviewer: What does it mean to you as a person to consume organic food?

Rebecca: It seems like the best thing that you can do while still be the consumer until you are making your own food, growing it. Till you have like a small local farm trading. It's the best kind of alternative until you get to that point. The amount of green

space that people have in their gardens, it's just a matter of educating people. There are so many people that are unemployed. Do like an organic training course with them and get them to go to their gardens. But people are so afraid of each other now. People are so afraid that someone will come and rob them. There's this culture of fear all the time, you don't trust anybody. People are like "What? Some on social welfare is going to come in and do my garden?" There're so many people that are like "No! No! No! That's a terrible idea!" Where it could actually be amazing. All the people who don't have many people in their lives but they have all these empty spaces. They could easily be growing food for their street and making an income of it. It could easily be done. Say like in Malahide, there might be forty people unemployed maybe, but how many people have massive gardens and are gone all day. Give those people a little square of it and every person is going to have a little square. You got lettuce, Billy is going to grow carrots, Mary is going to grow beetroots, Ciaran is going to have chickens in the green. Why not? And you can use the compost for everybody and everybody's going to have eggs and a bit of food.

Interviewer: A bit of bartering?

Rebecca: Yea, why not. That would be amazing. But that's how things used to be. But then everyone wanted to swap convenience for "No! I want my slick, fancy job in the city." But everybody is sick now. Everybody is getting cancer. How many people are suffering from major anxiety? When was the last time you touch ground, like the dirt. When was the last time you put your hands

in soil or went barefoot in the grass? And people are like "I wouldn't do that." You are meant to be touching plants.

Interviewer: Being one with nature?

Rebecca: Not even one with it but at least be a part of it. You are just nature. People have somehow got diluted into thinking that they are not nature anymore. "No, we are humans! We are different!" No you are still part of the whole, the same thing that everything else is a part of. All these animals that are evolving, we've just evolved in a weird way and we've evolved, we've got a mutation that made us think we are smarter than Mother Nature. But all of our inventions, all of our best inventions have been based on things that Nature has already figured out. Even like helicopters and all this kind of crack, figured it out already. We are just copying a smarter consciousness or something.

Interviewer: Do you tell others about organic food consumption?

Rebecca: Yea, I do. I definitely do. I think for a lot of people the unavailability of it and then the cost is like a major issue but then some people think it's fancier than non organic food. There's a bit of a stigma attached to it that being healthy is a upper class of thing or a very upper middle class thing. There's this kind of thing circulating "Oh, is it organic?" You know the way people have made fun of people that do yoga. So there's that little bit of stigma to it. But it's so silly because it makes, you just kind of go "Well you can think that way if you want, but it actually is better for you."

Interviewer: So you find that most people you tell about organic food consumption don't really take it seriously or think it's really fancy?

Rebecca: Yea, it's just because it's that little bit more expensive they think it's out of their price range or not worth it because I don't think there's enough emphasis put on the health ramifications. And maybe there's not even that much research into organic food over non organic food, what the nutrient level is. I don't even know if there's such a thing.

Interviewer: And do you find that you try to convince other people into consuming organic food?

Rebecca: I try and avoid trying to convince people. I just tell how I feel about it and then I just leave it at that. As opposed to trying to really convert people because I don't really feel that way. I feel you kind of need to make a decision for yourself based on whatever reasons it is. You just present the best case and then people can choose to do it or not. But I think a lot of people would like to do it but not a lot of places have that kind of facilities like Malahide does. So I am quite lucky that I live in Malahide and it's easy for me to buy organic food. I either live with my dad or I'm down in my housing and it's just easy for me to buy organic food. It's just easy, easy, easy for me to get organic food. The one thing is if I am in work all week, I miss your opening hours. But say if you lived in Balldoyle or even city centre, the options are very limited to be able to do that. Because I think a lot of people would put the money in but it's not in their mind and it's not in their eyesight enough. When I

know I have the option I can just come in tomorrow morning. Why would I bother, going to buy my shopping with all that plastic and so on. But when you people don't have that option it's harder to make them switch.

Interviewer: How would you normally consume organic food?

Rebecca: Vegetables I would normally consume raw. I try to get as many vegetables as I can and as varied nutrient group and color group as I can. You just want to have it nice and varied. I would eat a lot of it raw and cook grains and have that as the hot part of it and then very lightly cook them. And with other organic food I would try and pick stuff that has biodegradable or recyclable packaging and then if it has that then I have no concerns over eating it at all. Oh, fuck, I'm forgetting crisps. When I know I shouldn't as the packaging is probably not recyclable and I should try to avoid it but in the odd time I don't

Interviewer: Would you try making your own?

Rebecca: I tried making my own crisps but they were so nice that I ate way too many of them. And then I was like "I'm too fat" Cause you have to use too much oil. And that's the problem, if you want to make crisps you have to use a lot of oil. I like those kale, corn ones. They are delicious and I don't know how to make that. Do I make a corn paste and then fry them. I don't know... If I could I would. I try to eat as much natural stuff that I can and the least amount of packaging possible. That's how I try to consume organic food.

Interviewer: And how would you normally store it at home?

Rebecca: Either just in the fridge or the press... It doesn't need much. I don't think a lot of this stuff needs all these preservatives to keep it fresh. Carrots last like a week, everything lasts about a week just as long... it lasts just until I am about to use it. I don't think that it needs any special rigmarole. I don't know if the stuff that you get is kind of half frozen as they do in the supermarkets.

Interviewer: It's always fresh. We get it imported from Holland or from a farm in Ireland. But the farm that we work with only so big that we mainly import fruit and veg from the Netherlands. The transport company that we work with has a chilled storage room where they store the veg until we get it delivered to the shop. I'd say it takes about a day and a half from when I place an order to when we receive it in the shop. But then some of the fruit and veg travel a good bit to get to the Netherlands. The likes of French beans, for example, used to come from Egypt or some exotic fruit would be shipped from all over the world like Ivory Coast, Argentina, Mexico and so on.

Interview 3: Julie – 69 years old

Interviewer: When did you start buying organic?

Julie: I started probably nearly forty years ago I think certainly. I went to a health farm when I was 31 and now I am 69 so if you subtract that it's nearly 40 years and when we'll be having our meal, it was in county Mayo, the lady used vegetables and all that, it was all from the garden. And she talked then even about the dangers of sugar - too much sugar, too much salt. So when I came back then from that week I started then to look. Also as well, we did yoga for years and we used to go to doctor Ogtan for years. She was an English lady and she did homeopathy. So she always said too "If you can buy organic, buy it." And I think in a nutshell what I feel is that when I am eating I really like that my food does not have pesticides on it. That is the biggest thing for me. And the reason then I was so delighted when this shop opened because I always had to travel to town and then you get the supermarket (produce) and it's always in plastic and it's a bit off putting. But at least anyway it was better than not having organic. And it was also great then when the chickens appeared because again the same thing about the chickens. We don't know if there's antibiotics put into them and you just buy them and I would rather not eat the chicken. That's a long winded way of answering but it goes back.

Interviewer: And then this kind of triggered your interest in organic food? Going to that farm?

Julie: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: And then was there a lot of organic food around at the time?

Julie: There wasn't really. I remember they used to have a market in town, in Dublin city. I can't even remember where it was and people would come from the country. Maybe it's even still there. People would come from the country with all their fruits and vegetables but that involved going into town on a Saturday... and I had three young children so it's not always that easy to do that.

Interviewer: So why do you think it's relevant for you to consume organic food?

Julie: Because I feel it's better for my health. I'd be very conscious of being healthy. I say to my sons "I don't want to be the one on the trolley in Beaumont hospital." I am very conscious of being well. Probably from going back that time to the health farm and learning and not wanting to put medication in my system unless it was somehow natural because of the side effects. I think once we started into the yoga that does lead to a healthy lifestyle. It's not that I was always healthy. I still go out have my wine. You know what I mean, of course I do. And I'd eat a steak but I'd only really buy the organic steak. Yea, it's about health, it's about being healthy. And I would also like to think that the people who grow the food organically they are careful in what they do. They are also into healthy way of living. I like that as well. And even maybe with the steak, I also like to think that when they are going to be killed, the cows... I still have a thing about that, I say "Oh my God, the poor cow!"... but that it is in

some way more humane. I don't know if this, I mean, killing an animal is still killing it. I don't know. I suppose I do have the fish and we do vegetarian meals but I do have the fish and a bit steak occasionally, maybe the steak not even once a week but mostly really for my health. I remember one time feeling... I thought I was actually in the menopause, I went to the consultant it was in the Rotunda hospital and what she said to me was "You are not in the menopause but you are very stressed." And I hadn't realized that I was and at that stage I had a vegetarian diet and she said "You know what? I think it will be no harm if you had a nice piece of steak and a glass of red wine." So I thought "Alright! I can manage that!" Because sometimes while yoga and all that is good it might be a bit controlled. That you are living a kind of controlled sort of life and maybe that's not great.

Interviewer: Yea, like a schedule.

Julie: Like a schedule exactly and you are practicing the breathing, pranayama, and the postures and I would have been very diligent cause I was teaching it as well but at the same time then you need to lighten up as well and not be too serious.

Interviewer: I thought it always gives you the opposite effect - relaxing and yoga and meditating and all that but I suppose it could be stressful as well.

Julie: It can because then if you don't get into practice you go "Oh my God, I didn't get my practice done today.!" And that can become the concern. I felt I really needed to lighten up on the whole thing and not be so serious.

Interviewer: What percentage of your daily diet consists of organic food at the moment?

Julie: I'd say most of it. If I am to take everything that I buy... I buy the organic porridge and that's my breakfast. I would have berries but I don't always buy the organic. The bread, it's not organic the bread that I buy I suppose, is it?

Interviewer: The bread here? Yes, it is.

Julie: Yes, of course it has to be. Well that's the bread we use. If I make scone, I make them with the organic flour – really the most of my diet. Most of it is. Maybe if I was in a shop and the vegetables, the organic ones, didn't look healthy and the other ones did I would probably buy them. But mostly I don't. I am trying to think of everything that I eat. Well, the fish wouldn't be organic.

Interviewer: Fish is a bit funny because unless it is farmed fish you can't really say it is organic. I have noticed on our tins it says "Fish in organic olive oil" but you can't really put a stamp on the fish as it lives in the sea and you don't really know...

Julie: You don't really know how clean the sea is.

Interviewer: Yes, exactly.

Julie: So I would say most of my food is organic.

Interviewer: And how do you think this changed over time? So from like forty years ago?

Julie: Yes, it was much harder. Now it is much more plentiful. And it's great living in Malahide and having an organic shop. That's a

huge asset. Other than that where would I be going. Well in the supermarkets they do have them, as I say, they are always in the plastic. And I think it looks nicer when you come in here and you see all the vegetable and fruit are out. But maybe they do come in plastic but in the same time it's nice.

Interviewer: Most of them don't come in plastic with small exceptions like carrots to keep them fresh.

Julie: And I have noticed in the last while now, and Ed would say the same, the oranges... when we are doing our supermarket shop and I might pick up the oranges, they are not as nice as the ones here. They are kind of sourer or something. And they used to be nicer but at the minute they are not as nice.

Interviewer: This question might sound a bit strange but if organic food was a person what kind of characteristics would you give it? Or how would you describe it?

Julie: If the food was a person?

Interviewer: Yes, just what comes to mind.

Julie: I suppose vitality. Someone with vitality and caring and thoughtful. That type of thing rather than all mass produced, you know and maybe not too much thought going into it. So, yes, vitality, the caring, the thoughtful. That's it.

Interviewer: So it's the same question but regarding non-organic food. So if, let's say, processed food was a person what kind of characteristics would you give them?

Julie: That's nearly harder to say. I think I am just going back to the mass produced stuff, where there's not much thought. You know, it's someone just making money. Happy to put pesticides down into the earth. Not as caring about the earth. Selfish. Not thinking of a bigger picture to the earth, to the environment.

Interviewer: So from the way you described the organic food as a person, what aspects of the way you described it relate to you?

Julie: Well, I think I am thoughtful. I'd like to think that I am a thoughtful person and I am kind. And I do have I'd say vitality. Well sometimes I am tired but most of the time I think because I keep myself as well as I can so I'd say I can relate.

Interviewer: And what does it mean to you as a person to consume organic food?

Julie: Well it's very important in my life. And I had remarks passed at the checkout in SuperValu or Dunnes it could be at, now it's not lately or anything, but sometimes the girl would say "Oh my God! You are into being really healthy!" As if it is not a normal, natural thing. My trolley would have fruit and vegetable, well it might have the odd bag of crisps but mostly... Other people I've had say to me "Are you on a diet?" I say to them "No, actually I am not a diet. This is my diet."

Interviewer: They find it unusual?

Julie: Yea, yea. Now people haven't said it recently so maybe there's changes coming about but yea for me is very important. Because that's how we stay well. If our food is good and healthy and I know there's other things as well that have to come into it

besides the food but I am particular about what I put into my system because I'd feel awful if I particularly eat at night. I don't go out for meals at night but you know it might happen and odd time that we would be out. And really I wouldn't feel right and then I wouldn't sleep properly and then I wouldn't feel well the next day. So it's like kind of a vicious circle. So yes, it is important to me to have organic food.

Interviewer: And do you feel like if you go out and you don't feel well it's because of the type of food?

Julie: I think it is because I would have consumed it late in the evening and my system isn't used to it.

Interviewer: And you wouldn't normally have...

Julie: No, I don't after... certainly not after 8. We usually have our meal about 6:30 or 7 and then I'd have a chamomile tea at maybe about 8 but that's it then. And it's just making the decision "How do I want to live?" Do I want my life... I don't want to be eating late and getting up late and having no energy. If there's an occasion - ok, then of course I would be going to it. I don't think it really has to do with food not being organic. I think it's more to do with my system is not able... and my system has always been like that. It never really suited me to eat late.

Interviewer: And how does organic food make you feel?

Julie: I am so used to it. It is just natural way of life now and it just makes me feel good. Because if I was eating foods that I knew were sprayed with pesticides, I'd nearly start imagining I had

something. It would give me a bit of stress or anxiety. But when we go away on holidays, I'm pretty sure there won't be organic food. But that's only two weeks in the year. I think it's when you do something most of the time, you know that 80/20 rule. That 80% of the time you are living your life healthy, the best that you can and of course everybody is going to have a bit of a breakout with the chocolate or the wine, or those corn crisps. I like those corn crisps.

Interviewer: Do you tell others about your organic food consumption?

Julie: Not too much. I remember years ago a friend of mine Mary Flynn, she's a doctor Flynn now, she's a dietician. We are still in touch. And I remember saying to her "I'd only eat organic food." And this was years ago, in my early thirties and she got really annoyed with me and said "Julie you have to remember that there are so many people that can't afford organic food. There are people with big families and they go into the supermarket. It drives me mad when you start talking like that!" Now, I think going back then the organic food probably a good bit dearer. I don't think it's hugely dearer now. I don't think so anyway, I've never really sat down and worked it out. But maybe from after she said that to me I kind of became a little more cautious. Then I remember another time, which is not so long ago. I was out with women from the choir. I was out for a meal with friends from the choir and I picked the chicken dish and then I said "Oh my God, sure we don't know. This could be dosed with antibiotics. We don't really know what's in this." And the woman who was beside me said "Oh, shht for God sake. Just eat it." So I knew then "Oh, I'd better not be saying

anything." But I suppose people who'd know me well know I'd buy organic and they'd see me around, and my family would know. Our sons know, they don't buy organic. And I'd say too maybe it's just a money thing. They'd literally go into Lidl, well I know Lidl do organic stuff, but I don't think they buy organic. Some things they maybe do.

Interviewer: Have you ever tried to convince them? Would you try?

Julie: I don't really cause I feel they see what we eat and they see that we are well. And I think when you see somebody is well is better than saying. Cause I couldn't say "Oh you should be organic food." Just couldn't say it. Or then if I said "Would you not think it would be better to eat organic food?" They might say "Mind your own business." I don't know what they'd say, so I don't. I always feel that it's better if I look well and feel well then that's what people see. I have a couple of friends and they would buy organic but a lot of them wouldn't. They just go and do a normal grocery shop in the supermarket.

Interviewer: So you think they have to make up their own mind?

Julie: I do, I do. I think young people today have enough issues without their mother saying "Oh, would you not eat organic?" If they see us well they can make their own choice.

Interviewer: And how would you normally consume organic food?

Julie: I make a lot of stews. I don't really like raw food to be honest. I am a bit unsure, I remember reading some books and it says raw foods are great and salads are raw. But I used to go to a guy for acupuncture and he said that certainly in the acupuncture, the

Chinese medicine, they'd always say it's better to have it lightly steamed. That raw could be very hard to digest. So I don't really know, of course I do eat salads but mostly I'd have it cooked - stews and steamed vegetables.

Interviewer: And I suppose if you have people over you would be serving organic food?

Julie: Yea, I would, I would.

Interviewer: Do you think they find a difference in the quality?

Julie: No, I don't think so. And sometimes I would make a point, for example when John, our son and Stacy, when they came home from Australia, and with Ken, our other son, we were having a family gathering. And I made meringues and they were saying "Oh, they are gorgeous." and I said "And everything organic." I did actually make a point saying that. And I made my sister some meringues and I said again "Everything organic." and she said "My God they are just delicious! I would never now want to buy shop ones." And if it wasn't organic, say the sugar wasn't organic and all of that and the eggs, I don't know really if they would taste much different. But it's just that I feel better that it's all organic and I know all the sugar that goes into them is not great, but it is a treat. It's a treat and it's organic and again it's kind of mentally it's going back to the same thing for me that someone is careful about growing this and thoughtful about it and not just putting on loads of stuff that can half kill us.

Interview 4: Lucy – 32 years old

Interviewer: When and how did you discover organic food?

Lucy: I think I first discovered organic food when I was a kid. I didn't know at the time it was organic or what organic meant for that matter. We had a house in the countryside with a lot of different trees. My sister and I used to climb them and pick the nuts and fruits. It was an amazing experience that I didn't really appreciate at the time. We had anything from almonds and walnuts, to apples, cherries, quinces, grapes, strawberries, potatoes... you name it. Until recently I wasn't really picky about what I would purchase from the store. It was only about three or four years ago that I started thinking more about my health and wellbeing. I like to get organic fruit and veg, because I feel like most of the times it tastes better and I don't think it does because it is organic per say but because the produce isn't forced to grow. It has all the time it needs to grow and harvest sunlight, which I think is the main reason for it tasting better.

Interviewer: And why was it relevant for you to consume organic food?

Lucy: Well, mainly because I would like to be healthier. I gained a lot of weight three years ago and I started thinking about my way of life. I want to change my bad habits and become a healthier and happier person. I am not as active as I used to be due to a lot of reasons, but mainly my job I guess and I suppose the quality of food I eat isn't great or at least wasn't. I am trying to change this although it proves hard from time to time. I think

eating as much organic food as possible will also make me feel better both mentally and physically. It will maybe give some peace of mind as well knowing that there are so many people suffering from cancer today. Did you know that our corpses don't disintegrate as fast as they used to? Yea... a friend of mine mentioned it a while ago. It's due to all the preservatives that have been added to food.

Interviewer: Really?

Lucy: Yes, it's mad when you think about it, what we are turning into...

Interviewer: What do you mean by this?

Lucy: I mean that it is sad how the world is being destroyed by us. We are being destroyed by us. It's sad that it is more important for someone to make more money and profit of people's health or from carelessly using our global resources. We are just stupid consumers that don't think about anything else but ourselves. We managed to completely wipe out animal species, our seas are extremely polluted and the Great Barrier Reef is almost being destroyed. Ice caps are melting and polar bears are dying, deforestation is a thing as well. It's just really sad to be honest. It breaks my heart. Anyways... I suppose we'll see how things turn out. Hopefully we still have time to change...

Interviewer: Yes... What percentage of your daily diet would you say consists of organic food?

Lucy: I suppose at the moment it is anywhere between 50% to 100%. I am really not as strict as I would like to be. Not to mention that every now and then I like to have McDonald's or go for a meal

out, but I suppose that can't be helped. After all we are creatures of habits and I like eating unhealthy food... I really want to change this though. I know it's affecting my health.

Interviewer: And how has this changed over time?

Lucy: Well, it went from 0% about three years ago to at least 50% at the moment. I don't think I can go fully 100% or maybe I can, but I am not really sure how committed I am going to be to it. I would be really happy if my diet consists of even 90% organic produce. That for me would be a personal win although I don't find it's only the organic part that matters as I could be buying organic junk food like crisps and chocolates and all that or cooking with loads of oil and having deep fried meals. I think it should be a healthy fruit and veg filled, balanced diet with maybe occasionally having junk food. That's what I am striving for at the moment as well as trying to incorporate more organic food into my life.

Interviewer: If organic food was a person, what type of person would it be?

Lucy: I think it would be a positive, energetic, happy person. I kind of picture it as a woman in her thirties or forties, full of life. I imagine one of these pictures of Spring in kids' books. Spring is always playful and happy and always a woman. That's kind of what I imagine when I think about organic food - pure and kind, wearing a white dress, smiling and dancing on a green lawn nearby trees or a forest. A motherly figure as well I guess and someone who doesn't smoke.

Interviewer: Similar to the previous question, how would you describe non-organic food if it was a person?

Lucy: Non-organic food... Probably someone that smokes, for some reason I imagine an older man. His skin is dull, and he looks sick from smoking and probably drinking. He's a bit overweight and unhappy. I picture him looking quite miserable and hopeless if this makes any sense. I suppose he looks like someone that needs help – both physically and mentally.

Interviewer: What aspects of the “organic food person” relate to you as a person?

Lucy: Well, I think I am kind and positive. I'd like to be healthier and probably livelier as Spring. I guess I'd like to be a motherly figure as well but for the time being I am not. I think I am however a good person, if I could say that for myself. I quit smoking recently. I had only smoked for two years on and off and it's a nasty habit. Even though it felt good at times it always bothered me that it's taking its toll. I guess I started smoking since my boyfriend did and it was easy and somewhat comforting. I have persuaded him though that we should both give it up and try to be healthier as life is short and we shouldn't make it any shorter ourselves.

Interviewer: And what does it mean to you as a person to consume organic food?

Lucy: It means that there is one less thing to worry about I suppose. It means that I shouldn't be afraid that what I eat will harm me. Again... this is I suppose kind of what I said earlier, I could be

eating loads of organic chocolate and crisps or other organic food that's not good for me, which obviously would defeat the purpose. I spoke to a woman a couple of years ago I think it was. She was a kinder garden teacher, probably still is. She wanted to show her class the different stages in the life of a butterfly, you know, from caterpillar to butterfly and once the caterpillars cocoon and become butterflies they were going to release them into the wild. All really nice and sweet but... what she said happened was that she got cabbage from Lidl to feed the caterpillars and most of the cocooned caterpillars exploded from what she assumes was the pesticides in the cabbage. Scary, right? I guess that's what eating organic food means to me – peace that my body won't “explode” and won't react to all the nasty things that companies put in our food.

Interviewer: So then how does consuming organic food make you feel?

Lucy: Safe. It makes me feel safe in a way. I read somewhere that there's certain foods that don't necessarily have to have an organic logo or certificate as farmers wouldn't normally use pesticides while growing them so we could assume they are organic. To be honest I can't really remember what they were... Have to really look into this again.

Interviewer: Do you tell others about your organic food consumption?

Lucy: I don't really say it to people. I think I've said it to my parents a few times whenever we've talked about food. I remember I was telling them how different chickens tasted. You can really feel the chickens have not been forced into growing. The meat feels drier. Apart from them, I don't really think I talk about organic

food with my friends. We normally catch up by talking about other things.

Interviewer: And do you try to convince others, like your family for example, to consume more organic food?

Lucy: I don't, to be honest, no. If it comes to talking about organic food I might just express how I feel about it rather than try to persuade them into eating organic.

Interviewer: Why not?

Lucy: I don't eat 100% organic to be in a position to give people advices or make them switch to organic food. It would be hypocritical of me to do so, which I guess is why I don't even try to do it. And everyone is so caught up in what they are doing that I feel like it's inappropriate. It would be the same as asking my friend to stop smoking... What my friends or everyone else does is their own business and they should decide for themselves how to live their lives. I feel like the only person that I am in any way convincing or trying to convince to eat organic is my partner, probably because we both like to cook and after all we share the same fridge. So far he's on board on the healthy wagon although we indulge in a lot of unhealthy food as well but we are slowly changing this.

Interviewer: How would you normally consume organic food?

Lucy: Well, we both like cooking for each other so this is certainly one of our favorite ways to consume food, by cooking for each other. I am trying to introduce more fresh fruit and veg into our diet as we would normally cook quite a lot and I feel we would

benefit more if we had more salads or fruit as a snack or dessert. We are doing really well in eating more fresh fruit and especially in the summer... you want to eat more fresh produce and fresh fruits as most of the fruit come out in the summer. We also love pizza so we have a pizza or two per week. Oh God, we used to have pizzas pretty much every other day so we have really cut back on it even though we absolutely love it.

Interviewer: Do you buy organic food for your friends or family as a treat?

Lucy: Well, my family is back home so I don't really buy them anything. I actually got them a packet of coffee beans when I was going home as they have a machine in their house and I love this coffee. Apart from that haven't bought them anything else. I sometimes get my friend tofu or something else that's vegetarian but it's not very often. I think it's happened twice and I know her for about 7-8 years so you can imagine how often that's happened.