Food For Thought - Animal Welfare Tops Britain's Food Concerns

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When it comes to our food, there is nothing closer to the hearts of the nation than the wellbeing of animals.

Indeed, new research from Mintel finds animal welfare is Britain's number one food concern with as many as four in ten (40%) Brits worried about this issue.

And it is women who are showing the greatest concern, with almost half (46%) of British women expressing concern about this issue, compared to just a third (34%) of men.

Meanwhile, being of British origin (37%) and free from additives or preservatives (36%) make up the remaining top three food concerns, closely followed by the desire to have locally produced food (35%). By contrast, today organic is important to just one in ten (11%) of Britons.

Kiti Soininen, Senior Food and Drink Analyst at Mintel, said:
"Recent media coverage has helped drive awareness of animal welfare, with celebrity chefs such as Jamie Oliver and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall putting the spotlight on poultry and pork farming in recent years and it seems the appeal of free-range and domestic food has continued to grow even during the recession.â€•

â€œFood provenance â€“ the origin of what we eat â€“ has also forged a permanent place on the consumerâ€™s and mediaâ€™ agenda. Various food scares, the focus on â€˜food milesâ€™ as part of ethical consumption and a wider trend for authenticity and premiumisation are a driving interest in food provenance." Kiti continues.

Mintelâ€™s research also finds that age has an enormous impact on the importance of where produce has come from. Almost half (44%) of over 55s are committed to British food versus just one in four (26%) of 16-24 year olds.

The tendency is even stronger when it comes to local food, which is important to 20% of the youngest age group and 47% of the oldest age group.

Two in five people buy British to support local business (40%), but only one in five (19%) see it as worth paying more for, while a similar number (17%) say that British food tastes better.

Indeed, it seems the future also looks promising for future growth, as more than one in four people say there isnâ€™t enough British food available in their supermarket and nearly half would like more local foods there.

Today, some 16 million adults buy British food to support local businesses.

Although local food lags slightly behind British in terms of overall food concerns, almost half (48%) of the population claim to buy local food when possible and a similar number (45%) would like to see more local food at their supermarket.

However, just one in seven (13%) people say they actively seek out local food, suggesting that the broad interest only translates into action for a minority of the population.

"Mintelâ€™s consumer research indicates that the broad interest in food origin in general, and British and local food specifically, often fails to translate into action. Securing mainstream supply can give local food products access to a pool of 14 million people nationally, who buy local food when possible, but are not willing to seek it out. As with many other food issues from fair trade to animal welfare, consumers are in favour of doing the "right" thing, as long as someone else does the work to make it happen." concludes Kiti.

Source: Mintel Oxygen Reports

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