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Food labels: understanding, attitude and consumption habits of Bragança (Portugal) population

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The aim of the present work was to assess Bragança population's knowledge on food labelling, to better understand consumption habits, gain insights on how buyers normally check food quality in home and buyer openness consumption of products that are out of date.

Concerning labelling, ingredients associated with food intolerances, allergies, and expiry dates were cited most frequently by the respondents as being compulsory. Regarding nutritional information, 45.6% of respondents did not give importance to it. Relating to the concepts of "net quantity of the food" and "drained net weight", 53.3% admitted not to be able to tell the difference between them. 90.0% said to were aware of the date terminologies - "best-before" and "use-by"- but no more than 64.4% were able to differentiate and only 55.6% declared to take dates into account when judging if the products are fit for consumption. When checking food products, more than 95% said that they use the smell, observation and comparison if the product matches their expectations. Moreover, they also verify the expiration date. In terms of products that people were willing to consume out of date, yogurt and other dairy desserts (e.g. pudding) were mentioned as the ones that respondents would eat the most.

With a sample size of 90 consumers from the urban centre of Bragança city (Portugal) the data was found to be highly informative. It is clear that further efforts are required in the education of consumers on food labelling and promotion of food safety.