

Natural food products in transition: Seven studies on demand, supply, and sustainability

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Research overview

Natural food products are at the heart of Finland's sustainable bioeconomy. This poster combines seven studies, covering roughly 390 survey and interview participants, plus a 54-study review, linking both consumer demand and supply-side practice, from purchase behaviour to sustainability recognition.

DEMAND-SIDE STUDIES

D1 Survey · *n*=124

Consumer demand: drivers & barriers

RESEARCH QUESTION

What drives or limits consumer demand?

KEY RESULT

Strong interest exists, but price and limited availability remain the biggest barriers to purchase.

D2 Repeated survey · *n*=245

Demand over time (2025 vs. 2026)

RESEARCH QUESTION

How did consumer demand change in a year?

KEY RESULT

Attitudes and behaviour stayed stable, but purchasing shifted toward specialty stores.

D3 Survey · *n*=151

Value via processing & distribution

RESEARCH QUESTION

How do processing & distribution shape value?

KEY RESULT

Moderate processing and direct sales channels build the most consumer trust.

Across D1–D3

Attitude-behavior gap

Interest is high, but price, availability, and channel trust decide whether it becomes a purchase.

SUPPLY-SIDE STUDIES

S1 Lit. review · 54 studies

Knowledge-driven innovation

RESEARCH QUESTION

How does knowledge management drive innovation?

KEY RESULT

Knowledge management converts sustainability and coordination needs into innovation outcomes.

S2 Interviews · *n*=22

Supply-side views of demand

RESEARCH QUESTION

How do supply-side actors perceive demand?

KEY RESULT

Actors read indirect signals, negotiating sourcing between demand and constraints.

S3 Interviews · *n*=17

Managing perishability

RESEARCH QUESTION

How do firms govern perishable sourcing?

KEY RESULT

Perishability favours trust-based, informal coordination over formal contracts.

S4 Interviews (12) + survey (62)

Sustainability recognition gap

RESEARCH QUESTION

What shapes sustainability recognition gaps?

KEY RESULT

Practiced sustainability often stays invisible to outsiders without certification.

Table 5 (study D2) - Motivations for purchasing natural food products, 2025 vs. 2026

Motivation	2025	2026	χ^2 (1)	p	Cohen's h
Health benefits	66.9%	67.8%	0.00	0.998	-0.02
Environmental sustainability	46.0%	50.4%	0.32	0.570	-0.09
Ethical reasons	29.0%	29.8%	0.00	1.000	-0.02
Taste and quality	72.6%	57.9%	5.23	0.022*	0.31
Domestic origin	65.3%	71.1%	0.69	0.407	-0.12
Availability / convenience	31.5%	24.0%	1.36	0.244	0.17
Other	4.0%	2.5%	0.11	0.746	0.09

**p* < 0.05. Each motivation tested as an independent comparison (selected vs. not selected, by year), Yates-corrected; *n*=119 (2025), *n*=126 (2026).

Bridging demand and supply

Positive attitudes don't guarantee purchases, and practiced sustainability isn't always recognised. Closing this gap requires transparent communication and coordinated, trust-based supply chains.

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