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Chinese consumers' attitude toward genetically modified foods: Taking genetically modified soybean oil as an example

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China is the largest importing country of genetically modified (GM) soybean produced in the USA. In 2013, nearly 60 million tons of GM soybean was imported into China, 40% of the amount was from the USA. Oil made from the GM soybean is the main edible oil for Chinese consumers. Chinese traditional culture does not against the GM food, but since 2013, some celebrities has taken a public stand against GM food, and following these celebrities, Chinese consumers has showed diverse attitude toward GM food. This study investigated Chinese consumers' attitude toward edible oil made from GM soybean based on a survey conducted in Hangzhou China. Using multiple liner regression, the study analyzed the factors effecting consumers' attitude toward GM soybean oil. The findings revealed that most Chinese consumers generally hold positive attitude toward GM soybean oil, and rarely have sufficient biological knowledge. Even the strong opponents of GM food raise objection without sufficient knowledge and information. Respondents' age and educational background do not correlate to their wiliness to pay (WTP) of GM soybean oil, which contradict to the previous findings from Europe, Japan and China. Income level, celebrities' attitude and media publicity are three factors influencing Chinese consumers' WTP; while income level is the most important. When have lower income, Chinese consumers have to choose GM soybean oil which is cheaper and the negative influence from celebrities and media publicity has not been so significant. With the growth of income, Chinese consumers worry more about GM security and have more choice of edible oil. The negative influence from celebrities and media publicity becomes significant. Therefore, Chinese consumers' attitude toward GM soybean oil might become more conservative. The promotion of GM soybean oil will be more difficult and challengeable.

Biography

Xia Ming is now pursuing his Post Doctor research in the field of food culture at Zhejiang Chinese Medical University in China. His former research interests were mainly focus on milk protein's denaturalization on milk products manufacture. Recently, his research interest has been moved into Chinese food culture and tradition, and the impact of modern food technique on Chinese dietary customs, especially on the influence of Genetically Modified Foods (GMF) on Chinese consumers' behavior of food. Last but not least, he is planning to purse a social science degree to improve his knowledge structure.

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