



Consumer preference for organic apple and strawberry in Skierniewice

Krzysztof Zmarlicki email: Krzysztof.Zmarlicki@insad.pl
Piotr Brzozowski email: Piotr.Brzozowski@insad.pl
Economics and Marketing Section
Research Institute of Pomology and Floriculture, Skierniewice, Poland



Development of innovative products and technologies for the environmentally-friendly cultivation of fruit plants

Introduction

The consumer of today considers increased importance on food safety, environmental and health issues, hence some of them are willing to purchase organic fruit. Therefore organic production is becoming more popular around the World and global organic food market is expected to reach level of US \$ 70 billion in 2010 (Boccaletti 2009). In 2006, there were at least 250,000 ha of organic temperate fruit (among them apples and strawberries) under production worldwide. For example in Washington State, USA, a leading producer of apple, pear, and cherry, organic production will soon comprise 10% of all apple and pear area (Granatstein et al 2008). Europe has the largest share in global organic food sales. Poland has one of the most suitable economic and landscape conditions to expand organic fruit production among European countries. Organic food market in Poland is still at the early stage of development and there are many barriers to overcome (Żakowska-Biemans S. 2009). The aim of this study was to examine the main factors affecting buying decision of organic apples and strawberries in Skierniewice (central Poland).

Methods

The data were collected by interviewing 290 people living in Skierniewice and neighbourhood chosen at random. The survey was carried out in October and November 2009. The profile of interviewees is shown in Table 1. Among other things like: frequency of consumption and interviewees habits, people who were interviewed had to state the barriers to buy organic apples and strawberries and to point out the most important reasons to buy organic apples and strawberries instead of those coming from conventional production. They were also asked to show the levels of willingness to pay an extra price for organic apples and strawberries.

Results

The majority of interviewed consumers are having fruit very often, almost every day or 3-4 times a week (Fig.1). The consumption increases together with the increase of the age of interviewees. However the lower incomes of consumers had significant influence in all age segments. Besides higher prices there are many other barriers to buy organic apples and strawberries. Among them the most important are those connected with limited supply (Fig.2). Also the trust that fruit are from organic production is very important. Some consumers dislike the appearance of organic apples. Usually they don't look as well as those from conventional production (Pic.1). The most important reasons to buy organic apples and strawberries are health issues and need to protect the environment (Fig.3). Also the need of assistance to smaller farmers and the demand for chemicals free food are important factors in creating demand for organic apple and strawberry. Willingness to pay an extra price for organic apples and strawberries is very limited among interviewed consumers (Fig.4).

Table 1. Profile of Skierniewice Interviewees (N=290)

Gender	62,4% Female 37,6% Male
Age	Mean 45,4 +/- 25,3 years Range 18 -77 years
Education	5,17% Primary school 41,38% Secondary school 28,63% Some college 24,13% High education 0,69% Post graduate
Income per capita	58,62% Less than 1.000 PLN 29,31% 1.001-1.500 PLN 7,59% 1.501-2.000 PLN 2,41% 2.001-2.500 PLN 2,07% Over 2.500 PLN
Residence	65,52% Urban 34,48% Rural
Employment	64,48% Employed 12,07% Retired 8,62% Student 14,83% Other
Household	58,62% Children under 18 years at home 41,38% No children under 18 years at home

Picture. 1 Organic apples at retail



Fig.1 Frequency of consumption of fruit in different age groups

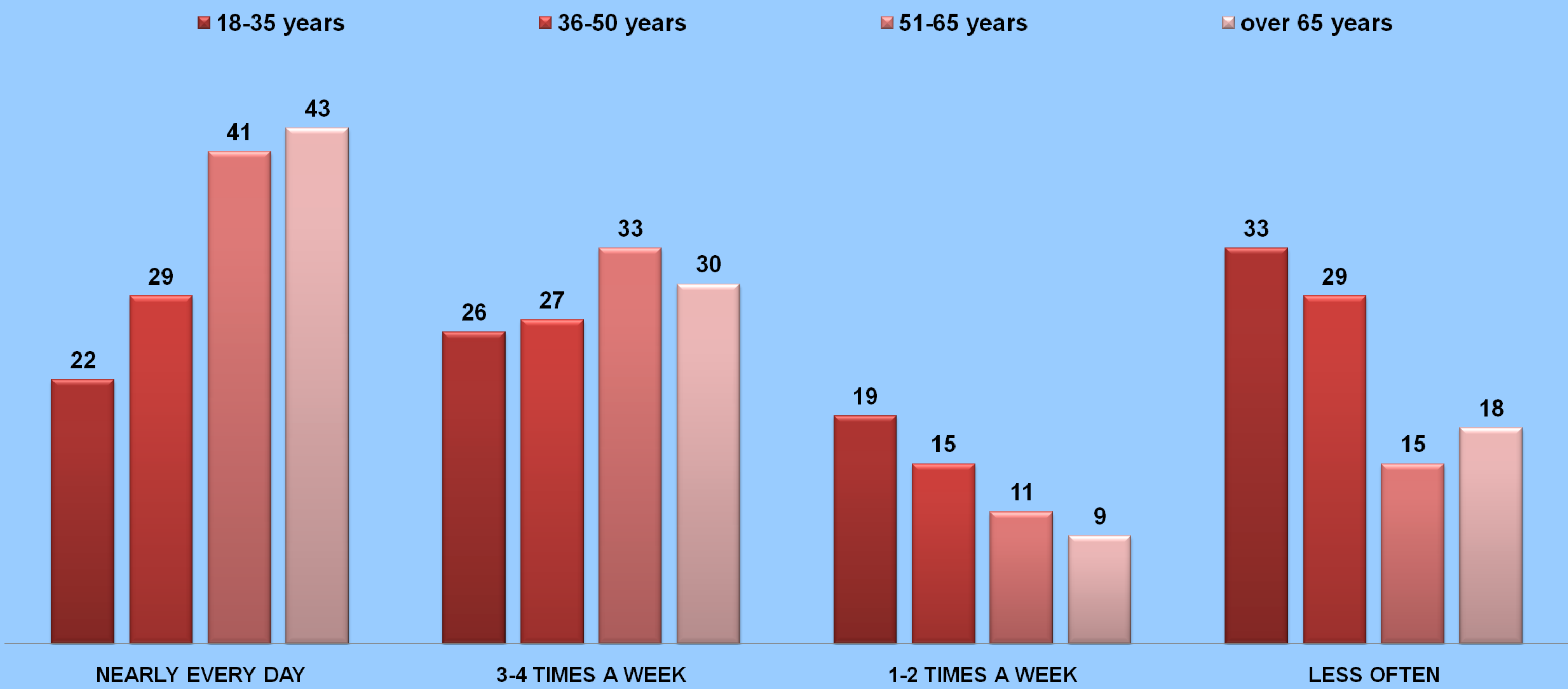
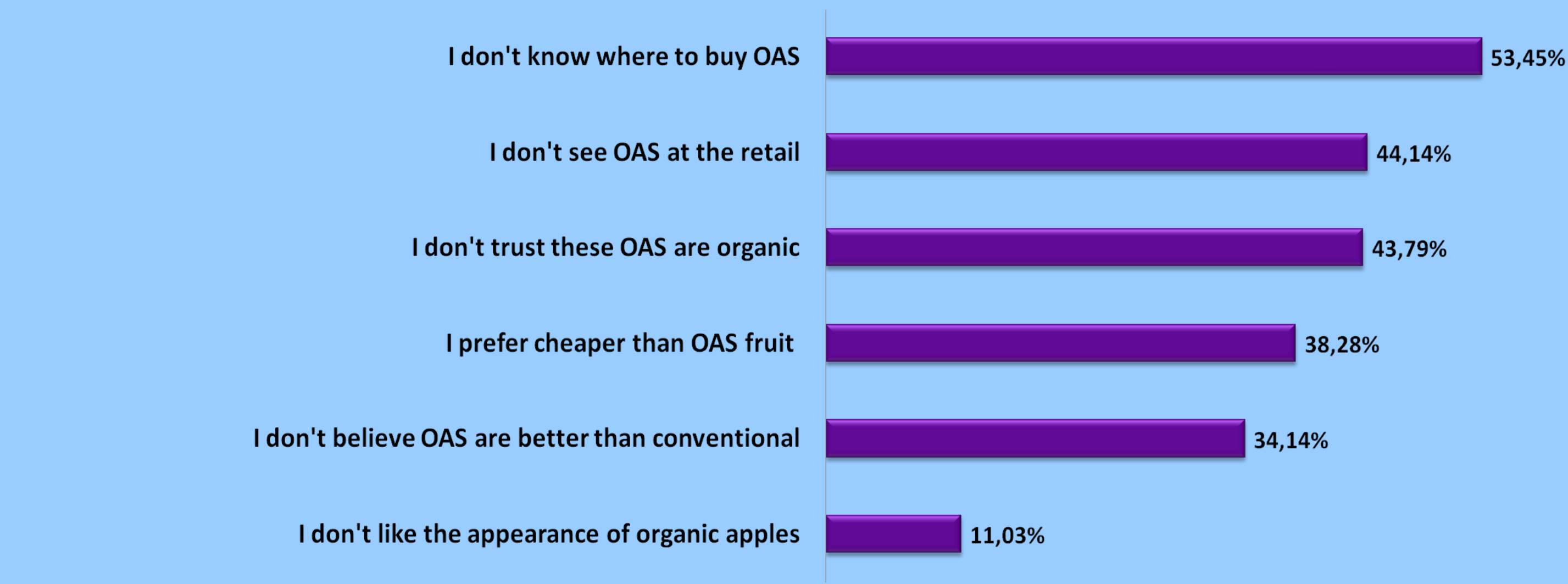
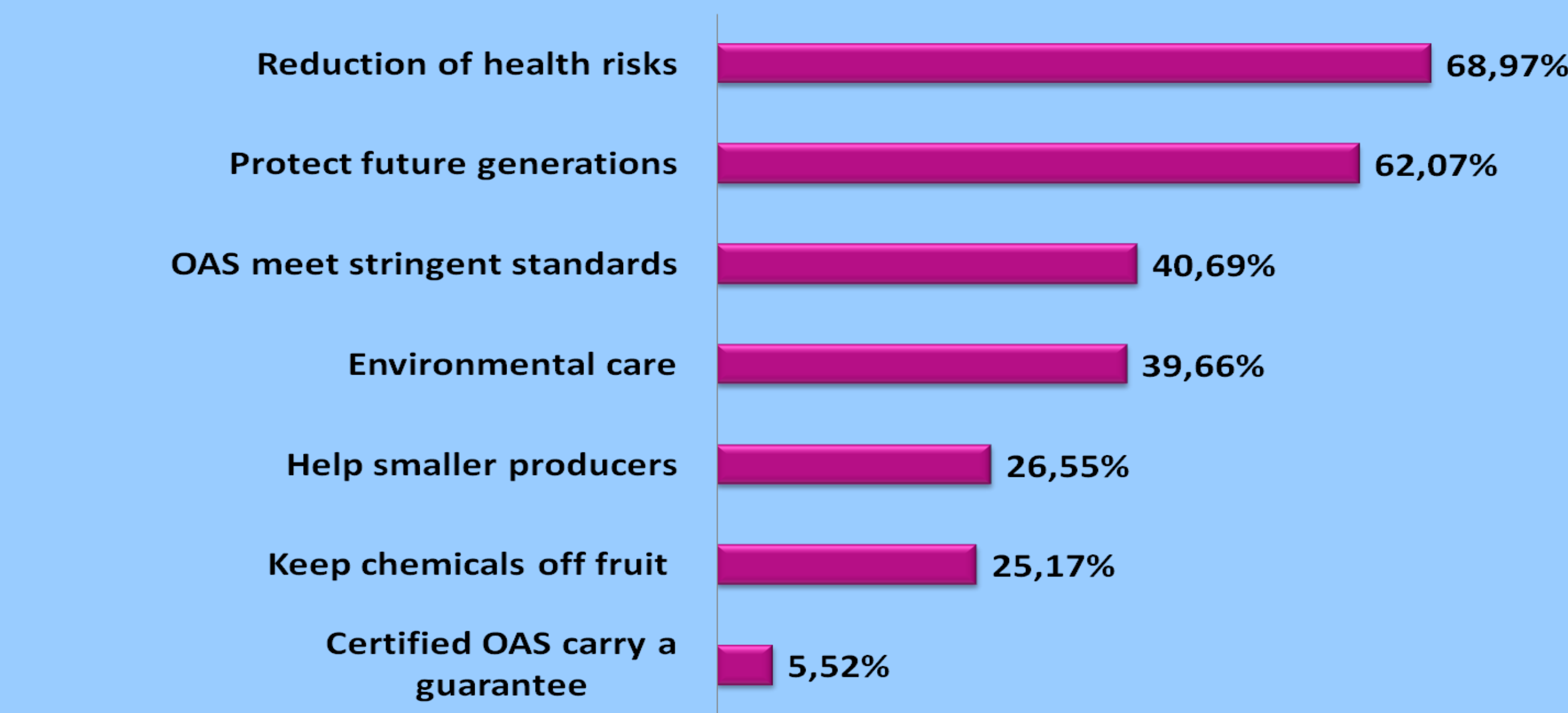


Fig. 2 Barriers to buy organic apples and strawberries (OAS)



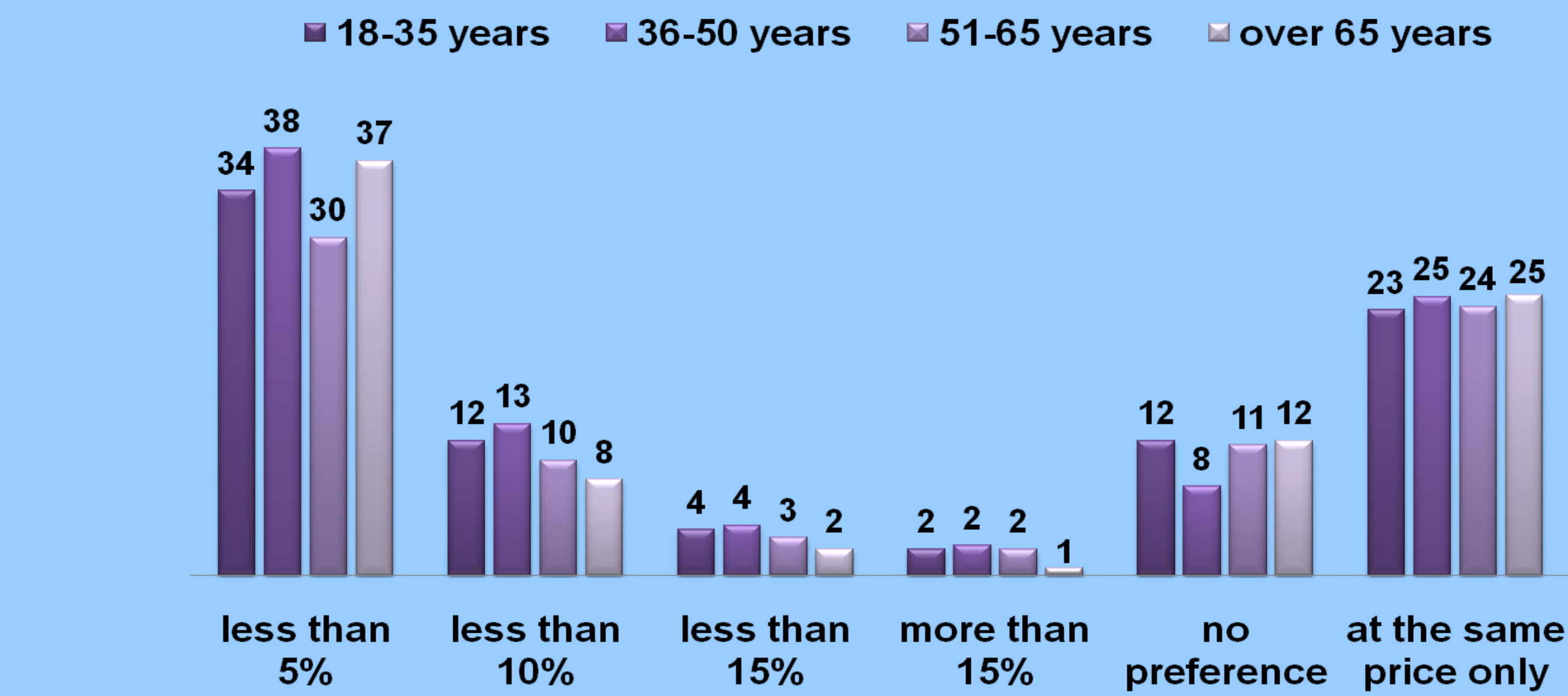
Source: Author's own studies

Fig. 3 The most important reasons to buy organic apples and strawberries (OAS)



Source: Author's own studies

Fig. 4 Willingness to pay an extra price for organic apples and strawberries



Source: Author's own studies

Conclusions

- Not enough supply in retail and lack of information about availability of organic apples and strawberries are biggest barriers which decrease their sales and consumption.
- More than 40% of interviewees do not trust, that apple and strawberry they are buying as organic are really organic.
- Reduction of health risks and environmental issues are the key factors stimulating purchase of organic fruit instead of those from conventional production.
- Very few consumers are willing to pay an extra price for organic apple and strawberry especially when the present price differences are as high as 30% more for organic.

References:

1. Boccaletti S.2009 Organic food consumption: Results and policy implications. Conference: Houshold behaviour and environmental policy 3-4th June 2009 Paris <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/3/3/43039314.pdf>
2. Granatstein, David; Kirby, Elizabeth and Willer, Helga 2008. Current World Status of Organic Temperate Fruits. Paper presented at: Organic Fruit Conference, Vignola, Italy, June 16-17, 2008 www.orgprints.org/14664/
3. Żakowska-Biemans S. 2009. Factors underlying consumption of organic food in the opinion of Polish consumers. Agronomy Research 7(Special issue II), 768 – 774, 2009



Research project co-financed by the EUROPEAN UNION from the European Regional Development Fund as part of Action 1.3 of the Operational Programme Innovative Economy, Sub-Action 1.3.1.