Chapter 12
General View Point, Perception and Acceptance of Organic Food Products Among Urban Consumers in the Thai Marketplace

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Abstract This study aims to determine consumer knowledge about organic foods and the reasons why buyers patronize or reject organic food products in Bangkok. It also relates such consumption patterns with the consumers' understanding and points of view towards organic food as well as their demographic and socio-economic profiles. Data were collected from 130 randomly selected organic food consumers in a huge Bangkok supermarket using semi-structured questionnaires. Results showed that more than half of the respondents have purchased organic fruits, rice and vegetables in the past. The key reasons given for these purchases include expectations of healthier lifestyle and long-term contribution towards a more sustainable environment. Results have shown that surveyed organic consumers tend to have higher educational and family income levels, bigger family size and older than those who have never bought any organic products. The primary obstacles cited in the purchase of organic products include persistent confusion in interpreting organic food labels and the general lack of organic product information.

Keywords Buying behaviour • Consumer education • Consumption patterns • Product perception • Organic food • Organic products labels • Thailand

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12.1 Introduction

The organic movement has rapidly swept across the world alongside a growing awareness of perceived environmental and health benefits that can be derived from organic products. The shift from conventional farming methods into organic farming and agricultural genetic engineering has occurred in many countries in widespread efforts to promote sustainable agriculture (Wheeler 2008). Many developed countries in the West have stepped up their organic farming efforts while in most Third World countries such a shift is just beginning to take effect (Chouichom and Yamao 2010) although there are inherent problems attributed to various socio-economic factors.

The intimate link between organic farm products and good human health is well known, likewise with the perceived environmental impacts of organic production. Organically produced food has shown a growing role in the evolving consumption patterns among today's households. One major concern is chemical residues in fruits and vegetables which have caused widespread anxiety among consumers especially those in developed countries. Moreover, promoting greater environmental awareness coupled with food safety concerns has caused many people to favour sustainable agricultural practices (Chen 2007). It is well known that chemical and pesticide residues found in food are linked to deleterious, long-term as well as unidentified effects on human health (Wilkins and Hillers 1994; Miles and Frewer 2001; William and Hammit 2001).

In Thailand, as well as in many Southeast Asia countries, the rapid socio-economic development is ushered by the industrialization and modernization of agricultural food production. The Thai government is particularly keen in pushing agricultural export targets to supply world demands. As such, the use of fertilizers and pesticides has increased dramatically in recent years (OAE 2008). While pushing up agricultural productivity, the Thai government is slowly realizing the need to promote organic approaches to address issues of food safety to maintain its competitiveness in the global market. Domestically, traditional food production schemes are still deeply rooted but will need to be re-examined in the light of growing awareness among Thai consumers towards environmentally friendly and healthy eating patterns. The demand for safe food imports from developing countries is likely to increase for social and political reasons. In many Western countries, health concerns among the general public appear to be the main reason driving the organic food industry (Schifferstien and Oude Ophuis 1998), thereby exerting pressure on exporting countries to re-evaluate safety options.

Organic food consumption represents a new lifestyle trend among the urban population of developing countries as the benefits of organic agriculture are only starting to be realized. A strong organic food manufacturing and marketing system will obviously rely on a stable organic food production source, i.e., organic farms. In Thailand, the organic food supply chain is only beginning to be defined (Kramol et al. 2006). In a study on consumer perceptions of organic vegetables and fruits, only one-third of respondents have purchased organic produce due to various reasons and

constraints (Roitner-Schobesberger et al. 2008). Among Thai consumers surveyed in that study organic food labelling has been cited as confusing although respondents showed some degree of awareness of food safety and environmental issues. In neighbouring Malaysia, a preliminary survey among a group of academics revealed a health consciousness factor exerting a greater influence on organic food choices rather than environmental preservation (Salleh et al. 2010).

The recent years have witnessed increased global spending on organic food which exceeded US$86 billion in 2009, with the perceived human health benefits dominating consumers' preferences for organic food. Alongside these human health concerns, Poulston and Yiu (2011) surveyed the increasingly popular concept of organic dining in some New Zealand and U.S. restaurants who found the higher prices of organic food as a main obstacle to increased consumption among customers. Price sensitivity plays a significant role in consumer preferences even in developed countries (Stolz et al. 2010) and expectedly more so in countries with lower incomes. Despite these setbacks, it is suggested that the highest trend of organic food production and consumption has not been reached yet, and that there is still plenty of growth capability within the global organic market (Ebrahimi 2007). The gap between organic food production and demand growth rates is wide: production growth rates in European countries and in China are about 15–25 % (Briz and Ward 2009) and 30 % per annum (Sheng et al. 2009), respectively, while in New Zealand and Australia a growth rate in the demand for organic products could run up to 50–60 % per annum and as much as 75 % per annum in the U.K. (Poulston and Yiu 2011). The world organic market is more vigorous than ever.

Thus far, there has been very little information about organic food consumption trends in Asia compared to industrialized countries such as the U.S., Australia, New Zealand and the European Community (Zhang 2005). Asian countries are set against unique socio-cultural backgrounds which might influence the collective mindset of its people, and thus present complicated trends of consumer behaviour and preferences. Therefore, the aims of this study were to assess the level of consumer knowledge about organic foods, determine some socio-economic and cultural factors affecting their decision-making and the reasons why buyers patronize or reject organic food products in Bangkok. It also relates such consumption patterns with the consumers' understanding and points of view towards organic food as well as their demographic and socio-economic profiles. Moreover, some correlation between consumers' attitudes towards organic food consumption and their socio-economic background will be explored.

12.2 Study Area and Methodology

This study was conducted mainly within Siam Paragon Shopping Centre in downtown Bangkok, one of the largest organic food markets and presumably the destination of most organic consumers in Thailand. The survey and pre-test were

carried out in late February 2010. The total sample size was 130 consisting of randomly selected consumers. The interviews employed semi-structured and structured questionnaires. In order to complement both quantitative and qualitative data, more information is collected through focus group discussions among target groups and also by one-on-one interviews. Some questions elicited quantitative data as well. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine percentages, arithmetic means, and standard deviation. A significance of $p < 0.05$ was set for statistical analysis in this study. F-test values were computed and used for comparing means. A Likert-type scale also was used when respondents were asked to point out their opinions and attitudes.

12.3 Results and Discussion

12.3.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

As shown in Table 12.1 the bulk of respondents included in this study were female (70.8 %), had an average age of 39.77 years (middle-age in this study); most of them were able to read and write fluently. The majority of the interviewees earned bachelor degrees from universities (63.1 %) and some of them had some form of graduate education (23.8 %).

Compared to the respondent group of an earlier survey conducted in Bangkok (Roitner-Schobesberger et al. 2008), the current group is younger, included more women and have higher educational attainment. The latter may imply that surveyed consumers have potentially better knowledge and information about organic food products than the previous sample. Clearly, education significantly influences the level of awareness for organic products (Briz and Ward 2009). Interestingly, Ghorbani and Hamraz (2009) found women consumers in Iran to be more willing than men to pay for organic products owing to their higher levels of awareness towards food nutritional issues, a pattern similarly seen by Byrne et al. (1994) among American respondents. Bartels and Rienders (2010) opined that gender has a profound effect on organic buying behaviour, and contrary to the findings of Ghorbani and Hamraz (2009), they identified men in U.K. spent more money on organic products than women without offering an explanation. The average family composition of respondents was 3.90 persons/household, and mainly with young children. Their average total income was 57,877 ThB/year/household (1 US$ = 36 ThB).

Besides, respondents received organic food information from various sources at around 3.78 times a month. The Internet printed advertising leaflets and television commercials were their primary sources of information about organic products. The media have important roles in disseminating information as illustrated in the case of Australia wherein negative media portrayal hindered the further adoption of genetic engineering (Wheeler 2008).

Table 12.1 Demographic characteristic of respondents (n = 130)

Variables	No.	Percentage (%)	S.D.	Mean	Sig.
Sex			0.47	–	
Female	92	70.8			
Male	38	29.2			
Age (years)			8.72	39.77	
≤30	21	16.2			
31–40	48	36.9			
41–50	51	39.2			0.032*
>50	10	7.7			
Highest educational attainment			0.82	4.03	
Vocational school	17	13.1			
Bachelor degree	82	63.1			0.041*
Master degree or higher	31	23.8			
Family composition (persons)			1.40	3.90	
1–2	22	16.9			
3–4	69	53.1			0.038*
5–6	36	27.7			
>6	3	2.3			
Total income (Baht/year/household)			6.02	57,877	
≤ 20,000	30	23.1			
20,001–40,000	33	25.4			
40,001–60,000	35	26.9			0.034*
> 60,000	32	24.6			

*$P < .05$

12.3.2 Consumers' Concern with Pesticide Residue and GMOs

Table 12.2 shows that more than half of respondents (70 respondents or 53.8 %) showed concerns about harmful chemicals and potential risks as a result of genetic manipulations.

This is not entirely surprising since health risks, aside from environmental hazards, are recurring themes within the consumer world. Chang and Zepeda (2005) revealed that many consumers are far more anxious about the kinds of chemicals used and how they affect their health than anything else. These anxieties about chemical residues drive consumers into buying organic products as observed by Ghorbani and Hamraz (2009). While organic foods are perceived as healthier for the consumer and environmentally friendly as well, these two positive benefits have different acceptance levels in different societies. Green consumption by way of purchasing locally and organically produced foods is often based on an ethically centred consumer behaviour directed towards the general welfare of the society and the environment and is widespread in Europe (Pieniak et al. 2010). In the richer societies of Europe and North America, such altruistic values play a significant role in organic food consumption (Vermeir and Verbeke 2008) as food prices do not

Table 12.2 Participants' concern with pesticide residue and GMOs (n = 130)

Questions/concerns	Very much	Often	Sometimes	Not at all
Are you concerned with pesticide residues on vegetables, meat and fruits?	46 (35.4 %)	70 (53.8 %)	12 (9.2 %)	2 (1.5 %)
Are you concerned with the use of GMOs in foods?	27 (20.8 %)	54 (41.5 %)	36 (27.7 %)	13 (10.0 %)

rank as high a concern as that in poorer societies. In many countries of East Asia which witnessed a number of recent food crisis like mad cow disease, foot-and-mouth disease, avian influenza, etc., there is understandably a far greater concern on the effects of consumed food on their personal health and well-being (Miles and Frewer 2001). In Malaysia, the 'health consciousness factor' exerts a greater impact on food preferences than environmental concerns (Salleh et al. 2010). The same could be said about the respondents of the present study. When asked about chemical residues in foods and foods made with GMO, only 10 % said that these issues do not matter to them, but the great majority are worried and directly link such concerns with personal health and well-being with only a faint impression for environmental concern at best.

When asked to compare their concerns, more respondents were more worried with pesticide residues (35.4 %) than GMO in foods (20.8 %). Farming practices like fertilizer and pesticide applications with their corresponding residues are apparently more well- known in an agricultural country like Thailand than genetically engineered foods and the processes that go into making them. In addition, genetically modified crop seeds are banned in Thailand. In the local media, GMOs have received very limited coverage and public discussion. Roitner-Schobesberger et al. (2008) mentioned that only 10 % (n = 848 respondents) of organic food production consumers surveyed in Bangkok stated that they were 'very much' concerned with GMOs food product, a trend also seen in the present study.

12.3.3 Consumers' Knowledge Level of Organic Farming and Agriculture

The interviewees were asked about their level of knowledge of organic farming and agriculture (Table 12.3) with most of them (94.6 %) having heard the statement 'organic food/organic product' but are not certain what it meant. Most interviewees (70 %) have some knowledge but only 5.4 % claimed having very good knowledge about organic foods. It can therefore be said that there is a moderately low level of organic food products knowledge of consumers in the study area. It has been pointed out that consumers who have more information and knowledge about organic products will show a higher willingness to purchase organic products and that this understanding about organic food is based upon perceptions and state of

Table 12.3 Participants' knowledge level of organic farming and agriculture

Statements	Yes (%)	No (%)
Having heard the statement organic food/organic product	94.6	5.4
Having know some knowledge about organic food/organic product	70.0	30.0
Having very good knowledge about organic foods	5.4	94.6

Table 12.4 Participants' satisfaction with organic food products in supermarkets (n = 130)

Questions	Yes	No
Do you think organic food products are expensive?	103 (79.2 %)	27 (20.8 %)
Are you satisfied with the variety of organic foods in the supermarkets?	57 (43.8 %)	73 (56.2 %)

knowledge, both of which contributed to the final decision to buy or not to buy organic products (Briz and Ward 2009). Consumers' preference towards organic food purchase is in turn positively determined by their attitude towards organic foods. Consumers are influenced by information about organic production and manifest their acceptance in the direction of the expected link, especially among consumers in developed countries where awareness of the ethical value of organic farming and its effects on product safety are high (Napolitano et al. 2010).

12.3.4 Consumers' Satisfaction with Organic Food Products in Supermarkets

Table 12.4 showed that a big number of respondents (79.2 %) thought that organic products are still expensive and that most (56.2 %) are not satisfied with the variety of organic products available in Bangkok supermarkets at the time of the survey. Price and charge variables seem to affect the consumers' decision-making process, whether they will purchase or not. This is not surprising as the respondents belong to a fairly affluent urban community. The organic and non-organic food product prices in Bangkok are quite divergent; with organic food products priced as premium products almost 100 % more than non-organic products. Roitner-Schobesberger et al. (2008) cited that despite the price difference, approximately 60 % of organic food shoppers said the high prices of organic food do not cause a significant problem or a strong deterrent towards their purchase. Mondelaers et al. (2008) and Stolz et al. (2010) found that organic consumers are much less price-sensitive compared with non-organic shoppers in general. In addition, respondent shoppers expressed general dissatisfaction with the variety of organic food products, especially fruits and vegetables, found in supermarkets at the time of the survey. The results of Roitner-Schobesberger et al. (2008) also confirmed that shoppers would like to see more variety from where they can select products to purchase.

Table 12.5 Reasons for buying organic food products

Statements	Yes (%)	No (%)
Organic food is fresher than other common products	82(63.1)	48(36.9)
The taste of organic food is better	78(60.0)	52(40.0)
Organic foods are good for the health	149(87.7)	16(12.3)
Organic food does not have pesticide residue	110(84.6)	20(15.4)
Organic food has organic certification	88(67.7)	42(32.3)
Just want to try organic product/something new	71(54.6)	59(45.4)
It is fashionable to buy organic food	31(23.8)	99(76.2)

12.3.5 Consumers' Reasons for Buying Organic Food Products

The respondents were presented with seven statements asking for the reasons why they buy organic foods (Table 12.5). Results showed that the most important reason cited is the positive health impact (87.7 %). Consumers always considered health reasons as directly impacting on them. Physical well-being and egocentric values are the most important motives for consuming organic foods because of the perceived health benefits of organic food over and above those derived from conventional food products (Grankvist and Biel 2001; Makatouni 2002; Naspetti and Zanoli 2002). Health concerns also constitute a more important incentive even among incidental or infrequent patrons of organic food products (Schifferstien and Oude Ophuis 1998).

Furthermore, consumers surveyed bought organic products because there is proper organic certification in them (67.7 %). The issue about organic certification is contentious. Certification and organic labels are confusing to many consumers. For example, Roitner-Schobesberger et al. (2008) found that respondents presented with six different food labels such as hygienic food, pesticide-safe, organic, etc. found no difference among them and equated all of them into a simplistic and convenient definition of organic products which is of course incorrect. The term 'organic' as found in food labels has been shown to influence behavioural changes brought about by altered brain activity (Linder et al. 2010). Chen (2007) has hypothesized several factors that can affect consumer choices, and one of these is product labelling which was found to be confusing for surveyed consumers in Taiwan. It is apparent that consumers who possess the right information about labels will show more effectiveness and more discrimination towards buying organic foods (Ghorbani and Hamraz 2009). Awareness of organic labels can increase the probability that consumers would be willing to pay a premium for organic food products (Battle et al. 2005). In contrast, consumers experiencing more difficulty in identifying organic foods labels will likely show a drop in their intention to purchase organic foods (Chen 2007).

More than half of surveyed consumers (63.1 %) felt that organic food is fresher than other products while most of the respondents (60.0 %) agreed that organic foods

Table 12.6 Reasons for not buying or rejecting organic food products

Statements	Yes, I agree	No, I do not agree
Organic food product is not a special product compared to any ordinary products, its price is just higher	33(25.4)	97(74.6)
I do not know sufficient information about organic food product and what it stands for	46(35.4)	84(64.6)
I do not believe in the certification system of organic food products	33(25.4)	97(74.6)
It is difficult to find and there are only few organic food products sold	89(68.5)	41(31.5)
Organic food has higher prices than the more common non-organic products	82(63.1)	48(36.9)
The taste of organic products is not good	14(10.8)	116(89.2)

have better taste than non-organics although numerous sensory assessments have yielded inconsistent results (Fillion and Arazi 2002; McEachern and McClean 2002; Zhao et al. 2007). Moreover, two quality aspects of food product (taste and visual attractiveness) are factors related to the frequency of buying organic fruits and vegetables (Ghorbani and Hamraz 2009). Wholesomeness, absence of chemicals, environment friendliness, and a better taste have been cited as primary reasons to justify the purchase of organic foods (Schifferstien and Oude Ophuis 1998).

Other respondents just wanted to try new organic products (54.6 %) while some (23.8 %) wanted to go with the organic food lifestyle trend. Roitner-Schobesberger et al. (2008) declared that the important motive to purchase organic food is the consumer's search for new, trendy and fresh products. On the other hand, food neophobia, defined as the behavioural and personality style shift wherein consumers are reluctant to try new foods (Chen 2007) also figures prominently in our survey results. Poulston and Yiu (2011) have seen a significant and noticeable trend towards organic food and also a noticeable switch towards healthier eating of organic food of respondents in what they called organic dining in restaurants. Generally, the key factor for purchasing fruits and vegetable is the freshness of the products (Pénau et al. 2006; Sakagami et al. 2006) and this is likewise an issue among the present respondents who hinted that Thai organic vegetables must show such qualities to merit their continued patronage.

12.3.6 Consumers' Reasons for not Buying or Rejecting Organic Food Products

The consumers were also asked about some of the reasons which prevented them from buying organic foods. The survey (Table 12.6) showed that consumers were generally satisfied with the variety of organic foods in the supermarket with only 31.5 % complaining that it was difficult to locate organic products. Interestingly, Chen (2007) found that inconvenience has a negative impact on consumers' attitude to organic foods. With the distribution channels of organic foods still limited in

Taiwan, this causes inconveniences to consumers in the purchase of organic foods there. On the other hand, providing a more visible place for organic products in a shop may increase consumers' familiarity with the products and simultaneously improve their image (Aertsens et al. 2009).

Another reason for the rejection of organic foods was the far higher prices compared to non-organic products as cited by 63.1 % of the respondents who also suggested introducing lower cost organic products to the market. From our field survey, we found that the price of organic food product is higher than conventional food by almost 100 % or more. The price premium (generally 50–70 % more than conventional food) is a determining factor for a lot of shoppers (Brown and Sperow 2005; Duffort 2006; Willer et al. 2008). McCoy (2002) and Pearson (2001) opined that the price premium is the most significant reason limiting the demand for organic foods. Baltzer (2003) and Corsi and Novelli (2003) mentioned that consumers' willingness to pay high prices for organic food reflects their appreciation for organic food production quality.

Some respondents (35.4 %) cited poor product information as another reason for not purchasing them. About a quarter of respondents (25.4 %) did not trust organic certificates or banners or became confused with too many kinds of certificates. Mann (2003) argued that the physical image and presentation of organic produce are good enough to hasten consumption and social acceptance. However, due to budget restrictions, the market share for organics is still low. Roitner-Schobesberger et al. (2008) revealed that organic consumers have become more sensitive of food labels and read label more carefully. The current respondents also knew very little about the information on organic product labels. Thus even if the respondents mentioned that they 'know' the label, it does not necessarily denote that they understood the specified data on the label. Marshall and Bell (2004) found that people with a higher level of food involvement have capabilities to make finer discriminations among foods, including what kind of food is healthier. Yet, the best policy for the institutions concerned is to make it easier to identify the certificates of organic foods so as to promote purchasing intentions of organic foods.

12.3.7 Organic Products Most Commonly Purchased by Respondents

The results in Table 12.7 showed most of organic products that were purchased by consumers are organic rice and lettuce (48.5 %). The other organic product commonly shopped by Thai organic consumers is swamp cabbage/water spinach (33.8 %). This kind of vegetable is quite popular in Southeast Asia countries and in other tropical countries. Approximately 26.9 % of respondents frequently bought Thai herb products such as kaffir lime leaf, lemon grass, galangal, ginger, turmeric (curcuma), chili, spicy basil leaf and so on. The organic status of these herbs is

Table 12.7 Organic products most commonly purchased by respondents

Organic products	Yes (%)	No (%)
Cabbage	23.8	76.2
Chinese kale	25.4	74.6
Swamp cabbage/water spinach	33.8	66.2
String bean/long bean	13.8	86.2
Pumpkin	4.6	95.4
Papaya	12.3	87.7
Lettuce	48.5	51.5
Thai culinary herbs	26.9	73.1
Rice	48.5	51.5

uncertain but because they are standard ingredients in Thai cuisine their organic origins have not been scrutinized. In Germany as well as in many parts of Europe, vegetable products have a higher share of organic production than animal products (Mann 2003). These results showed a similar situation in the Thai marketplace surveyed in the present study.

12.3.8 Correlation Between Consumers' Socio-Economic Data and Their Perception of Organic Food Production

In Table 12.1, statistical results illustrated that consumers' age, educational level, family size, and total income were strongly correlated to and influenced their perception of organic food production at the 5 % level. Moreover, the respondents who are between 41 and 50 years old, have educational level of at least the bachelor level, have family members between 3 and 4 persons, have monthly family income between 40,001 and 60,000 ThB are more likely to buy and shop organic food products than other consumers. Bartels and Rienders (2010) revealed that age and income were significant positive predictors of consumer behaviour. Additionally, their results confirmed that the younger generation spent more money for organic food than did older people. This observation disagreed with our present results. Napolitano et al. (2010) pointed out that consumers with a higher education level are more concerned with ethical issues and other sensitive information related to the organic production system. The results of Ghorbani and Hamraz (2009) found that with increasing family size, willingness to pay for organic products will increase.

12.3.9 Consumers' Constraints Towards Organic Food Consumption in Bangkok

Table 12.8 showed some of the consumers' constraints towards organic food consumption in Bangkok. Majority of consumers (64.61 %) cited the lack of

Table 12.8 Consumers' constraints towards organic food consumption

Constraints	Yes (%)
Lack of organic label information	84 (64.61 %)
Low diversity of organic products	76 (58.46 %)
Higher price of organic products	68 (52.30 %)
Small organic market niche	65 (50.00 %)

organic label information as a major problem. They expressed that they still need more information details than what is currently available in the labels. Also, they are still confused with too many organic labels in supermarkets, an observation shared by respondents polled earlier by Roitner-Schobesberger et al. (2008). In Taiwan, consumers are likewise confronted with a confusing array of organic food certificates and labels, with at least 14 different kinds of certification in the market (Chen 2007).

Obviously, greater understanding of information in organic labels can help consumers make intelligent decisions (Ghorbani and Hamraz 2009). Although organic food labelling presents recognition and decision problems, surveyed consumers (58.46 %) stated that the diversity of organic food products is low to allow for greater and wider product selection. German shoppers surveyed by Mann (2003) also expressed dissatisfaction over the low variety of organic products in stores. Approximately 52.30 % of organic consumers surveyed cited the high price of some organic products in the supermarket as constraints.

Napolitano et al. (2010) revealed that the major obstacle to buying organic food is the higher price because of higher production costs. In addition, consumers (50.0 %) felt that the current organic food market niche is restricted with limited patronage, but they were left without any options but to buy at higher prices anyway. There is obviously a need to narrow the gap between the prices of conventional and organic foods in order to stimulate the growth of the organic food sector. To initially address this concern, shoppers expressed the need for businessmen to expand the organic market and for the government to grant subsidies and incentives to achieve the same effects and to reduce the price of some organic products. This way a major constraint revolving around high costs would have been eliminated. This is not a new idea but is a feasible and temporary intervention step until socio-economic conditions can allow the usual market forces to set in.

12.4 Conclusions

The results of this study showed that most of the respondents have purchased organic rice, vegetables and fruit, among other organic items available in Thai marketplaces. The key reasons given to support these purchases include expectations of healthier lifestyle as primary reasons and long-term contribution towards a more sustainable environment as secondary reasons. However, purchasers still need more information on organic labels. Consumers faced a number of issues

that restricted them from further patronizing organic foods, foremost of which is the limited market niche that hinders greater product variety and product competition. Consumer preference for organic products is observed among consumers with higher educational attainment and greater family income, bigger family size and greater age than those who have never bought any organic products. Our results showed a steady growth of the organic market share in Bangkok; organic patrons have risen to about 50 % among the respondents (February 2010) compared to about only a third during an earlier survey conducted April-May 2005. This comparative figure points to a growing organic food market in the urban Thai setting. The main obstacles cited by respondents that prevented them from patronizing organic products were the lack of information by way of organic product labelling. This study strongly suggests that new, easily accessible information and knowledge on organic products be more widely disseminated, particularly within the general shopping areas and urban population centres by agencies supporting the organic movement in the country. In this case, public education is clearly a potent factor towards increasing consumer awareness that will help them make informed decisions. It is also a crucial factor that could result in the rise and fall of the growing organic industry of the country.

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