

Title Experiences of quality in the horticultural value chain - the case of Sweden
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Abstract

This paper deals with the concept of quality as defined by market actors in the value chain. Quality can be seen as reaching certain defined levels and includes value for money, price, origin, ethical values, taste/flavour/texture, health and convenience. In a quantitative study of 100 carrot buyers in supermarkets, the lack of packaging was the most important factor in the choice of product and Swedish origin was the most important prerequisite. In a conjoint study, origin was considered more important than organic. In a study of apples and tomatoes, retailers ranked quality and price first, followed by demand, quantity and product origin. Observations in supermarkets show that the fresh produce departments do not promote product according to product origin, but rather promote the private labels of the chain. Wholesalers' defined quality in terms of the buyers wants. In their ranking of the importance of different purchasing criteria, quality came second after demand, and was followed by quantity and price. In another study, wholesalers expressed an interest in organic and fair trade fruit, but were reluctant towards promoting local or regional products. We identify a number of conflicts in the value chain. Consumers want quality products with a connection to freshness and origin. Retailers follow the marketing strategy of the chain and promote private label products. The wholesale levels acquire products in an over-supplied market and follow the demand from retailers. Producers must meet their terms or seek other paths to market.