

Consumer attitudes towards 'free-from' labels

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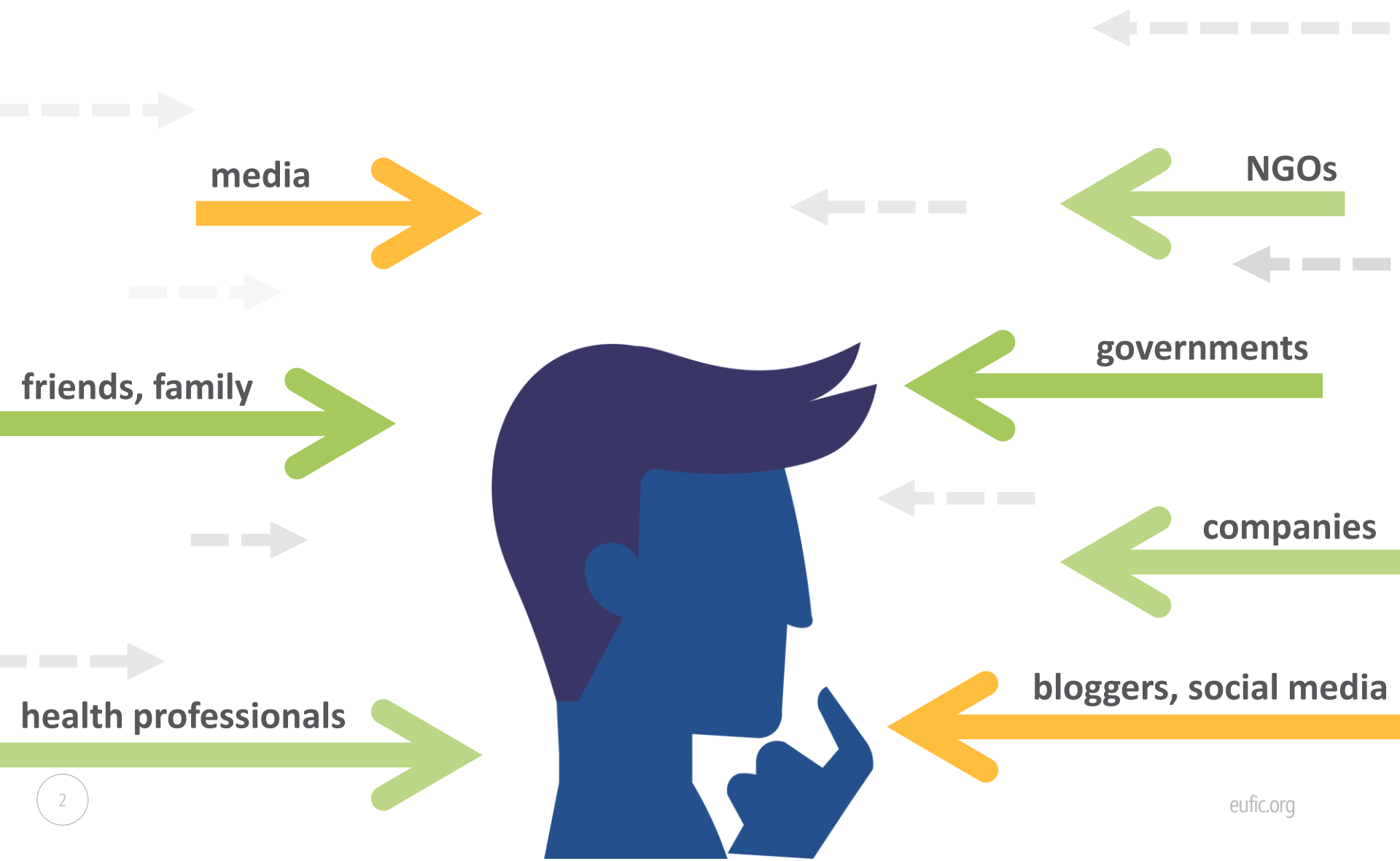
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Information sources



The headlines



Vision

A world where people choose to live healthily because they know how to.

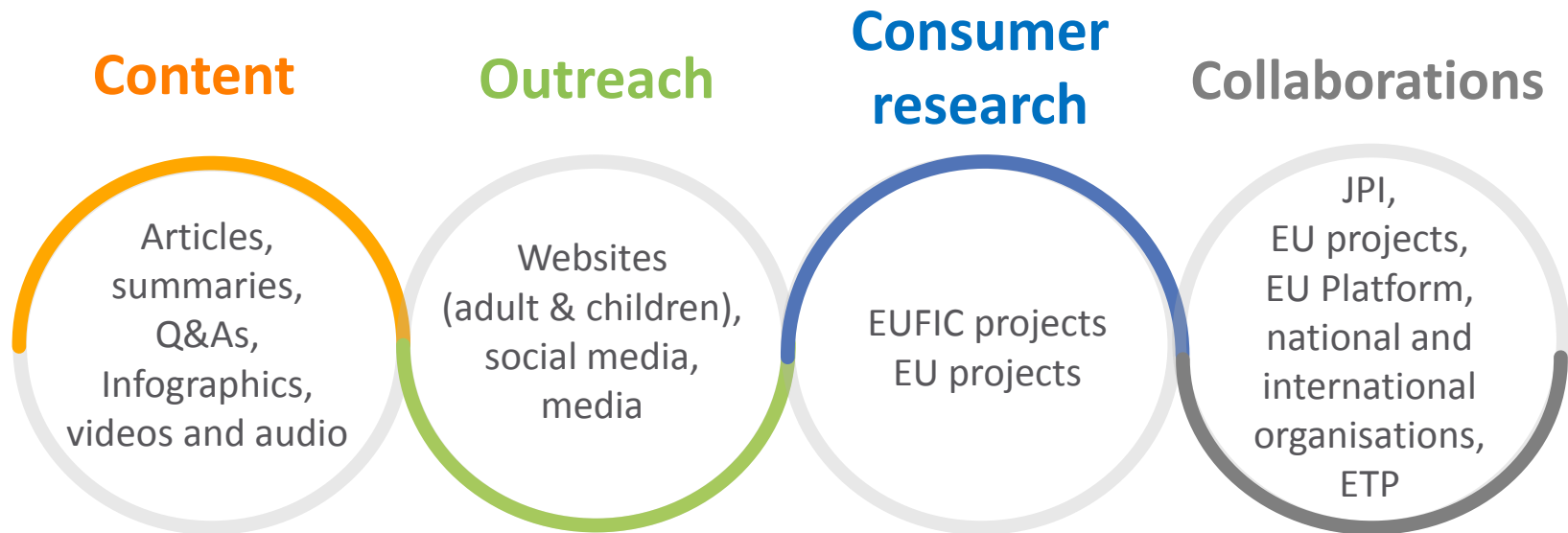
Mission

Offer accessible, appealing and actionable science-based information on food and health, to inspire and empower.

Since 1995

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What do we do?



JPI = Joint Programming Initiative
ETP = European Technology Platform

Our numbers



10,000
online articles



53,000 social
media followers



31,000 newsletter
subscribers



37 EU Projects
18 currently running



10 million web
visits/year (2016)
12 languages



20 permanent staff
6 interns

Funding: 60% - EC-funded research projects; 40% membership
(food and drink companies, academic institutions, research organisations, NGOs and non-profit associations)

What are consumer attitudes towards and perception of free-from labels?

The study - overview

ABOUT

Commissioned by EPOA
Conducted by EUFIC (Dr Hieke)
and ETH Zurich (Prof Siegrist)
Data collection by MMR Research
Worldwide

AIM

Explore consumer perceptions
and attitudes towards several
'free-from' labels in Europe

TEAM

eufic



Prof Michael
Siegrist



Dr Sophie
Hieke



Camille Taper

METHODOLOGY

- Online 25 minute survey
(quantitative/qualitative)
- In UK, FR, PL and SE
(500/country – 2192 total)
- Free-from gluten, lactose,
palm-oil and GMO

Four free-from labels



What we wanted to find out



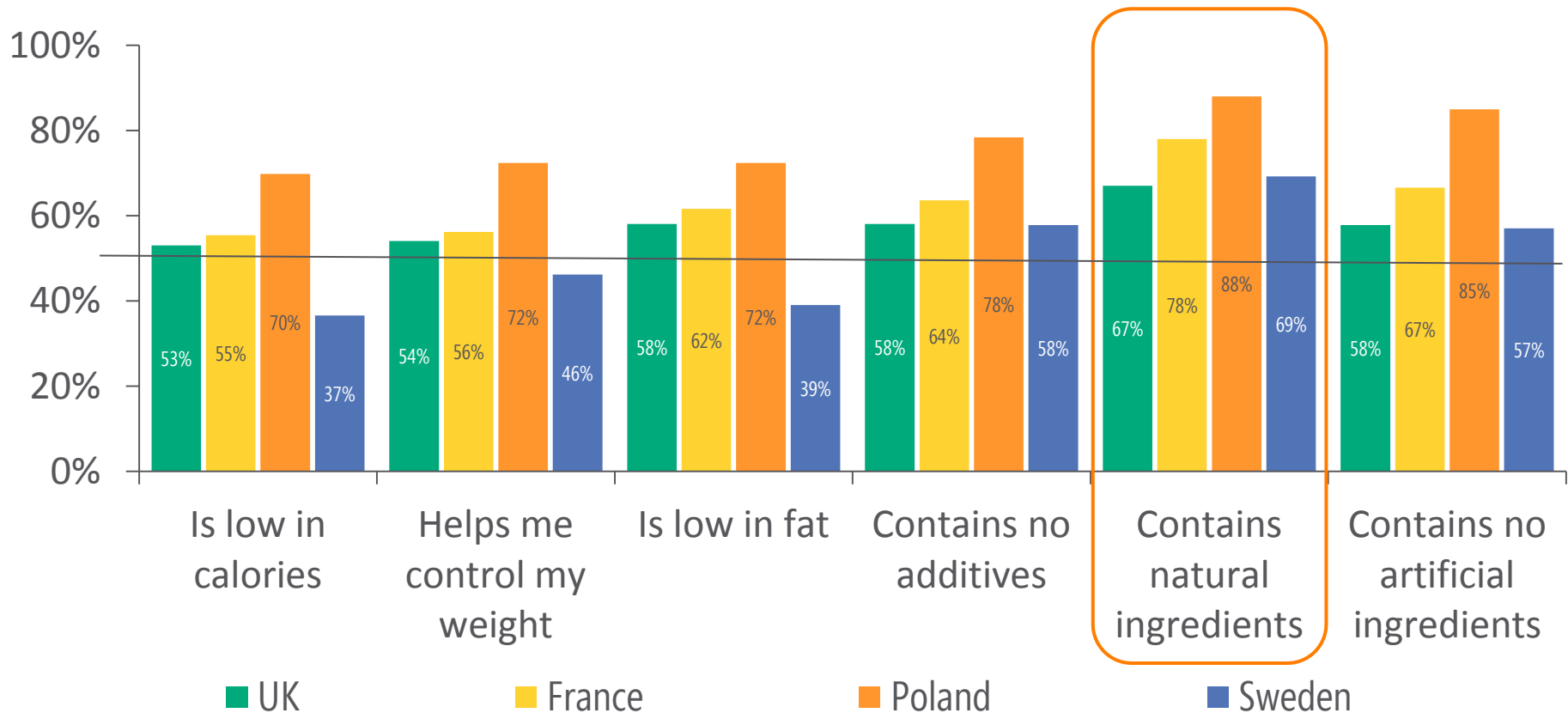
- How do consumers interpret 'free from' labels?
- Do they find them useful?
- Do these labels influence consumer willingness to buy products?
- Do consumers think that the absence of an ingredient ('free from x') improves the nutritional value/healthiness/safety of a product?
- How is consumers' trust affected when they learn that 'free from' does not necessarily equal 'healthier'?

European consumers' general attitudes

Food to contain natural ingredients is most important to consumers



“It is important to me that the food I eat on a typical day...”

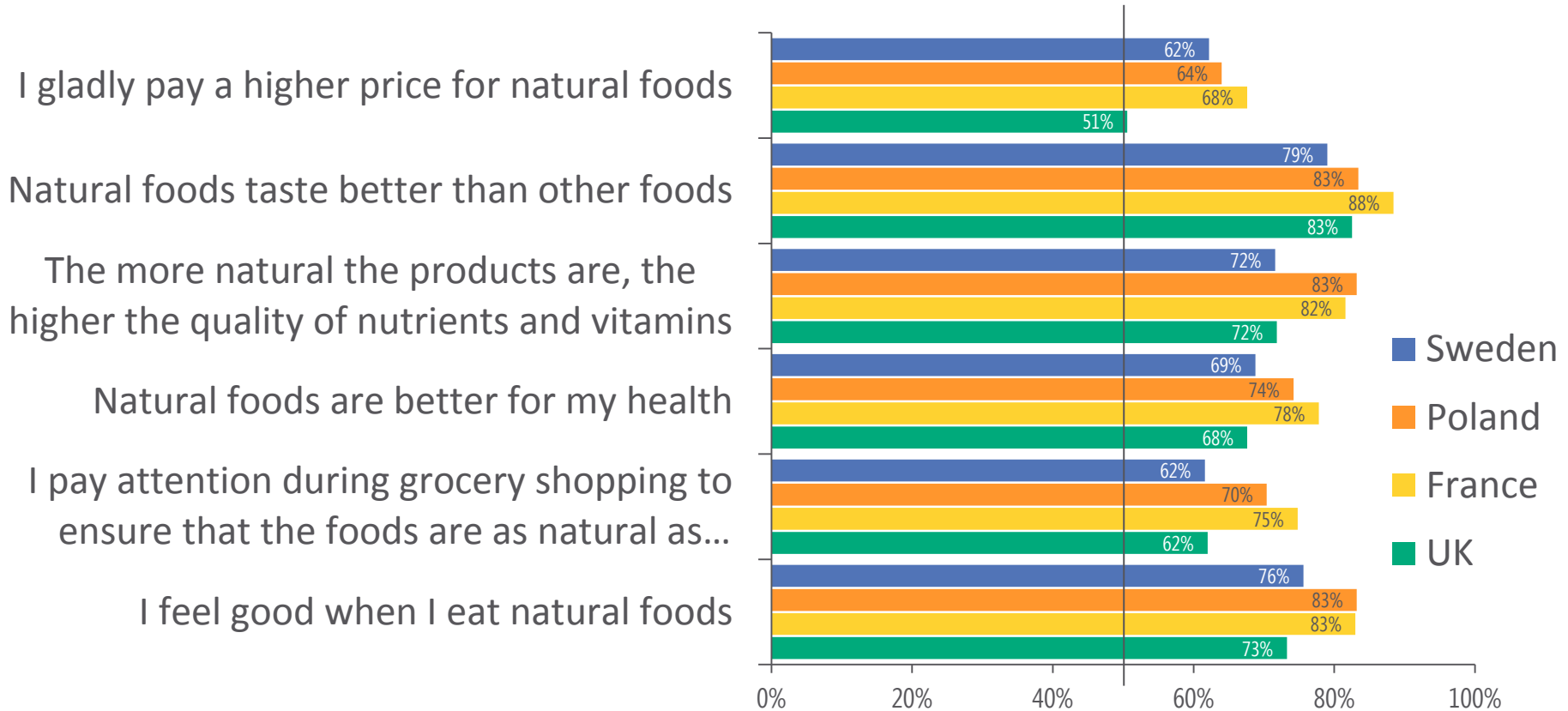


Percentage of respondents answering they agree
(scale points 3 and 4 on a scale of 1=not at all important to 4=very important)

Interest in naturalness is important for all consumers, but agreement varies by country



“To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?”



Percentage of respondents answering they agree
(scale points 4, 5 and 6 on a scale of 1=do not agree at all to 6=completely agree)

How do consumers interpret the 'free-from' labels?

What consumers associate with these four terms differs widely by country

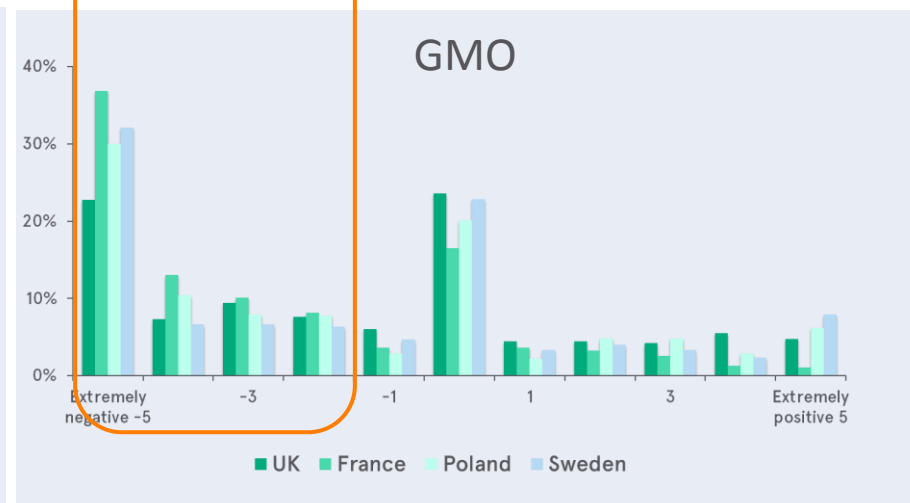
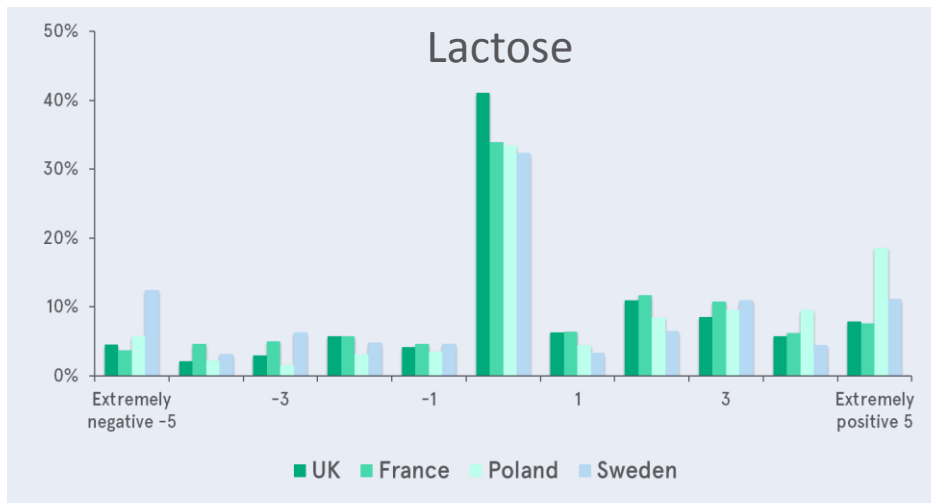
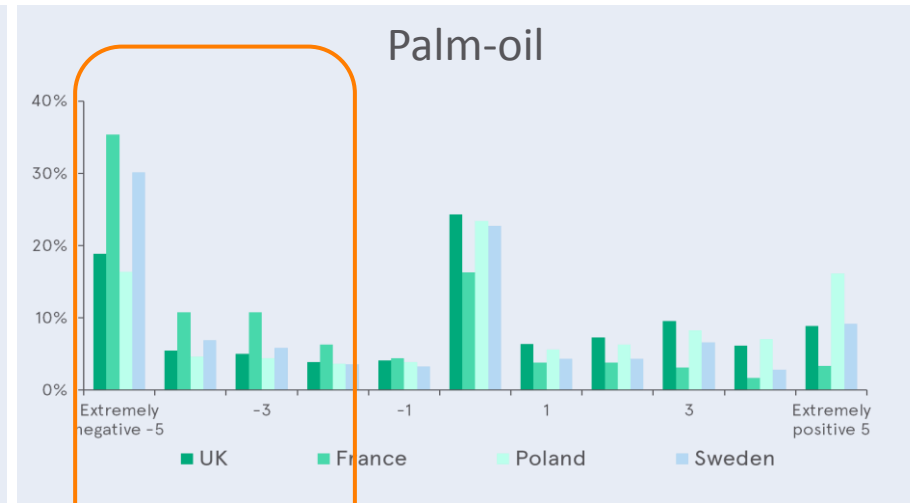
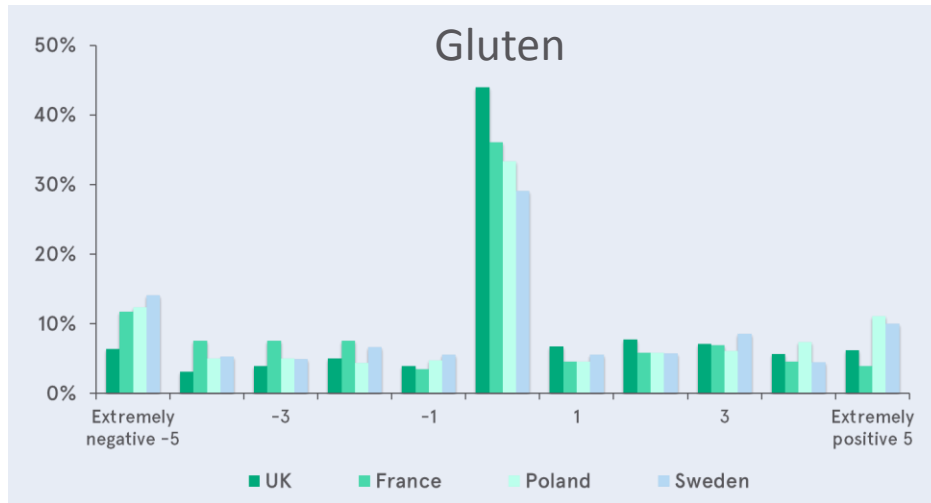


	UK	France	Poland	Sweden
Gluten				
● Intolerance, illness, digestion, allergy	12%	28%	13%	25%
● Products with gluten	43%	29%	38%	43%
Lactose				
● Irritation, digestion, intolerance	9%	12%	8%	23%
● Milk, milk-products	47%	52%	52%	46%
Palm oil				
● Destruction of environment, suffering monkeys	14%	21%	1%	21%
● Unhealthy	3%	8%	9%	5%
GMOs				
● Artificial, unnatural, Frankenstein-food	19%	16%	29%	12%
● Negative evaluation (e.g., bad, wrong, dangerous, avoid, unhealthy)	9%	24%	15%	12%

Neutral associations for gluten and lactose, but extremely negative for palm-oil and GMO



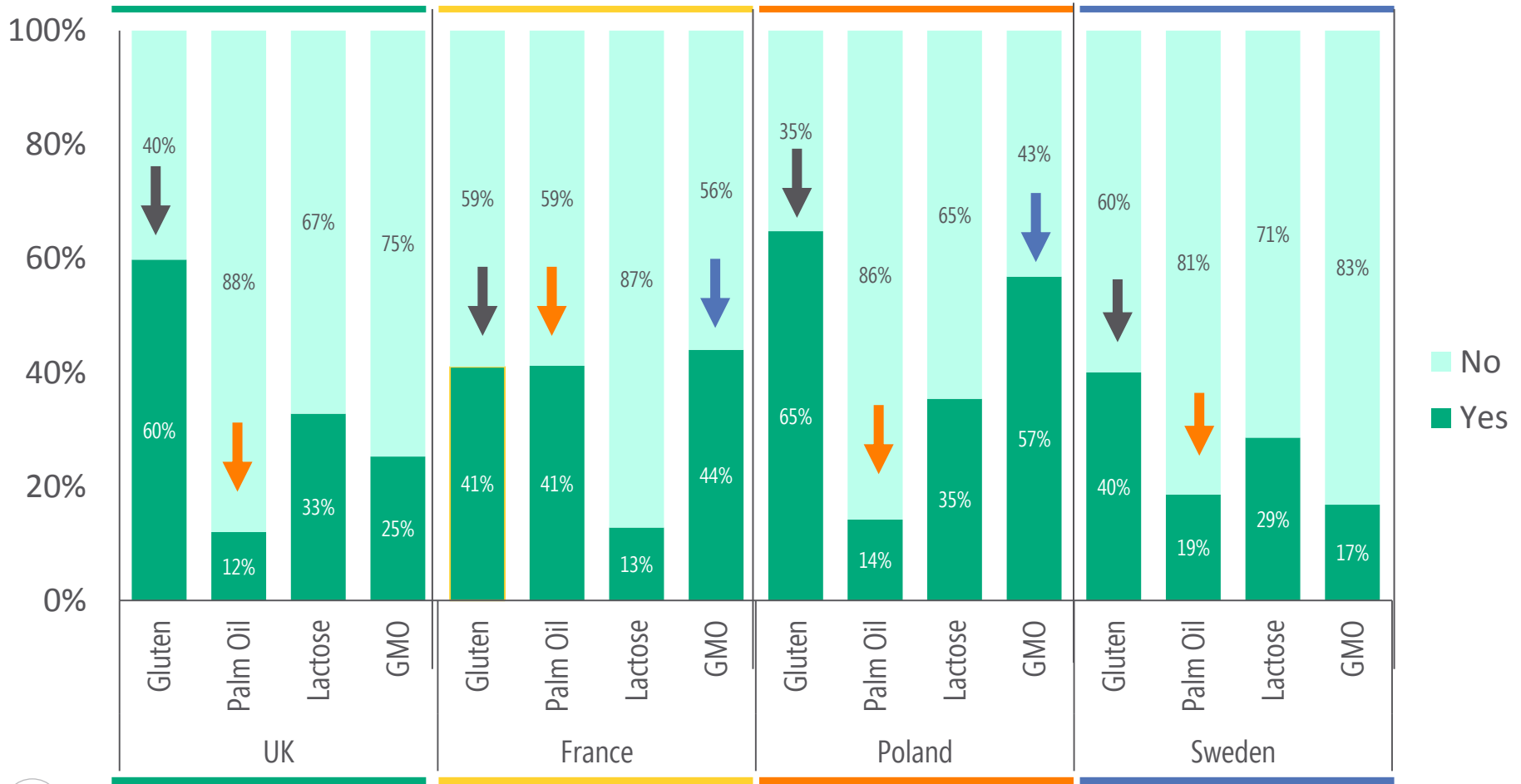
“Do these associations evoke a positive or a negative feeling?”



Awareness of 'free from' labels is low, but is highest for gluten, with strong country variations








“Prior to this survey, have you seen a label like this before?”



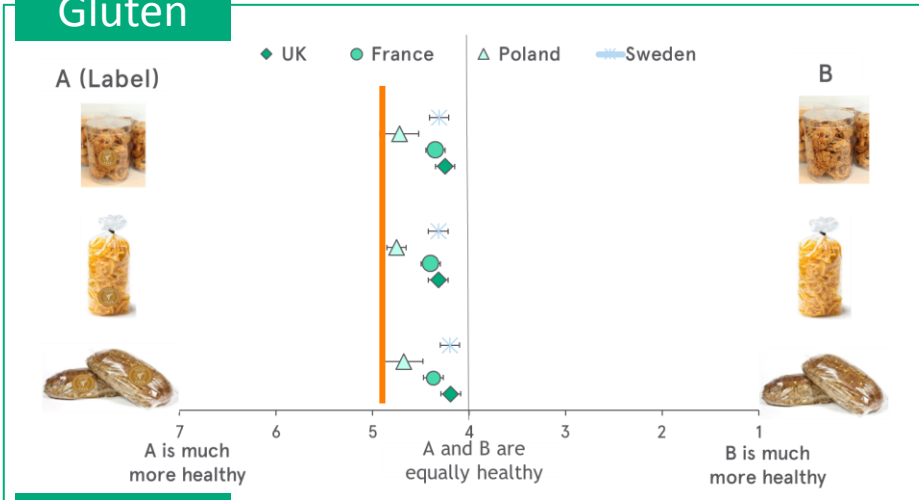
European consumers associate 'free from' with healthier

When shown generic product pictures, for the 4 'free from' labels, products carrying the label were rated healthier than those that did not have a label

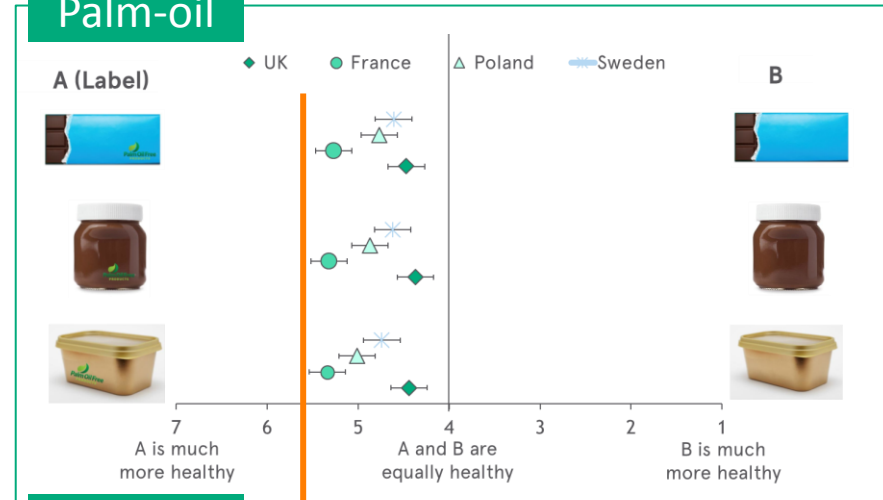
			
			
			
			

Products carrying 'free from palm-oil and GMO' perceived healthier than same products without the label

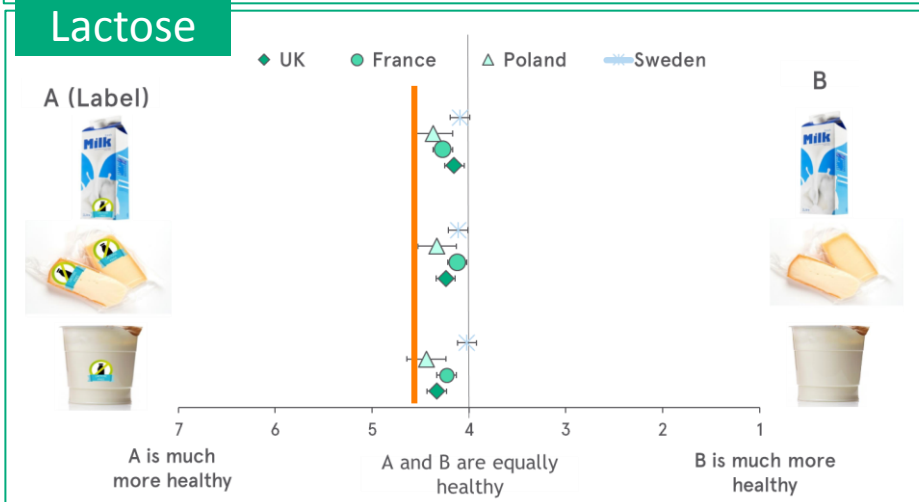
Gluten



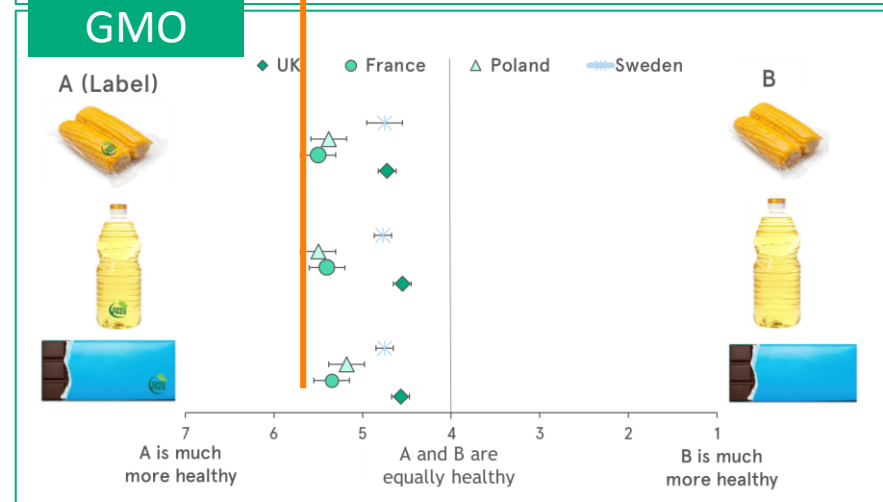
Palm-oil



Lactose



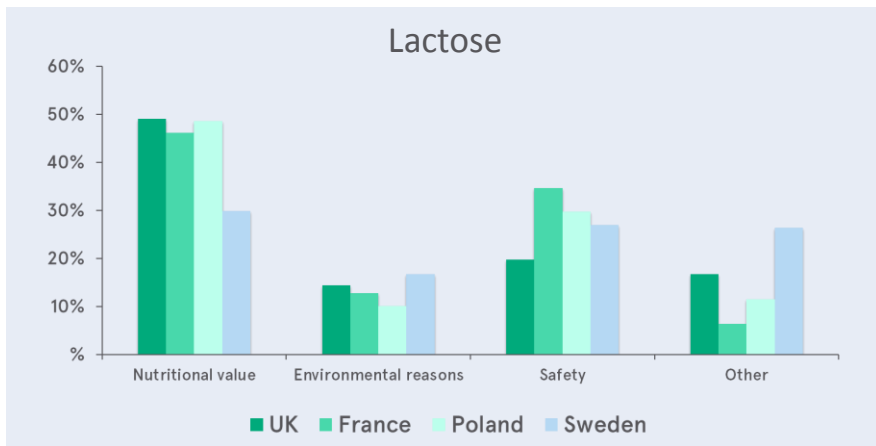
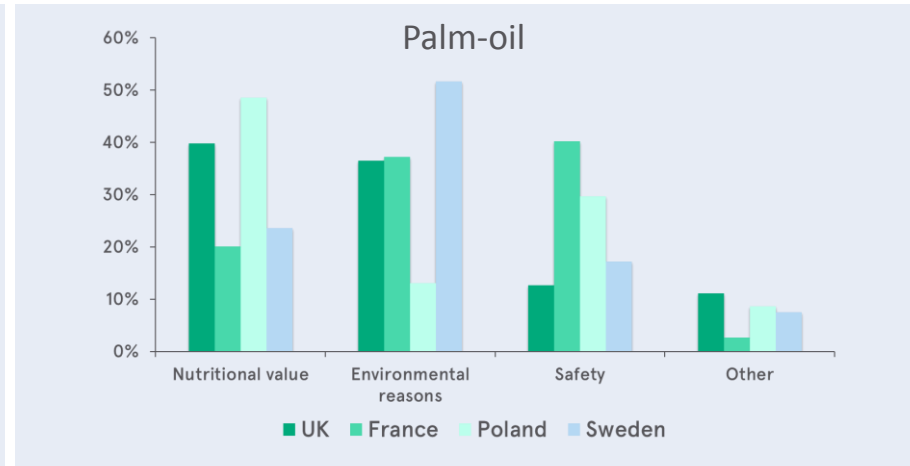
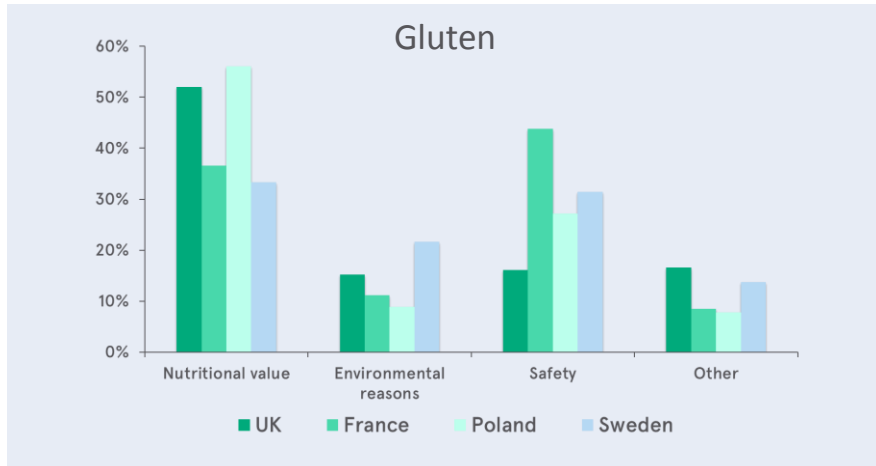
GMO



Nutritional value, environmental reasons and safety associated to varying degrees with the four labels – large country differences exist

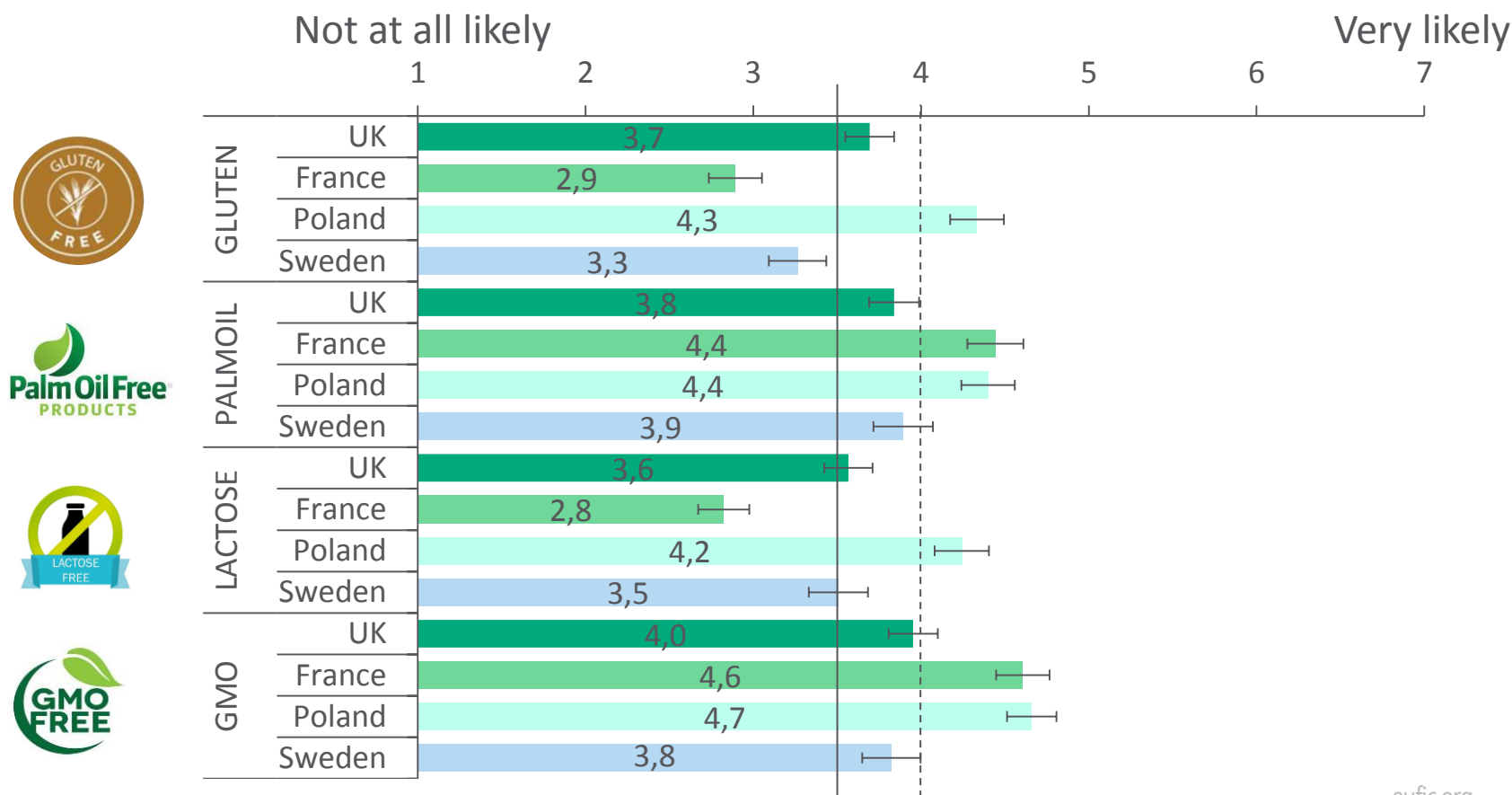


“Why do you currently look for this label when buying products?”



Consumers are somewhat unlikely to find 'free from' labels useful in their purchase decision, but country differences exist

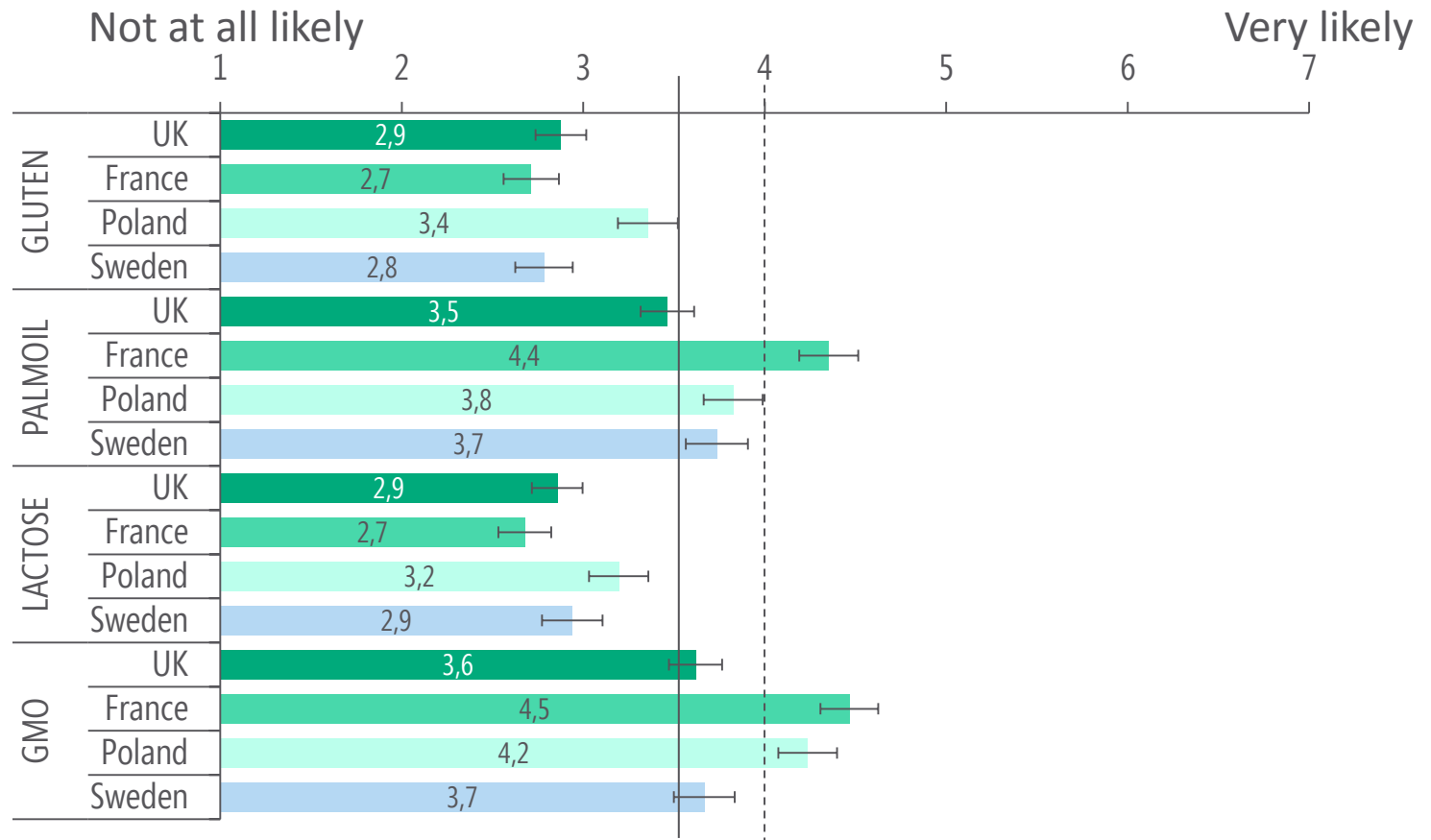
“Do you find the information in this label useful in helping you make a purchase decision?”



Except for palm oil and GMOs in France, consumers are not willing to pay more for ‘free from’ labelled products



“If the price would be higher than on similar products without the label, how likely would you be to purchase the labelled product?”



As a summary...

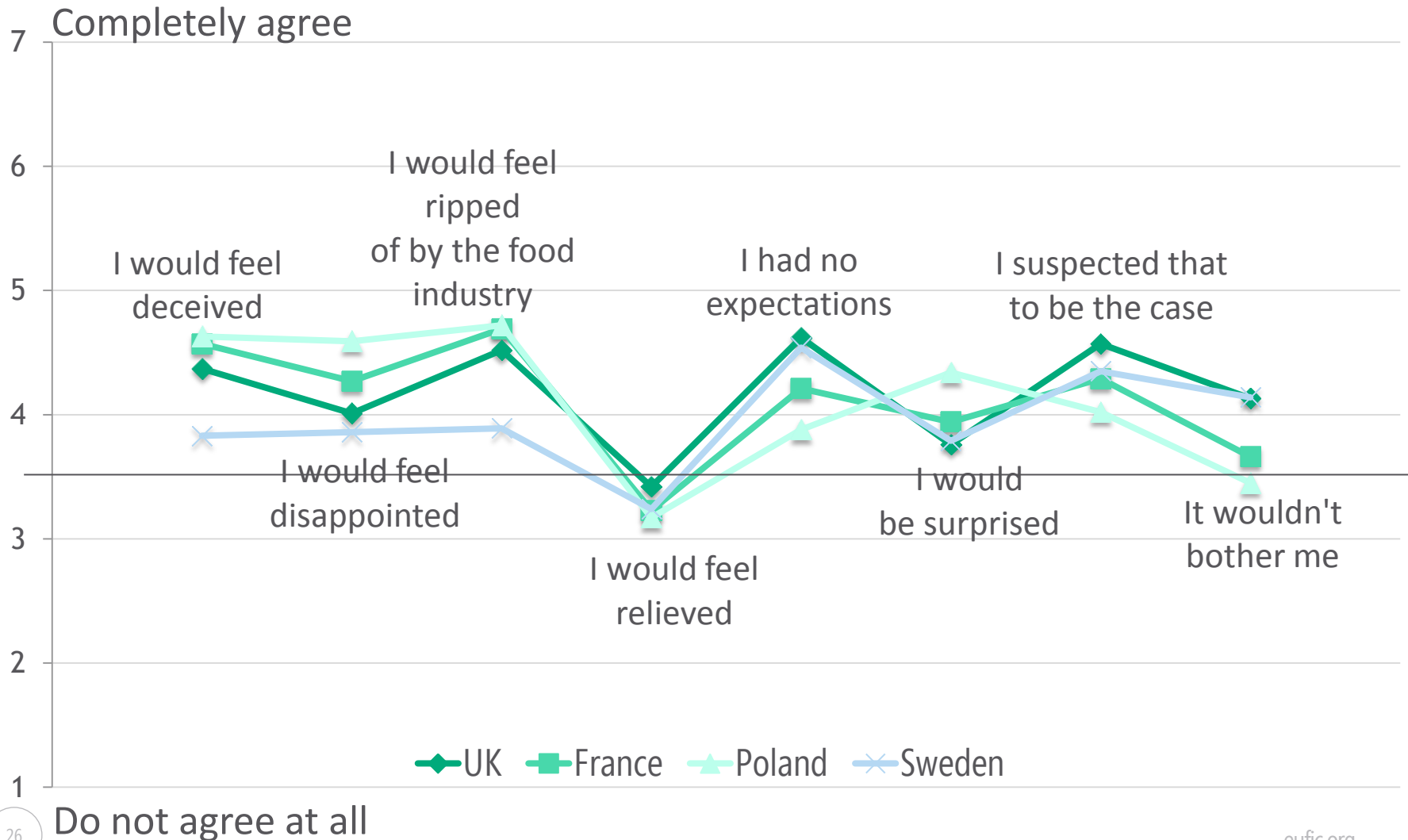
'Free from' labels are linked to perceived product healthiness



- When comparing same products with and without 'free from' label, consumers rate labelled product as healthier
- Across all countries, 'free from' labels are seen as trustworthy
- Consumers do not currently look for 'free from' labels (exception French consumers - look for palm-oil and GMO free labels)
- Gluten-free and lactose-free labels mainly linked to nutritional benefits, while GMO-free labels mainly linked to safety concerns
- 'Free from palm-oil' labels perceived differently across countries: nutritional benefits most important in the UK and Poland, environmental reasons most important in Sweden and safety concerns most important in France

How do consumers react when they're told 'free-from' does not necessarily mean 'healthier'?

Consumer reactions to 'free from palm-oil' labels ('if they are not necessarily healthier')



A few concluding remarks

‘Free-from’ labels could have potential for misleading consumers, independent of which ingredient they are free from

- Labelled products perceived to be healthier compared to products without such a label
 - Effect especially strong for ‘free from palm oil’ and ‘free from GMO’ products
- ‘Free from’ labels may be confusing for consumers
- Palm oil and GMO evoke very negative feelings
 - Consumers in France and Sweden perceive it more negatively compared to consumers in the UK (and Poland for palm oil)
- If consumer’s expectation – that food with a ‘free from’ label is healthier – is not met, this may result in distrust in the food industry

Thank you!

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