



Food neophobia and sustainability consciousness on willingness to eat insects as food

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Due to their beneficial attributes such as decreased greenhouse gas emissions, low resource inputs and a rich nutritional profile, edible insects offer a possible solution to global food-supply concerns.⁽¹⁾ However, insects are not consumed on a large scale in Australia despite their various benefits. A reason for this may be due to food neophobia (reluctance to try new foods) or extent of sustainability consciousness impacting widespread acceptance.^(2,3) The study aimed to explore the role of food neophobia and sustainability consciousness on consumers' willingness to eat insects as a food source. A secondary aim was to evaluate the possible relationship between food neophobia and sustainability consciousness, on motivating factors designed to improve consumer opinion of insects as food. An online survey evaluated 601 participants (76.2% female, 23.8% male) and showed a strong association between food neophobia and an increase in negative opinions toward insects as food ($p < 0.001$) and an overall reduced willingness to eat insects ($p < 0.001$). Furthermore, a relationship was observed between food neophobia status and the motivating factors 'increased accessibility to insect products' ($p = 0.003$) and an 'increased environmental burden from animal protein' ($p = 0.026$), with food neophobic participants more likely to view these motivations favourably. A further association was observed between gender and the sustainability consciousness questionnaire statements 'I think that we need stricter laws and regulations to protect the environment' ($p = 0.026$), 'I think that it's important to take measures against problems which have to do with climate change' ($p = 0.024$) and 'I have changed my personal lifestyle in order to reduce waste' ($p < 0.001$) with females more likely to strongly agree with these statements than males. This research provides a greater understanding of the roles of food neophobia and sustainability consciousness on consumers' willingness to eat insects, while also providing awareness on their influence on the efficacy of potential motivators that may improve perceptions and increase willingness to eat insects in the future.

References

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