

# Food safety and quality : A factor analysis approach to consumer perception

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## ABSTRACT

Developing countries are paying increased attention to food safety, because of growing recognition of its potential impact on public health, food security, and trade competitiveness. The study focuses on the consumer preferences and perception of food safety and quality with regard to fruits and vegetables and their willingness to pay extra for certified fruits and vegetables. The survey was undertaken in the Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu State, India during October 2011 – January 2012 covering randomly selected 150 rural and 150 urban households. Vast majority of the urban respondents (47.33%) opined that food safety and quality certifications, grading, packing and labeling and certification of fruits and vegetables were important. While only 21 per cent of the rural respondents considered food safety and quality certification to be important. Freshness and texture were the most important attributes considered by the urban and rural respondents for assessing the quality of fruits and vegetables. Kruskal-Wallis test also confirmed that there was no difference between the urban and rural respondents in choosing the attributes for assessing quality of fruits and vegetables. Consumer perception on food safety and quality when analyzed through factor analysis approach yielded four factors viz., ‘perception on quality’, ‘perception on safety’, ‘sensory perception’ and ‘evaluation based on external appearance’. The rural consumers were not willing to pay extra for graded, packed, labeled and certified fruits and vegetables whereas 46 and 39 per cent of the urban consumers were willing to pay extra for fresh cut and packed and certified fruits and vegetables, respectively. Though the rural and urban consumers did not differ in their choice of attributes for assessing quality of the fruits and vegetables, they did differ on the willingness to pay for minimally processed, graded and branded fruits and vegetables.

**KEY WORDS :** Consumer preference, Consumer perception, Food safety, Quality

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