

Consumer's Trust and The Edible Insects

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Edible insect industry is growing slowly but steady. A sector which is experiencing a significant economic growth, ready for the development of a virtuous cycle. In our view the four main drivers, which are dynamically correlated, are:

- **Consumer acceptance**, as result of perception, social habits, availability and fear for the unknown, ...is it safe to eat?
- **Product cost**, especially of the pure insect ingredient. Price points are still too high to think about a possible short-term wider consumption.
- **Scale of production**, namely the farming, has not developed yet to a proper size for costs reductions, with very few exceptions.
- **Diverse regulatory framework** which places uncertainty for investments and commerce. While in the EU the legitimate *novel foods* platform makes observers think whether it is only grounded on public health concerns.

Given that historically, social changes start from the people, how to have an impact on consumers adoption? How to nudge not only trial but repeated purchase? The main obstacle when it comes to insect food is overcoming the fear of the unknown, as well as personal and cultural heritages. You may have seen thousands of videos showing the thrill of eating an insect. This feeling is crucial for insect food.

The **instinctive perception** or the so-called *yuck* factor must be counterbalanced by the **rational side**, to arrive at the conclusion that insect food is a safe and healthy choice. This duality of instinct and rationality is sustained by the findings of a joint report of various consumer surveys and focus groups, collected in the last 3 years across multiple western countries. It shows that there are 4 main clusters of consumers:

- **Frequent users.** "It is or it will be part of my weekly diet". 12%
- **Believers.** "yes, I want to live more sustainably". 18%
- **Try once or skeptical.** "it looks fun, why not?" Mostly social-users. 25%
- **Disgusted.** "never ever". 45%

With no doubt's insects have been eaten by humans since prehistoric times, and still constitute a daily essential food in many countries. Nevertheless, the survey demonstrates that the lack of confidence in the unknown may need an extra guarantee, proof that this food is properly farmed and manufactured.

In each consumer's cluster the combination of perception and rationality finds a different balance, while experimental tastings in field confirm the assumption that the rational side clarity can trigger and inspire a change in consumption.

This constitutes **half the way to gain consumers choice and loyalty**. So that when trust is gained, personal habits will likely change.

This is why the Entotrust certification program was developed to support quality producers, with the main purpose to reinforce their message of good food and sustainable alternative proteins. In the last year of activity, the team was engaged to assess producers and farmers from France, China, Mexico, Denmark, Canada, South Korea, Burkina, United Kingdom, Madagascar...a wide variety of products based on diverse insect species such as protein powders, beverages, dried insects, biscuits and crackers, among others.

The key aspects of consumer safety and environmental impacts must always be on focus in the rising demand and offer of alternative proteins, and innovative food. This sector is growing, many farmers and manufactures are entering the market, start-up, small and sizeable players. Besides the narrative of lower impact protein sources, and well-known infographics, the Entotrust certification confirms that **in food there are no compromises on quality, and sustainability can be measured**.

The value for the food manufacturer is to have a scientific third-party recognition of the know-how, food safety and low environmental footprint that can be effectively communicated on product packaging, facing the consumers. **This constitutes transparency and differentiation, which builds loyalty and brand value**.

To conclude, the road to win consumer trust goes through higher transparency, economies of scale and a favourable regulatory framework. Given the evolving scenario we recommend to the insect farmers and food manufacturers few key actions to develop the business and ultimately the sector:

- **Maintaining utmost food safety is a must**, 'home made' and 'good will' are not enough, potential food scandals should not arm this young sector.
- **The sustainability narrative**, should be supported by facts which are personalized, brand related, not just quoted.
- **Always declare product origin**, clearly, also on packaging.
- **Address retailers**, and provide them extra guarantees for their customers.
- **Build consumer awareness**, support product trials. Enlarge the passionate followers base.

Be loyal to your core, believe in the initial idea of revolutionizing for a better future.

About ENTOTRUST

ENTOTRUST is the voluntary insect-food certification, an independent and science-based organization established in 2018, which allows producers to assess their food safety and sustainability. ENTOTRUST mission is to recognize quality insect farmers and products. Nudging the people decision when buying new alternative food and working with the stakeholder's network to improve the scientific knowledge and best practices. The ENTOTRUST logo is a registered trademark, which can only be used by certified producers and farmers. For more information, please visit <http://www.entotrust.org>

The ENTOTRUST certification program envisions a world where edible insects will supply healthy food, making high value proteins accessible to a wider population with important environmental and social benefits.