

The role of ethical concern in evaluation of farmed cod

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Overview

- **Background and objectives**
- **Subjects, setting and procedures**
- **Descriptive results of product evaluation**
- **Effects of information cues**
- **Segments of consumers**
- **Conclusions**

Background

- **Ethical concern is suggested to influence consumer behavior**
- **Alleged negative perceptions related to fish farming:**
 - **Animal welfare issues**
 - **Environmental/pollution issues**
- **Alleged positive perceptions:**
 - **Sustainability issues**
 - **Product quality issues**

Objective

- **To study consumer evaluation, buying intention and willingness to pay for seafood produced by different ethical production systems**
- **Project CONSUMEREVALUATE**
 - **Partners: NIFA (Norway), IMARES, C.I.C.S. (WUR, the Netherlands), UGENT (Belgium) and IFL (Iceland)**

Subjects and setting

- **452 consumers in Valencia, Spain**
 - 93% women
 - Average age: 41
- **Random route sampling – 12 zones, 12 interviewers**
- **Filter: Responsible for buying and cooking food, age (18+), household size (national distribution)**

Procedures

- **In-home test of one Icelandic farmed cod product per subject**
- **Experimental design: Three levels of information:**
 - **Basic:**
Farmed cod
 - **General ethic:**
This cod has been farmed in order to meet all environmental and ethical standards
 - **Extended ethical information:**
This cod has been farmed Without suffering; With respect to their rights, well being and ethical standards; In an environmentally friendly way; In a way that has not polluted the sea or other environment; Under strict governmental supervision

Products

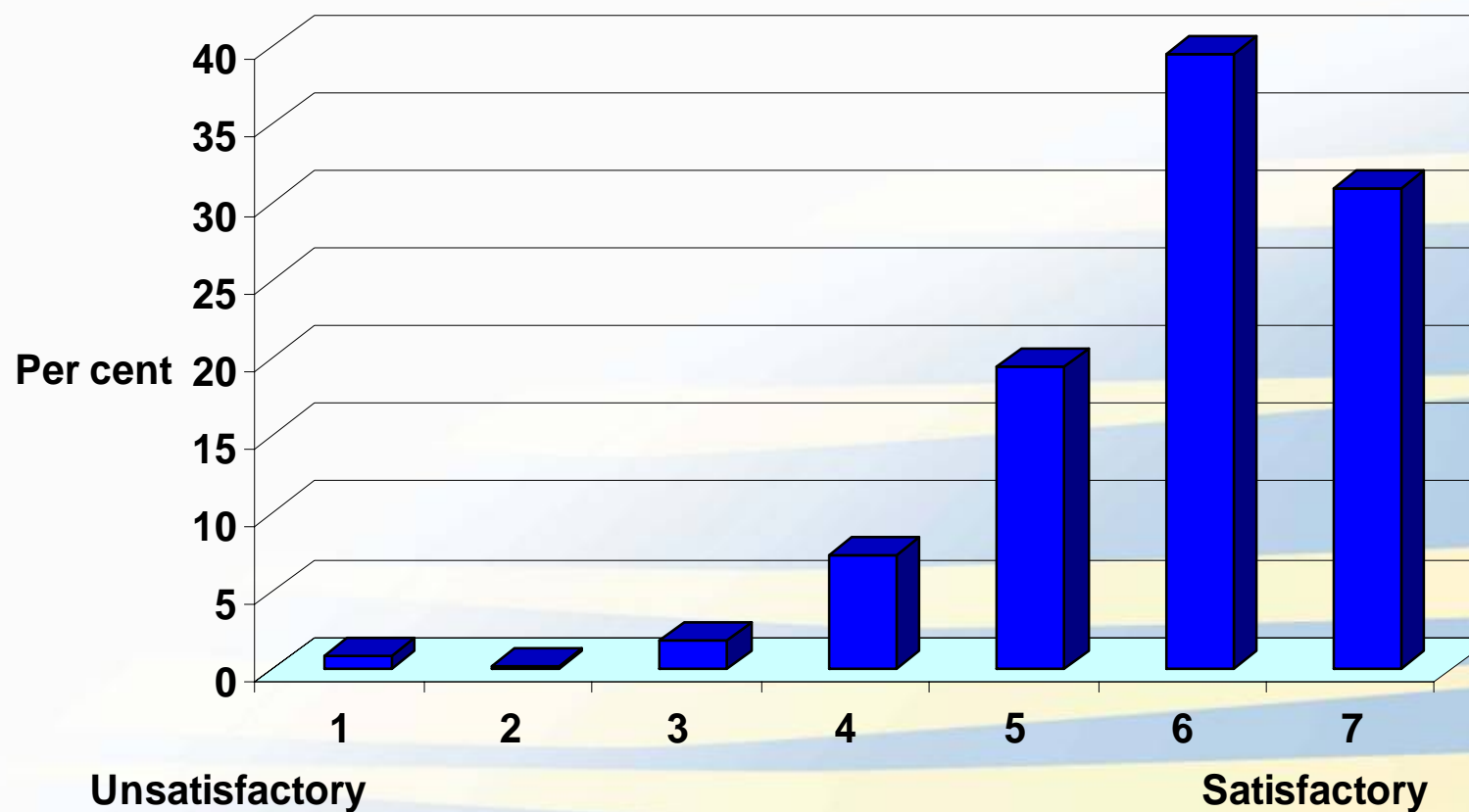
- Icelandic farmed cod
- Filleted prior to rigor mortis



Questionnaire

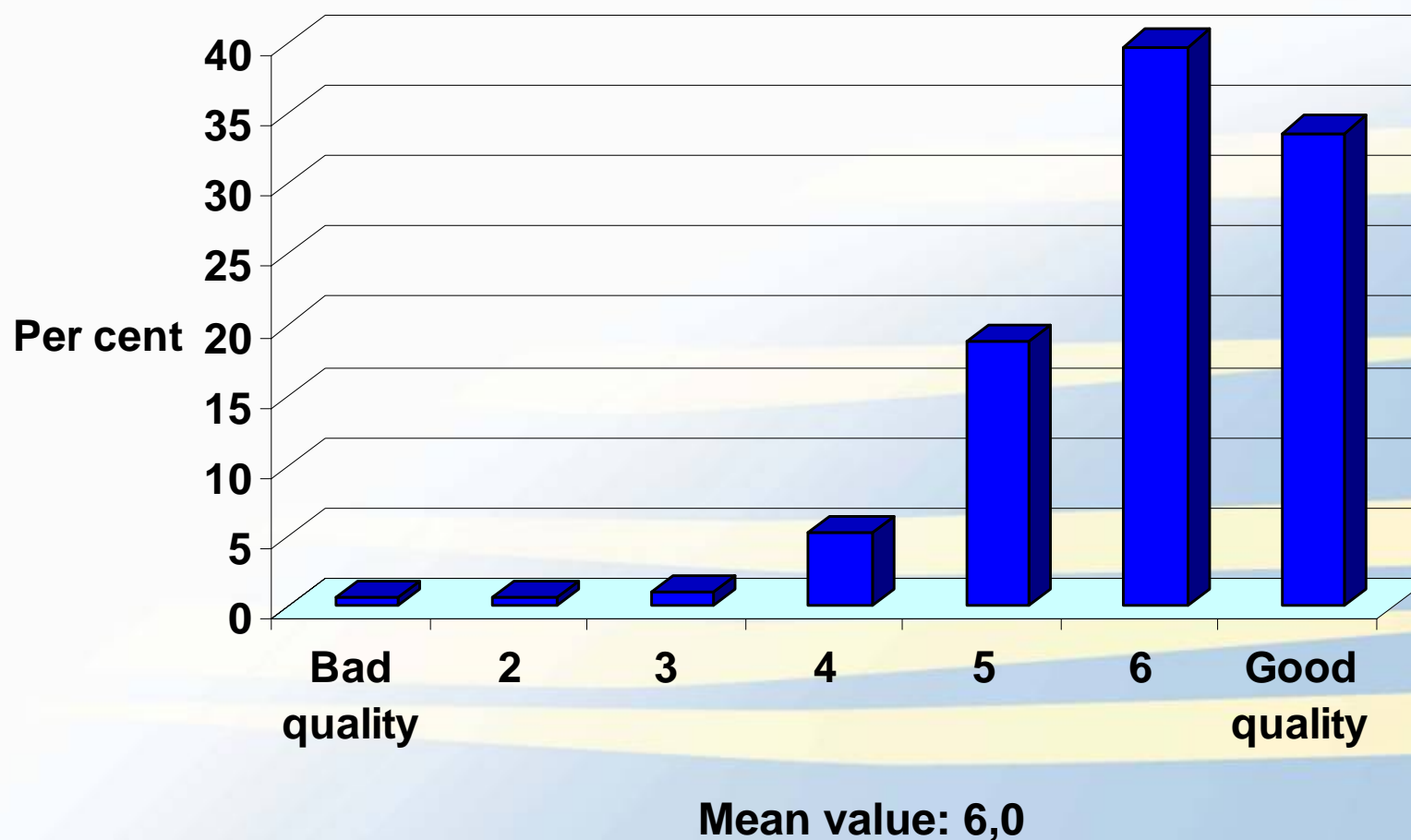
- **Evaluation of the product after tasting**
- **Intention to buy & willingness to pay**
- **Fish consumption**
- **Attitudes towards fish, farmed fish and farmed cod**
- **Ethical and health issues**
- **Knowledge and information use**

Satisfaction



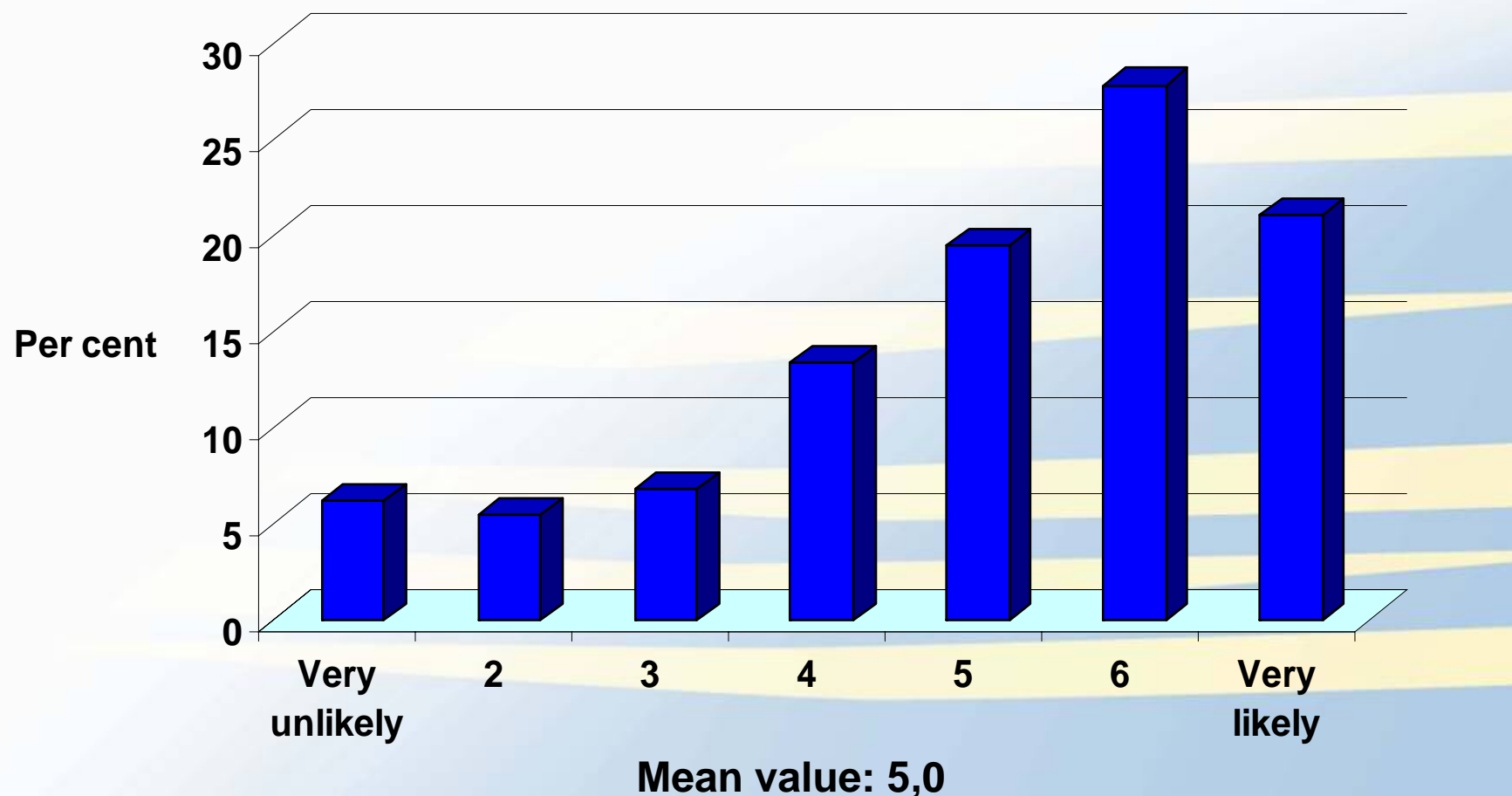
Mean value: 5,9

Quality perception

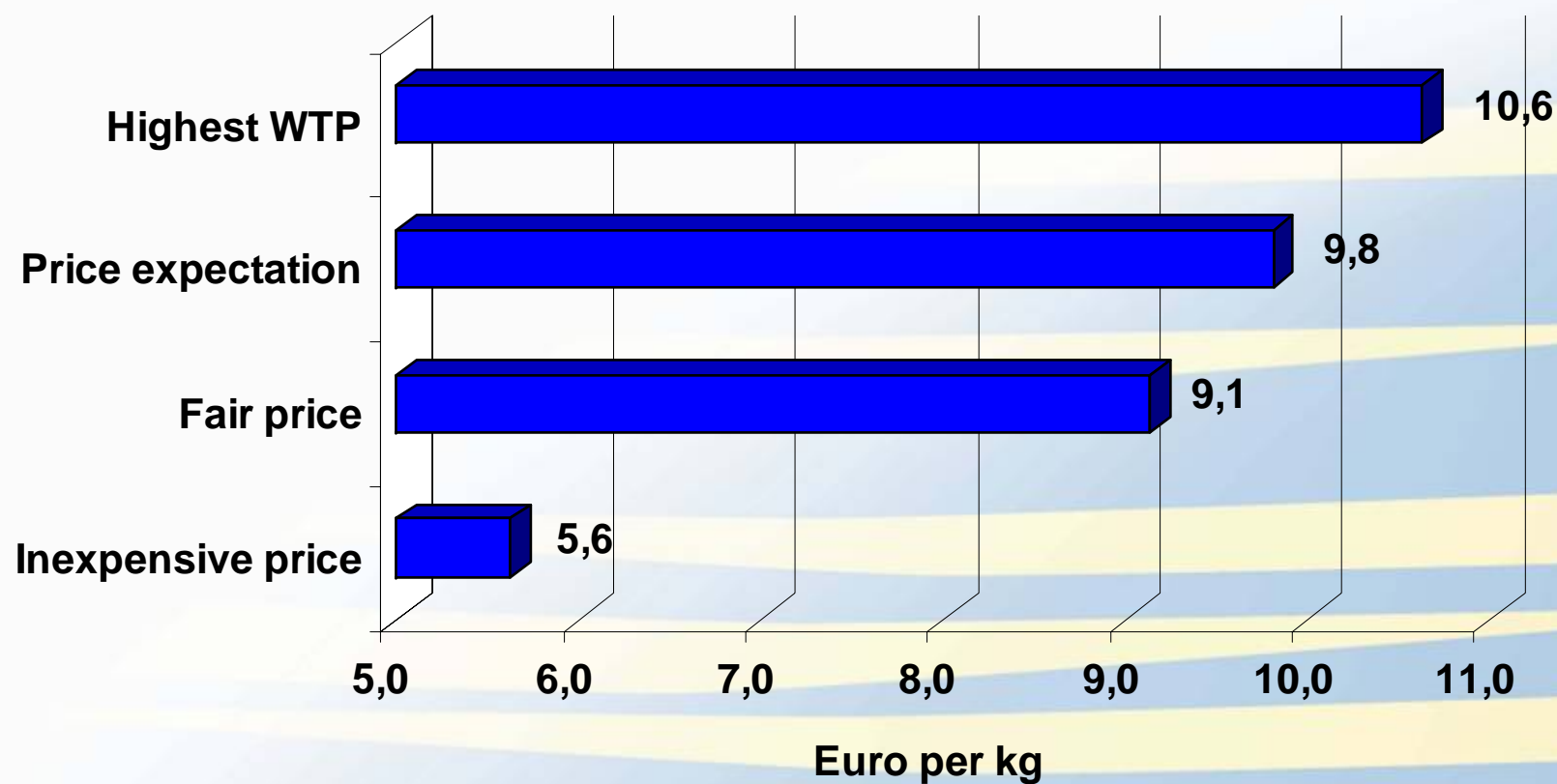


Intention to buy

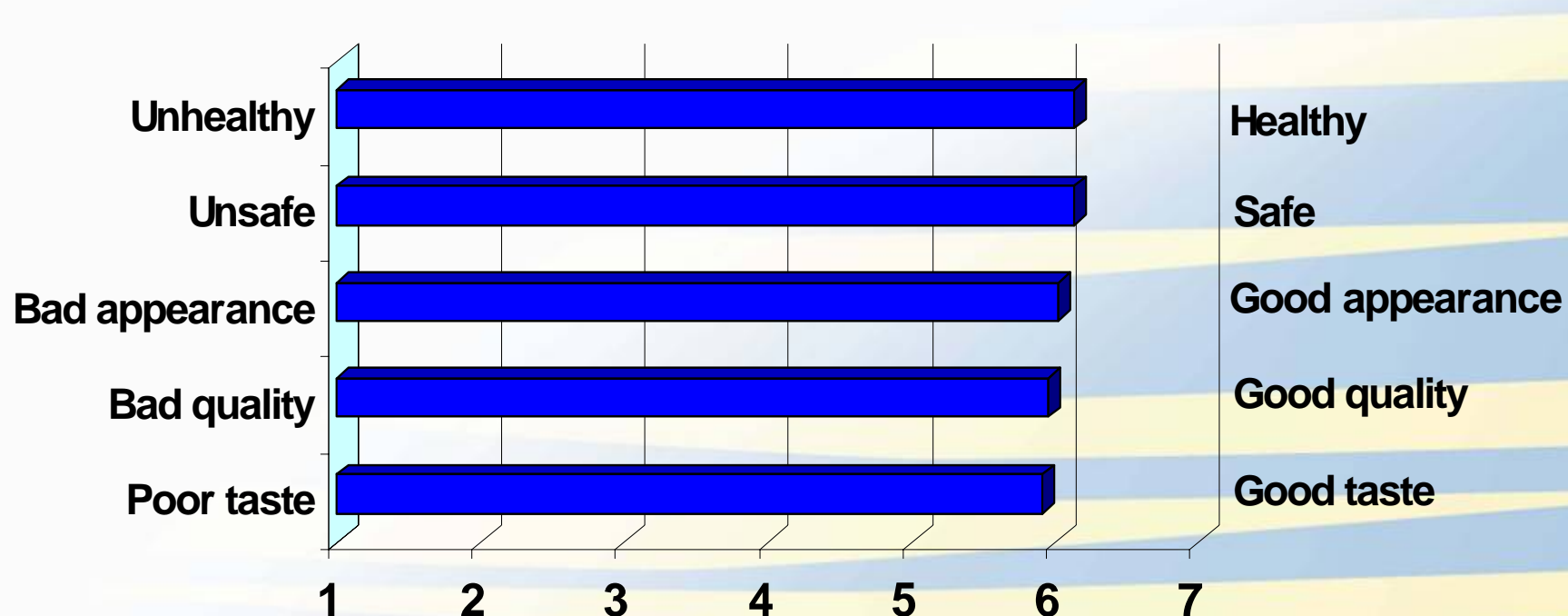
I will try to buy



Willingness to pay



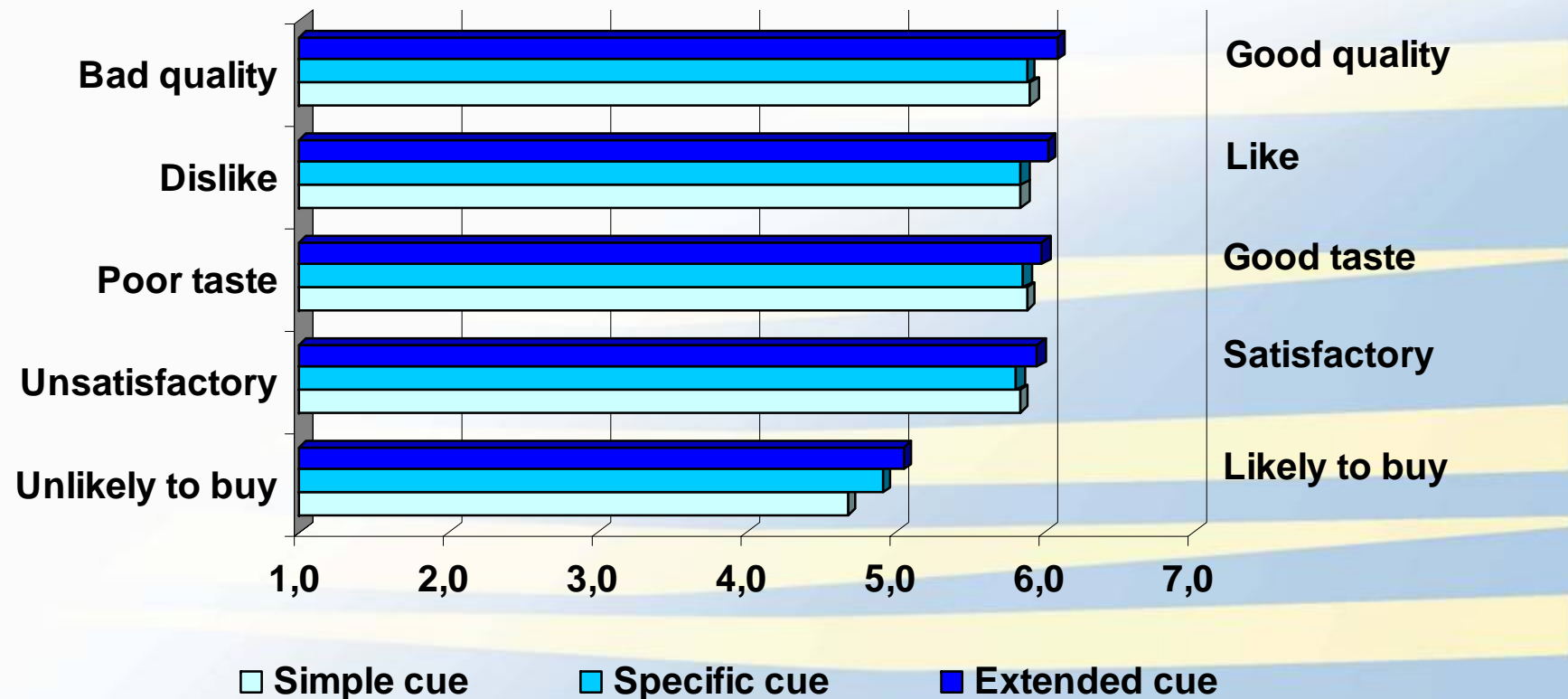
Evaluation: Health, quality and safety aspects



Information manipulation results

- **Manipulation of the information level did not result in significant differences in product evaluation**
- **A larger sample could give significant differences in favor of ethical production**
- **An example...**

Information manipulation – no differences in product evaluation

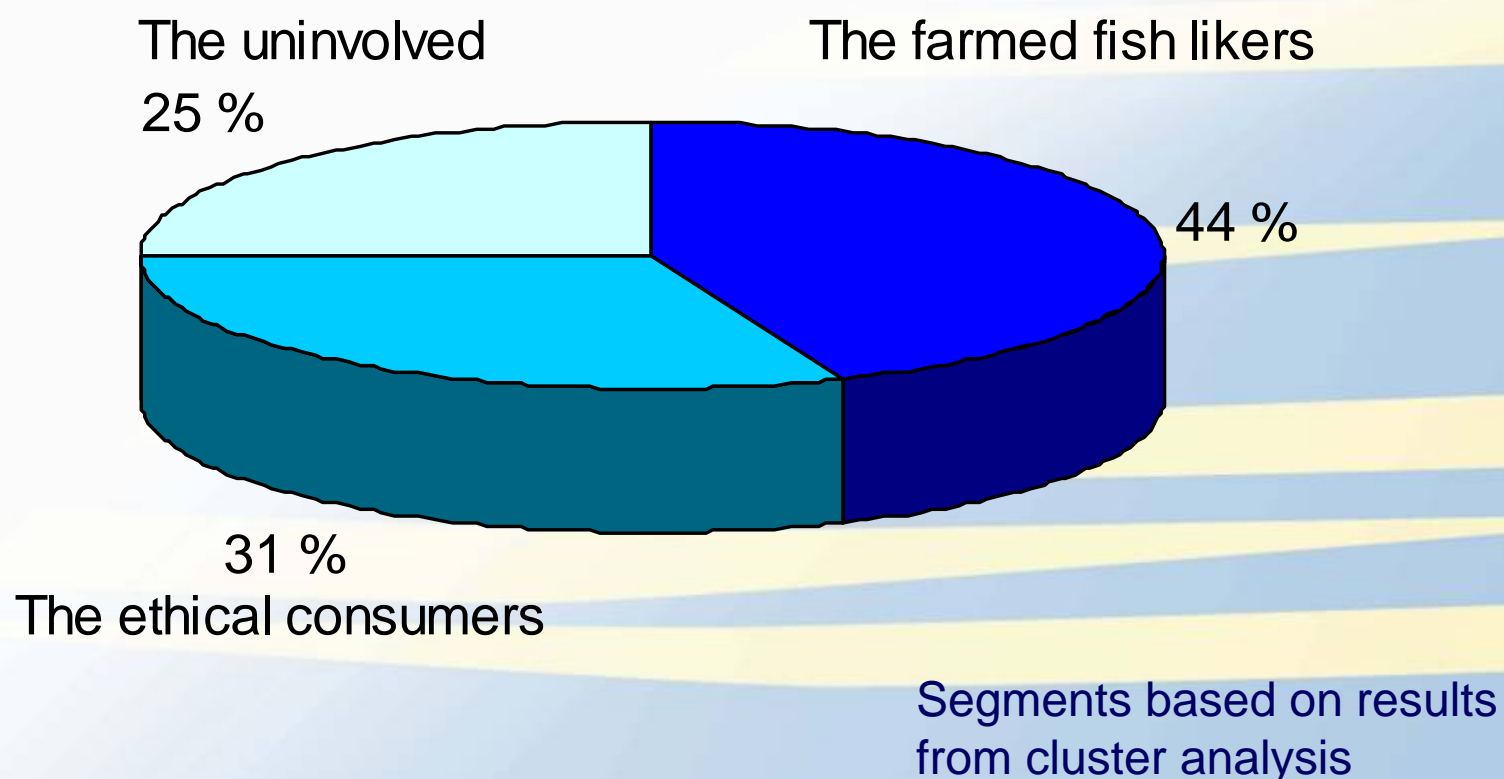


Segmentation

Cluster analysis based on:

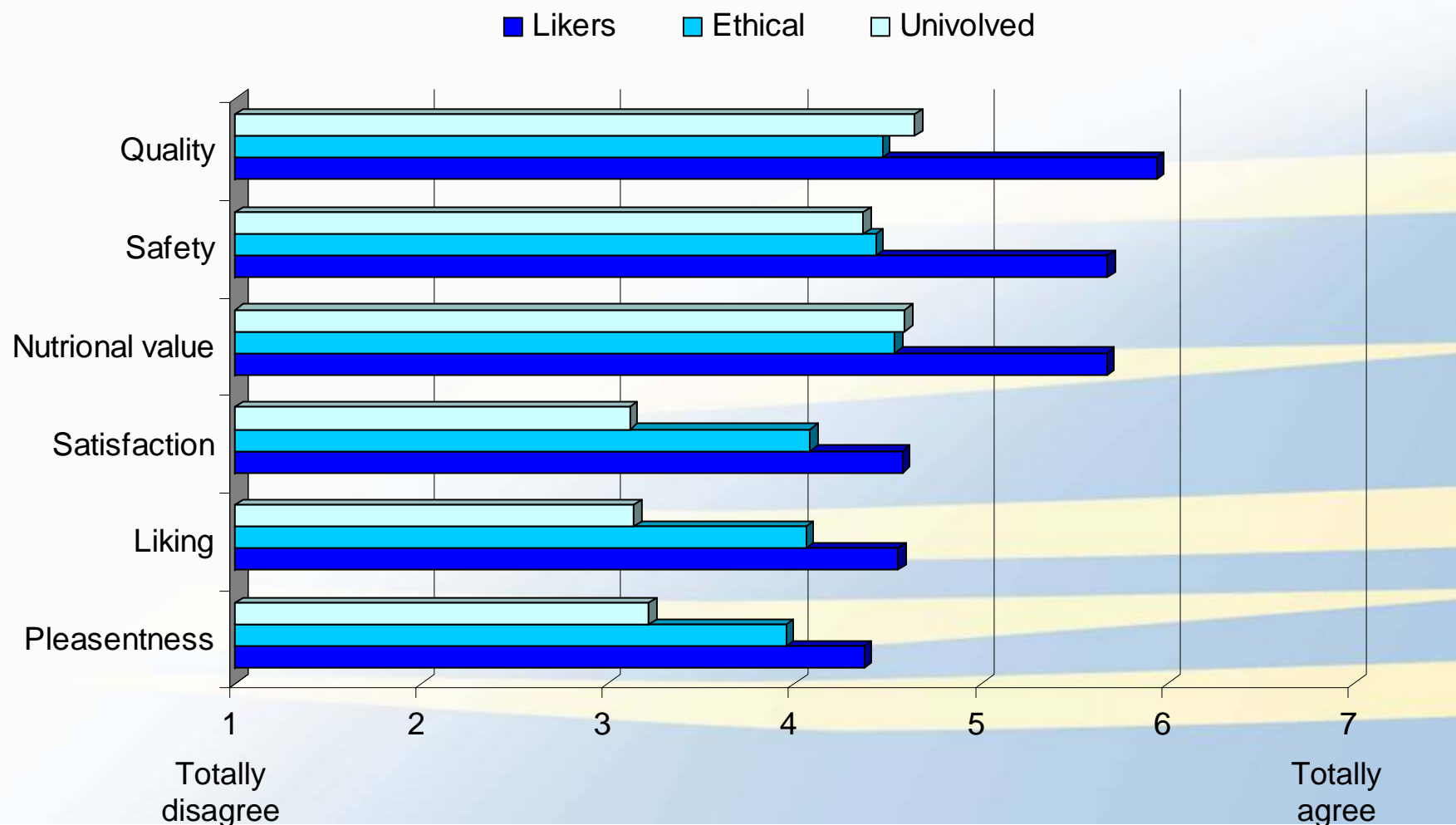
- Attitudes towards farmed fish
- Ethical issues related to farmed fish
- General ethical concern related to fish

Segmentation of consumers based on their ethical concern and perception of farmed fish



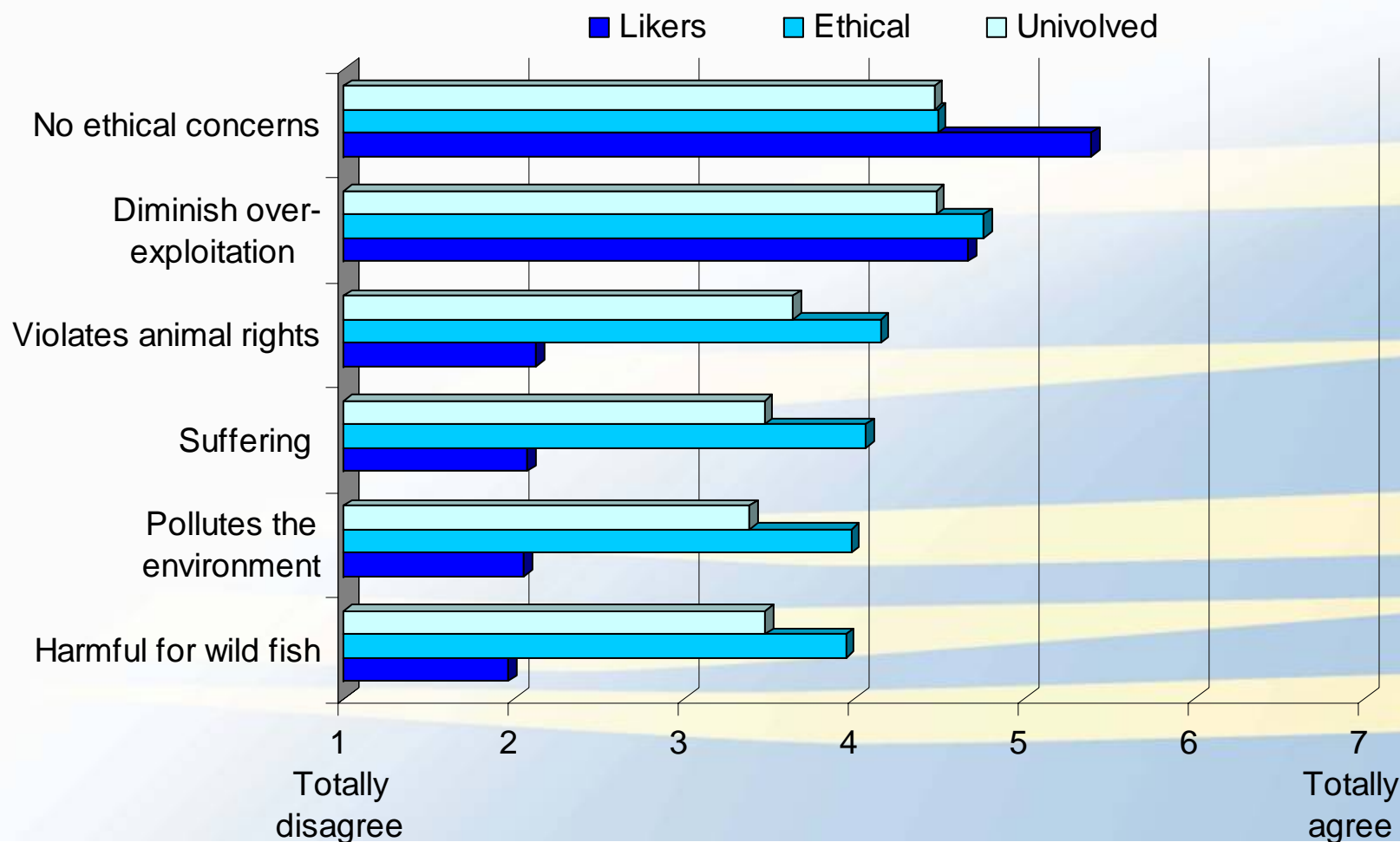
Segment descriptors

Attitudes towards farmed fish



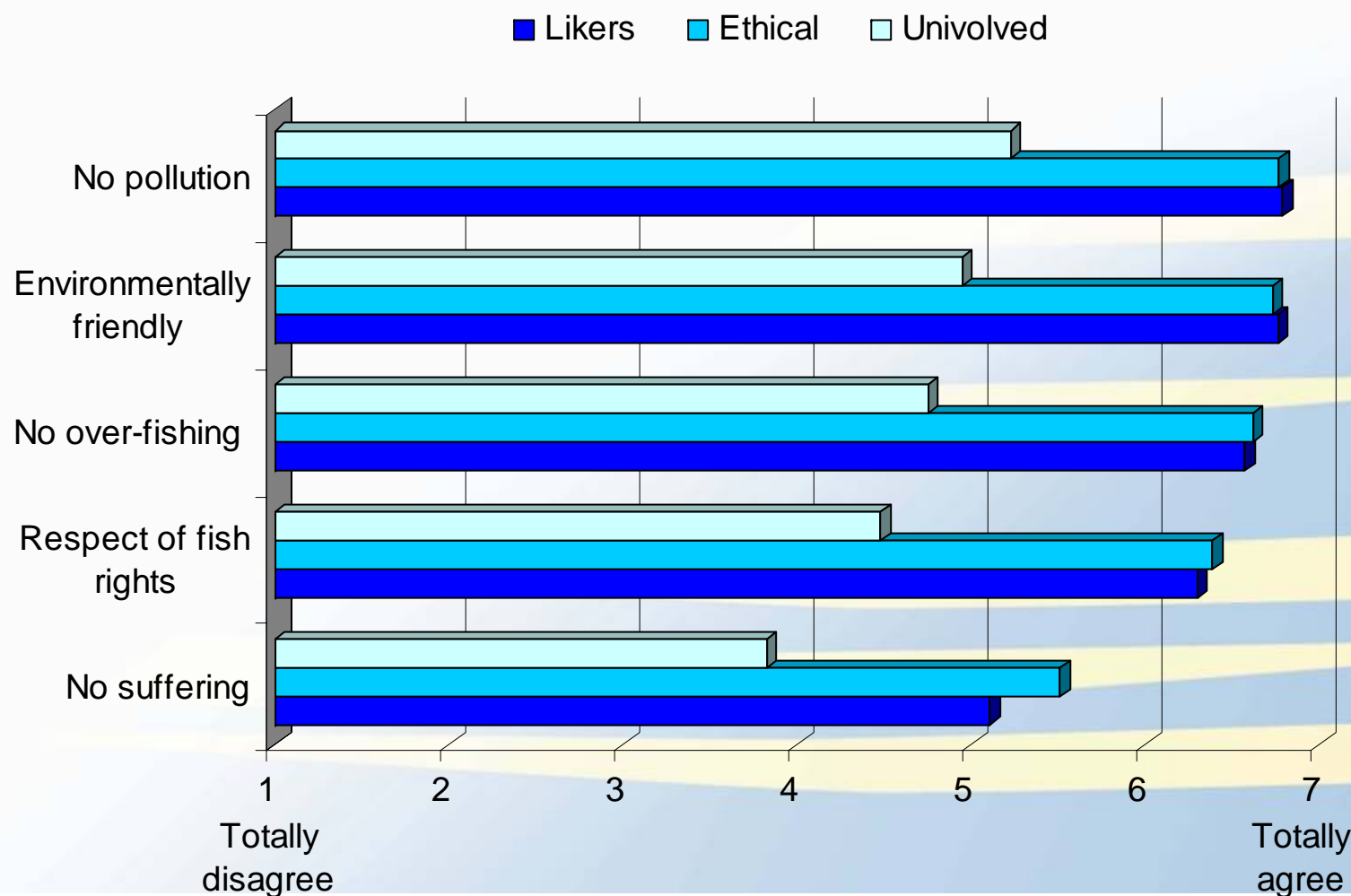
Segment descriptors

Ethical issues related to farmed fish



Segment descriptors

Ethical concern for fish in general



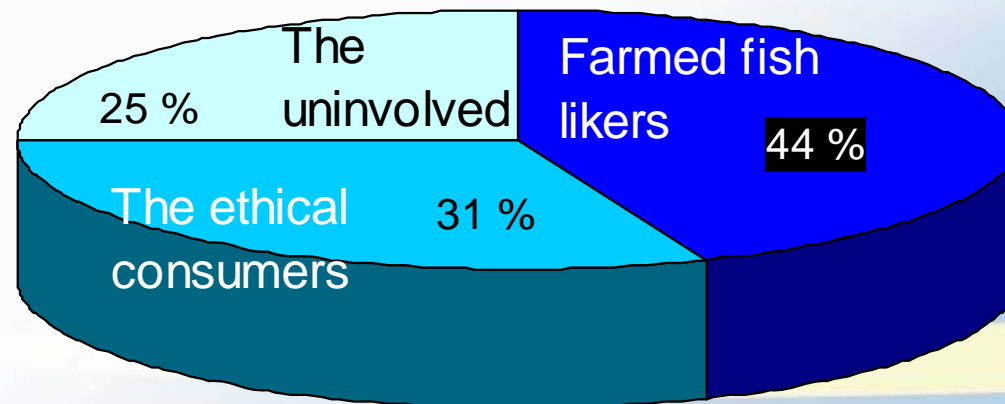
Segment profiles

- **Discriminant analysis to profile the segments:**
 - Ambivalence towards tested product
 - Ambivalence towards farmed fish
 - Information issues
 - Product evaluation
 - Importance of health and natural products
 - Knowledge about fish farming
 - Demographic variables
 - Behavioral variables

Segment profiles

- High level of ambivalence about farmed fish
- Lower concern for naturalness of food
- Do not use environmental information cues
- Low knowledge about fish farming

- Certain about their opinion of farmed fish
- Knowledgeable about fish farming
- Highly positive evaluation of the tested product



- Concerned about naturalness of food
- Rather high ambivalence level about farmed fish
- Use environmental and ethical information cues when buying fish
- Not very knowledgeable about fish farming

Conclusions

- **Farmed cod was very well accepted by the consumers in Valencia**
- **Different level of information about ethical production methods did not give any significant differences in product evaluation**
- **The reported level of ethical and environmental concern related to fish in general is quite high**
- **Environmental and sustainability issues seem to be most important**

Conclusions

- **Fish farming is not considered as ethically problematic for most consumers, but there seems to be one group which is ambivalent about fish farming**
- **Fish farming might be perceived as positive (sustainable)**

**Thank you for your
attention!**

A better life with seafood...



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