

CONSUMERS' TAKE ON FOOD CONTACT MATERIALS

April 2022

verbraucherzentrale
Bundesverband

2019 CONSUMER SURVEY

IMPORTANCE OF FOOD PACKAGING

How important is the subject of food packaging and labelling of food packaging to you?

For a majority of consumers the subject of food packaging and their labelling is rather or very important.



Source: Representative survey conducted on behalf of the Federation of German consumer organisations in 2019 in Germany, <https://www.vzbv.de/pressemitteilungen/schadstoffe-gehoren-nicht-lebensmittelverpackungen>

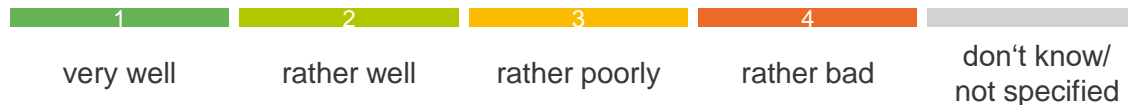
INFORMATION ABOUT FOOD PACKAGING

How well do you feel informed about the safety and health risks of food packaging?

6 out of 10 people feel rather poorly or very poorly informed about the safety of food packaging.



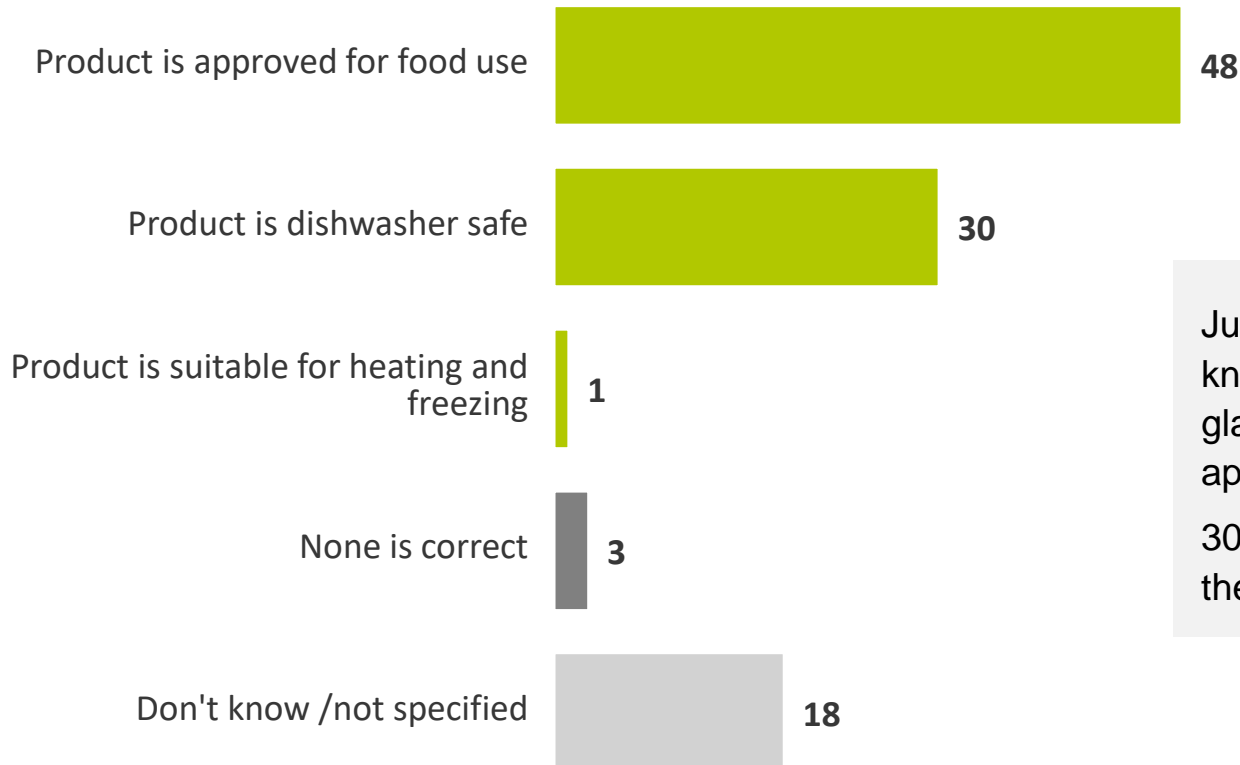
(in percent and average value)



Source: Representative survey conducted on behalf of the Federation of German consumer organisations in 2019 in Germany, <https://www.vzbv.de/pressemitteilungen/schadstoffe-gehoren-nicht-lebensmittelverpackungen>

GLASS AND FORK SYMBOL

What do you think does the glass and fork symbol mean?



Just under half of the respondents know that items marked with the glass and fork symbol are approved for food use.

30 percent of respondents think the product is dishwasher safe.

Source: Representative survey conducted on behalf of the Federation of German consumer organisations in 2019 in Germany, <https://www.vzbv.de/pressemitteilungen/schadstoffe-gehoren-nicht-lebensmittelverpackungen>

2021 CONSUMER SURVEY

SURVEY DESIGN

- **4 focus groups** with a duration of 120 minutes each
- in **4 cities in Germany** (Berlin, Leipzig, Hamburg and Mannheim)
- with **30 consumers** interviewed in total
 - not a representative sample
- conducted in **September 2021**

HIGH COMPLEXITY – LITTLE AWARENESS

REASONS

perception of missing causality: no apparent link between exposure and diseases

complexity of risk assessment

multitude of factors linked to the choice of food (e.g. healthy choices, regional and sustainable products)

no apparent alternatives

no guidance or orientation available

Participants reduce the complexity of FCM safety through different mechanisms.

unconscious purchasing decisions and utilization (e.g. routines, learned behaviour)

downsizing the importance

official controls expected to guarantee high level of safety

CONSEQUENCES

PERCEPTION OF SYMBOLS AND WARNINGS

often misinterpreted

not very trustworthy

not well known

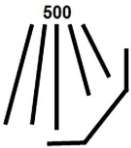
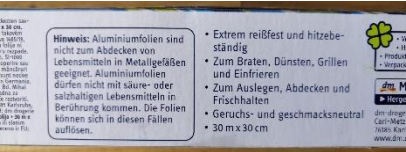
Do not influence purchasing decisions and utilization of materials

Existing symbols and warnings are of little guidance to consumers.

That doesn't catch my eye very often. (Leipzig)

These are symbols that already exist? I have never seen them before. (Hamburg)

Participants were shown the following symbols and warnings:



DESIGN OF WARNING INFORMATION



CONCLUSION: CONSUMERS' PERCEPTION

ASSUMPTIONS OF CONSUMERS

- Participants generally assumed that products and substances were tested before being placed on the market.

CONSUMERS' PERCEPTION OF RISK ASSESSMENT

- Thresholds need to be defined according to most sensitive consumers.
- The risk assessment needs to be conducted by public authorities.

CONSUMERS' PERCEPTION OF RISK MANAGEMENT

- Products linked with health risks need to be banned in the first place.
- Risk management needs to assure a basic level of safety for all kinds of food contact materials.
- Consumers can only safely use products if the right information is easily accessible to them.

CONCLUSION: VZBV'S POSITION

- Finalise the **revision of Regulation (EC) No 1935/2004**
- Include a **clear ban on particularly harmful substances**
- Implement a strict European **approval and registration process**
- **Help consumers to use food contact materials safely**
 - Starting point for product design and hazard assessments: foreseeable and normal use
 - Develop a standardised, comprehensive and binding communication and labelling scheme
- **Strengthen monitoring and enforcement**

Impressum

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