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Corinne Amblard, Cécile Bord, Estelle Petit, Laura Zerbini

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Consumer insights on vegetable substitutes to cheese

Amblard, C1., Bord, C1., Petit, E2., Zerbini, L2.

1 Université Clermont Auvergne, INRAE, VetAgro Sup, UMR, F-63370, Lempdes, France

2 Institut Paul Bocuse Research Center, France



OBJECTIVE

Measure the acceptability of omnivore consumers towards vegetable substitutes for cheeses and identify the place of those substitutes on a cheese board.

CONTEXT

- **Consumer's dietary behavior and food habits** change due to different factors such as global environmental or food system change,
- Cheese is an emblematic product of French gastronomy
- **Growth of plant-based vegetable:** substitutes for cheese attracting new consumers (not only lactose intolerant, vegans or vegetarians).

METHODOLOGY

3 focus groups



- **20 omnivore consumers** (50% men, 50% women; 49 yr for all groups)
- 3hr-group discussions.
- Selected based on their consumption of traditional cheeses



- **Tasting of 7 food products** : 4 vegetable substitutes / 3 traditional cheeses

RESULTS

Difficulty for French omnivore consumers to accept a substitute for cheese, in terms of both taste and perception.

What can explain this attitude towards cheese substitutes?

- Traditional cheese is an emotional food product stand out by pleasure, organoleptic and symbolic dimensions.
- Traditional cheese vs innovation : an innovation **is not very well accepted for traditional cheese.**
- For omnivore consumers, these substitutes are more targeted for vegans, vegetarians and lactose intolerants. Their place are not on a cheese board.



- **Bluffing aspect:** Substitutes are assimilated to traditional cheese in terms of appearance



- **Reject of taste:** Taste and texture of substitutes are perceived differently to traditional cheeses, not really appreciated by consumers.

NEXT STEPS

- A free sorting method with naives consumers to identify a sensory space configuration: traditional and vegetable alternatives
- Hedonic tests to measure acceptability of two substitutes for cheese
- Questionnaire/ survey about perception and attitudes



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