

# FY2 Wave 3-4 NI: Chapter 7 Food shopping and labelling

In March 2022, the FSA launched a new [5-year strategy](#) (2022-2027). Building on the previous strategy, the FSA's vision has evolved to include 'food is healthier and more sustainable', to account for the growing priorities of dietary health and sustainability for the Northern Ireland Executive, UK Government, Welsh Government, and for consumers.

Regulation of food labelling is complex, and the remit of food labelling is held by multiple bodies, that differ between [Northern Ireland, England and Wales](#).

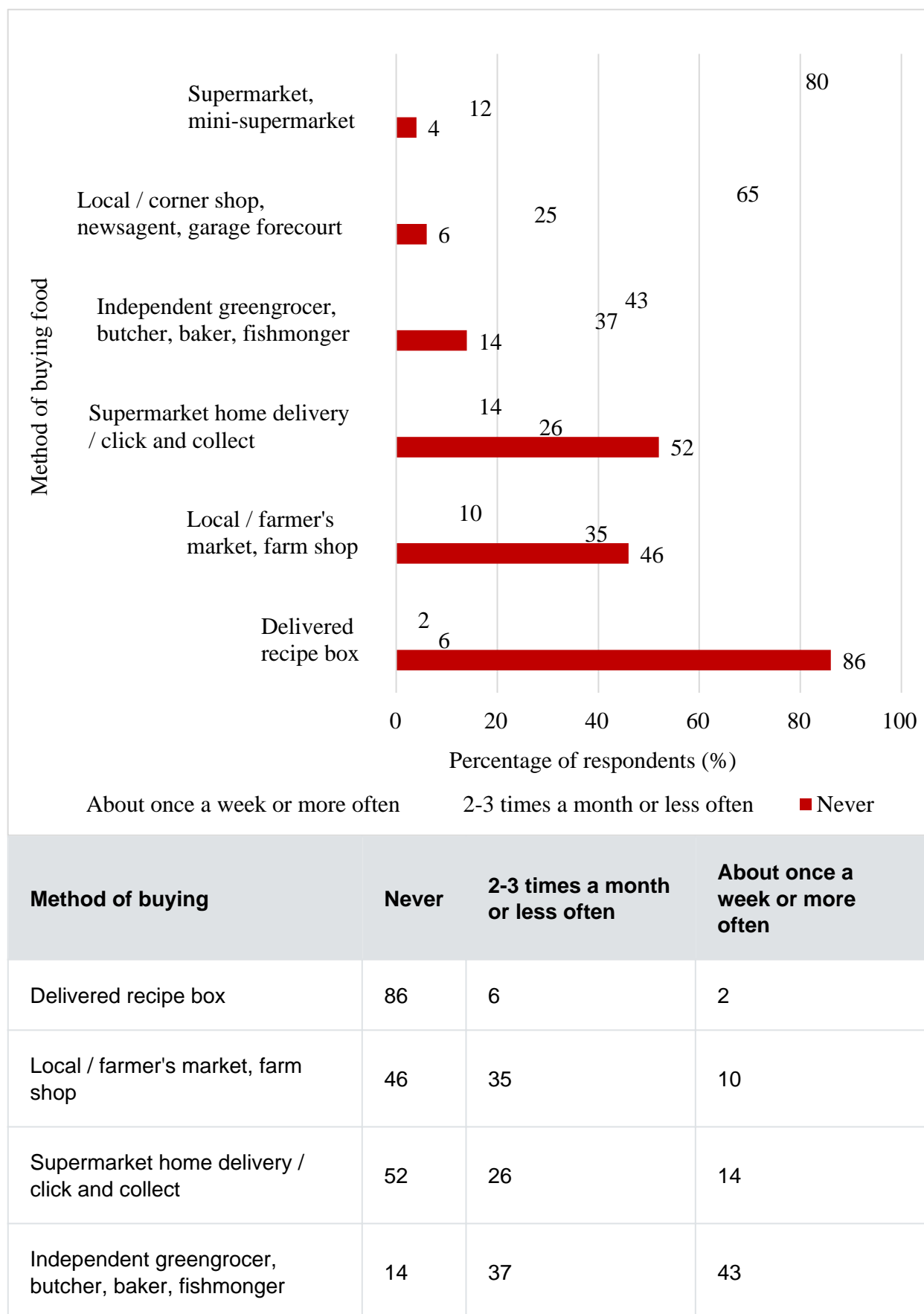
The [Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs \(Defra\)](#) plays a major role in food production and is responsible for aspects of food labelling such as composition and provenance. Defra only works directly in England but works closely with the devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland.

## Where do respondents buy food?

### Figure 17 Where respondents buy food from

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Method of buying	Never	2-3 times a month or less often	About once a week or more often
Local / corner shop, newsagent, garage forecourt	6	25	65
Supermarket, mini-supermarket	4	12	80

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 3

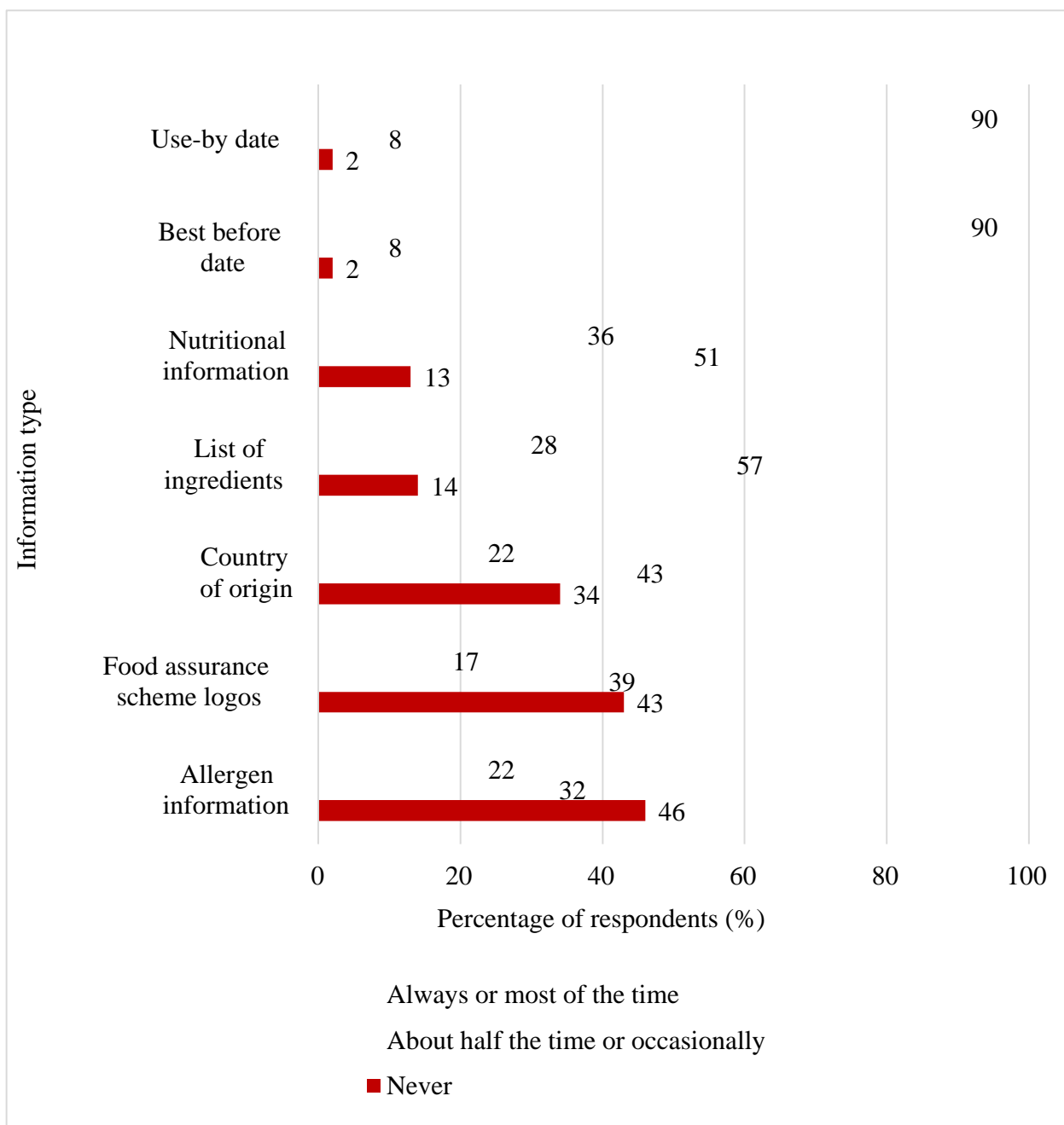
Respondents were asked to indicate where and how frequently they buy food. Most respondents reported that they bought food from a supermarket or mini supermarket (80%), or local or corner shops, newsagents or garage forecourts (65%) about once a week or more often (Figure 17) ([footnote](#)).

## What do respondents look for when buying food

### Figure 18 Type of information respondents check while shopping

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Information type	Always or most of the time	About half the time or occasionally	Never
Allergen information	22	32	46
Food assurance scheme logos	17	39	43
Country of origin	22	43	34
List of ingredients	28	57	14

Information type	Always or most of the time	About half the time or occasionally	Never
Nutritional information	36	51	13
Best before date	90	8	2
Use-by date	90	8	2

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 3

Respondents were asked to indicate what information they check when buying food. Most respondents reported that they often (i.e. always or most of the time) check the use-by (90%) or best before (90%) date when they bought food. Respondents reported that they check the list of ingredients (57%), nutritional information (51%), and country of origin (43%) about half the time or occasionally (Figure 18) [\(footnote\)](#).

When asked what information is used to judge the quality of food from a list of options, respondents reported that they most often used freshness (57%), taste (40%), and appearance (39%) to judge food quality. Fewer respondents reported that they used the price (27%), ingredients (26%), brand (25%), and country of origin (17%) to judge food quality. Assurance schemes (13%), animal welfare (13%) environmental impact (7%) and convenience (1%) were reported to be least used by respondents when judging food quality [\(footnote\)](#).

Around a third (31%) of respondents thought that meat, eggs, and dairy products show enough information about animal welfare, and 21% thought that food products show enough information about their environmental impact [\(footnote\)](#).

## Confidence in allergen labelling

Respondents who go food shopping and take into consideration a person who has a food allergy or intolerance were asked how confident they were that the information provided on food labelling allows them to identify foods that will cause a bad or unpleasant physical reaction. Overall, 84% of respondents stated that they were confident in the information provided on food labels [\(footnote\)](#).

Respondents were asked how confident they were in identifying foods that will cause a bad or unpleasant physical reaction when buying foods which are sold loose, such as at a bakery or deli-

counter. Respondents were more confident in identifying these foods at independent food shops (68%), in-store at a supermarket (67%), when buying food from a supermarket online (64%). However, respondents were less confident when buying food from food markets or stalls (51%) ([footnote](#)).

## **The importance of buying foods with a low environmental impact**

Respondents were asked how important it was to buy food which has a low environmental impact. Around three-quarters (73%) of respondents reported that it was important (i.e. very important or somewhat important) to them to buy food which has a low environmental impact. Around 2 in 10 (22%) respondents did not consider it important (i.e. not very important or not at all important) to buy food which has a low environmental impact ([footnote](#)).

## **How often respondents check for information about the environmental impact of food**

Respondents were asked how frequently they check for information about the environmental impact of food when purchasing food. A fifth (20%) of respondents reported that they often checked (i.e. always or most of the time) for information about the environmental impact when purchasing food, 41% did this less often (i.e. about half of the time, or occasionally) and 33% of respondents reported that they never checked for information about the environmental impact when purchasing food ([footnote](#)).

## **How often respondents buy foods with a low environmental impact**

Respondents were asked to indicate how often, where possible, they buy food which has a low environmental impact. Almost a third (28%) of respondents often (i.e. always or most of the time) buy food which has a low environmental impact, 42% do this less often (i.e., about half of the time, or occasionally) and 8% of respondents reported that they never buy food which has a low environmental impact. However around 2 in 10 (22%) respondents do not know how often they buy food which has a low environmental impact ([footnote](#)).

## **Attitudes toward information about a products environmental impact**

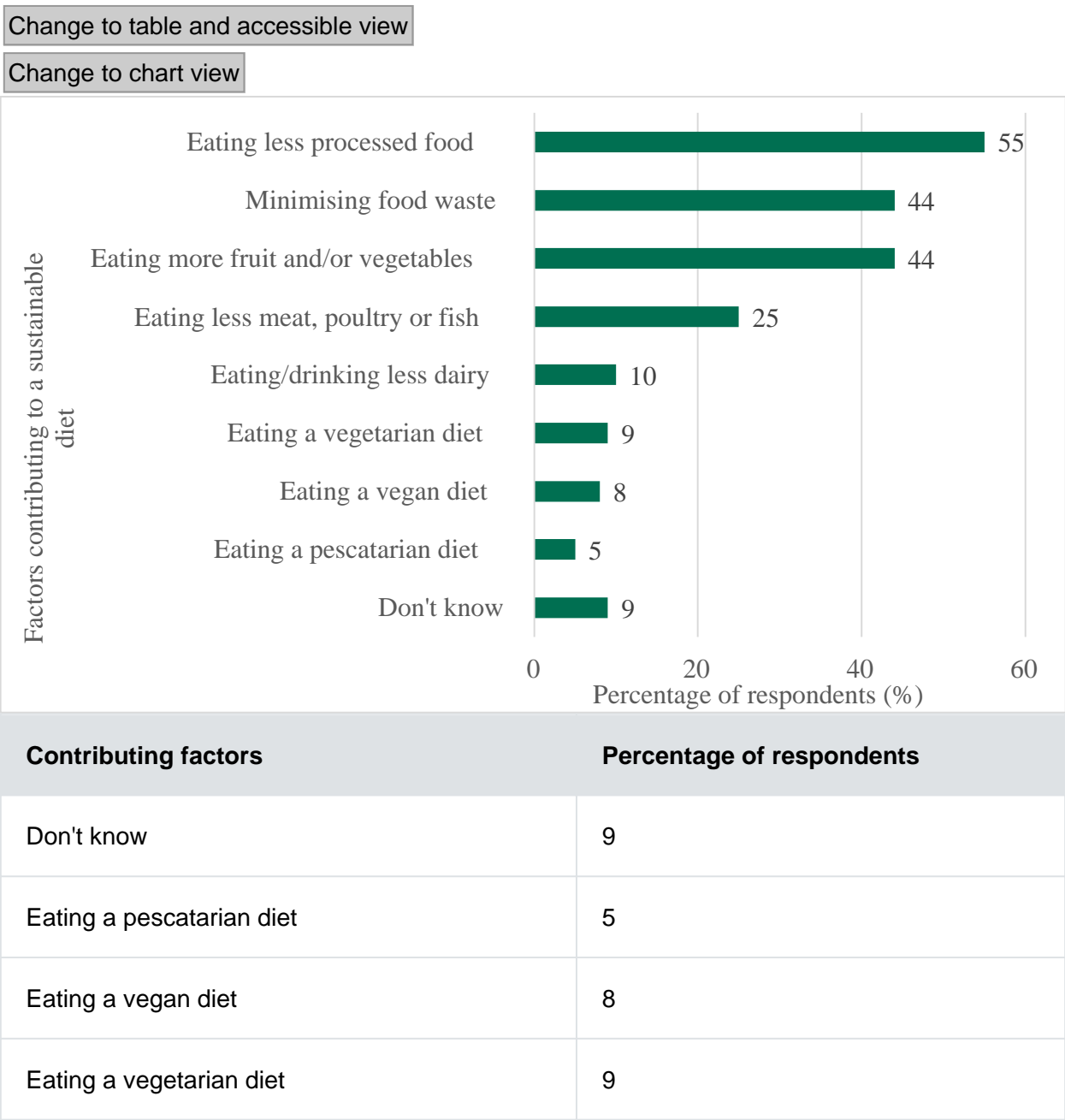
Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agree or disagree that food products show enough information about their environmental impact. Over a quarter (28%) of respondents agreed (i.e. strongly agree or agree) that products show enough information about their environmental impact, however around a quarter (24%) of respondents disagreed (i.e. strongly

disagree or disagree). Around 1 in 10 (12%) respondents reported that they do not know whether products show enough information about their environmental impact [\(footnote\)](#).

## Perceptions of factors which contribute to sustainable diets and shopping choices

### Perceptions of what contributes to a sustainable diet

Figure 19 Factors which respondents thought contribute most to a sustainable diet.



Contributing factors	Percentage of respondents
Eating/drinking less dairy	10
Eating less meat, poultry or fish	25
Eating more fruit and/or vegetables	44
Minimising food waste	44
Eating less processed food	55

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 4

Respondents were asked, from a list of options, what they thought contributes most to someone having a sustainable diet. Over half of respondents thought that eating less processed food (55%) contributed most to a sustainable diet. Around 4 in 10 respondents thought that minimising food waste (44%) and eating more fruit and/or vegetables (44%) contributed most to a sustainable diet. A quarter (25%) of respondents thought that eating less meat, poultry, or fish (25%) contributed most to a sustainable diet. Fewer respondents thought that consuming less dairy (10%), eating a vegetarian (9%) or vegan (8%) diet or contributed most to a sustainable diet. Almost 1 in 10 (9%) respondents reported that they did not know what contributed most to someone having a sustainable diet (Figure 19) [\(footnote\)](#).

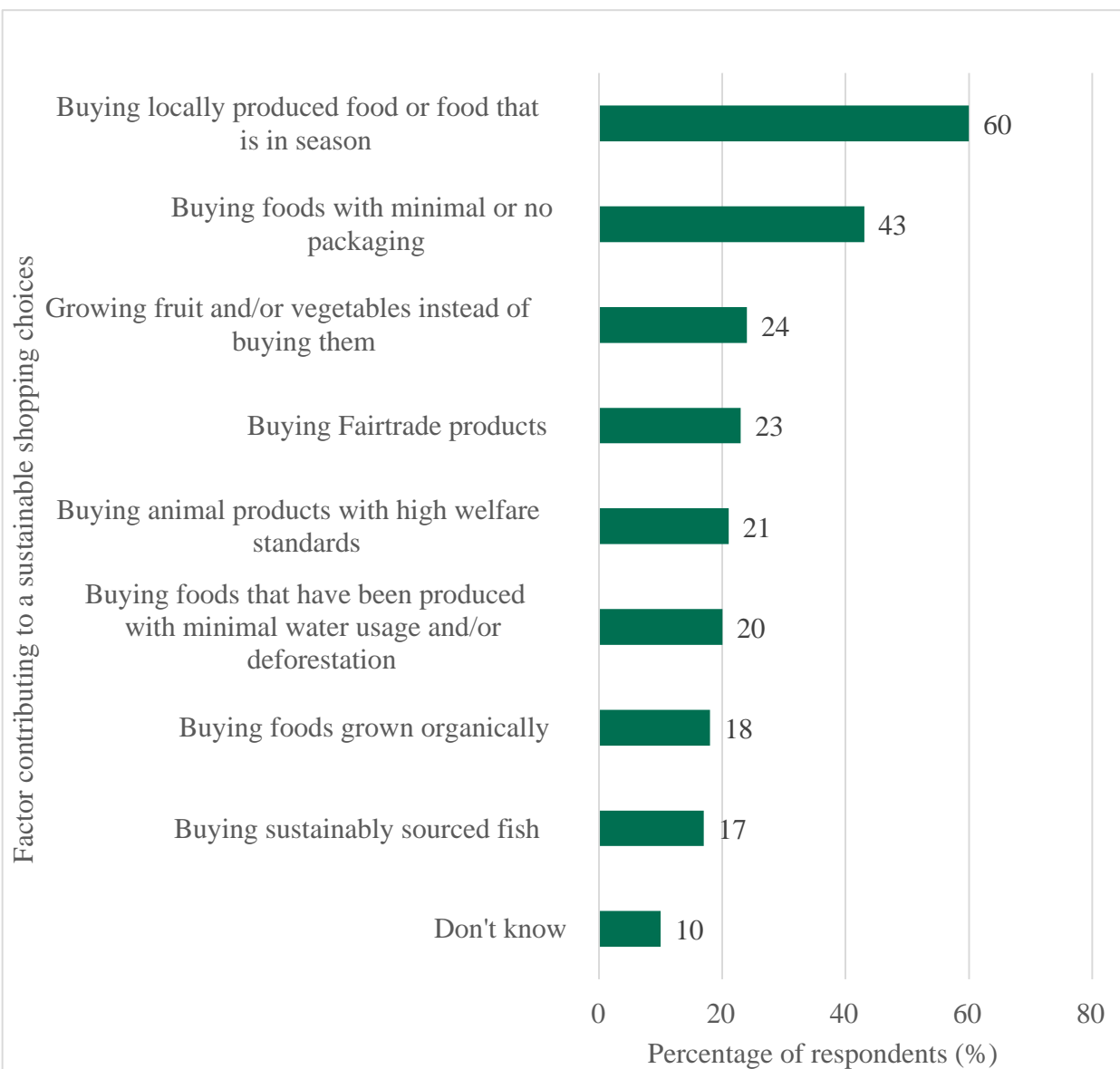
## Perceptions of what contributes to sustainable shopping choices

### Figure 20 What respondents think contributes most to sustainable shopping choices

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Contributing factor	Percentage of respondents
Don't know	10
Buying sustainably sourced fish	17
Buying foods grown organically	18
Buying foods that have been produced with minimal water usage and/or deforestation	20
Buying animal products with high welfare standards	21

Contributing factor	Percentage of respondents
Buying Fairtrade products	23
Growing fruit and/or vegetables instead of buying them	24
Buying foods with minimal or no packaging	43
Buying locally produced food or food that is in season	60

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 4

Respondents were asked, from a list of options, what they thought contributed most to someone making sustainable food shopping choices. Most (60%) respondents thought that buying locally produced food or food that is in season or buying foods with minimal or no packaging (43%) contributed most to someone making sustainable food shopping choices. However, 10% of respondents reported that they did not know what contributed most to someone making sustainable food shopping choices (Figure 20) ([footnote](#)).