

A Study on Green Food Consumption Behavior: An Analysis of Processes and Mechanisms from the Perspective of Environmental Sustainability

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Abstract:

Introduction: This study, from the perspective of environmental sustainability, explores consumer behavior theories related to green food and analyzes the decision-making process consumers undergo when choosing green food, along with the underlying influencing factors. Based on the theoretical framework of consumer behavior, the study conceptualizes the green food purchase decision-making process as a complete cycle, dividing it into five stages: need recognition, information search, comparative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation. Each stage is then analyzed in detail, focusing on consumers' thought patterns and actions regarding green food choices under the lens of environmental sustainability. Subsequently, the study examines the drivers behind consumers' green food purchasing behavior from six dimensions: individual characteristics, social cognition, emotional attitudes, economic environment, political environment, and legal environment, all within the context of sustainable consumption. Finally, through case studies on the legal systems and policy practices related to green food in the European Union and the United States, the research further demonstrates the positive role of legal, policy, and market mechanisms in jointly promoting green consumption behavior. While this study provides valuable theoretical support for understanding green food consumption behavior, it has certain limitations, including the lack of large-scale empirical data, relatively limited dimensions of research variables, and a geographically narrow sample base. Future research could enhance the systematic nature and practical value of studies on green food consumption behavior by expanding sample sources and conducting cross-national empirical analyses.

Keywords: Environmental Sustainability; Green Food; Consumer Behavior; Process Analysis; Influencing Factors.

1. Introduction

With the growing public awareness of environmental protection and the increasing acceptance of green consumption concepts, green food has become a major focus of consumer attention. Food safety concerns not only affect public health and social well-being but also serve as a crucial pillar in advancing environmental sustainability and driving the transition toward a green economy (Trudel, 2019). Building a healthy and sustainable food market requires a diversified supply of green products, eco-friendly production processes, and a robust environmental regulatory system. However, current food safety governance still faces numerous challenges. Some enterprises deviate from green production standards by illegally using chemical additives or misleading consumers with false green labels for improper gains. Such practices not only endanger consumer health and disrupt market order

but also seriously erode public trust in green food and green consumption policies, ultimately hindering society's transition toward sustainable consumption patterns (White et al., 2019).

Food safety risks have become a key constraint in promoting green consumption and implementing environmental sustainability strategies, mainly reflected in three critical stages. First, in the raw material stage, there is a lack of systematic eco-tracing mechanisms, and some agricultural products damage water and soil resources during production, deviating from sustainable agricultural practices. Second, in the processing stage, the full adoption of clean production and green manufacturing has yet to be achieved, with some enterprises still relying on traditional, energy-intensive, and high-emission processes, thereby increasing environmental burdens. Lastly, in the logistics and sales stages, weak cold chain management results in resource waste and higher carbon emissions, which run counter to the goals of a low-carbon economy (Carvalho, 2017). These issues not only diminish the environmental friendliness of green food but also weaken consumer trust and willingness to engage in sustainable consumption practices.

As the concept of green development becomes increasingly integrated into consumers' daily lives, consumption patterns are shifting from a singular "health-oriented" focus to a hybrid model of "health + environmental protection." A growing number of consumers recognize that green food contributes not only to individual health but also to the protection of ecosystems and the promotion of societal sustainability (Hosta and Zabkar, 2021). Against this backdrop, a systematic exploration of the underlying mechanisms influencing green food purchase decisions from the perspective of environmental sustainability, and the precise stimulation of consumers' green consumption intentions, has become a critical topic for the upgrading of the green food industry and the expansion of its market.

2. Theoretical Foundations of Consumer Behavior

2.1. Consumers and Consumer Behavior

In a narrow sense, consumers generally refer to individuals or households who purchase and use various products or services to meet their personal needs. In a broader sense, the term encompasses all market participants, including individuals, households, and various organizations that purchase or use products and services. This study focuses on consumers in the narrower sense, with particular attention to their behavioral characteristics and underlying patterns (Rachmad, 2024).

Based on this definition, consumer behavior can be described as the various actions and decision-making mechanisms exhibited by individuals or households in the process of purchasing and using products or services. Specifically, consumer behavior consists of two components: external, observable actions and internal decision-making processes (Singh, 2025). Among these, the purchase decision-making process forms the core of consumer behavior and is the primary focus of current research in the field. Existing theories mainly explore how consumers make purchasing decisions in dynamic market environments, emphasizing how they evaluate and select products or services to fulfill their needs.

Therefore, an in-depth analysis of the consumer decision-making process not only helps reveal consumers' purchasing motivations and behavioral patterns but also clarifies the mechanisms through which multiple internal and external factors influence consumer behavior. This, in turn, provides a

solid theoretical foundation for precise market analysis and the formulation of effective marketing strategies. Particularly in the context of the growing prevalence of green consumption and sustainable development concepts, consumer behavior research is becoming increasingly ecologically oriented. Factors such as environmental awareness, green preferences, and a sense of social responsibility have become key drivers influencing consumer purchasing behavior.

2.2. Behavioral Mechanisms of Green Food Consumption Decisions from the Perspectives of Information Asymmetry and Bounded Rationality

The two core assumptions proposed by new institutional economics—market information asymmetry and incompleteness, along with consumers' bounded rationality—offer valuable theoretical insights for understanding green food purchasing behavior.

Firstly, under the green consumption context, information asymmetry is particularly pronounced (Ramsundar and Shubhabrata, 2013). Green food typically embodies higher environmental value and social responsibility, emphasizing low-carbon emissions, ecological protection, and sustainable development throughout its production process. However, the environmental friendliness, health benefits, and green attributes of these products are often difficult for consumers to assess through appearance alone, requiring reliance on third-party certifications, eco-labels, or brand trust. Nevertheless, in some markets, the prevalence of “greenwashing”—where firms falsely advertise the environmental attributes of their products—further exacerbates information asymmetry in green consumption, increasing consumers' perceived risks during purchasing. Moreover, as green food products generally come at a premium price compared to conventional products, consumers, lacking complete information, find it difficult to accurately assess the trade-off between environmental benefits and price premiums, creating significant cognitive barriers to the promotion of green food in the marketplace.

Secondly, bounded rationality is also evident in green consumption behavior (Goldsmith, 2017). While some consumers recognize and support the principles of sustainable development, their actual purchasing decisions are often constrained by factors such as price sensitivity, habitual consumption patterns, time pressure, and cognitive load. This limits their ability to fully consider the long-term environmental benefits and social value associated with green food. Under conditions of limited information processing capacity, consumers tend to rely on heuristic decision-making or habitual choices, leading to a “cognition-behavior gap” in green consumption—where strong environmental awareness does not always translate into active green purchasing behavior. Additionally, bounded rationality hampers consumers' full understanding of the role green food plays in addressing environmental challenges, reducing carbon footprints, and promoting sustainable consumption, ultimately affecting their perceived value of and willingness to purchase green food.

Therefore, both information asymmetry and bounded rationality jointly influence consumers' risk perceptions and decision-making pathways in green food consumption and, to a certain extent, constrain the market expansion and sustainable development of green food. This highlights the need to optimize green food consumption behavior by improving green product information disclosure mechanisms, enhancing environmental education, and strengthening green trust mechanisms. Such

efforts would reduce decision-making uncertainty caused by information asymmetry and alleviate the constraints imposed by bounded rationality on green consumption behavior.

3. Analysis of Green Food Purchasing Behavior Based on Environmental Sustainability

Building on the previous discussion of consumer behavior theories, the decision-making process of consumers when purchasing green food can be conceptualized as a complete and dynamic cycle, typically divided into five stages: need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation (see Figure 1). This process outlines the cognitive path and behavioral patterns of consumers when selecting green food, while also capturing their multidimensional approach to acquiring, processing, and evaluating relevant information. It reflects both the systematic and complex nature of green food purchasing behavior. The specific characteristics of each stage are as follows:

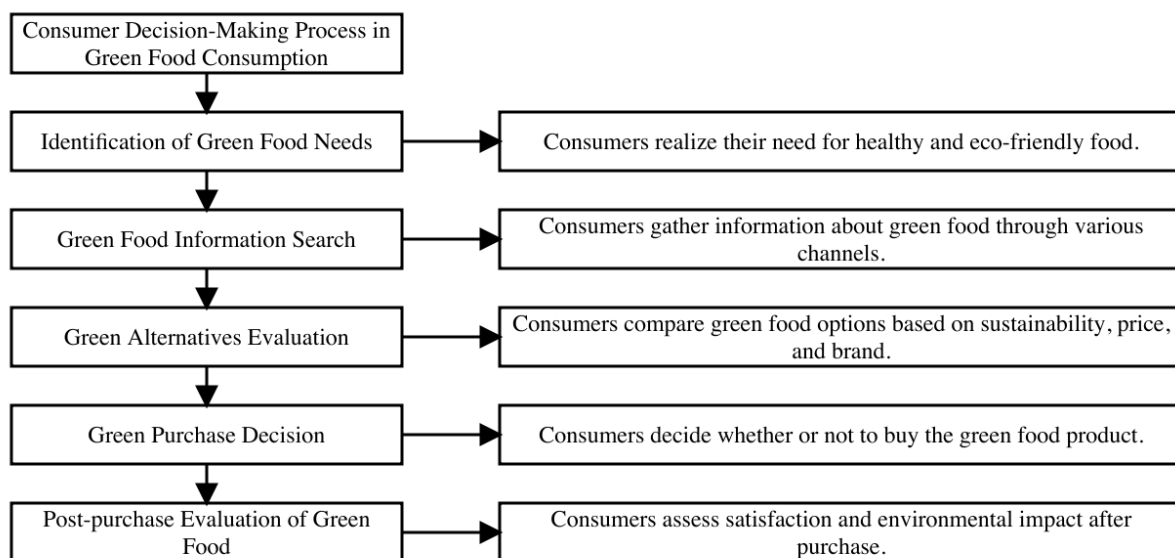


Figure 1. Green Food Purchase Decision Process under Environmental Sustainability

3.1. Identification of Green Food Needs

In the context of green food purchasing decisions, consumers' need recognition is driven by both internal motivations and external stimuli, while increasingly reflecting a heightened concern for environmental sustainability (Alamsyah et al., 2020). Internally, consumers often develop a demand for green food based on their awareness of personal health, food safety, and ecological protection. Externally, factors such as environmental policies, the dissemination of sustainable development concepts, and the promotion of green consumption through social media further strengthen consumers' sense of environmental responsibility, prompting them to place greater emphasis on the eco-friendly attributes of green food during decision-making (Ahmed et al., 2021). At this stage, consumers are not only focused on meeting personal health and lifestyle needs but also on the contribution of green food to ecological protection, carbon footprint reduction, and resource conservation, gradually clarifying their role and responsibility as sustainable consumers.

As the initial stage of green food purchasing decisions, need recognition reflects the awakening of consumers' environmental awareness and understanding of sustainable consumption. Green consumption behavior is only effectively triggered when consumers realize that green food can both fulfill their individual needs and contribute to environmental protection and social sustainability, particularly when these needs remain unmet (Zhang, 2020). From the perspective of environmental sustainability, consumer demand is shaped by multiple factors such as green values, willingness to engage in eco-friendly behavior, and a sense of social identity, exhibiting a stronger value-oriented tendency. The diversity of such needs is reflected not only in consumer preferences for different categories or brands of green food but also in the integration of various value orientations, including health, environmental protection, and social responsibility, ultimately leading to the formation of sustainability-oriented green consumption behaviors.

3.2. Green Food Information Search

In the information search stage of green food purchasing decisions, consumer behavior is typically driven by sustainable consumption awareness. As environmental concepts and sustainable development goals become increasingly ingrained in public consciousness, consumers, after identifying a need for green food, tend to proactively gather information related to the sustainable attributes of products and services, such as environmental protection, safety, and health. Additionally, external factors such as green marketing, sustainable brand communication, and the display of eco-friendly products further stimulate consumers' green awareness and information-seeking behavior (Anjani and Perdhana, 2021).

At this stage, consumers' attention extends beyond the basic functions and price of green food to include aspects such as the environmental friendliness of the production process, carbon footprint, resource utilization efficiency, and the impact on ecosystems. From the perspective of environmental sustainability, information acquisition mainly manifests in the following forms:

(1) **Personal Experience:** This refers to the accumulation of sustainable consumption experiences and environmental awareness from previous green food purchases. For example, consumers who have previously purchased green food produced according to high environmental standards or low-carbon processes may develop a positive perception of sustainable products, leading them to prioritize options that align with eco-friendly values.

(2) **Commercial Information:** This includes information disseminated through various green marketing activities that highlight the environmental sustainability value of products, such as green labels, carbon footprint certifications, descriptions of eco-friendly production processes, and the use of renewable packaging materials. Such information enhances consumers' understanding of green food's contributions to environmental protection, resource conservation, and climate friendliness, motivating them to engage in sustainable consumption behaviors.

(3) **Social Recommendations:** Increasing discussions around environmental responsibility and green lifestyles within social circles encourage consumers to place greater importance on social identity and green consensus in their purchasing decisions. Positive evaluations of the environmental attributes of green food from friends, family, or colleagues often emotionally reinforce consumers' commitment to

sustainable consumption, prompting them to choose products with stronger eco-friendly characteristics.

(4)Public Evaluations: Information provided by media outlets, government agencies, and industry organizations—such as green certifications, environmental standards, and sustainable production case studies—serve as critical references for consumers when assessing the environmental performance of products. By consulting such information, consumers gain a clearer understanding of green food's specific contributions to environmental protection, sustainable resource utilization, and the fulfillment of social responsibilities, ultimately leading them to make more rational and sustainability-oriented purchasing decisions.

3.3. Green Alternatives Evaluation

In the process of green food purchasing decisions, the alternative evaluation stage not only involves value judgments on product attributes but also places greater emphasis on their contribution to environmental sustainability (Anjani et al., 2021). Based on the information gathered earlier, consumers apply sustainability-oriented criteria to comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of various green food products in meeting personal health needs and in practicing environmentally responsible consumption, thereby assessing their alignment with eco-friendly consumption goals.

This stage is influenced by both internal factors (such as green consumption awareness and environmental values) and external stimuli (such as green certification campaigns and social responsibility advocacy), which prompt consumers to enter a more systematic and rational product evaluation process after confirming their green food needs. Specifically, consumers usually focus on key attributes of green food related to environmental sustainability, including: whether the product has authoritative organic or green certifications, whether the production process adopts energy-saving, emission-reducing, and eco-friendly technologies, whether the packaging materials are environmentally friendly and biodegradable, whether the supply chain supports local sourcing to reduce carbon emissions, and whether the product plays a positive role in biodiversity conservation and resource recycling.

In addition, consumers seek to strike a balance among the nutritional value, environmental friendliness, and economic feasibility of green food to achieve the dual goals of health and sustainable consumption. During the evaluation process, consumers not only make horizontal comparisons of the external features and actual effectiveness among multiple green food products, but also comprehensively assess their positive impact on the ecological environment by considering dimensions such as the brand's social responsibility performance and the product's environmental performance throughout its life cycle.

The depth of evaluation and the quality of decision-making at this stage largely depend on consumers' understanding of sustainable development concepts and their knowledge of green consumption.

3.4. Green Purchase Decision

After completing the information search and sustainability evaluation of green food, consumers typically form a clearer purchase intention and move into the actual decision-making and purchasing behavior stage. From the perspective of environmental sustainability, this stage not only reflects

consumers' responses to their personal needs for green food but also demonstrates their active commitment to ecological responsibility and sustainable consumption concepts (Qi and Ploeger, 2021).

In the specific decision-making process, consumers need to comprehensively consider multiple factors, such as selecting sales channels that are committed to sustainable development (e.g., supermarkets or e-commerce platforms that promote local organic agriculture and eco-friendly packaging), determining the quantity, type, and brand of green food to purchase, and choosing payment and delivery methods that align with green consumption concepts (such as supporting paperless payments and green logistics). Typically, consumers with stronger environmental awareness are more likely to trust and choose brands that perform well in green production, environmental certification, carbon emission management, and related areas (Zhang et al., 2023).

However, the conversion from purchase intention to actual decision-making is often influenced by various uncertainties. For instance, when green food lacks sufficient disclosure of environmental information or when "greenwashing" (i.e., false or exaggerated green claims) occurs, consumers may find it difficult to accurately assess the product's true environmental friendliness and health benefits, leading to perceived risks and hesitation in decision-making (Yang et al., 2020). If consumers worry that green food does not truly meet their sustainability and health expectations, they may choose to postpone, adjust, or even abandon the purchase.

Additionally, social recognition, recommendations from others, and external environmental factors also play significant roles in consumer decisions. For example, if public opinion strongly advocates for green consumption, or if eco-friendly values are widely supported within one's social circle, consumers' willingness to engage in green consumption and related behaviors will be further strengthened. Therefore, green food purchasing decisions are not only the result of personal value judgments but also a rational choice made by consumers in balancing personal interests with environmental responsibility.

3.5. Post-purchase Evaluation of Green Food

After consumers complete the purchase of green food, the decision-making process does not end but rather enters a post-purchase evaluation stage centered on environmental sustainability (Chao and Uhagile, 2022). In this stage, consumers not only focus on whether the product meets their personal health and functional needs but also comprehensively assess its sustainability performance in areas such as ecological protection and resource conservation.

When green food demonstrates excellent environmental characteristics during actual use—such as meeting organic standards, using renewable or eco-friendly packaging, having a low carbon footprint, and supporting ecological agriculture—and the overall experience exceeds consumer expectations, consumers tend to form a high level of recognition toward the product and brand. This positive feedback not only enhances their willingness to make repeat purchases in the future but may also encourage them to actively promote the concept of sustainable consumption, motivating people around them to participate in green consumption and further driving the spread of environmental awareness and sustainable market growth.

Conversely, if green food reveals environmental shortcomings during use that do not align with its marketing claims (e.g., non-eco-friendly packaging materials, opaque supply chains, high carbon emissions during production), resulting in the product failing to meet consumers' expectations of environmental friendliness, consumers often feel dissatisfied or even develop resistance to the brand, particularly among consumer groups with strong environmental awareness (Yu et al., 2014). Such negative experiences may directly undermine trust in the brand, reduce future purchase intentions, and, through channels such as social media and word-of-mouth, influence other potential consumers.

In addition, consumers may adopt more proactive feedback behaviors, such as filing complaints with companies or regulatory agencies, participating in environmental organization initiatives, or even using legal means to urge companies to fulfill their green commitments.

4. Research on the Motivations for Green Food Purchases from a Sustainable Consumption Perspective

Consumer behavior in the decision-making process of purchasing green food is typically influenced by a combination of multiple factors. Based on Kurt Lewin's behavior model, individual consumption behavior is not only driven by internal factors such as sustainable consumption concepts and health awareness but is also deeply affected by the external environment, particularly the sustainable development orientation within the social, economic, and policy contexts. These internal and external factors are intertwined, together forming a multi-dimensional system that influences consumers' sustainable consumption behaviors and has become a key focus in green consumption research.

From the perspective of environmental sustainability (see Figure 2), the following section will systematically analyze how six aspects—individual characteristics, social cognition, emotional attitudes, economic environment, political environment, and legal environment—impact consumers' engagement in green food consumption and the transformation toward a sustainable lifestyle.

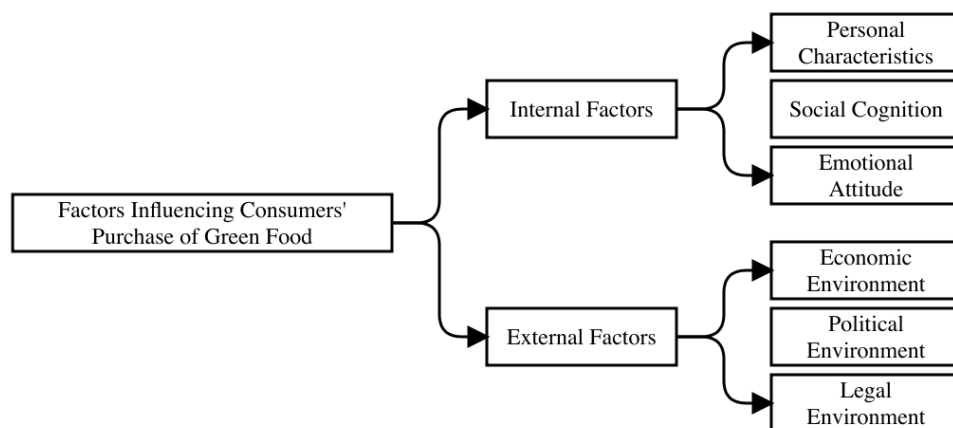


Figure 2. Drivers of Green Food Purchases under Sustainable Consumption

4.1. Personal Characteristics

In the context of environmental sustainability, consumers' individual characteristics have become important variables influencing green food consumption behavior. Factors such as age, gender, education level, income status, occupational attributes, and environmental awareness not only shape

consumers' cognitive framework regarding green food but also determine the depth of their engagement in sustainable consumption (Hassan et al., 2022). Generally, consumers with higher education levels and a stronger knowledge base in environmental protection are better equipped to understand the contributions of green food to biodiversity conservation, greenhouse gas reduction, and ecosystem balance, and are therefore more inclined to adopt environmentally friendly consumption behaviors.

Additionally, income levels directly affect both the purchasing power and frequency of green food consumption. Middle- to high-income groups, possessing stronger purchasing intentions and environmental awareness, often serve as core supporters of the green consumption market. Notably, the younger generation, being more sensitive to global issues such as climate change and sustainable resource use, is gradually becoming the main driving force behind green food consumption.

4.2. Social Cognition

At the level of social cognition, consumers' awareness and attitudes toward green consumption, environmental protection, and sustainable development goals significantly influence their willingness to purchase green food (Gao et al., 2020). With the steady advancement of global "carbon neutrality" targets and green transition strategies, green food has been widely recognized as an important means to reduce carbon emissions and protect the ecological environment. The stronger consumers' awareness of the environmental value of green food, the higher their acceptance and implementation of sustainable consumption behaviors.

Moreover, consumers' green consumption concepts are often greatly influenced by surrounding social groups. The environmental attitudes and green lifestyles of family members, friends, colleagues, and social circles can, through social norms and group identity, strengthen individuals' sense of responsibility and belonging to green consumption, thereby fostering more stable green consumption behaviors.

4.3. Emotional Attitude

Within the framework of environmental sustainability, consumers' emotional attitudes are reflected in their emotional identification and value resonance with the concept of green consumption. For some consumers, the motivation to purchase green food is no longer solely based on health considerations, but increasingly incorporates emotional concerns for the ecological environment, climate change, and social welfare (Bakshi et al., 2020). For instance, consumers may develop a positive emotional preference for green food due to their recognition of its role in promoting sustainable agriculture, improving the ecological environment, and mitigating global warming. This positive emotional cognition enhances consumers' proactive engagement in environmentally friendly consumption and support for green brands, further facilitating the internalization and normalization of environmental awareness and green consumption behaviors.

4.4. Economic Environment

The development of a green economy system provides strong external support for consumers' green food purchasing behavior. The continuous optimization of green supply chains, green production models, and green market mechanisms has reduced the market prices and access thresholds for green

food, thereby enhancing its availability and cost-effectiveness (Wieland, 2020). Throughout the entire chain of green production, green distribution, and green consumption, concepts such as energy conservation, emission reduction, and resource recycling are deeply integrated, increasing the market appeal of green food. In addition, the implementation of policy measures such as green finance, green subsidies, and green procurement has further reduced the circulation and consumption costs of green products, enabling consumers to easily choose eco-friendly products in a more favorable economic environment. The green economy not only promotes the diffusion of green consumption behavior but also serves as a key economic pillar in building a green and low-carbon society.

4.5. Political Environment

Against the backdrop of deepening global green transition and sustainable development, European and American countries have actively guided consumers toward green food consumption by improving policy frameworks (Parsons et al., 2023). Policies such as the European Union's European Green Deal and the Sustainable Products Policy Framework explicitly position green food as a crucial tool for achieving sustainable agricultural development and promoting the transition to a low-carbon and circular economy. In the United States, sustainable agriculture provisions within the Food Safety Modernization Act and measures such as the Federal Green Purchasing Policy have provided strong support for green food consumption and the construction of an eco-friendly market.

Driven by these policies, Europe and the United States have enhanced the standardization and credibility of the green food market by establishing sound green food certification systems, improving eco-friendly product databases, and implementing green subsidies and incentive mechanisms, thereby strengthening consumer trust in sustainable products. Meanwhile, green consumption campaigns and educational initiatives led by institutions such as the European Commission and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have further reinforced public awareness of the ecological value and sustainable significance of green food. These efforts have fostered a green consumption culture and facilitated the shift of consumers from passive acceptance to active participation, injecting strong momentum into the global sustainable development agenda.

4.6. Legal Environment

The legal system plays a pivotal role in regulating market order, protecting consumer rights, and promoting ecological sustainability within the green consumption framework (Chawla and Kumar, 2022). In the European Union, legal frameworks such as the Ecodesign Directive and the Green Public Procurement Directive cover all stages of green food production, certification, labeling, and market circulation, ensuring that green products meet environmental and safety standards. In the United States, comprehensive regulations such as the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) oversee production practices, environmental standards, and market behavior related to green food.

The legal systems of the EU and the U.S. have not only effectively curbed issues such as "greenwashing" and misleading advertising, improving market transparency for green products, but have also safeguarded consumers' rights to information and freedom of choice. A sound legal environment strengthens consumer confidence in practicing green consumption and supports the

healthy expansion of the green food market, contributing to the broader advancement of global sustainable consumption patterns.

5. Environmental Sustainability Practices under the Green Food Legal Frameworks of the EU and the U.S.

5.1 The EU—Green Public Procurement Policies Driving Food System Transition

In the European Union, Green Public Procurement (GPP), as a key initiative under the Green Public Procurement Directive and the European Green Deal, has been widely embedded in the food procurement processes of public institutions such as governments, schools, and hospitals. GPP has become an important tool for expanding the green food market. For example, in Denmark, the Copenhagen municipal government implemented a GPP policy mandating that at least 90% of all food purchased by municipal public catering institutions must be organic or sustainably certified products. This policy has effectively driven rapid growth in green food demand and guided agricultural production systems toward low-impact models such as organic and ecological farming.

Following the policy implementation, Copenhagen significantly reduced the use of environmentally harmful substances such as fertilizers, pesticides, and antibiotics in agriculture, lowering the risks of non-point source pollution and water eutrophication while promoting soil health and positive cycles within agro-ecosystems. Additionally, the EU, through the Food Information to Consumers (FIC) Regulation and the Sustainable Product Policy Framework, mandates that food producers disclose comprehensive sustainability-related information on packaging and marketing materials, such as nutritional content, carbon footprint, and eco-labels. This has enhanced transparency in the green food market, reduced instances of "greenwashing," and strengthened consumer trust and recognition, thus further promoting green consumption (Castillo-Díaz et al., 2025).

5.2 The U.S. —The Organic Foods Production Act Advancing Green Agriculture and Climate-Friendly Consumption

Since the enactment of the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) in 1990, the United States has established a comprehensive green food certification system centered on the USDA Organic label, covering all stages of the industry chain, including production, processing, and distribution. This legal framework has provided institutional support for the green transformation of agriculture and the sustainable regulation of the food market. U.S. organic food retail giant Whole Foods Market, for instance, rigorously adheres to USDA Organic standards in selecting and managing suppliers, promoting the widespread adoption of organic agricultural practices across the country and significantly reducing the use of chemical inputs, thereby lessening the negative impact on the climate system.

Whole Foods has also set up "Sustainable Consumption Education Zones" in its stores, educating the public on the environmental, biodiversity, and climate change mitigation benefits of green food, thus strengthening consumers' green consumption awareness. Driven by both legal standards and market-based education, Whole Foods has not only cultivated a stable green food consumer base but has also contributed to reducing carbon emissions and resource waste across its supply chain. This has

facilitated the green upgrade of the agricultural and food industries, resulting in environmental, economic, and social co-benefits (Fortin, 2022).

5.3 Discussion: Synergistic Policy Tools Driving Environmental Sustainability

The cases of the EU and the U.S. clearly demonstrate that sound legal systems and diverse policy tools play critical roles in promoting green food and achieving environmental sustainability goals. Legal frameworks have effectively regulated the green food market, curbed false environmental claims, and protected consumers' rights to information and choice. Meanwhile, initiatives such as green public procurement, standard certification, and public education have guided both supply and demand sides, creating a coordinated green food promotion mechanism through the synergy of "law—policy—market—consumer" interactions.

6. Conclusion

This study, grounded in consumer behavior theory, systematically analyzes the decision-making process and influencing factors behind green food purchasing behavior from the perspective of environmental sustainability. The findings reveal that green food consumption has become a key behavioral manifestation of modern consumers' commitment to sustainable development principles and environmental responsibility. Consumers' decisions to purchase green food are driven not only by basic physiological needs such as health and safety but are also strongly influenced by their environmental awareness, ecological values, and concern for sustainability.

Currently, environmental sustainability has emerged as a significant external driver affecting green food purchasing decisions. Against the backdrop of increasingly refined legal frameworks, policy advocacy, and market regulations for green food worldwide, consumers are more inclined to incorporate factors such as eco-friendliness, low carbon emissions, and ecological protection into their purchasing considerations, thereby developing a proactive green consumption attitude. Particularly in well-regulated markets such as the EU and the U.S., transparent certification systems and green public procurement policies have enhanced trust and visibility within the green food market, significantly strengthening consumers' willingness and intrinsic motivation to engage in sustainable consumption.

At the same time, the formation of green food consumption behavior results from the combined influence of internal factors (e.g., individual characteristics, social cognition, emotional attitudes) and external factors (e.g., economic environment, political climate, legal framework). Amid the global acceleration of green transition and sustainable development, governments, businesses, and society at large should work collaboratively to improve green product policies, optimize the green food market environment, and enhance environmental awareness through education. Such collective efforts will help foster rational, eco-conscious consumption behaviors, providing solid support for advancing global environmental sustainability and ecological civilization.

Despite providing a systematic analysis of green food consumer behavior from an environmental sustainability perspective, this study has certain limitations. First, it relies heavily on literature and theoretical frameworks, lacking the support of large-scale empirical data, making it difficult to fully capture the diverse behavioral patterns of different consumer groups in real-world green food purchasing scenarios. Second, while focusing on the influence of environmental sustainability, the

study does not delve deeply into the interactions of other critical variables, such as price sensitivity, brand preferences, and social identity, resulting in a relatively narrow analytical lens. Furthermore, the case studies primarily center on the EU and the U.S., without incorporating developing countries and emerging markets, limiting the generalizability and external validity of the conclusions. Future research should integrate empirical surveys, expand variable design, and broaden the geographical and demographic scope to enhance the scientific rigor and practical value of the findings.

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