

Narratives for Resilient Agriculture

Study set-up (DRAFT)

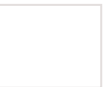
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The Need for a Narrative that Resonates with Consumers

Resilient agriculture (RA) delivers demonstrated environmental and social benefits, yet consumers show low awareness and limited understanding of what RA actually means.

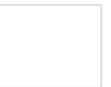
- There is no universally accepted definition that speaks to consumers; current definitions reflect scientific and practitioner viewpoints rather than consumer language.
- For farmers, transitioning to RA requires effort, time and financial investment. A clear consumer preference for RA products would reduce risk and increase incentives for adoption.
- Corporates and policymakers lack sufficient consumer insight to build successful go-to-market strategies or develop standards that consumers understand and value.
- A compelling narrative is needed to:
 - Build recognition of RA principles
 - Make benefits tangible and personally relevant
 - Facilitate consumer preference and willingness to choose RA products
 - Support standardisation and certification efforts



What we Already Know about consumers and Regenerative Agriculture

For more background information please refer to document 'Resilient Agriculture - Insights Digest'.

- Awareness of RA is still low despite increasing attention from media, producers, corporates, and politicians.
- Consumers respond more strongly to outcomes (healthier and tastier products, specifically minimising chemicals) than to farming methods.
- Consumers see RA as most relevant for fresh produce and animal products, and less relevant for highly processed foods.
- What stands in the way of broader consumer appeal and preference:
 - Lack of a clear, consistent, consumer-friendly definition
 - RA remains difficult to recognise at point-of-sale
 - Consumers struggle to distinguish RA from organic and other kinds of sustainable farming
 - Certification and labelling are not yet standardised, making it hard for consumers to trust RA claim
- Earlier research showed that many consumers did not perceive major problems in common agricultural practices, reducing their sense of urgency for alternatives. As geopolitical tensions have increased and extreme weather events became more frequent and more disruptive to harvests, we now need to understand whether consumers' perceptions have shifted — and whether this leads to a more fertile breeding ground for preferring more resilient farming practices.



What we don't yet know about consumers and Regenerative Agriculture

We have hypotheses about what will move consumers to choose for Regenerative products based on previous research, but these need to be tested.

We also know that one barrier from consumer interest in regenerative agriculture is related to the lack of a sense of urgency in improving conventional agricultural practices. We need to better understand what perceptions are of conventional vs other types of agriculture (e.g. organic) are and how we can leverage them in positioning regenerative agriculture.

Geopolitics and supply-chain realities are shifting quickly, which can reshape consumer priorities and perceptions almost overnight, so our insights need to keep pace.

With a deeper understanding of what different consumers know, value, and worry about—and which messages and proof points actually move them—we can make decisions on positioning, product strategy, and where to invest for impact.



Aim of the Study

This study will produce clear, compelling narratives that translate RA principles into consumer benefits that will motivate choice.

To get there, we need to:

- Better understand how European consumers perceive conventional agriculture and whether they see a need for change and in what way.
- Understand how European consumers currently perceive resilient and regenerative agriculture (RA) and what RA means to them in their own language. What terminology is more recognized and perceived to be most relevant? (Regenerative, resilient, other?)
- Identify which principles and outcomes of RA resonate most strongly with consumers — especially those linked to health, taste, biodiversity, and reduced chemicals.
- Understand how growing environmental and geopolitical concerns influence perceptions of the need for change in our food system and the preference for products made using these resilient practices.
- Explore what drives or hinders consumer preference for products produced through RA, building on evidence that consumers find RA healthier, safer, higher-quality, and more natural.



Who needs these insights?

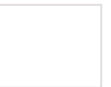
This study will provide insights that help industry, farmers, and policymakers shape communication, certification, and go-to-market strategies.

The main stakeholders that will benefit from these insights are:

- **Food Brands & Manufacturers.** Insights help them design credible claims, product positioning, and messaging that align with what consumers value, enabling successful go-to-market strategies for RA-based products.
- **Retailers & Supermarkets.** Retailers need to know how to present, label, and differentiate resilient agriculture products in-store, and understand which narratives drive preference at the point of sale.
- **Farmers & Farmer Associations.** They need to understand which consumer benefits matter most so they can justify the effort and investment required to transition to resilient agriculture and communicate its value effectively.

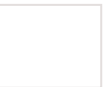
Other stakeholders who can make use of the insights are:

- **Certification & Standard-Setting Bodies.** They depend on knowing which principles consumers recognise and trust, helping them create meaningful labels that consumers can understand and act upon.
- **Policymakers & Regulators.** They require consumer insights to develop clear, trusted, and relevant standards, certification systems, and policies that resonate with the public and support wider adoption of RA.
- **NGOs & Sustainability Organisations.** These organisations need consumer-oriented narratives to educate the public, mobilise awareness campaigns, and accelerate transitions to sustainable food systems.



Research Questions to be answered

- **Research Question 1:** How do European consumers perceive conventional agriculture and do they see a need for change?
Hypothesis 1: Consumers believe conventional agriculture mostly works well, but they would prefer a reduction in use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers.
- **RQ2:** How do European consumers currently understand regenerative and resilient agriculture (RA)?
H2: Awareness is low and definitions do not resonate with consumers.
H3: Consumers confuse the concepts of regenerative with organic.
- **RQ3:** Which principles and outcomes of RA are most meaningful to consumers?
H4: Consumers respond most to health, taste, biodiversity, and reduced chemical use.
- **RQ4:** What motivates consumers to choose products produced through RA?
H5: RA is associated with healthier, safer, higher-quality food.
- **RQ5:** What barriers prevent consumers from preferring RA products?
H6: Barriers that prevent consumers from choosing RA products are lack of clear definition, difficulty recognising RA at point-of-sale, lack of standardization and certification.
- **RQ6:** How can RA principles be translated into compelling, consumer-friendly narratives that increase interest, trust, and preference?



Examples of narratives

Below are three examples of ways of explaining the benefits of resilient agriculture to consumers. Each is based on a different angle.

Narrative 1 : Increasing nutritional value

When farmers minimise chemical inputs and maximise biodiversity, plants grow in a more balanced, natural ecosystem. The result? Fruit and vegetables that taste fuller, fresher, and more vibrant.

But it's also genuinely better for your body. Produce grown through resilient agriculture nourishes the soil first, and that healthier soil delivers crops with more vitamins, minerals and other good stuff.

Narrative 2: Independent Europe

When international trade is uncertain, resilient agriculture helps ensure that the supply of food on our tables is reliable and high-quality. By rebuilding soil health and strengthening European ecosystems, farmers can keep producing nutritious food even in unstable times.

Choosing resilient agriculture supports a European food system that is more sovereign, more stable, more affordable, and more fair — benefits that help protect consumers and farmers alike when the next international storm arrives.

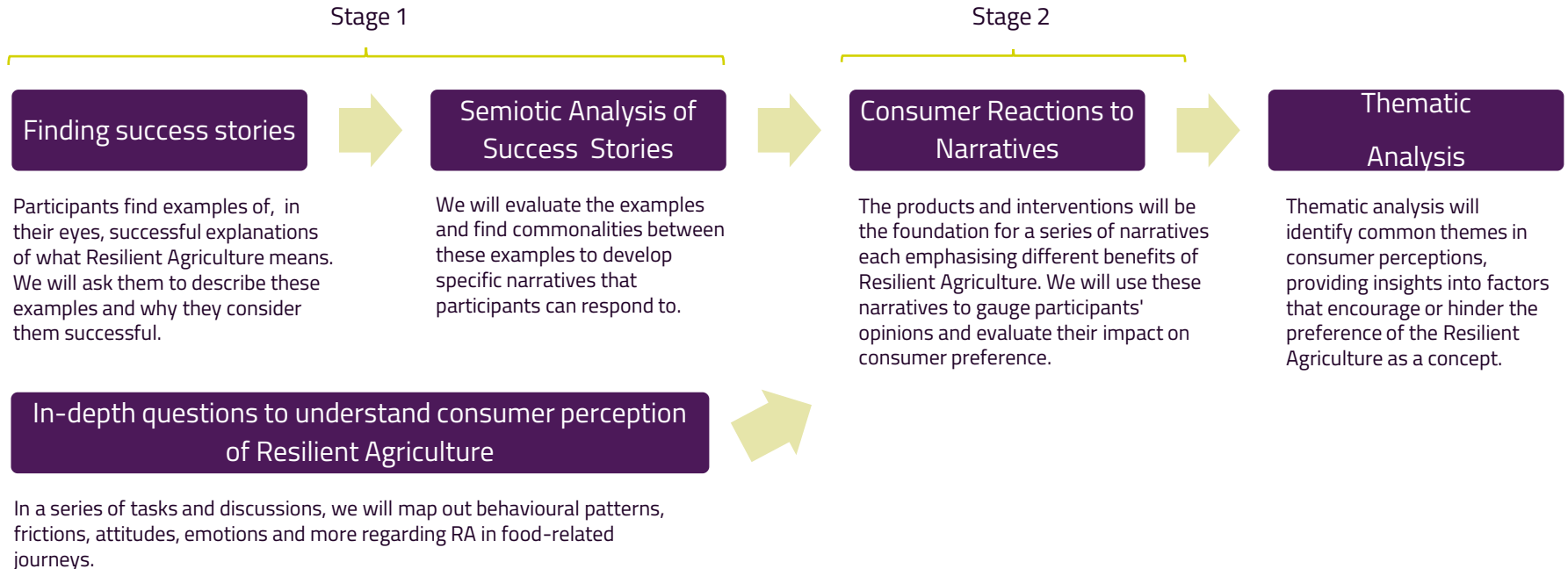
Narrative 3: Prepare for the storm

When droughts, heatwaves or heavy rains hit, many farms struggle — but resilient agriculture keeps producing. By restoring soil health and using diverse crops and regenerative methods, farmers create fields that continue to deliver strong, reliable yields regardless of the weather.

Choosing products grown this way helps future-proof our food supply, ensuring that even in a changing climate, Europe can keep growing the food we depend on.



Research Approach Combining Qualitative Methods with Semiotic Principles



Study Set-up

Data collection via the Consumer Observatory's Qualitative Online Community

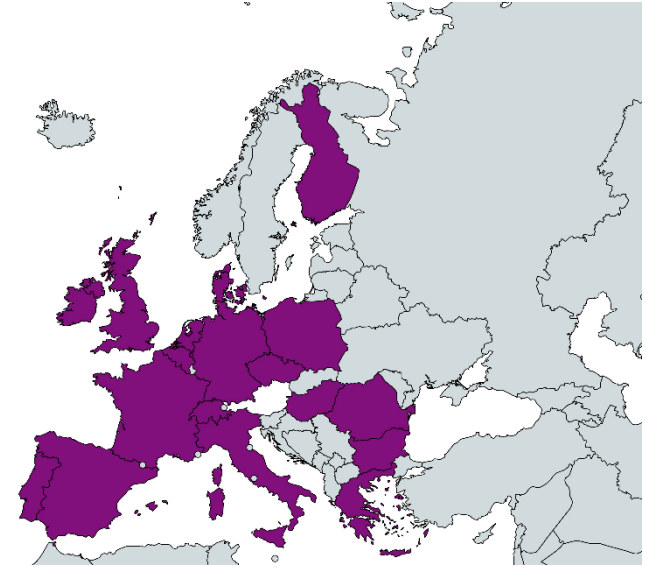
Around 300 members from 17 European countries, with a balanced spread of gender, age (18-75yo), location (urban-rural) and education level. Members are front-runners when it comes to food; interested in cooking and talking about food and food news.

Range of Activities and Tasks

Participants take part in activities ranging from discussions, to polls and questionnaires, photo-challenges and journal entries. Participants are engaging with one another and with the moderators and researchers. Moderators are responsible for probing participants, leading to in-depth and relevant insights.

Two Stages of Activities for This Study

- In the first stage we ask a group of 70 participants to find 2 success stories each and participate in a series of tasks and discussions.
- In the second stage we will discuss the developed narratives with a smaller group of 45 participants.



Research Steps & Planning

Week 1
(start date t.b.d)

1. Set-up and
Background Research

- Speak to industry experts and expand the body of knowledge with desk research
- Final research design, including a detailed plan of research, tasks and questions

Week 2-3

2. Fieldwork Stage 1

- Success stories generation and series of in-depth discussions and tasks
- 1-2 activities are posted on the platform per working day
- Moderators engage with the participants and probe for in-depth answers on each issue

Week 4

3. Interim Analysis

- Semiotic analysis and development of narratives. Together with relevant stakeholders 3 -4 different narratives to be developed, to be used as stimuli during the second stage

Week 5

4. Fieldwork Stage 2

- Testing citizen perception of the narratives
- In addition, moderators and researchers check for data saturation, and if necessary, adjust the upcoming activities to make sure that all research questions are answered

Week 6-7

5. Analysis and
Reporting

- Thematic analysis of the Stage 1 and Stage 2 results
- Report writing

Week ?

6. Debrief

- Presenting research findings to stakeholders
- EIT Food Consumer Observatory to consult on the application of qualitative insights

About the EIT Food Consumer Observatory

Powered by EIT Food, the Consumer Observatory brings together experts and consumer insight organisations from across the food system to curate and produce consumer insights, trend analysis and research tools.

By combining research expertise, sector knowledge and the green transition behaviour change perspective, the Consumer Observatory aims to maximise the availability of consumer insights on agrifood topics, delivering greater knowledge, strategy and guidance to agrifood stakeholders – helping to bring about positive change in the food system.

This platform puts consumer knowledge and behaviour at the heart of the conversation on food sector trends, driving forward innovative solutions that will help to achieve EIT Food's three missions:

- A Net Zero Food System
- Healthier Lives Through Food
- Reducing Risk for a Fair and Resilient Food System

To access the latest insights or to discuss your specific insight needs, visit eitfood.eu/projects/consumerobservatory or get in touch via co@eitfood.eu

For more information about EIT Food Consumer Observatory reports, download our [reports disclaimer](#).

