

Summary

Organic pet food: what do dog and cat owners think?

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S.1 Key findings

The chances of commercial success for organic pet food are not particularly good. People consider it too expensive or a 'step too far' for their pet. The EKO certification inspires confidence because most people recognise it from the food they buy for their own consumption.

The opportunities for organic pet food in the supermarket lie in:

- *Dry food for cats.* Organic pet food is perceived as a high-quality product, like pellets. Organic pellets could therefore be an option. As pellets for cats are sold through supermarket channels, there are opportunities here for supermarkets. Dry dog food is sold through other channels.
- *Nourishing wet food or extras for dogs.* Dry dog food is sold mainly in garden centres and pet shops; wet food and extras are sold in supermarkets.
- *Dry food for small dogs.* Small dogs eat less so the owners do not need to buy in bulk.

S.2 Complementary findings

- *The pet food market is growing and changing.* The dog and cat population of the Netherlands continues to grow, and the demand for more specialised pet food is on the increase – especially for dogs.
- *Consumers show more brand loyalty with respect to dog food than with respect to cat food.* As long as the pet shows no negative symptoms, pet owners – especially cat owners – tend to buy pellets from the supermarket and will vary the brands depending on special offers, amongst other things. Dogs are more awkward so the owners usually stick with one brand that goes down well.
- *People expect better quality and higher nutritional value from organic pet food.* The nutritional value of organic pet food is associated with the more expensive specialised food rather than mainstream products.
- *Organic pet food is still a step too far for most consumers.* A pet is still an animal and, for many people, thinking about animal welfare when buying pet food is a step too far. The anticipated high price is another barrier.
- *Pet food is bought in supermarkets, garden centres and pet shops.* Cat food and canine treats, in particular, are sold in supermarkets. Specialised food and bulk packaging are bought more often in garden centres and pet shops, but also online.

S.3 Methodology

First, a literature search was carried out to determine what is already known about the purchase and consumption of mainstream and organic dog and cat food and about the consumer group that may be interested in organic products.

Qualitative consumer research was then conducted to develop a clearer picture of the consumer demand for a wider range of products that included organic varieties. The research was performed in four focus-group meetings, two consisting of cat owners and two of dog owners. A total of 32 people took part.