

Eat insects? More theory than practice

Crickets, mealworms and migratory locusts – insects are eaten by humans in many regions of the world. Since spring 2017, insects have been officially approved as food in Switzerland too, even though their consumption is not exactly commonplace in Europe in general and the public discussion is just beginning. How well known is the topic among the German population? What are the attitudes towards edible insects? How is the subject dealt with by the media? The BfR has found answers to these questions in two studies.

63 percent of Germans assume that eating insects does not pose a health risk, but they wouldn't try them.



63 %

The main reasons for this are revulsion, **lack of familiarity and concerns about hygiene and digestibility.**

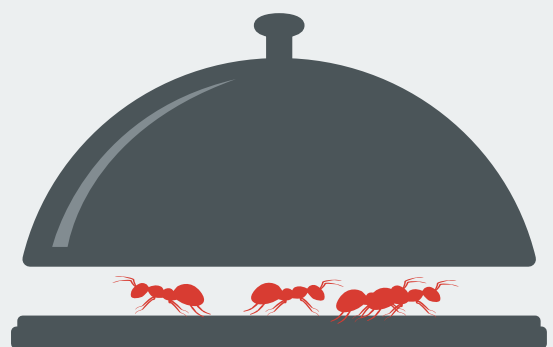
revulsion **46 %**

lack of familiarity **13 %**

concerns about hygiene and digestibility **15 %**

72 %

Insects as a food for humans – 72 percent of the respondents have heard about this. Insects are considered to be rich in protein, nutrients and vitamins, and are seen as a key source of food in light of the problematic world food situation.





14 percent of the respondents have already eaten insects, mainly abroad. The majority are men, aged 18-29 years, well educated and city dwellers.

14%

Media reporting on insects as foods and feeds doubled from 2014 to 2015. The majority dealt with beneficial aspects: insects have been portrayed in the media as a **“trendsetting, sensible food with which the benefits outweigh the risks”**.

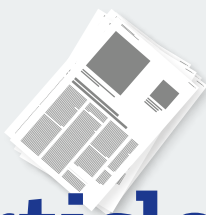
2015:

60 articles



2014:

27 articles



Consumers want more information on the possible health risks of insects as foods and feeds, and on their production and nutrient content. This could increase public acceptance of the consumption of insects. Insects that have been “rendered unrecognisable” in the form of processed foods would be more acceptable than insects in their original state.

Insects as food

- > Are regarded as novel foods under EU food law and have to be approved
- > Unexplored aspects: toxicology, levels of contaminants and residues, allergenic potential, microbiological risks



Further reading (in German): BfR symposium “Insects as Foods or Feeds: A food of the future?” Report on the symposium on 24 May 2016 in: 2016. Journal for consumer protection and food safety 11: 3, 281–289.

Underlying studies: Representative telephone interviews of 1,000 persons (German-speaking population aged 14 years and over), media analysis of 17 German print and online media (supreregional quality newspapers, capital city press and weekly newspapers) in the period January 2014 to December 2015 on the type and frequency of reporting on edible insects.



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