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Associations between retail food environment and organic food purchases in French households

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Background:

The aim of our study was to assess the associations between organic food purchases of French households and their exposure to food outlets that sell organic foods, including organic food stores (selling only organic products) and

standard food outlets, independently from households' characteristics.

Methods:

This cross-sectional study included 462 households from a quota sampling survey conducted in France. Share of expenditures for organic foods over a one-month period was assessed using food supply diaries and grocery receipts. The objective retail food environment (RFE) was assessed around the home and in activity space (AS) (i.e. areas around places of main activity and commuting journeys) using geographic information systems. Associations between RFE indicators and organic food purchases were assessed using multinomial logistic regression models, adjusted for households' characteristics.

Results:

Households exposed to organic food outlets around their home (OR presence vs. absence [95% CI] = 2.27 [1.33; 3.89]) had higher expenses in organic foods. Households exposed to organic food outlets in their AS were also more likely to have medium (OR ≥ 3 organic food outlets vs. absence [95% CI] = 2.52 [1.34; 4.76]) or high organic food purchases (OR [95% CI] = 1.90 [1.04; 3.47]). The models that included different types of organic food stores confirmed the first ones: households who were exposed to organic specialized food stores (greengrocers, bakeries and butcher's stores) around home and in their AS were more likely to have medium or high organic food purchases. In addition, the distance to the nearest organic grocery food store was inversely associated with high expenses in organic foods (OR [95% CI] = 0.57 [0.41; 0.80]).

Conclusions:

These results suggest exposure to organic food outlets and their use are related, providing knowledge for cities' commercial planning with the aim of promoting spatial access to organic food for their inhabitants.

Key messages:

- Exposure to organic food outlets and their use are related.
- Food environment may influence consumers' grocery shopping behaviors.