

## **People and insects - analysis of psychological aspects of aversion to insects and their consumption**

The purpose of the project is to investigate why people reject foods containing insects and why they generally feel strong aversion to insects. Whether or not we accept new food largely depends on the level of our food neophobia, that is, how strong is our fear of new food. However, in the case of a very particular type of food (insects), we encounter additional variables which significantly limit or delay our motivation to include such foods in our daily diet.

First, the individual characteristics associated with the process of acceptance of novel food will be examined. In addition to food neophobia, we will investigate the level of general neophobia, the fear of new food technologies, the level of sense of disgust, etc. Next, on the basis of the strong association between insects and dirt, transmission of diseases, and biological decay, etc., we will develop an analysis on how such perception of this form of food influences its acceptance as a component of the diet. Furthermore, the study will involve an analysis of factors connected to the insects' appearance, the knowledge about them, as well as matters differentiating insects as a source of food as compared to conventional foods. Finally, because even partial replacement of conventional food production with insects could produce a significant contribution to the environmental protection and livestock welfare, we will examine whether the individuals with a high level of environmental awareness, who display pro-environment and/or pro-animal attitudes and behaviours, will be particularly strongly motivated to include insects in their diet. We will try to test the hypotheses questioning the methods and main research trends in the previous research on this issue. One of the main purpose of the project is to examine the attitude towards insects, which may lead to a breakthrough in understanding their specificity as food.

The project involves multi-step, cross-sectional studies on large study groups relying on a wide range of instruments and research methods. Psychometric tests, questionnaires, focus groups, etc. will be used. Experiments measuring the study participants attitude to consuming insects will be designed in such a way as to confront the subjects with food products containing insects in a variety of forms and in different settings.

Although the topic has received more attention recently, there is a considerable shortage of comprehensive studies of psychological mechanisms of acceptance/rejection of foods containing insects. Several researchers and institutions (e.g. FAO UN) underline the need to conduct studies in this area. The present shortage of research on this topic is deemed to be a major obstacle to planning and implementing, on a large scale, actions aimed at changing attitudes to those types of food, which – in the short- or long-term perspective – may become indispensable to ensuring sustainable diets in large human populations. Despite many years of research on this issue and conducting social and marketing campaigns based on their results, there has been no significant increase in acceptance of this type of food. Without further research on this subject, it is difficult to imagine the introduction of insect food products to the broad market.