

Current Status of Ethical Consumption in Korea



Korea Consumer Agency

Joonbae Hong, Ph.D.

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What is Ethical Consumption?

- **Definition**

Ethical consumption refers to the practice of purchasing products and services that are made, distributed, and disposed of in ways that minimize negative impacts on people, animals, and the environment.

- **Key Aspects**

- Considering environmental protection, animal welfare, and fair trade in purchasing decisions
- Supporting companies and products that uphold ethical values
- Reducing consumption of products that harm society or the environment

- **Examples**

- Buying eco-friendly or cruelty-free products
- Choosing fair trade certified goods
- Reducing use of single-use plastics



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South Korea's Food Culture

Traditional Korean Food Culture

1. Harmony with Nature

- 1) Ingredient selection based on seasons and regions
- 2) Fermented foods: Kimchi, Doenjang (soybean paste), Gochujang (chili paste), etc.
- 3) Key features of Korean cuisine: Balance of rice, side dishes, and soup

2. Representative Traditional Foods

- 1) **Kimchi**: Health benefits through fermentation
- 2) **Bibimbap**: Harmony of diverse ingredients
- 3) **Hanjeongsik**: Full-course meal with multiple side dishes



Modern Korean Food Culture

1. Globalization

- 1) Influx of foreign cuisines: Fast food, Italian, Japanese, etc.
- 2) **Fusion cuisine**: Blending traditional Korean and foreign dishes

2. Health and Wellness Trends

- 1) Organic and low-calories diets: Prioritizing health
- 2) **Vegan and vegetarian diets**: Food choices considering environmental and health impacts



Efforts of the Korean Public Sector to Promote Ethical Consumption

- **Policy & Institutional Support**

- Ethical consumption included in national strategies (Sustainable Development Plan, Green Growth Plan)
- Laws require public institutions to prioritize green and eco-friendly products

- **Key Initiatives**

- Eco-friendly agricultural certification
- Fair trade promotion (city certifications, campaigns)
- Local food direct outlets to reduce food miles
- Consumer education and public awareness



Social Economy & Eco-friendly Consumption

- **Support for Social Economy**

- Certification and financial support for social enterprises and cooperatives
- Public sector prioritizes purchasing from social economy businesses

- **Promoting Eco-friendly Choices**

- Over 10,000 products with eco-labels
- Green Card program (carbon rewards, 18 million participants)
- Food waste reduction campaigns and animal welfare product use in public meals



Korea Consumer Agency's Role & Product Tests

Status of Quality Comparison Tests Conducted by the Korea Consumer Agency to Promote Ethical Consumption

- Consumers choose products based on values such as environment, animal welfare, and fair trade.
- Interest is growing in the resource circulation and environmental impact of food packaging materials.

Spread of Ethical and Eco-friendly consumption



- Provides quality comparison information and environmental assessment information, including energy saving, impact on environmental pollution, and resource circulation.
- Applies various criteria such as recyclability and biodegradability.

Role of the Korea Consumer Agency



- Providing eco-friendly information increases consumers' purchases of eco-friendly products.
- Encourages companies to develop eco-friendly packaging materials.
- Promotes the spread of a sustainable consumption culture.

Social effects



• Purchase Experience:

Among 1,000 consumers who received quality comparison information, 86.4% (864 people) actually purchased (or planned to purchase) the products.

• Intention to Purchase Eco-friendly Products:

90.7% (907 people) expressed willingness to purchase eco-friendly products.

• Influence of Information:

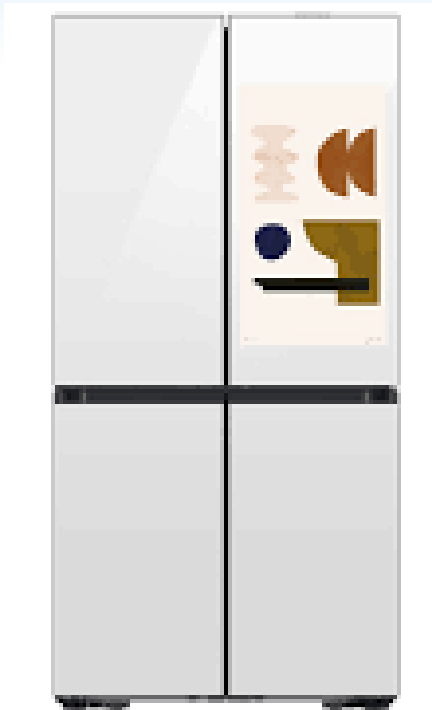
Among those willing to purchase, 96.3% (873 people) said that the environmental assessment information provided by the Korea Consumer Agency influenced their purchasing decision.

Impact of Quality Comparison Information on Eco-friendly Product Purchases



Representative Cases of Product Testing for Ethical Consumption

Energy Efficiency Container



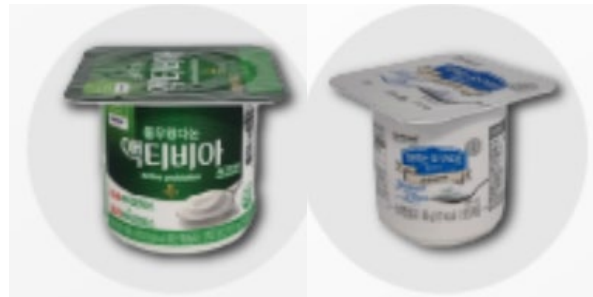
Vegan Food



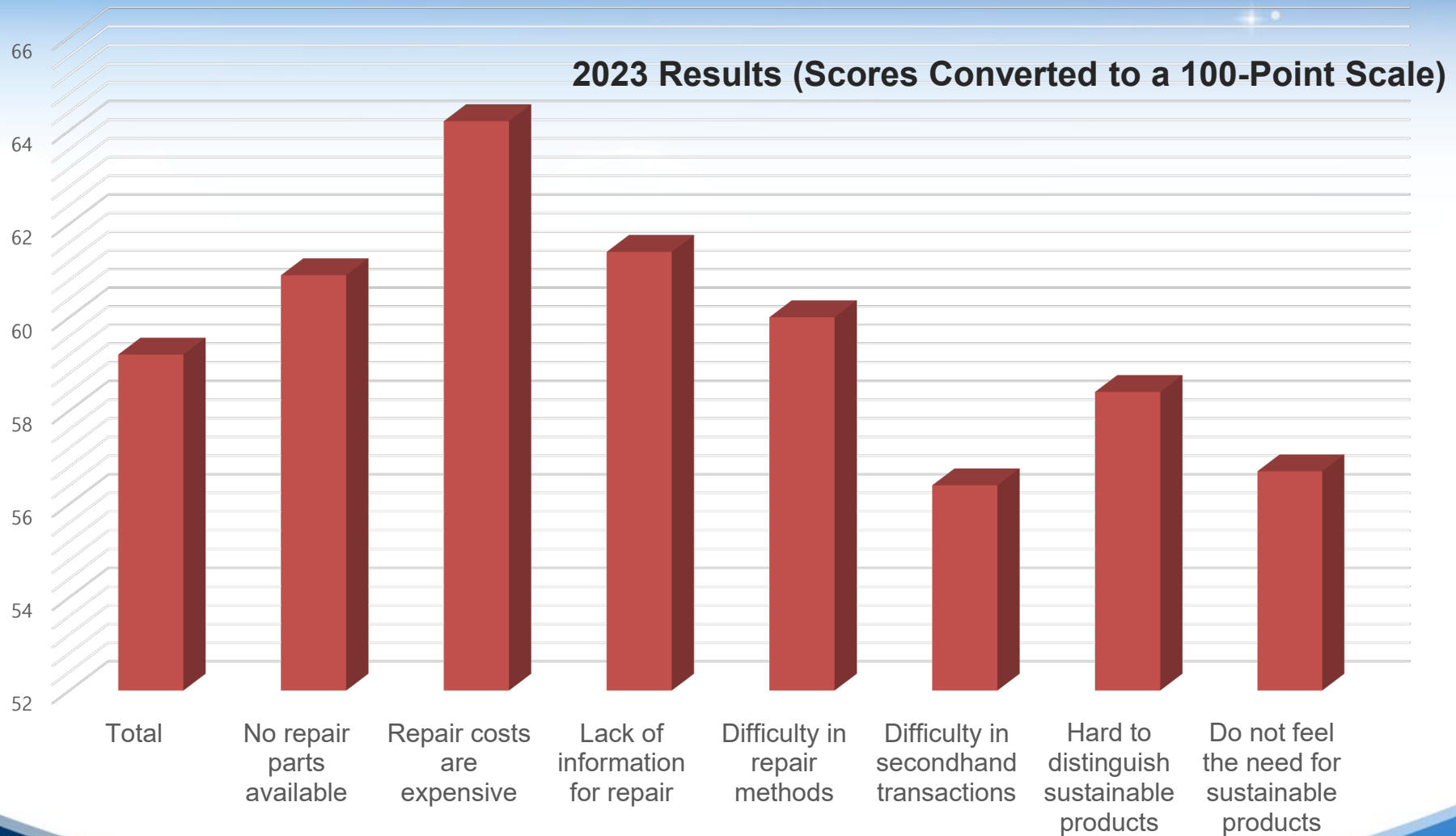
Disposable



Recyclability



Factors Hindering Sustainable Consumption Behavior including non-food items



Public Sector Ethical Consumption Achievements

Category	Details
Public Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Green Card cumulative issuance: Over 18 million• Annual GHG reduction: ~1 million tons
Fair Trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fair Trade City certified municipalities: 10+• Fair Trade consumption sites nationwide: 400+
Eco-Friendly Consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eco-friendly product procurement rate by public institutions:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 2010: 41.2% → 2022: 86%
Social Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public institutions' purchase of social economy enterprise products: Over KRW 600 billion (2022)
Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 70%+ of 20-30s consumers show interest in ethical consumption (2023)

Efforts by Civil Society & Corporations to Promote Ethical Consumption

1. Consumer Cooperatives & Corporations

- **iCOOP Cooperative:**

- 300,000+ members | Focus: Fair-trade coffee, ethical livestock products, plastic reduction campaigns
- Educational events (e.g., *Ethical Consumption Day*) → 90%+ repurchase rate

icoop 생협

- **Pulmuone LOHAS:** Animal welfare-certified eggs, vegan food expansion, sustainable packaging

풀무원로하스
PULMUONE LOHAS

- **Label-Free Water Campaign** (Samdasoo, Lotte ICIS):

- Improved recycling efficiency → surged in Gen Z popularity



2. Campaign Highlights

- **Ethical Consumption Week:** Cross-sector collaboration to raise awareness
- **Social Media:** #EthicalConsumptionChallenge with influencers targeting youth

Expansion Platforms & Local Collaboration

1. Online Platforms & Social Enterprises

- **Vegan Market:** Dedicated vegan product sales → supports animal welfare
- **Beautiful Store:** Secondhand goods sales → promotes reuse culture
- **Local food Direct Sales (Market Kurly):**
Connects urban consumers with rural farms

2. Key Achievements

- **Fair Trade Coffee**
 - Supply Chain Innovation: 15-20% premium contracts + training for African farmers
 - Impact: Foundation for economic self-reliance in developing nations
- **POSCO**
 - Carbon Neutral Tech: Hydrogen-based steelmaking for clean steel by 2050
 - Impact: Global model for industrial carbon reduction
- **Samsung Electronics**
 - Resource Circulation: Recycled 12M devices in 50 countries (95% material recovery)
 - Impact: Global ESG standard-setting



Conclusion

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- Culture is the foundation, policy is the facilitator, and consumers are the executors.

Recommendations

- Expand information provision
- Introduce consumer incentives and strengthen sustainability criteria
- International collaboration
 - Expand cooperation within the global network
 - Establish common labeling standards
 - Share best practices between countries

**"Ethical Consumption Is Not an Option but an Imperative
– Requires Collaboration Among Consumers, Businesses,
and Governments to Build a Sustainable Food Culture"**





Thank you

www.kca.go.kr

Joonbae Hong Ph.D.
Director General
Department of Safety Surveillance
Consumer Safety Center
Korea Consumer Agency

OP :82-43-880-5830

CP: 82-10-9905-6577

E-mail: jbhong@kca.go.kr