

**University "St. Kliment Ohridski" - Bitola, Republic of North Macedonia
Faculty of Technology and Technical Sciences - Veles**



**Book of proceedings of the 1st International Scientific Conference -
Food Science, Nutrition, Innovative Technologies
and Sustainability**

**Veles, North Macedonia
February 2026**

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CONSUMER ATTITUDES TOWARDS GOAT MILK AND GOAT MILK PRODUCTS IN NORTH MACEDONIA

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Abstract

Goat milk has been an important part of human nutrition for many years, partially due to high similarity to human milk, lower allergenicity, easier digestibility, and rich nutrient profile. Despite all these properties, the taste of goat milk is more intense compared to cow's milk, which may limit the acceptance of its products by consumers. This study aimed to assess consumer knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions toward dairy products from goats in North Macedonia, through a web-based survey. The data were collected using a structured questionnaire which included: sociodemographic information, consumption, and general perception of goat dairy products. A total of 400 people responded to the survey, with 65.75% being female and the majority being between 18 and 29 years old (50%). 50.75% of the participants who consumed goat dairy products, which include mostly cheese, yogurt, and milk, consume goat dairy products 2-3 times a month. The main reason for the participants who don't consume these products (49.25%) is the strong taste and flavor, followed by their dislike for these products, their unfamiliarity, and the cost. As for the perception of these products, 57.9% perceive them as very healthy products, and the main reason they consider them healthy is that they give nutritional benefits (68.5%). Even though only 22% of participants preferred goat's milk cheese, it is encouraging that 61% expressed interest in learning about the nutritional value of goat's milk products. In conclusion, results showed consumer interest in organic, drug-free, and eco-friendly products, highlighting the importance for producers to adapt to consumers' preferences.

Keywords: Goat milk, Consumption, Consumer attitude.

1. Introduction

Milk and dairy products are a crucial part of a nutritious diet (Lima et al., 2018). Goat milk is extensively used in the production of various milk products because it is highly digestible, hypoallergenic, and nutritionally dense (Hammam et al., 2022). Goat milk exhibits a broadly similar macronutrient profile to that of cow milk; however, notable differences in protein fractions, fat composition, and mineral content may affect its digestibility and the bioavailability of certain nutrients (El-Hatmi et al., 2015). Although goat milk has a stronger, more characteristic flavor that may limit consumer acceptability (Gomes et al., 2013), it is more easily digested compared to cow milk due to the absence of agglutinins (Park et al., 2007). Given the distinct sensory profile of goat milk, it is of particular interest to investigate consumer attitudes and preferences, with the aim of understanding potential barriers to acceptance and developing strategies to better align product characteristics with consumer expectations.

The majority of empirical studies analyzing consumer attitudes towards goat milk prioritize its perceived health and nutritional benefits as drivers of future use and demand (Hadeef et al., 2024). Some studies, however, indicate that sensory attributes, such as taste and smell, are major constraints to its consumption (Güney & Sangün, 2019; Rabiei et al., 2021; De Santis et al., 2019). Additionally, the lower access and higher price of goat milk compared to cow milk have also been identified as factors in influencing consumer choices (Vargas-Bello-Pérez et al., 2022; Zine-eddine et al., 2021). Consumer ignorance about goat milk and milk products has been identified as one of the biggest preventers of consumption (Tütenk et al., 2022; Paskaš et al., 2020). In contrast, age, gender, household income, level of education, and location are demographic and socioeconomic factors that have significant impacts on consumer decision when it comes to goat milk (Paskaš et al., 2020; Güney & Ocak, 2013). Global goat milk demand has promoted increased research focused on assessing consumer attitudes and perceptions toward goat milk and dairy products thereof (Hadeef et al., 2024).

Analyzing consumer attitudes, consumption patterns, and preferences toward goat milk products is essential for identifying both the potential and the limitations of this sector. Such insights provide a foundation for evaluating market opportunities, guiding product development, and shaping effective niche marketing strategies. Furthermore, consumer-oriented research can help dispel misconceptions, raise awareness about the nutritional and functional properties of goat dairy products, and support the sustainable growth and competitiveness of the goat dairy industry within the broader dairy sector. In the context of North Macedonia, where goat farming represents a traditional yet underutilized agricultural activity, such investigations are particularly valuable. A deeper understanding of consumer behavior may contribute to the revitalization of rural economies, improve the market positioning of goat dairy products, and align domestic production with local dietary habits and the increasing demand for functional and traditional foods in regional markets.

2. Methods and Materials

The survey instrument was adapted from consumer attitude questionnaires on goat dairy products developed by Vargas-Bello-Pérez et al. (2022), who investigated consumer preferences across Latin America (Mexico and Chile), Europe (Italy, Spain, Greece, and Denmark), and Asia (Bangladesh), and by Paskaš et al. (2020), who focused on consumers in Vojvodina, Serbia. Modifications were made to align the instrument with the specific objectives of the present study. The questionnaire included closed- and open-ended questions, as well as multiple-choice items, structured into three sections: (1) sociodemographic information, (2) consumption patterns, and (3) general perceptions of goat dairy products. The survey targeted residents of North Macedonia aged 18 years and older. A total of 400 individuals participated, representing diverse sociodemographic profiles. The survey was distributed online via website and email over a one-month period, allowing for broad participation across various age groups, regions, genders, and occupational backgrounds. Categorical and ordinal data were analyzed using frequency and percentage distributions.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic profile of the surveyed population with basic information about gender, age, region of residence, education and employment status.

Table 1: Socio-demographic profile of surveyed population (n= 400)

Parameters	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	263	65.75
Male	137	34.25
Age		

18-29	200	50
30-39	83	20.75
40-49	69	17.25
50-59	35	8.75
60+	13	3.25
Region of residence		
Skopje region	52	13
East region	6	1.50
Southeast region	4	1
Northeast region	8	2
Pelagonia region	11	2.75
Vardar region	20	5
Southwest region	15	3.75
Polog region	258	64.50
Other	26	6.50
Residence		
Urban place (>100000 residents)	45	11.25
City (50001-100000 residents)	107	26.75
Town (10000-50000 residents)	61	15.25
Village (<10000 residents)	187	46.75
Education level		
Elementary	4	1
Secondary	100	25
Bachelor	159	39.75
Master	71	17.75
PhD	66	16.50
Employment status		
Employed (university /food industry /nutrition centers /agriculture)	115	28.75
Employed (other disciplines)	110	27.50
Student (food technology /nutrition /agriculture)	27	6.75
Student (other disciplines)	108	27
Not employed	40	10

It can be concluded from Table 1 that the majority of the respondents were women, comprising 65.75% (263 people), whereas 34.25% (137 people) were men. The study drew on a representative sample consisting of 400 individuals, mostly of age 18-29 years old (50%), with the majority living in Polog region (64.50%), followed by Skopje region (13%).

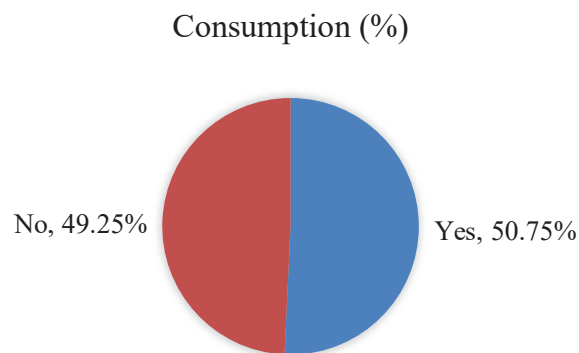


Figure 1: Consumption of goat milk and goat milk products

Variation was also observed in type of residence, education level, and employment status. This ensured representation of a wider population (Table 1).

Almost half of the respondents (50.75%) reported consuming goat dairy products, indicating potential to raise awareness and increase consumption of these products among the wider population (Figure 1).

Among consumers, the most frequently consumed products are fresh cheese (33.50%), yogurt (28.50%), milk (26.75%), and ripened cheese (26%), (Figure 2). While considered niche, products like butter, ice cream, cottage cheese, present promising lines of growth and expansion for food industries (Miller & Lu, 2019).

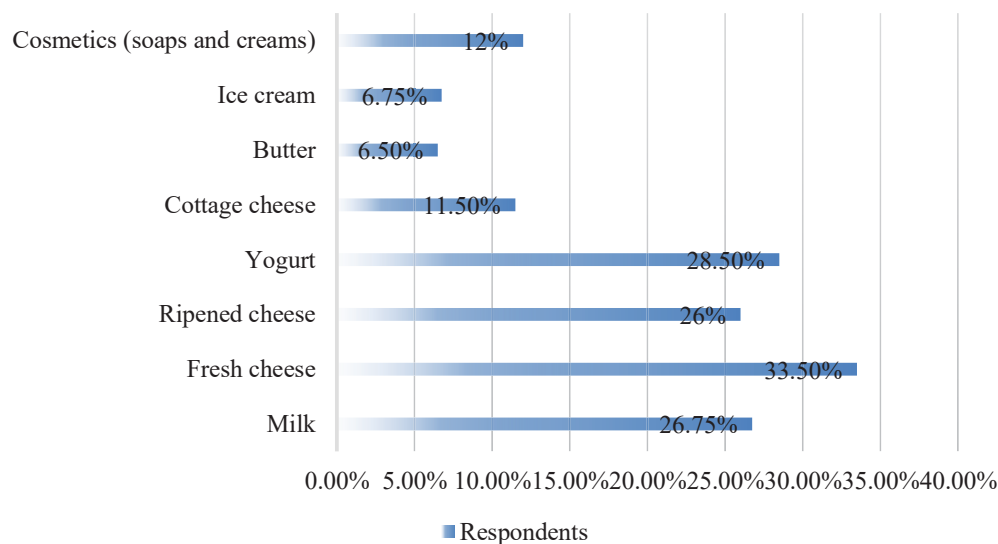


Figure 2: Percentage distribution of the respondents in answer to “What type of goat dairy products do you consume/use?”

Regular (daily) consumption of goat dairy products was relatively rare (13.79%), with the highest share consumers reporting intake 2–3 times per month (26.60%). Overall, these products are more often consumed occasionally than as part of a regular diet (Figure 3). The findings reflect a moderate but untapped market with scope to convert the occasional consumers into regular users by improving accessibility, affordability, and consumer awareness.

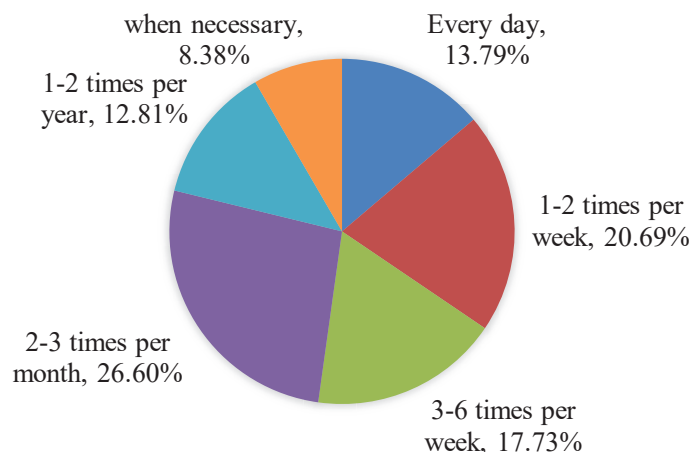


Figure 3: Percentage distribution of the consumers in answer to “How often do you

consume goat dairy products?”

According to the survey results in Figure 4, the majority of the respondents buy goat milk products from supermarkets (44.25%), followed by local farms (24.25%), and less from local markets (12%) and online suppliers (1.50%).

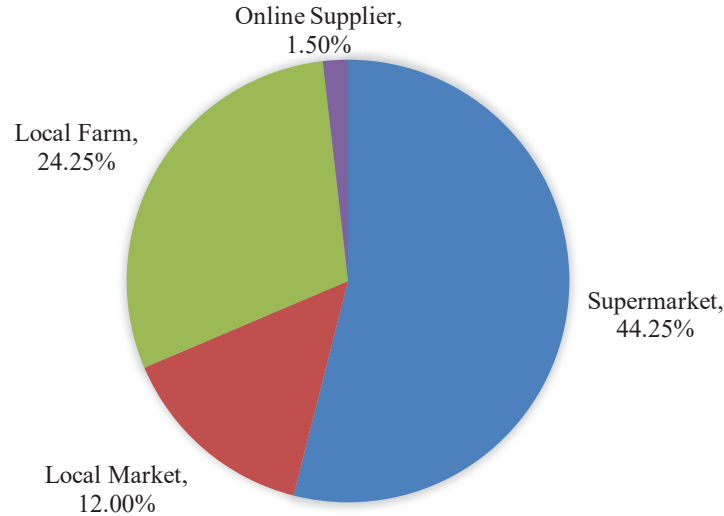


Figure 4: Percentage distribution of the respondents in answer to “Where do you buy goat milk products?”

Most customers prefer supermarkets when it comes to goat milk products because of convenience and trustworthiness, while others go to farms for freshness and proximity, however, local markets are losing ground as lifestyles change, and online shopping is still limited but shows promise for the future.

Respondents who do not consume goat milk products mainly cited the strong taste and smell (45.25%), personal dislike (24%), higher prices (17%), and limited availability in some markets (11.50%) as a reason for non-consumption (Table 2).

Table 2: Reasons for non-consumption of goat’s milk products (n=400)

Reason	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
I don't like them	96	24
I do not know them	49	12.25
Lactose intolerance	22	5.50
Allergy	13	3.25
Health concern	12	3
Ethical/animal welfare concern	12	3
Sustainability/greenhouse effect concern	14	3.50
Concern about added hormones or antibiotics	13	3.25
Animal-to-human disease transmission	18	4.50
Limited availability on the national market	46	11.50
Cost	68	17
Strong taste and smell	181	45.25

Based on the results (Figure 5) respondents associate the goat milk products mostly with these concepts: healthy (83.50%), strong taste and smell (45.75%), traditional (43.75%), and expensive (24.50%). The concepts as tasty, useful for cooking, and small-

scale farms are less often connected to them, which means that while there is an extremely positive image of goat dairy products, it can be improved by more profound culinary promotion and making them more affordable.

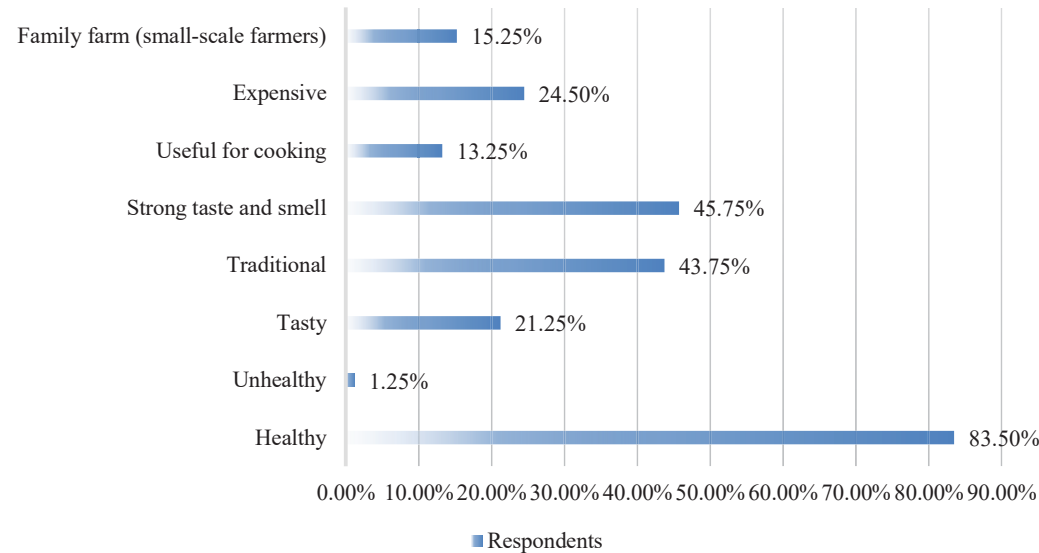


Figure 5: Percentage distribution of the respondents in answer to “Which of the following concepts do you associate with goat milk products?”

Figure 6 indicates that 57.90% of the respondents find goat milk products very healthy, 32.75% considers them healthy, highlighting health as their strongest attribute. Very few saw them as unhealthy (1.25%), or very unhealthy (0.50%), suggesting that negative health perceptions are low and taste and price are more constraining factors in limiting consumption.

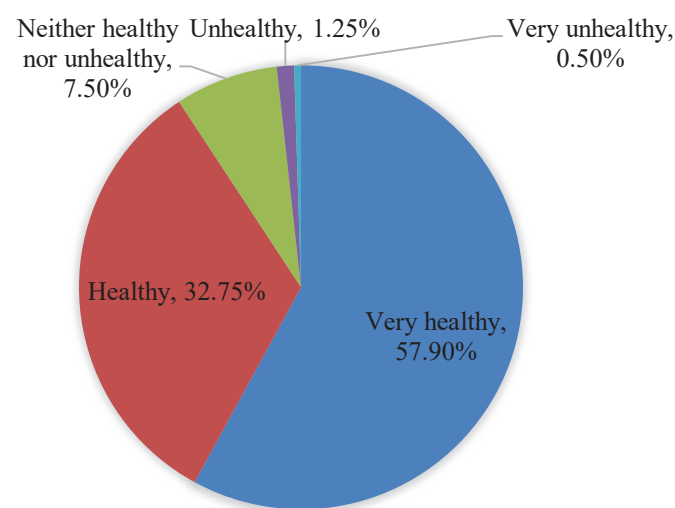


Figure 6: Percentage distribution of the respondents in answer to “How healthy do you consider goat milk products?”

When asked why they consider goat milk products healthy, respondents highlighted

their nutritional benefits (68.50%), their natural character (61%), and their traditional use as a remedy (37.50%) (Figure 7).

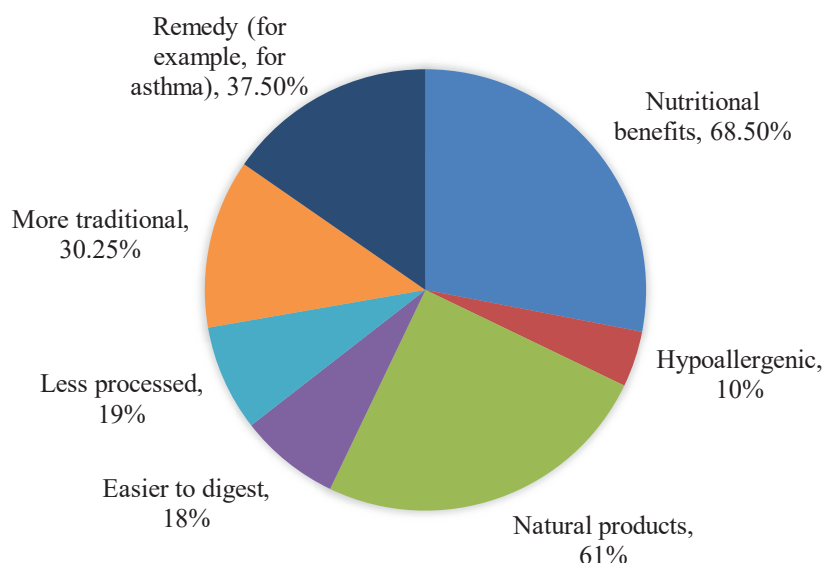


Figure 7: Percentage distribution of the respondents in answer to “Why do you think goat milk products are healthy?”

Results of the survey showed consumer interest in organic (50%), drug-free (47.5%), and eco-friendly products (30.5%) as an alternative of goat milk products they would pay more, highlighting the importance for producers to adapt to consumers’ preferences.

As can be seen from Table 3, 54% of the respondents prefer cheese from cow milk, this is most likely due to its availability, milder taste, and lower price compared to other cheeses. Sheep milk cheese holds second place with 24%, suggesting a moderate consumer base that values its richer flavor and perhaps its cultural or regional significance. Goat milk cheese is the least preferred cheese among the three types (22%), although still chosen by a notable number of respondents, its lowered popularity can be explained by its more intense taste and smell, higher price, and limited supply in relation to cow and sheep milk cheeses.

Table 3: Distribution of the respondents in answer to “What type of milk do you prefer your cheese to be made from?” (n=400)

Type of milk	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Cow milk	216	54%
Sheep milk	96	24%
Goat milk	88	22%

Even though only 22% of participants preferred goat's milk cheese, it is encouraging that 61% expressed interest in learning about the nutritional value of goat's milk products.

4. Conclusion

The findings indicate that nearly half of the participants consume goat dairy products, mainly cheese, yogurt, and milk, indicative of the presence of a well-rooted consumer base in North Macedonia. Consumption frequency for these products varies: 13.79% consume daily, about 38.42% consume weekly (1–6 times per week), and 26.60% consume 2–3 times per month, whereas others consume them less often or only occasionally. In contrast, non-consumption tends to be aligned with the strong flavor, more expensive price, or unfamiliarity. Despite these barriers, most of the respondents view goat milk products as very

healthy, and most have expressed interest in obtaining information regarding its nutritional value. This integration of existing consumer demand and rising interest offers a possibility of expanding market size through promoting goat milk's health benefits, improving the availability of products, and addressing sensory concerns. In particular, producing organic, drug-free, and environmentally sustainable products may foster consumer trust and contribute to the growth of the goat dairy sector.

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