

BACKGROUND

In Europe, seaweeds do not belong to the culinary tradition. However, some French companies have been trying for several years to include seaweeds in French dishes, and to support this food as a new vegetable. Since the early 21th century, an increase in Japanese food consumption is observed. This diet, rich in seaweeds, has generated an increase in seaweed consumption in Europe, and especially in France.

TARGET

This study aims to better identify and understand French consumers of seaweeds (**not accounting for food supplements and algal gelling agent**). Three topics have been investigated:

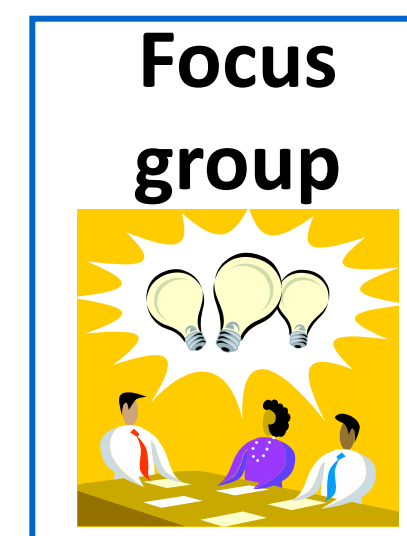
- Belief and perception of French people ;
- Consumer behavior ;
- Low consumption reasons.

METHODS & RESULTS

Two methodologies of research have been used to collect data from population: quantitative method using survey, and a qualitative one using focus groups.

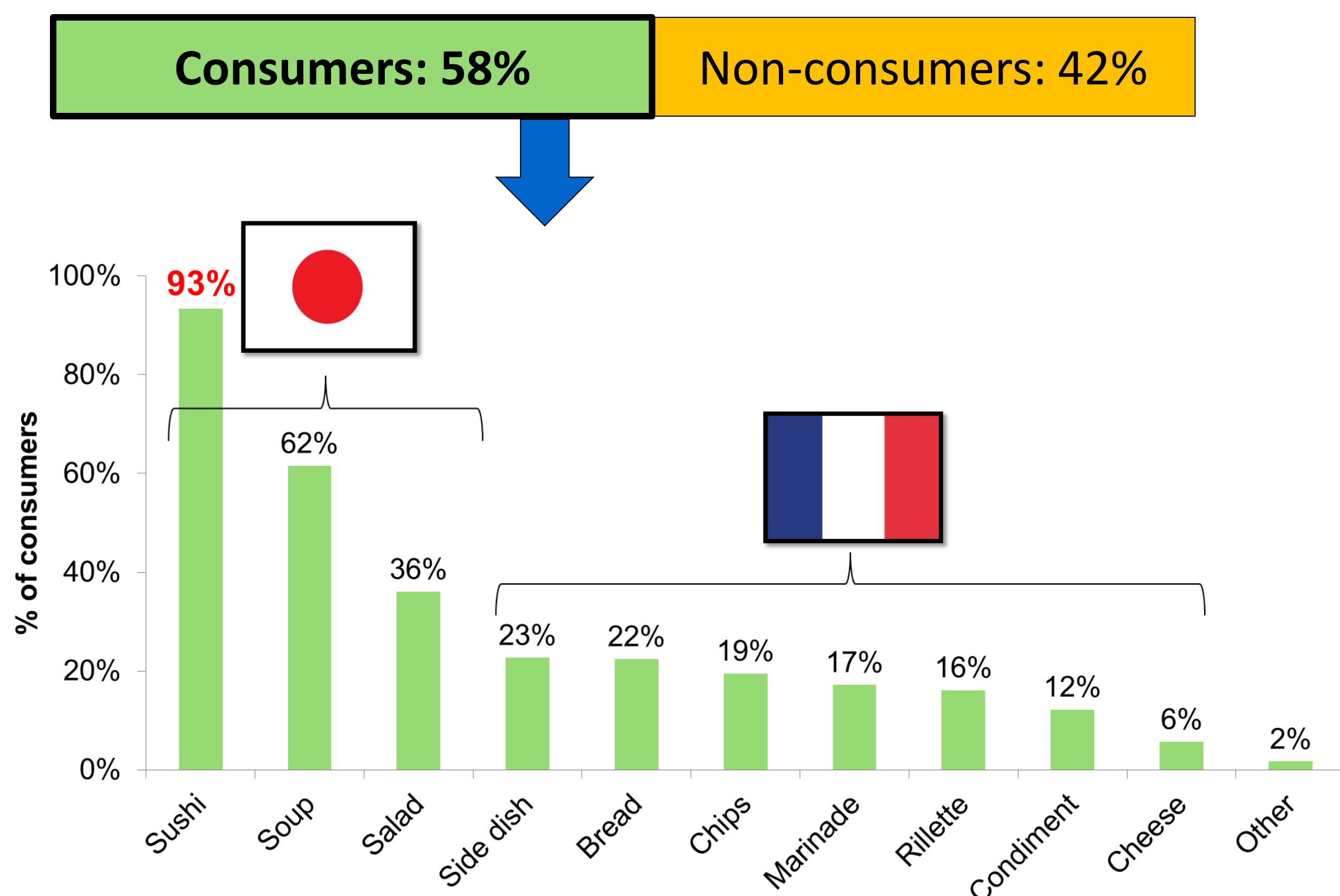


A structured interview is a face to face interview in the street. The participant answers to a survey composed of 22 questions dealing with consumption characteristics, perceptions, food habits...
 825 persons were interviewed in 7 cities: Lille, Strasbourg, Paris, Rennes, Lyon, Montpellier, and Bordeaux.



A focus group consist in gathering a group of 8 people asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards seaweeds. It is an interactive group where participants are free to talk. Seaweed consumers and non-consumers were split to make discussion easier. 10 focus group were organized in Lille, Paris, Rennes, Bordeaux and Montpellier.

Consumption characteristics

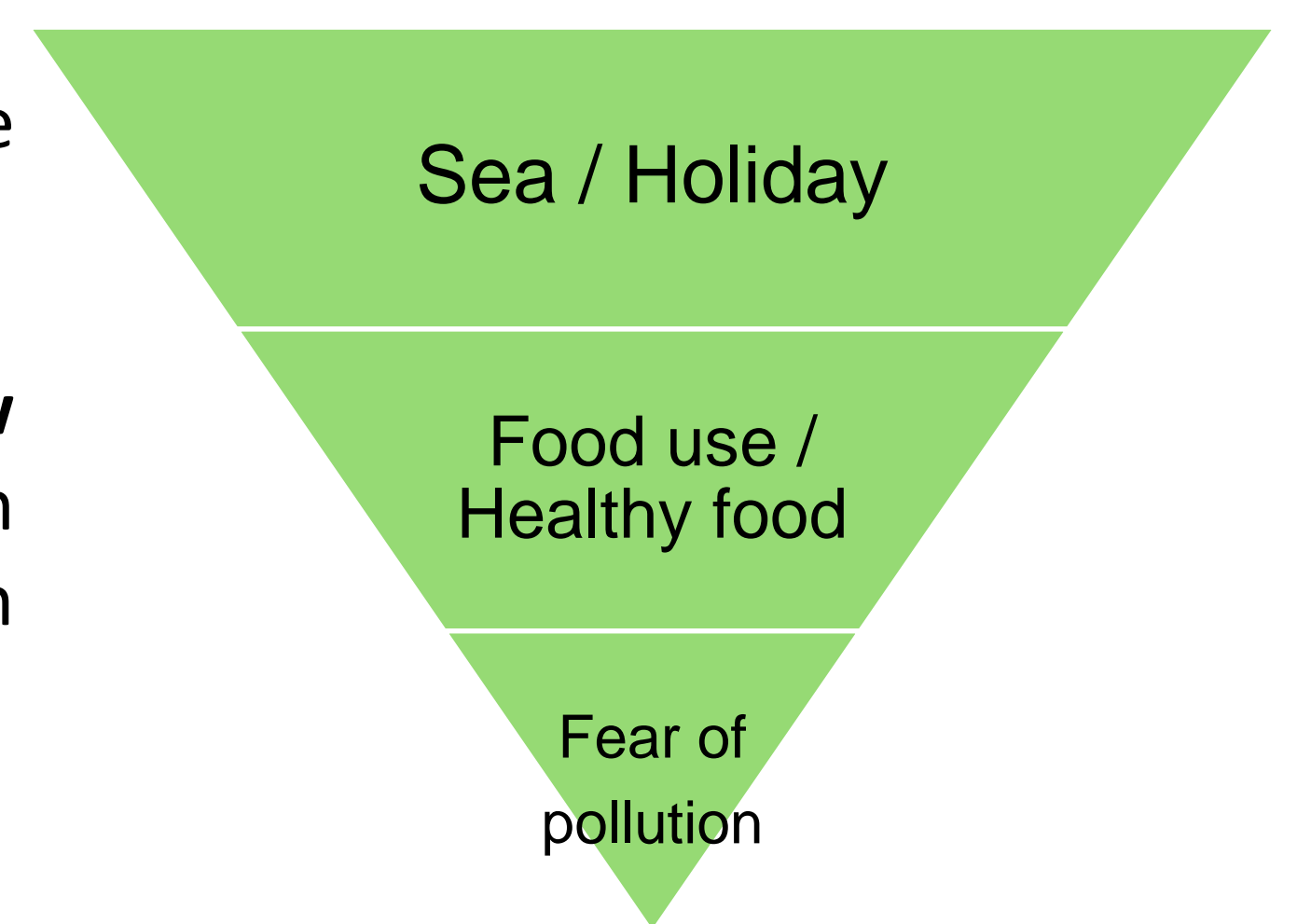


- 43% of the seaweed consumers only eat seaweeds through **Japanese food**.
- Only 35% of the consumers eat seaweeds at least once a month.
- Seaweeds consumption mainly takes place in Japanese restaurants.
- One out of two consumers **never** bought seaweeds to **cook it at home**.
- Four consumer profiles have been created according to their consumption:
 - The **beginner** (70% of consumers): he occasionally eats Japanese food ;
 - The **Japanese addict** (5% of consumers): he often eats Japanese food ;
 - The **taster** (13% of consumers): he is very interested in trying new tastes. However, he eats seaweeds occasionally only;
 - The **expert** (9% of consumers): he often eats French seaweeds. He has a good knowledge of seaweeds, and like to cook it.

Perception of seaweeds

- Consumers and non-consumers have a **similar view of seaweeds**.
- Seaweed species have a **low notoriety**. Species with a common French name are better known than those with an Asian one.

Main topics associated with the term "seaweed":



Low consumption reasons

- People eat small amount of seaweeds for two main reasons:
 - **Accessibility**: people do not have the idea to cook seaweeds, they do not know it, and do not find products in usual stores...
 - **Apprehension**: some people have a bad perception of seaweeds, they do not find it appealing, and are sometimes afraid to taste it...



■ Accessibility ■ Apprehension

- Non-consumers have a **higher apprehension** than consumers.
- Non-consumers need to be **guided** to taste seaweeds for the first time, to overcome their apprehension.
- 90% of non-users** declare that they **want to try** at least one product with seaweeds.

Healthy food, originality, marine taste, environmentally friendly product	Accessibility, apprehension, lack of knowledge, lack of habits, fear of pollution

CONCLUSION

- There is a large amount of seaweed consumers in France. Most of them eat seaweeds in Japanese food, but some other eat French products.
- French seaweeds have many benefits, and people have a good opinion of it.
- Main problems are in terms of accessibility.
- French industry must expand its exposure in stores and develop an harmonized communication to present and explain seaweed product. People need to be guided to the first tasting since it is a new food.

All the results are available on our website: <http://halieutique.agrocampus-ouest.fr/>

This work benefited from the support of the French Government through a program financed the National Research Agency and with regards to the investment expenditure program IDEALG ANR-10-BTBR-04