

Abstract

Purple Sweetcorn—An innovative Horticultural Product—Consumer Views [†]

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Abstract: Purple sweetcorn has been conceptualized as an innovative premium horticultural product that may provide consumers with the potential health benefit of anthocyanins. Gathering consumer insights is crucial to inform the breeding program to obtain a purple sweetcorn product closer to consumer's requirements. Thirty-six non-food neophobic sweetcorn consumers participated in a focus group session on the concept of purple sweetcorn, as well as visually evaluating early breeding lines. Consumers were very positive about the concept of purple sweetcorn and had clear ideas of potential uses. Consumers preferred that purple sweetcorn taste different to commercial yellow sweetcorn, and that health claims would support a premium price position. A small scale follow up consumer study (n = 10) was carried out where consumers were asked to rate acceptability for visual (raw and cooked), flavour, textural and overall of two purple sweetcorn breeding lines (reddish-purple and purple) and compared against commercial yellow sweetcorn. Visual acceptability scores were higher for purple than the reddish-purple lines for both cooked and raw forms, but the yellow cobs were the most preferred. In contrast, flavour and overall acceptability scores were higher for the reddish-purple and yellow cobs than the purple lines. It was also noted that the reddish-purple and purple lines had a slight raspberry flavour. Consumer's discussions outcomes from both studies were that consumers preferred better color coverage across the kernel, which will be the direction in continuing the development of purple sweetcorn lines. This study demonstrated there is a market for a premium purple sweetcorn product among consumers.

Keywords: purple sweetcorn; consumers; focus groups; acceptability

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