



Faculteit
Bio-ingenieurswetenschappen



68th International Symposium on Crop Protection

Inspiring Mornings @UGent FBW

“Wat is de toekomst van chemische gewasbescherming?”

Gent, 17 mei 2016

Communicatie rond gewasbeschermingsmiddelen – Waarheid en publieke perceptie

Prof. Wim Verbeke

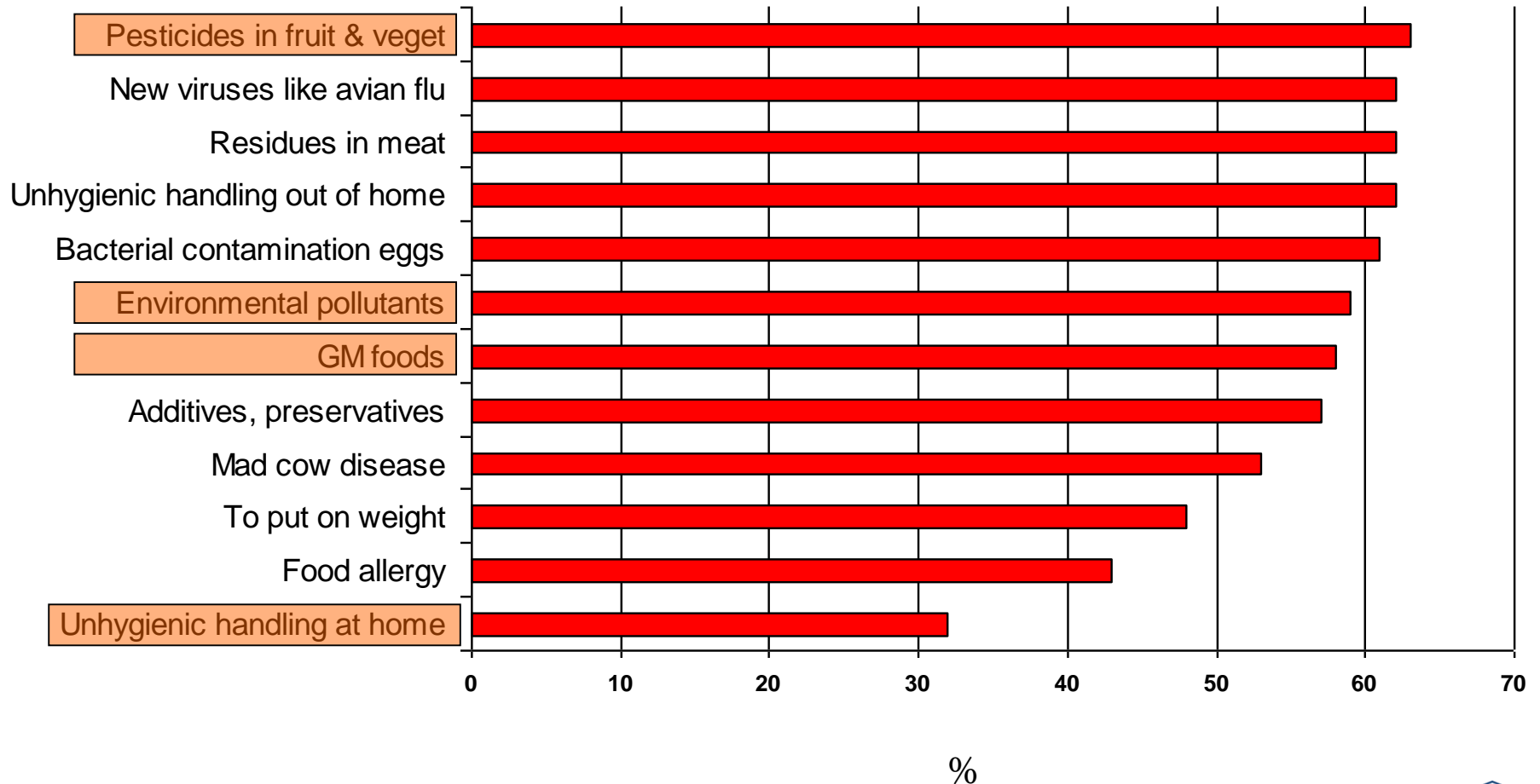
Vakgroep Landbouweconomie

Universiteit Gent

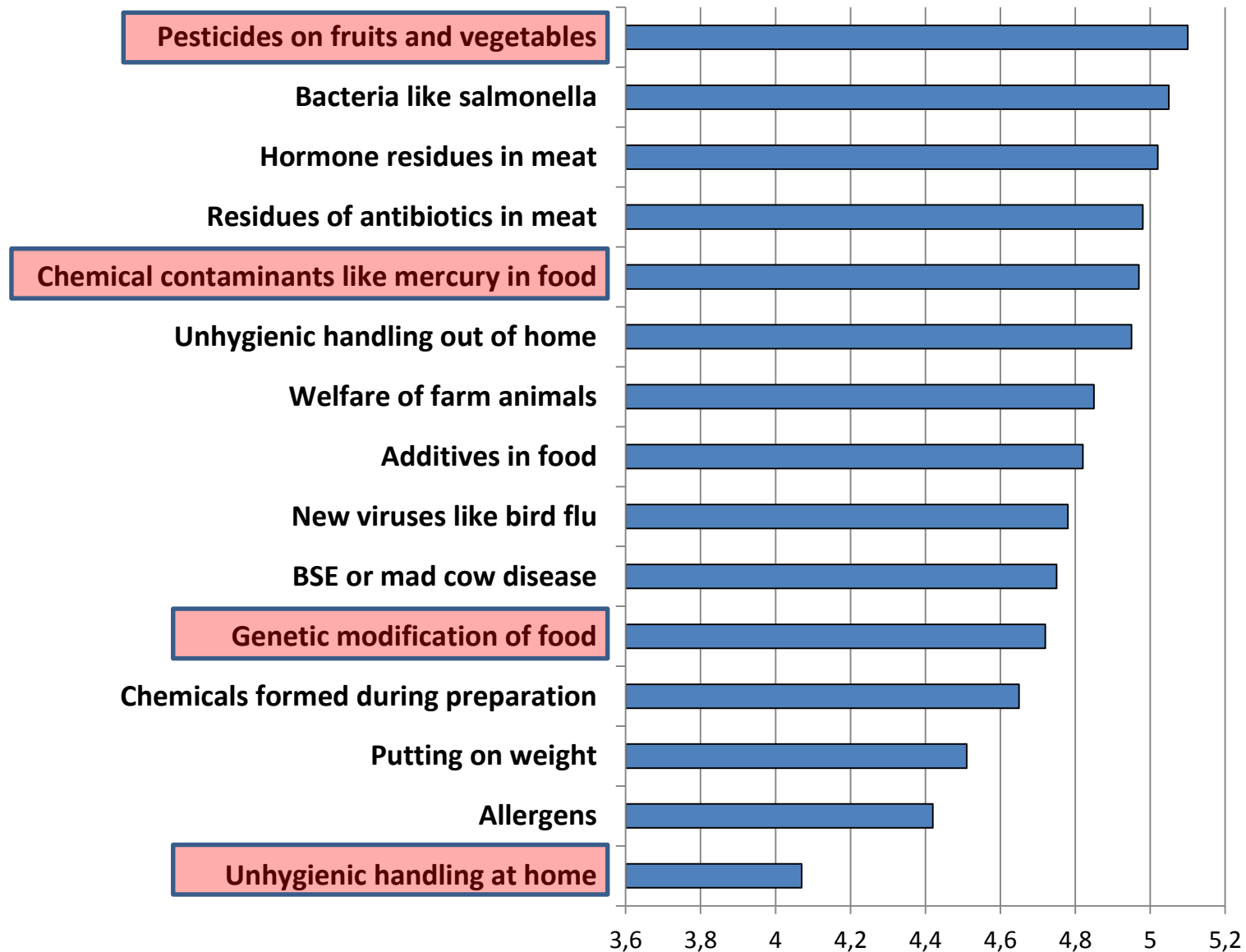
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Average “worry index” about possible risks associated with food, % EU (Eurobarometer, 2006)



To what extent are you concerned about possible risks associated with food? (n=600; 2012; Belgium; ProSafeBeef study, mean 7-point scale)



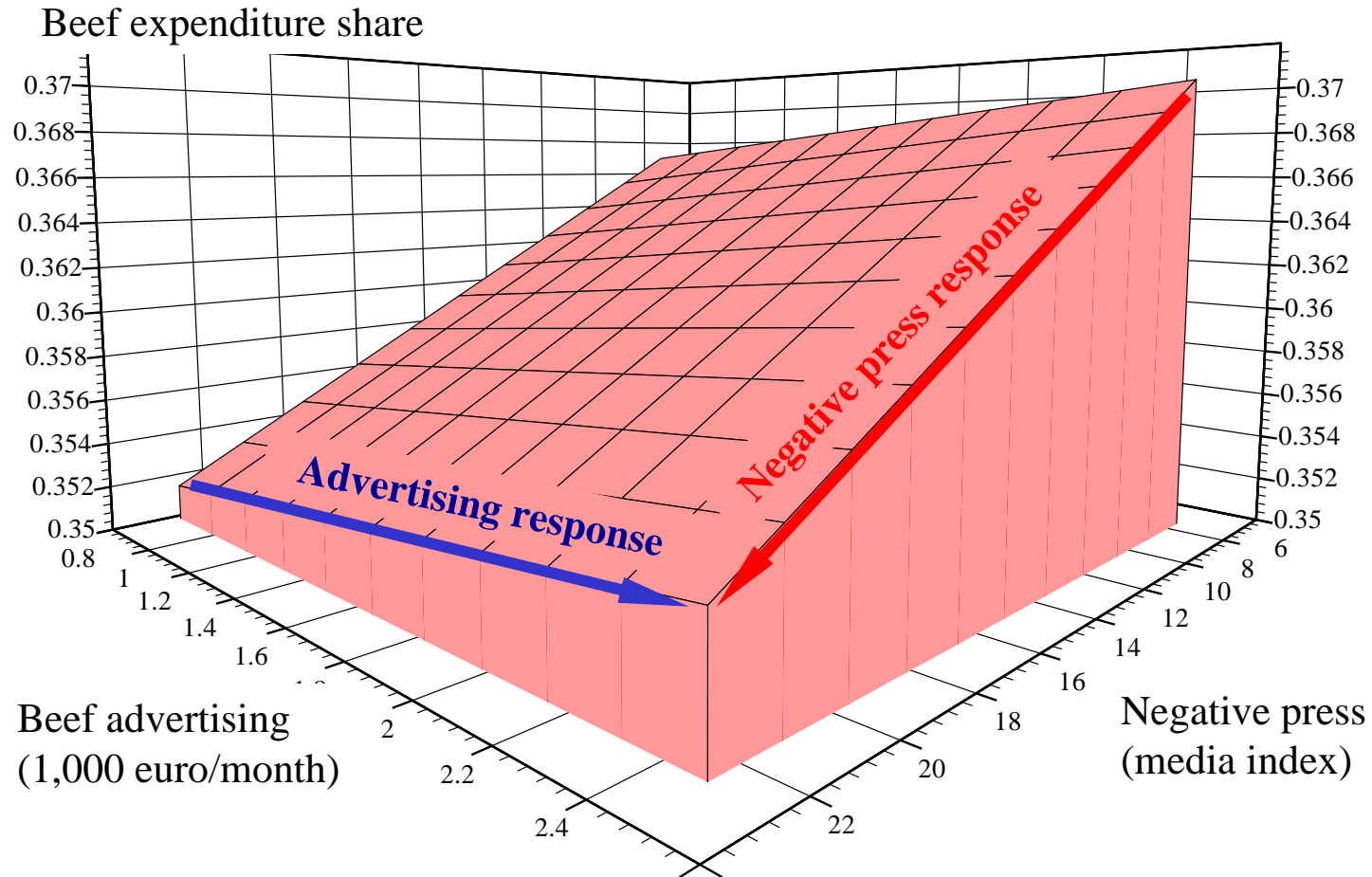
How consumers behave

- Concerned, even when hazards are not relevant;
- Overestimate some risks, especially technological risks;
- Underestimate other risks, especially lifestyle hazards;
- Do not differentiate greatly between risks within a category;
- Despite being uncertain, they mostly remain reluctant to information processing.

Lifestyle versus technological hazard

- Lifestyle hazard
 - Own risk <<< risk of average person: optimistic bias
 - Higher subjective knowledge lowers risk perception
 - Greater perceived control over exposure
- Technological hazard (= case of pesticides)
 - "Out of control" - beliefs
 - Unnatural and Man-made
 - Adding to the already existing risk environment
 - Most of the novel agri-food technologies

Power of mass media negative publicity versus positive news (here: BSE versus generic advertising)



- Ratio of slopes = 5 to 1
- Five units of positive news needed to offset one unit negative press

Five
Expensive
Working slowly
Shorter carry-over

←→

One
For free
Working fast
Longer carry-over





Stakeholder attitudes towards cumulative and aggregate exposure assessment of pesticides

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“... pesticides are necessary to have a product in the right condition and in the right quality available for the consumer...”
(trader or trading company)

“...consumers are not aware of all the studies done by industry and authorities and are only informed when there is an issue of concern. More balanced information is required including also the good news...” (manufacturer)

“...communication is difficult because nobody wants to admit that they have pesticides on their products. Consumers will immediately think that there is a major health issue...” (retailer)