Abstract
The excessive consumption threatens further existence of the humankind, the natural environment is destroyed, and the natural resources are depleted. In response to these negative phenomena, critical attitudes appear, manifesting themselves in the pursuit of moderation in purchasing new goods and searching for and consuming products which do not damage the natural environment. This tendency is included in the idea of the socially responsible consumption. An important area thereof is the consumption of organic food. The aim of the article is to identify the range of the socially responsible consumer behaviors on the organic food market and the barriers to their implementation. The assumed goal was achieved thanks to the use of the method of critical analysis of the domestic and foreign literature sources related to the socially responsible consumption and the analysis of the results of the empirical studies on the range of its occurrence. The results of the empirical studies show changes in the attitudes of the consumers towards the organic food and forms of socially responsible consumption in Poland. The organic food consumption growth factors are: declarations that when buying food, the consumers pay attention to the ecological origin of the food; the frequency of purchasing organic products "at least once a week" and "at least once a month"; purchasing food products labeled with the ECO mark; variety of the food products bought; the consumption of local products associated with the local culture. On the other hand, the barriers to its development include the increase in consumption of red meat, wastage of organic food, too high a price thereof, limited availability and insufficient knowledge about the benefits of the organic food. A limited range of behaviors being typical of the socially responsible consumption in the area of the organic food in Poland. The results of the studies obtained, due to their diversified nature (surveys, quantitative studies), constitute the basis for the limited conclusions. Therefore, it is worth undertaking the qualitative study in order to learn the actual behavior of the socially responsible consumers.

Keywords: ecological consumption, socially responsible consumption, socially responsible consumer, ecological food

JEL Classification: E21, M31, Q01

1. Introduction
In the discussions and scientific debates on the directions of the changes in the consumption, the issue of taking actions to reduce the excessive consumption, which has a destructive effect on the natural environment, appears. It is believed that the excessive consumption may limit the access to the natural resources for the future generations. Some researchers suggest that one of the directions of the actions to reduce the excessive consumption is the promotion of the socially responsible consumption, the main being a conscious and well-thought-out decision to make consumption choices because of personal moral beliefs and ethical values (Crane & Matten 2004). The ethical behaviors include the type of conduct in which the consumer follows the ethical values in the process of purchasing, using and disposing of the products. It can manifest itself in limiting the consumption of goods related to the consumer's lifestyle, approving the concept of the sustainable development, caring for the natural environment, opposing the actions of the producers who do not respect the workers' rights, promoting fair trade, purchasing and
consuming organic food, etc. The idea of the ethical consumption is manifested, among others, by the concept of the organic food consumption. The organic food market in Poland is a market in the growth phase. The organic food turnover is growing dynamically, but its share in the total food sales is still small. In Poland, the value of the organic food market in 2020 is estimated at approximately PLN 1.36 billion, which is 0.5% of the value of the entire food market. Compared to 2019, in 2020 the market value increased by 10%. The organic food is produced by 18,575 farms which cultivate 509,291 hectares. Their share in the total agricultural area is 3.5% (Polska Izba Żywności Ekologicznej 2019). The further development of this market is related to the dissemination of the consumer's attitudes and behaviors typical of the socially responsible consumption.

The aim of the article is to identify the scope of the behavior of the socially responsible consumers on the organic food market and the barriers to their implementation.

2. Literature review - Socially responsible consumption

Socially responsible consumption as an area of the ethical consumption is manifested in the relations with other consumers, the ethical dimension of the products, and the impact on the natural and social environment. Relationships with other consumers may take an organised form, for example, as the consumer cooperatives focused on the food consumption. The purpose of such initiatives is to meet the needs and aspirations of the consumers. For them, the cooperation between the consumers means having a real influence on the supply chain, on the choice of products they buy. The consumer cooperatives take the form of institutionalised or informal groups. In the first case, they create their own stores or connect to the network, for example, in Spain there is the Eroski network, in Sweden (KF/Coop Sweden), in the Czech Republic (UCMCC), in Slovakia (Coop Jednota), in Denmark (FDB/Coop Denmark) and in Finland (S-Group) (European Community of Consumer Cooperatives. 2008). They offer high-quality products at a reasonable price, not only to their own members but to all of the customers. In such cooperatives, the social responsibility for the community's consumption undertakings rests on the consumers.

In the second case, the informal food cooperatives are established. In such organisations, all of the processes related to the food production, distribution and consumption are informal, therefore they do not pay value added tax, do not have permits to operate, do not comply with established sanitary standards and do not have official certificates (Dentoni & Lorenzo 2014).

The food cooperatives operate with different goals. One of the most important is to create the conditions for purchasing the healthy food and care for the natural environment. They are based on mutual, two-way relationships between the producers and the consumers. The purpose of the cooperative is to eat healthy food and care for the environment.

Another area of the social responsibility of the consumption is caring for the ethical dimension of the consumer's goods, which is related to their ethical production (consistent with the human rights, working conditions, environmental protection, etc.) (Doane 2001). The ethicality of a product is demonstrated by the range of the presence of an ethical element in a given product, including the "fair" production and the biological neutrality towards the natural environment. The ethical dimension of a product can be perceived in a broader dimension, that is, as a physical product, its marketing, manufacturing process, and even the country of origin (Brinkmann & Peattie 2008).

The natural environment is an important area of the socially responsible consumption. It is assumed that the consumers, as the users of the natural environment, are responsible for it, which involves predicting the effects of their activities and taking them into account when making purchasing decisions. The literature distinguishes four basic types of consumption which take
into account the sensitivity to the environmental problems. They are: eco-consumption (ecological consumption), ethical consumption, sustainable consumption and the anti-consumption. The eco-consumption means consuming goods and services of an appropriate quality, produced using as little toxic materials as possible and reducing waste and pollution. The eco-consumption is sometimes referred to as the green consumption, which includes the protection of the environmental resources by improving the quality of life, improving efficiency, minimising waste, extending the perspective of the product's life cycle and taking into account the justice system for both the present and future generations (Peattie 2010). On the other hand, ethical consumption is associated with the purchase of the products which have been produced with respect for the basic human rights and the environment. It includes the diverse practices as buying fair-trade, products-not-tested-on-animals, non-sweatshop brands, organic goods and avoiding the exploitative products or unnecessary purchases (Littler 2008). The key to its implementation is the growth of the rational and environmentally conscious attitudes and behavior based on deep values (Ottman 2003). The sustainable consumption, on the other hand, can be defined as "the use of services and related products which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of the service or product so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations "(Liu et al. 2017, 414). One of the important goals of the sustainable consumption is the consumption of ecological food.

When considering the socially responsible consumption, the term of the socially responsible consumer appears. A socially aware consumer is the one who takes into account the social consequences of their private consumption or seeks to use their purchasing power to cause social change (Webster 1975). In the process of purchasing and consuming or using a product, they aim to minimise or eliminate any harmful effects and maximise the long-term beneficial impact of the purchased consumer goods on the society (Mohr et al. 2001). A socially responsible consumer is characterised by thinking ahead and tempering one's desires by knowing that actions have to be morally justifiable and who has to sometimes be prepared to sacrifice personal action for the society (Gabriel & Lang 1995). Thus, a socially responsible consumer is a person whose actions on the market are morally justified and is ready to give up their consumption desires when they harm the natural and social environment. Such a consumer tries to purchase products or services of the companies deemed responsible for the social and natural environment.

The behavior of a socially responsible consumer towards the natural environment can take many forms, first of all, the purchase of the consumer goods which are produced in the least harmful way to the nature. Second, eating the so-called ecological goods (mainly food) without the artificial additives, preservatives, etc. Third, purchasing goods which are produced at the lowest ecological cost, such as purchasing cleaning products with low levels of hazardous chemicals, biologically neutral baby food. Fourth, promoting the environmentally friendly life styles, for example, a style of voluntary simplicity in consumption. Fifth, promoting awareness of the co-responsibility for excessive production of post-consumer waste among other consumers, for example, on social networks. Sixth, promoting the consumption of the local products linked to the local culture. The above set of forms of the action towards the natural environment which can be taken by the socially responsible consumers is not closed. It is only a suggestion for further discussion on the issue of the socially responsible consumption in today's society.

The areas of the socially responsible consumption presented do not constitute a closed entirety, they are a starting point to discuss the directions of changes in the behavior and activities of the consumers in today's society.
2. Data and Methods

For the purpose of the range of occurrence of socially responsible consumption on the ecological food market in Poland, the findings of research in the following databases were utilized: CBOS [the Centre of Research on Social Opinion] – this research was conducted within the framework of the mixed-mode procedures (CAPI, CATI and CAWI). A representative name-based sample of adult inhabitants of Poland, who were selected from the PESEL register (Personal Identity Number N=1133); IMAS International – this research was conducted with the aid of the survey method, whereby the Internet survey of CAWI was applied in a quota-random sample of Poles (N=1011) and in a research sample (N=1000); the Polish Chamber of Ecological Food – quantitative research conducted with the aid of the survey method, in which the technique of the electronic survey available online was applied, while also in the form of phone interviews (N=1000); the General Directorate for the Environment and co-ordinated by the Directorate General for EU Communication – quantitative research conducted on a sample of 27,881 people from all the EU member states. Likewise, statistical data in research reports was availed of from the following: Statistics Poland, , the United Nations Environment Programme, Food Waste Index Report, Koalicja na Rzecz Rozwoju Rynku Żywności Bio, the European Community of Consumer Cooperatives. The research conducted relates to the period of 2017 – 2021.

The research methods availed of in the research on socially responsible consumption was that of the induction method, which is based on perception leading from the individual facts observed in the process of analysing the results of empirical research to generalization and the method of desk research, which avails of the findings of primary research stipulated in research reports as the source of data for analysis.

3. Results and Discussion

A socially responsible consumer looks for ecological products which are produced in a way that does not endanger the natural environment. One of such products is the organic food. The potential of spreading the patterns of the organic food consumption is evidenced by the consumers declarations that they pay attention to the ecological origin of the products. In Poland, a relatively high percentage of the consumers declare that when buying food they pay attention to the ecological origin (69% of respondents). If we take into account the socio-demographic characteristics of the consumers, men (71%), aged 60 and more (81%), with secondary education (72%) pay attention to the ecological quality of products relatively more often. This attitude is the least frequently displayed by young people aged 18-29 (64%) and with higher education (65%). (Bylok 2021)

One of the indicators of the socially responsible consumption is the frequency of purchasing green products. In Poland, the group of regular consumers of the organic food includes slightly more than 32% of the consumers who declare that they purchase organic food "at least once a week" and "at least once a month". In turn, 20% eat organic food occasionally, and 48% never buy organic food (Koalicja na Rzecz Rozwoju Rynku Żywności Bio 2021).

When comparing the results of these two studies, discrepancies can be noticed. Lewicka-Strzałecka estimates that the discrepancy between the declared readiness to make ethical purchases and the actual purchasing is 30:3, i.e. 30% of people declare that they are willing to make such purchases and only 3% actually do them (Lewicka-Strzałecka 2003). One of the reasons for such a state of the affairs is a relatively higher price of the organic food than the traditional food. Even for the consumers who identify themselves as the socially responsible, the prices of the organic products are more important than the concerns about the unethicality of the products produced by producers deemed to be ethical. Shaw and Clarke concluded that although the consumers in the studies declare their willingness to support the ethical companies by
purchasing their products, ethical issues do not have such a large impact on their actual purchasing behavior. In most cases, the products with ethical characteristics are more expensive than the traditional products, which reduces the consumer's incentives to buy them (Shaw and Clarke 1999).

Another indicator of the socially responsible consumption is the purchase of the food products marked with the so-called green leaf. Most often, the consumer learns about whether a food product is ecological from its description on the label. The certification mark confirms its belonging to the organic food group. The certificates are a key factor influencing the choice of the organic products (Savelli et al. 2019). In Poland the majority of consumers know that organic food is certified (80%), and more women than men have such knowledge (84% vs 76%) Polish Chamber of Organic Food 2021). The question arises to what extent the labeling of the ecological products influences the purchasing decisions. The Eurobarometer surveys show that the attitudes towards eco-labels vary significantly from country to country. The majority of the consumers consider eco labeling when shopping in Sweden (70%) and Denmark (57%), while the least frequent is Bulgaria (12%), the Czech Republic and Portugal (both 17%). In Poland, 20% of the consumers believe that the "ECO" ecological label is important to them when shopping, 35% indicated that it does not play an important role, and 40% have never paid attention to the ecological signs. However, only 10% of the respondents bought a product marked with this sign. (European Commission 2017)

The final decision to buy an organic product is influenced by the reliance on the label indicating that the organic product is environmentally friendly. In the European Union, the Ecolabel is the most trusted by the consumers in Greece (95%), Cyprus, Denmark and Hungary (all 94%). In Poland, on the other hand, 81% of the respondents trust the eco-label on the product label European Commission. (2017). Thus, the majority of consumers recognising the eco-label on a product trust it, which may positively influence the purchasing decisions.

The variety of the purchased organic products is another indicator of the socially responsible consumption. The Polish consumers most often buy ecological fruit and vegetables from among the food products. Over 25% of the consumers admitted that they buy them "at least once a week". The organic eggs are another frequently purchased product, which almost 63% of the respondents buy regularly. Bread, dairy products and milk are purchased slightly less frequently. Relatively rarely, the consumers buy organic cold cuts (13%). The least frequent items in the shopping cart are snacks, herbs, spices, tea and coffee, nuts and dried fruit, as well as semi-finished products and ready-made meals. (Polish Chamber of Organic Food 2021).

Due to the negative impact of the cattle, pig and poultry farming on the production of the greenhouse gases, limiting the consumption of meat is one of the indicators of the socially responsible consumption. In Poland, the meat consumption is systematically growing. The meat consumption index per capita increased from 73.7 kg in 2010 to 77.1 kg in 2019, with the consumption of beef increasing the fastest by 58% (Statistics Poland 2020). The polls show that in Poland, only 8% of the consumers significantly limit their meat consumption (CBOS 2020). Thus, the observed increase in the meat consumption points to a negative trend limiting the development of the socially responsible consumption.

An important indicator of the socially responsible consumption is reducing the food waste. Food waste can be defined as "...any food, and inedible parts of food, removed from the food supply chain to be recovered or disposed (including composted, crops ploughed in/not harvested, anaerobic digestion, bio-energy production, co-generation, incineration, disposal to sewer, landfill or discarded to sea)” (Aschemann-Witzel et al. 2015, 2025). One of the behaviors of a socially responsible consumer is the rational purchase of the food products, i.e. he buys only those he needs at the moment. In Poland, with the opinion of I buy as much food as I need without wasting food, 56% of the respondents strongly agree (CBOS 2020). Other studies show that 8%
of the consumers sometimes waste half of the purchased organic products, and 6.3% waste most of the purchased eco-products. On the other hand, sometimes an ecological product is wasted (40%), and the purchased products are rarely wasted (30.1%). Only a little over 14.3% of the consumers never waste ecological products (Polska Izba Żywności Ekologicznej 2019). In general, the consumers consider it inappropriate to throw away food (Porpino et al. 2016). Despite the relatively frequent waste of food by the Polish consumers, its amount of 56 kg of wasted food per household per year is lower than in most of the EU countries. The most wasted food is in Greece (142 kg), Malta (129 kg) and Hungary (94 kg). On the other hand, the food waste is least wasted in Slovenia and Russia (33 kg per household) (United Nations Environment Programme. 2021).

There are many causes of food waste. In Poland, the most common are the loss of freshness or the expiry of the expiry date of the products (43.8% of indications), then the improper storage of the products (28.1%), too large purchases (21.9%) and inadequate quality, the appearance or the taste of the products (15.6%) (Polska Izba Żywności Ekologicznej 2019).

The consumption of the local food products related to the local culture is another indicator of the socially responsible consumption. The attributes of this food category confirm that the health awareness and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, as values perceived by the consumers, are an element of building the product strategies of the entities related to the local food (Goryńska-Goldmann, E. (2019). Food is the product most strongly associated with the locality. The surveys show that the Poles pay attention to where the food products come from, 47% pay attention to it, while for 47% of the consumers it is of little importance. Only 4% of the consumers do not care where the food comes from (IMAS Agri 2018). The results of the subsequent studies indicate that 1/3 of the Poles eat local products at least twice a week, and approximately 70% eat these delicacies at least 2-3 times a month. About 40% of the consumers consume more local products than 3 years ago. The most commonly purchased local products are: cold cuts and processed meats, eggs and vegetables and fruit (Beeline Research 2017). The local food is most often purchased in bazaars, directly from the farmer or in specialised stores. In conclusion. Responsible consumers, who value the tradition and locality, have an impact on the greater production possibilities of the local food, which is the basis for the sustainable development of the local communities.

By analysing the results of the studies on the scope of the organic food consumption in Poland, it can be concluded that its further development encounters numerous barriers. In many studies, the three main barriers to the development which appear are: high prices, limited availability and consumer's knowledge (Grzybowska-Brzezińska & Grzywińska-Rapca 2018; Kulyk & Michałowska 2018). This is confirmed by the analysis of the IMAS studies results, which show that the Polish consumers considered the high price (64%), no need to consume the organic food (23%), its unavailability (16%), the lack of trust in the certificates (15%), a too far way to an organic food store (13%), lack of knowledge of where to buy it (11%), no difference between the organic food and others (10%); low quality/taste (7%), as important reasons for not buying the organic food (IMAS International 2017). Overcoming these barriers requires a great deal of effort. One of the key activities is to increase the knowledge of the consumers about the advantages of the organic food and the knowledge about the certificates and labels of the organic food, which will allow the recognition of this food and its conscious choice. The consumers with such knowledge are able to accept higher prices.
4. Conclusion

In spite of the skepticism expressed by many researchers (Carrington et al. 2014, Devinney et al. 2006) - largely related to only some dimensions of the socially responsible consumption, i.e. the ethicality of the products, their environmental friendliness - the number of consumers who can be called the socially responsible is gradually increasing, in particular in the ecological food market. The organic food market offers a wide variety of products, enabling a lifestyle choice based on the ethical consumption. The studies conducted on the scope of the occurrence of the socially responsible consumption patterns in Poland shows that the consumers declare that they are used in practice to a limited extent. The analysed indicators of the socially responsible consumption, i.e. the frequency of purchasing the organic products "at least once a week" and "at least once a month"; purchasing food products labeled with the ECO label; the variety of purchased food products and buying local food products related to the local culture indicate the potential of the organic food market in Poland. However, its further development depends on overcoming the barriers. The main obstacles are the too high price of the organic food, its limited availability, too little knowledge about its certified quality and too little knowledge about the benefits of the organic food. This is especially true for the group of consumers who purchase organic food inconsistently. The consumers need knowledge and arguments in favor of choosing organic products, in particular the knowledge about nutrition, organic food, labeling this product category, and the certification (Nestorowicz et al. 2016).

The results of the studies on the scope of the socially responsible consumption in the food market cited in the article indicate the growing interest in this form of consumption in Poland. For now, most of them are declarations, but some of them are made real in the actual consumer's decisions regarding the choice of the organic products. It is possible to forecast its gradual development, but it will not be a mass phenomenon.

References


