



**BEUC** The European  
Consumer  
Organisation

The Consumer Voice in Europe

# The time is ripe for expanding EU food origin labelling requirements

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Joint meeting of EC WG on Food Labelling and Advisory Group on the  
Food Chain on Origin Labelling – Brussels, 8<sup>th</sup> July 2019



# BEUC: who we are and what we do

- The European Consumer Organisation
- A network of 45 independent national consumer organisations from 32 European countries.
- We defend the interests of consumers in EU policy-making and coordinate our members' actions to enforce consumer rights.



# Do EU consumers care about food origin?

- 71% say that the origin of food is important.

\*Special Eurobarometer No 389 (July 2012)

- 70% want to know where their food comes from.

\*BEUC survey (2013) in AT, FR, PL & SW. *Where does my food comes from?*

- 90% want origin labelling for meat used as an ingredient in processed foods.

\*FCEC study (2013)

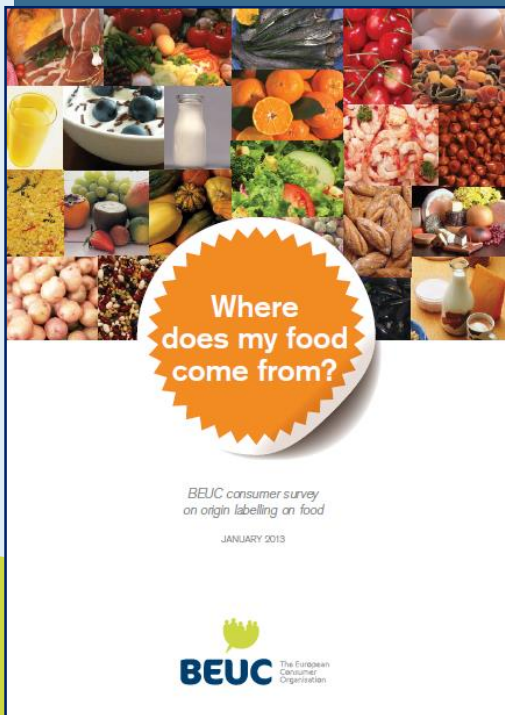
- 84% want to know the origin of milk, whether sold as such or in dairy product.

\*Special Eurobarometer No 410 (March 2014)

- The most important factors for Europeans when buying food are: origin (53%), followed by cost (51%), food safety (50%) and taste (49%).

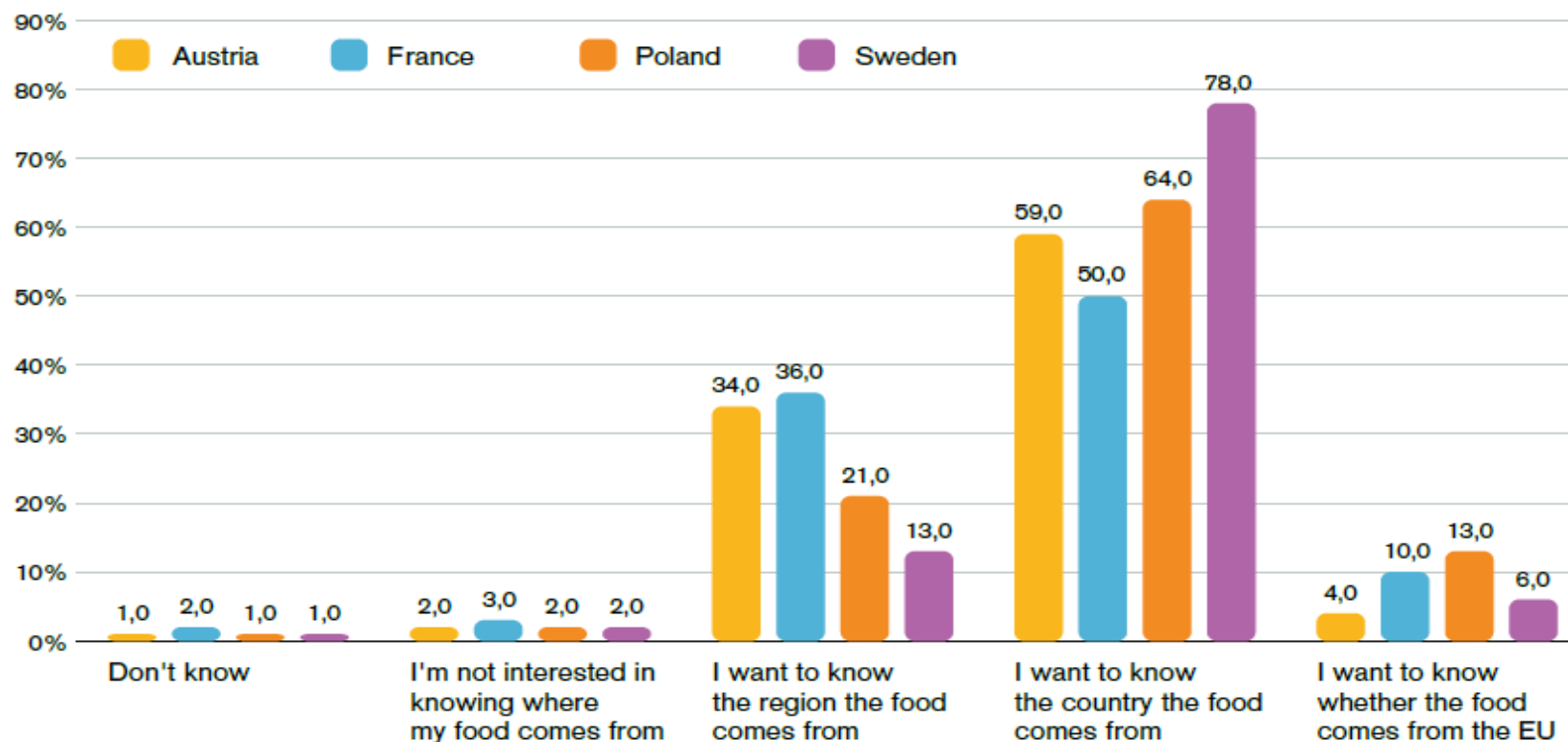
\*Special Eurobarometer Wave EB91.3 (2019) on Food Safety in the EU

# Consumers want to know the country their food comes from

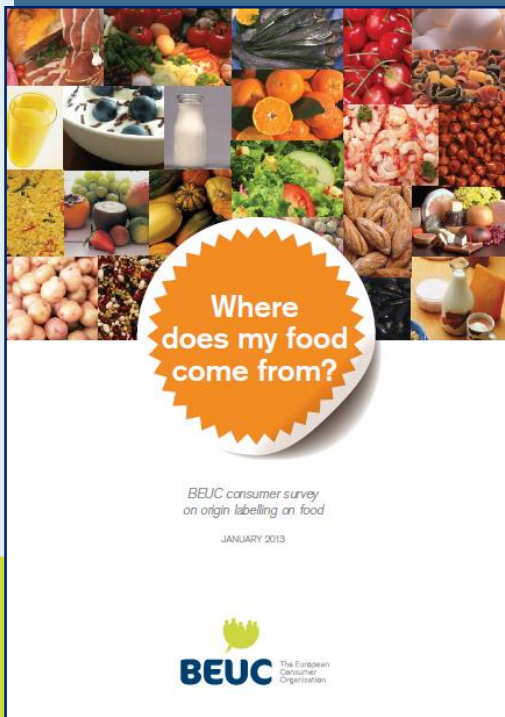


**FIGURE 1** Q4. Thinking about what “origin” refers to on a food label, how precise would you like this information to be?

Base: All who think it's important that origin is on labelling

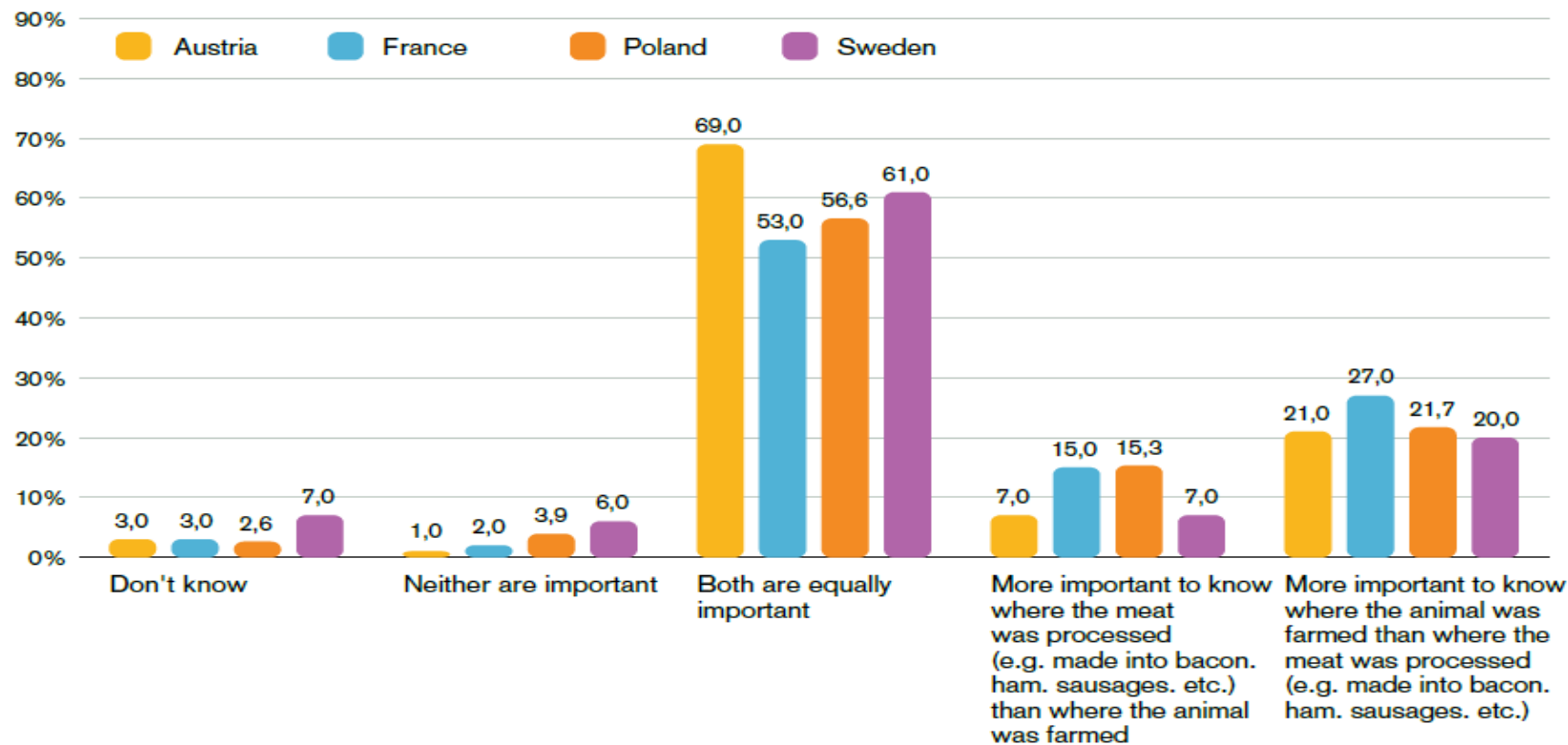


# Consumers want to know the place(s) of farming and processing



**FIGURE 4** Q7. Thinking about origin labelling on processed meat (e.g. bacon, ham, sausages, etc.), do you think it is more important to know where the animal was farmed or where the meat was processed into the final product?

Base: All respondents



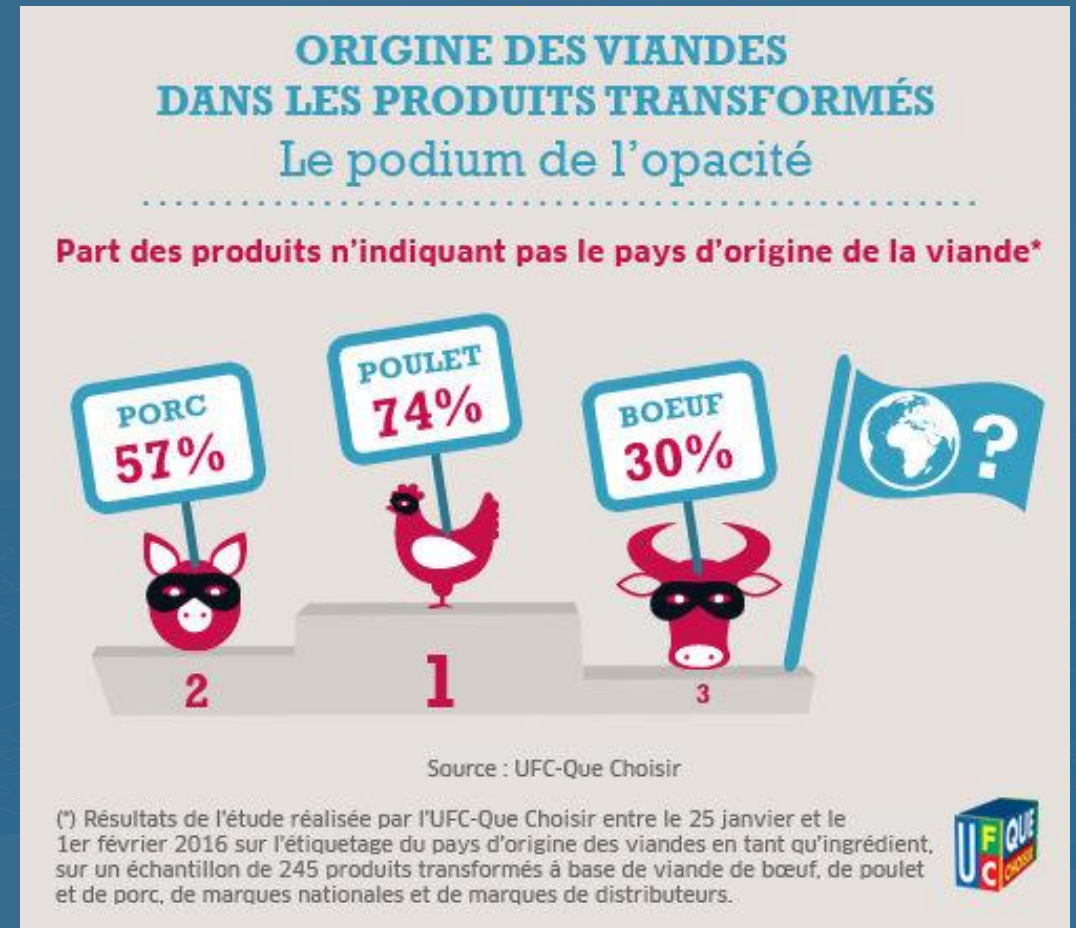
# Origin also matters when consumers eat out



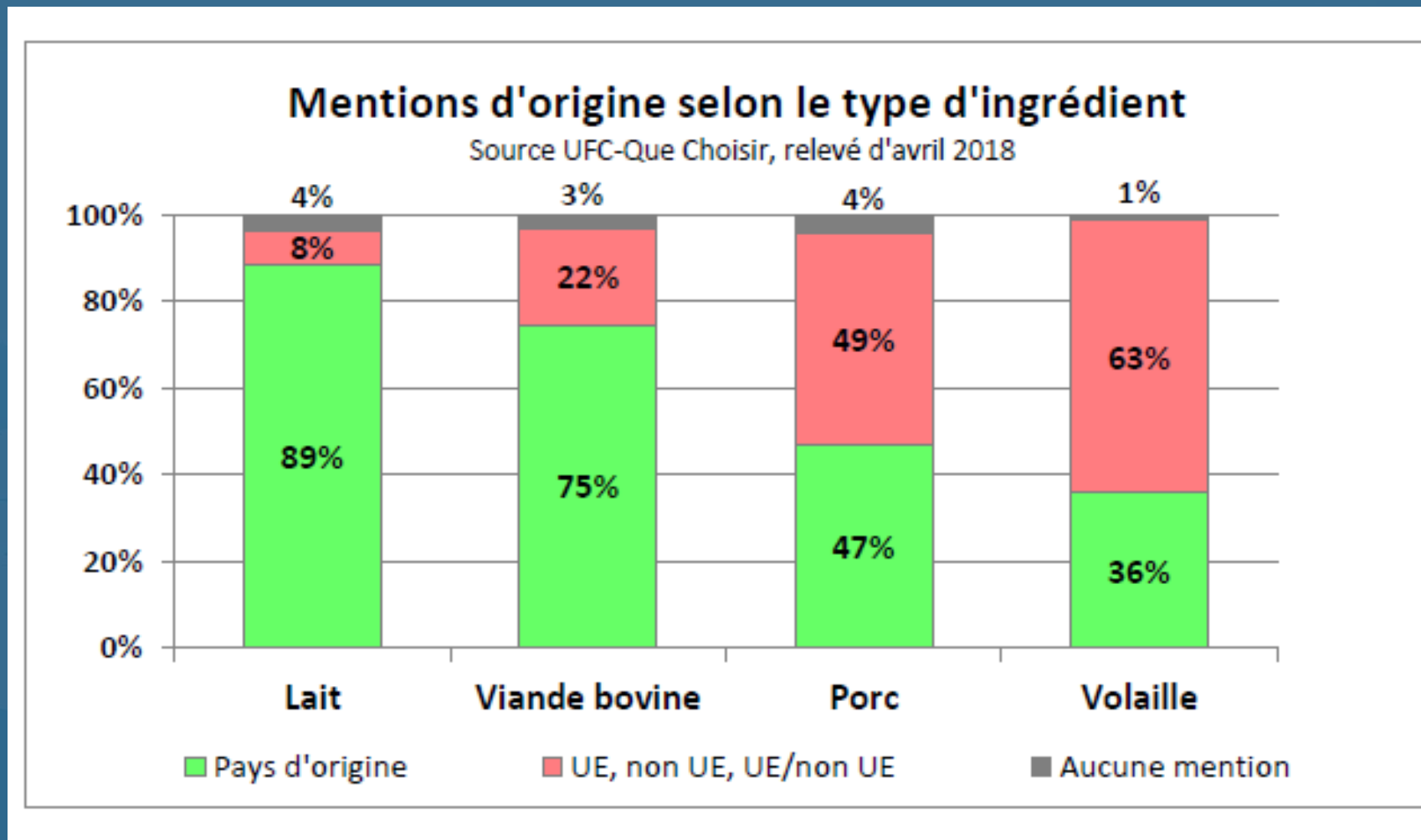
- Survey by Sveriges Konsumenter (Sept. 2018).
- 8 out of 10 Swedes want to know where meat served in restaurants comes from.
- Only 9 of 61 restaurants visited informed guests about the origin of the meat on the menu.

# The French COOL decree – Feedback from a consumer organisation (UFC – Que Choisir)

- First market check (January 2016)
  - ✓ Before adoption of French origin labelling measures.
  - ✓ 244 processed foods containing meat (incl. meat products, sandwiches, nuggets, ready-meals, sauces, etc.)
- Second market check (April 2018)
  - ✓ Mid-term of French COOL experiment
  - ✓ 269 products (53 dairy products, 216 processed foods containing meat)

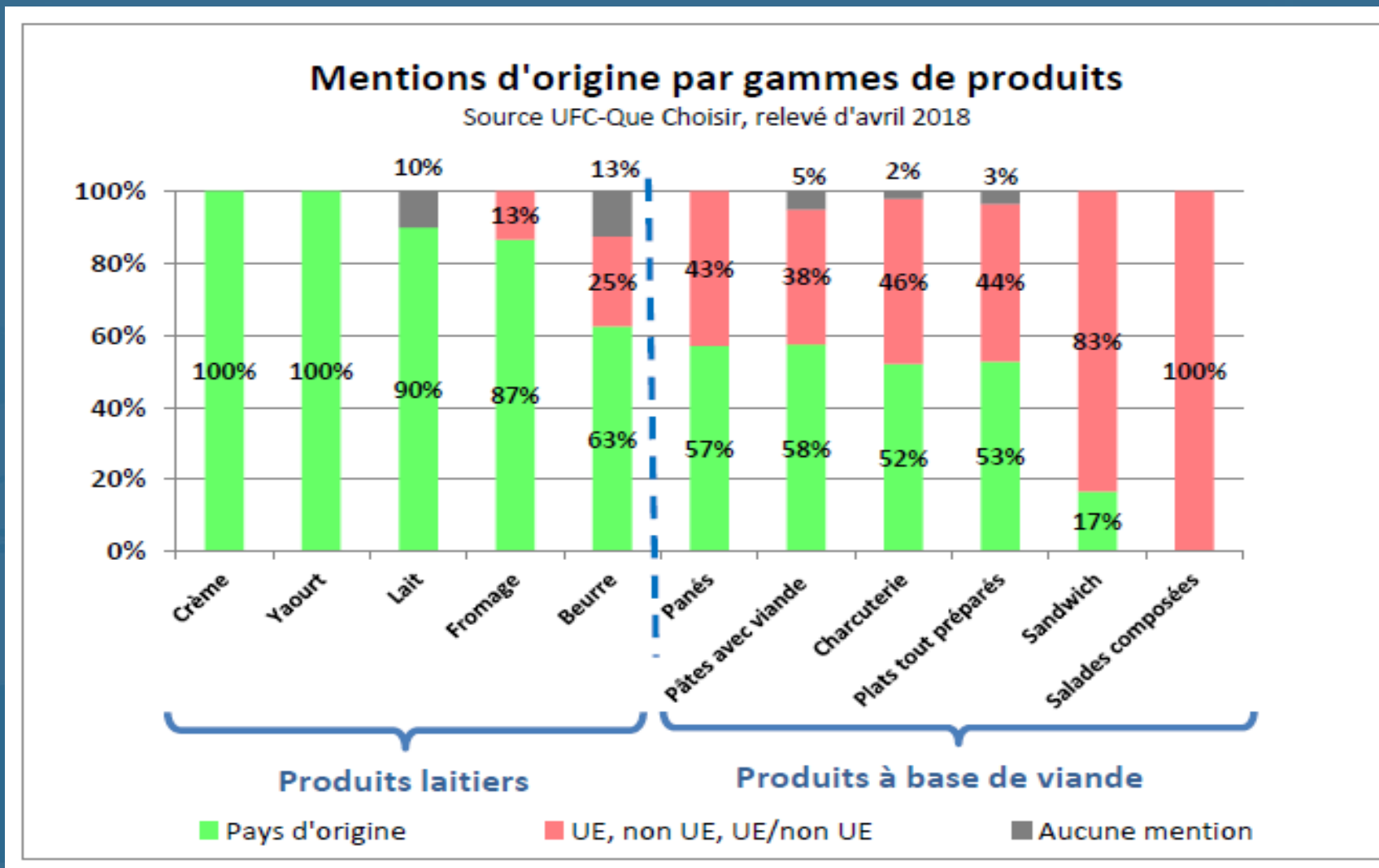


# Origin declarations per ingredient types





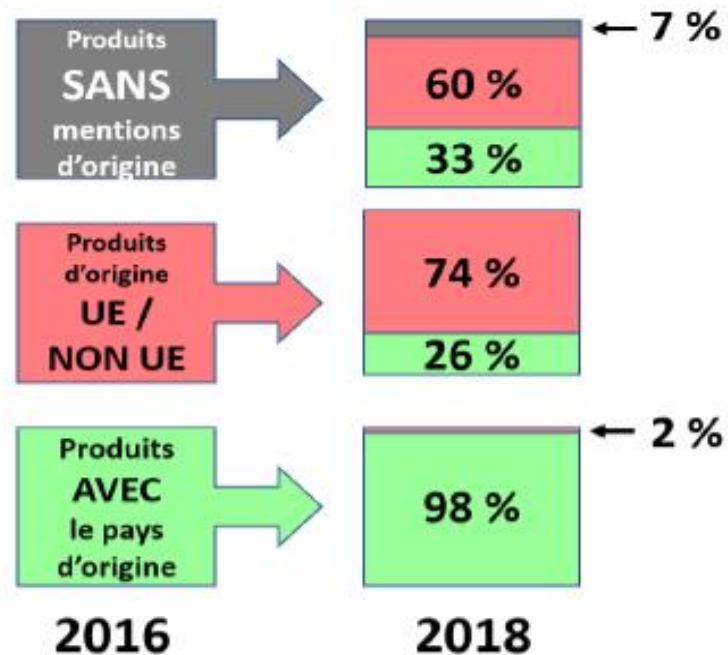
# Origin declarations per food category types



# Meat-based foods with origin labelling in the period 2016-2018 for the French market

## Evolution des mention d'origine pour 127 références de produits à base de viande suivis entre 2016 et 2018

Source UFC-Que Choisir relevés de février 2016 et avril 2018



■ Mentions du pays d'origine   ■ Origines UE, non UE, UE/non UE   ■ Aucune mention d'origine

# Key learnings from French COOL experiment

- Significant and positive impact of French origin labelling rules for consumer information:
  - +25% foods containing meat labelled with specific country of origin (compared to 2016)
  - high compliance rate (only 3% of all concerned products without origin information)
- Level of transparency on origin seems influenced more by company/retailer policy than product category or genuine technical constraints.
- No observed price increases attributable to COOL.

## BEUC recommendations

- Consumer demand for origin labelling remains high across the EU (especially for animal products)
- Art. 26(3) of Food Information to Consumers Regulation (primary ingredient) does not compensate for absence of mandatory COOL
- The time is ripe for EU-wide legislation requiring country of origin labelling for meat and milk (incl. when used as ingredients in processed foods)
  - EU/non-EU not meaningful enough for consumers
  - Place of farming and processing

## Now that origin mystery is ended for fresh meat



Why do consumers remain in the dark if  
meat is processed?

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