

STUDY REGARDING FOOD BEHAVIOR AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

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Abstract: *In the last period of time it has been found that the consumption of fruit and vegetable juices, cooked meals, dairy products, dietetic and baby foods, DOC wines and high quality wines, non-alcoholic beverages have increased. Most consumers are part of the standard consumer category (28%), so that from this category the consumers are adults with a diet considered as traditional. The category with the smallest consumers (12%) is represented by large diversified consumers, who are mainly men, with age between 25-45 years who frequently consume meat, bread, sauces and sugary products.*

Key words: *food, behavior, Europe, consumption*

INTRODUCTION

At European level, has been created an information base that allows the analysis of the dynamics of food consumption in different countries from European continent, and so many researchers in the field have conducted studies to try to better differentiate the eating habits of Europeans [3,5,6,8].

If we make a comparative analysis of food consumption characteristics between the two hemispheres of Europe, the north and the south, we find that the differences tend to fade progressively, but to some particularities continue to be maintained: so if, in the north, there is still a consumption higher of products rich in lipids in the form of margarines or animal fats, in south there is registered a consumption of products rich in lipids in form of olive oil [1,2,4,7].

MATERIAL AND METHOD

In order to accomplish this scientific work, we have carried out studies in order to determine food behavior at European level, following the evolution of food consumption and beverages both non-alcoholic and alcoholic.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Consumption of vegetables and fruits tends to be uniform, in recent years increasing their consumption in the Nordic countries as well. Concerning the consumption of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, it is higher in Northern and Central Europe. Wine is more present in France, beer in Germany and Finland, acidified beverages in the UK and Norway.

At European level there are certain agro-food products whose consumption has increased:

- Fruit and vegetable juices
- Cooked meals
- Spices, vinegar, sauces
- Dairy products
- Dietary and baby foods
- DOC Wines and high-quality wines
- Secondary cereals (rice)
- Non-alcoholic beverages
- Canned, frozen, smoked fish
- Mineral waters

But we can also talk about agro-food products of whose consumption has decreased in the last period of time:

- Bread
- Snacks as dessert

- Potatoes
- Pastry products
- Beef and horse meat
- Sugar
- Milk, concentrates and milk powder
- Wines for current consumption

At European level, have been defined large consumer groups, so from the first group take part those consumers who buy various foods, fruits and vegetables, cereals, meat, fish, dairy products. Pensioners have a tendency to integrate into this group, unlike those from the workplace. The second group is mainly characterized by the purchase of foods already prepared and through a lower consume of vegetal foods. Urban residents are part of this group. These studies provide only a partial picture, because the individual's particularities of social and cultural nature are very large.

At the level of the developed countries, there were registered a number of trends that have put their mark on consumer behavior of agro-food products. First, raising the standard of living has generated the shift of the need to eat to the pleasure of eating. People are willing to spend more to satisfy their various culinary pleasures, and creativity plays an important role in choosing food and preparing them.

On the background of this trend, studies conducted in many countries from European Union have identified a series of changes occurred in the purchasing behavior and agro-food products consume of individuals:

- consumers are looking for the convenience in buying food, preferring large stores, which have a diversified supply for all categories of agro-food products;
- consumers are looking for convenience in preparing food, are preferred those foods that are easy to be prepared and as short as possible;
- are preferred balanced products from nutritional point of view, higher in terms of quality, with special sensorial proprieties;
- increasing the share of nutritional products in the consumption of the population, as a result of the increased interest in keeping properly the health condition;
- are preferred food products that contain known ingredients and traditional agro-food products;
- in particular, is followed the pleasure of eating preferentially in weekends and during leisure time, products that satisfy caprices in this field;
- are preferred products in small packages.



Figure 1. Changes occurred in European consumer's behavior

According to some studies, carried out in this field, it was found that consumers ranking is made in six specific types (Figure 2).

- **Small diversified consumers**, this group has the following features:
 - o mainly women, with age up to 45;
 - o the menus are composed from dairy products, vegetables, cereals, legumes, with insignificant additions of meat and animal fats;
 - o fruit are regularly consumed.
- **Large diversified consumers**, this group has the following features:
 - o are mainly men, with age between 25-45 years;
 - o frequently consumes meat, bread, sauces and sugar products;
 - o their socio-cultural environment is considered rather elevated.
- **Standard consumers**, this group has the following features:
 - o Most are adults;
 - o presents a diet considered traditional.
- **Young consumers**, this group has the following features:
 - o the vast majority are men, with age between 18-34 years;
 - o pay little attention to their diet;
 - o biscuits, pasta, acidified juices do not cause them concern.
- **Small consumers hurried**, this group has the following features:
 - o most are young women;
 - o food diversification does not represent a feature;
 - o consumes dishes made fast, already cooked and can be eaten immediately, as well as bakery products.
- **Large monotonous consumers**, this group has the following features:
 - o Most of those from this group are men, with a relatively low socio-educational level;
 - o preferences are directed towards products rich in lipids, consumed in excess;
 - o such food presents risks for health.

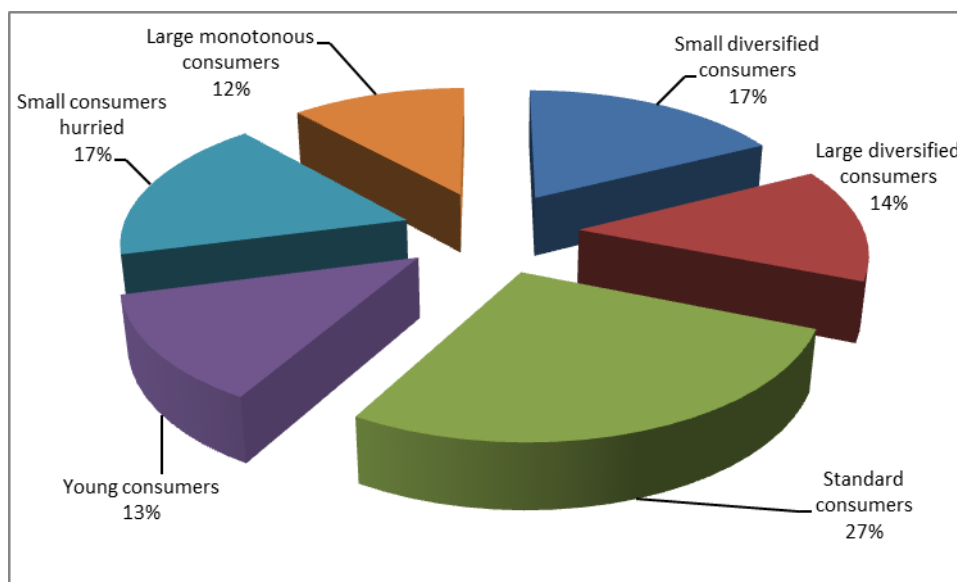


Figure 2. Typologies of consumers

The largest category is represented by standard consumers, meaning 28%, from which are parts most of adults, who are turning their attention to traditional agro-food products.

CONCLUSIONS

At the level of developed countries within the European Union, there have been registered a number of trends that have put their mark on the consumer behavior of agro-food products.

Increasing the consumers living standard to determine the transformation of the need to eat into the pleasure of eating, consumers are willing to spend more to satisfy their various culinary pleasures, and creativity plays an important role in choosing food products and preparing them.

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