

FOOD SAFETY AND TRADITIONAL PRODUCTS

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Abstract: Agriculture plays an important role in Romania, reported to the size of the rural population and to the level of employment. About 45.7% of the Romanian population lives in rural areas, compared to about 23.6% in the EU member states. About 30% from the population is engaged in agriculture, compared to about 2% in the old Member States (EU-15) and 3-14% in the new Member States (EU-8). The EU is making efforts to ensure that its food standards do not lead to the removal of traditional products from the market, do not stop the innovation or affect the quality. The quality and food safety is based on the efforts of all those involved in the complex chain that includes agricultural production, processing, transport and consumption. According to the European Union and the World Health Organization - food safety is a responsibility of everyone, from their origin up to the moment they reach the table. In order to maintain the quality and safety of food along the chain, both procedures are needed to ensure that food is integrated, as well as monitoring procedures to ensure that operations are carried out in good condition. The food safety policy of the EU takes into account the whole chain of food, designated for animal or human consumption. It provides extensive regulation and emphasizes the responsibility of manufacturers and suppliers for their participation in quality assurance of food supply. EU regulations are among the strictest in the world.

Key words: traditional products, food safety policy, quality assurance

INTRODUCTION

Although there have been concerns about the state of nutrition of the population since ancient times, it was only in the middle of the last century that the scientific and institutional foundations of contemporary food and nutritional policies were laid.

Food and nutritional policies are represented by a series of objectives, priorities, norms and decisions adopted by the actors and institutions empowered with skills necessary to provide the entire population with the economic and social conditions for a good state of individual and public health.

Food security has different meanings in the literature:

- seeks to ensure that everyone has access to the healthiest food;
- ensuring availability of food;
- secure and respect the right of every man to feed himself and the desire to have a healthy diet;
- is the basic component of social, economic and, explicitly, national security of a state (be it with or without agricultural potential).

Food policies represent the set of legislative, regulatory, administrative and financial measures that take into account previously defined objectives.

The nutritional policy aims to ensure a balance between the physiological needs of food consumption and the intake of nutrients to meet them.

The legitimacy of a state is the ability to provide security, namely to protect and maintain the rights of its citizens, and to provide them with the right environment to meet all needs.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For this study I applied as a working method: data collection, processing, centralizing data, data analysis and drawing conclusions.

RESEARCH RESULTS

In the opinion of many specialists in the field, the food security of a country is the most important dimension of national security.

A state has national security only when it has food security and only when it has sufficient supplies of agricultural and food products able to cover the food needs of all its inhabitants within its borders and at the same time to ensure the necessary stocks of feed for animals, but also water in situations of natural calamities, war, crisis, etc. Failure to ensure food security can rapidly generate internal convulsions and social tensions, may cause physical and mental health damage to the population, create conditions of economic and political instability, and externally can exert diplomatic, economic and political pressures undesirable and dangerous effects for national security. [9,14]

Food security represents the insurance the amount of food needed for people, leading to the lack of social seizures in national security.

Even if Romania is recognized at European and world level for its outstanding agricultural potential, the absorption rate of European funds is still very small and difficult, having a more complicated bureaucratic system than the new and old EU Member States. Thus, it is quite obvious that the effects are not and do not seem to be spectacular. The financing and co-financing gap is growing - access to credit is slow. The lack of a coherent strategy dedicated to Romanian agriculture and, in particular, food security, the incoherence of decisions, to which we add the rapid changes taking place in the structure and governmental authority, in our economy, in the structure of the agricultural sector and of the local food industries, and in the globalization and liberalization of trade lead to rapid changes in consumer needs as well as in consumer requirements on food quality and safety, food security, nutrition, legislation and control. [11,13,15]

It is necessary to create and implement, as urgently, an effective food security strategy at national level.

For Romania, agriculture with its sub-branches - plant and animal breeding, agro-food industry, exploitation of agricultural potential and agricultural land (mainly for own use) represent one of the most important resources of national development. [12]

Also, by identifying the threats, and risks to the address of food security, one can predict the main vulnerabilities in agriculture and the agro-food industry, which are among the most diverse:

- vulnerabilities directly affecting the natural environment - soil, water, air, energy resources;

- excessive population or exploitation: underdeveloped infrastructure, mainly critical, starting with the production one: agricultural machinery morally and physically used, storage facilities, insufficiently developed energy networks, transport networks of food;

- the shoring of agricultural land mostly owned by farmers - where only 4% from the national arable land is owned by 50 agricultural producers with potential for exploitation and capitalization; only 7 million hectares can be the subject of EU funds because 2.4 million hectares are subsistence farms;

- the lack of adaptation of the legal status of farmers 'household, at the one of micro-farms in order to qualify for access to funds for the development of rural infrastructure and to improve farmers' standard of living, through national funding, and by accessing funds for agriculture from specific funds;

- using their own agricultural land in order to ensure food security for other states (through possible excessive exports of agro-food products) - at the expense of its own food security can become a vulnerability and a threat to its own food security, and implicitly to

economic stability and social security, national security of the Romanian state (considering that food security is the basic component of the national security of a state);

- declaration of the technical base and stagnation of investments, asset destruction (irrigation systems, plantations, machinery, zoo technical complexes, etc.)

Although some of the reports submitted by Romania indicate an increase in the degree and standard of living of the Romanians, the data are contradicted and demonstrated by figures of independent UN and EU institutions (EUROSTAT). So, according to the Country Report regarding the situation of the population of the EU member states, it results that in Romania, out of a total of approximately 21.47 million inhabitants (according to the latest NSI report, regarding population census) about 9 million (meaning 41.5% - representing 8.89 million people out of a total population of 21.47 million taken into account by the EU Bureau of Statistics) live in poverty and therefore risk their poverty or social exclusion. The data were collected at the level of 2010. In the EU 27, Romania's level of poverty and food insecurity is the weakest, Romania is the last one! Having a high risk (close to 50%). [13]

For Romania there is no need to be made predictions about the possible occurrence of a food crisis because a large part of the population is already affected by this phenomenon. The increasingly precarious food security of the Romanians is not the consequence of the lack of food for the time being, but of the sharp decline in indigenous production at the expense of the increase in imports, of the agricultural potential at its disposal, of the purchasing power generated by at least four factors: salary adjustment, VAT, recalculation and taxation of pensions, and rising inflation. These factors contribute substantially to reducing food consumption, both quantitatively and qualitatively, by volatilizing food prices, reducing self-consumption, along with the steadily increasing imports. [7,8,10,11]

Recent developments have clearly highlighted the "breadth and interest of food security", a topic that has become a priority in all the debates at the highest level (G20, G8, UN, UNFAO, OECD, IFAD, World Bank, World Food Program, IAEA, etc.) but also at the level of most of the world's governments, becoming even "zero" priority for those where agricultural output is very low or absent (see areas of Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Central America, areas seriously affected by desertification, water, poor food supplies). The most advantaged states in terms of ensuring food security are those with an agricultural potential able to supply large quantities of agricultural raw materials and foodstuffs beyond their national needs. [7,10]

Among these countries is Romania, which has a generous agricultural potential and is ranked 5th among the EU countries, capable of covering the food needs of approx. 80 million people. It can be appreciated that such countries can have and most of them have, of course, food independence. This comparative advantage of Romania is insufficiently capitalized because, according to estimates of experts and national and international institutions in the field, approx. 70% of the aggregate food demand, existing on the market, covers the import of such products. Under these conditions, the current state of Romania's food independence and security is unacceptable.

Romania is recognized at European and world level for its outstanding agricultural potential. The agricultural potential of a state is the key of food security. Nothing can destabilize a country more than a hunger or a lack of drinking water.

The traditional product is that food produced on national territory and for which are used local raw materials; which does not contain food additives; which presents a traditional recipe; a mode of production and/or processing and a traditional technological process and which is distinguished from other similar products belonging to the same category.

Traditionality represents the element or the set of elements whereby a product is distinguished from other similar products belonging to the same category; traditionality cannot be limited to a qualitative or quantitative composition or to a mode of production established through Community or national regulation or by voluntary standards; however this rule does not apply if the regulation or standard has been established to define the product's traditionality. [1,3,4]

Food safety is a component of food security and human nutrition referring to three aspects that a food must meet.

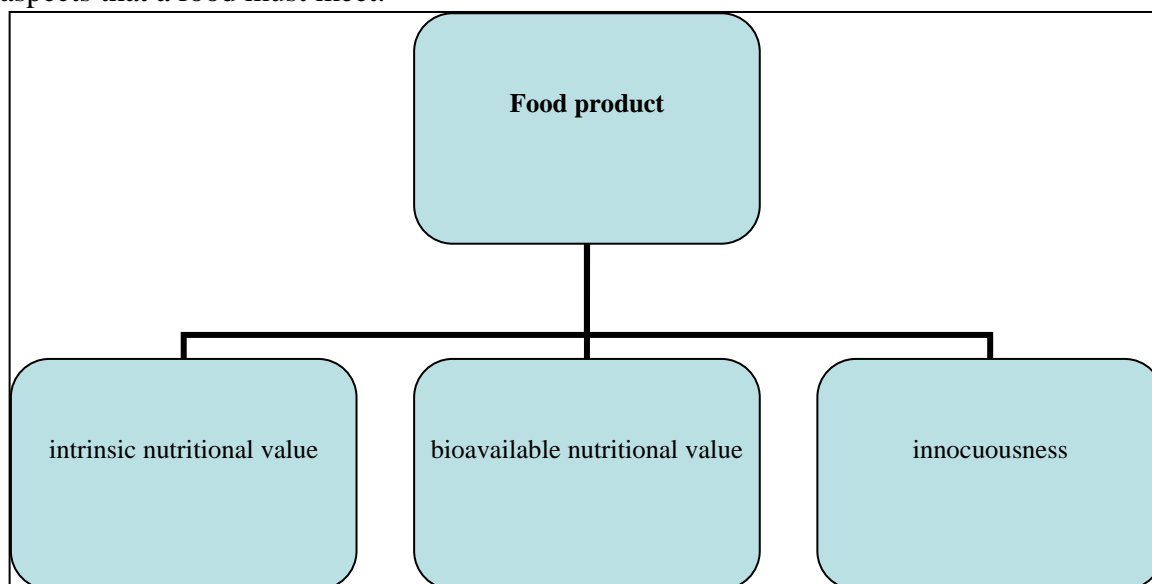


Figure 1. The aspects of food product

According to the Codex Alimentarius Commission, through traceability means the ability to track the movement of a foodstuff at different stages of production, processing and distribution. Traceability allows tracking a product, going from the raw material to the exposure for marketing, including the consumer. The consumer perceives traceability as an attribute that allows the flow of a food from the farm to the consumer's table or "fork-to-fork", a policy of identification and tracking with the help of documents. [2,5]

Traceability systems are useful to consumers because:

- Can easily avoid specific foods and food ingredients that can cause allergies, food intolerance, and those that do not fit to a particular lifestyle;
- Make it possible to choose between different foods made in different ways;
- Make possible the protection of food safety by recognizing the product if it is necessary. [2,6]

Therefore the traceability system allows the consumer to buy only safe food from the point of view of their sanitation.

The traceability systems are of particular interest to governments as part of the system that:

- protects public health by withdrawing food from sale
- helps prevent fraud when analyzes cannot be used for authentication (meaning organic food)
- controlling zoonotic diseases such as tuberculosis, salmonellosis, bovine spongiform encephalopathy through the ANSVSA Animal Health Division (National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority);
- make it possible to control human and animal health in emergencies; (meaning contamination of soil, of raw materials);

- facilitează epizootic și enzootic controlul bolilor animalelor prin identificarea rapidă a surselor de boli și contactelor periculoase;
- monitorizează/controlă numărul de animale în vederea acordării subvențiilor.

CONCLUSIONS

Interest in studying the field of food safety has grown since the emergence of the concept of food security, which was first presented after World War II in the framework of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) debate when it was launched in Rome in the year 1963, the famous manifesto "Proclamation of the right of every man to eat to satisfy his hunger".

Each country's food security can be secured primarily from domestic resources through country-specific policies. Ensuring the food security of the population of a state is primarily its duty. A state must manage its resources efficiently and rationally, otherwise the existence of the state and of the people itself is jeopardized.

The concept of national security also encompasses the concept of food security. The promotion of national security interests is achieved through the establishment of some benchmarks of the state effort, materialized in national security objectives.

A special place in the new vision of economic security as a public good must be given to food security through pro-active and complementary EU policies for agricultural policy, with the agricultural potential being already accurately detected. Genuine food security has important effects on the correction of internal imbalances in the field (profitability, competitiveness, supply and taxation) and external (trade deficit on the non-embargoed balance of food products to the existing potential) and the construction of a significant export offer for what is the contribution of net exports to GDP formation.

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